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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 10 March 2020 / Mardi 10 mars 2020

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, 2020, Bill 175, Ms. Elliott / Loi de 2020 pour connecter la population aux services de soins à domicile et en milieu communautaire, projet de loi 175, Mme Elliott

Mrs. Robin Martin.....	7595
Mr. Gilles Bisson	7595
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	7595
Hon. Paul Calandra	7595
Vote deferred.....	7596

Rebuilding Consumer Confidence Act, 2020, Bill 159, Ms. Thompson / Loi de 2020 visant à rétablir la confiance chez les consommateurs, projet de loi 159, Mme Thompson

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed.....	7596
Mr. Michael Mantha	7597
Ms. Donna Skelly.....	7597
Mr. Joel Harden.....	7598
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	7598
Mr. Joel Harden.....	7598
Ms. Sara Singh.....	7598
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson	7601
Mr. Kevin Yarde	7601
Mr. Norman Miller.....	7602
Mr. Daryl Kramp.....	7602
Mr. Kevin Yarde	7602
Ms. Donna Skelly.....	7603
Ms. Donna Skelly.....	7603
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	7605

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Women's issues

Miss Monique Taylor.....	7605
--------------------------	------

Skilled trades

Mr. Parm Gill.....	7605
--------------------	------

Manufacturing jobs

Mr. Kevin Yarde	7605
-----------------------	------

Indigenous affairs

Mr. Toby Barrett	7606
------------------------	------

Workplace safety

Mr. Jamie West	7606
----------------------	------

Human trafficking

Mr. Stephen Crawford.....	7606
---------------------------	------

Homelessness

Mr. Jeff Burch.....	7606
---------------------	------

Accessibility for persons with disabilities

Mr. Jim Wilson.....	7607
---------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	7607
Miss Monique Taylor	7607
Hon. Todd Smith.....	7607
Mr. Jamie West	7607
Mr. Mike Schreiner	7607
Ms. Lindsey Park	7607
Mr. Tom Rakocevic.....	7607
Mr. John Fraser	7607
Mr. Stephen Crawford.....	7607
Ms. Peggy Sattler	7607
Mr. Amarjot Sandhu.....	7608
Mr. Terence Kernaghan.....	7608
Mr. Michael Parsa	7608
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	7608
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	7608
Mr. Joel Harden.....	7608
Ms. Peggy Sattler	7608

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

COVID-19

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	7608
Hon. Christine Elliott	7608
Hon. Rod Phillips	7608

Hospital funding

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	7609
Hon. Christine Elliott	7609

Public health

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	7610
Hon. Christine Elliott	7610

Public health

Mrs. Gila Martow	7611
Hon. Christine Elliott	7611

Licence plates

Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	7611
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson	7612

Health care funding

Mr. Mike Schreiner	7612
Hon. Christine Elliott	7612

Human trafficking	
Ms. Natalia Kusendova	7613
Hon. Jill Dunlop	7613
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	7613
Education	
Mr. Gurratan Singh	7613
Hon. Stephen Lecce	7614
Energy policies	
Mr. Mike Schreiner	7614
Hon. Greg Rickford.....	7614
Mental health and addiction services	
Mr. Dave Smith.....	7615
Hon. Christine Elliott	7615
Hon. Michael A. Tibollo	7615
Hydro rates	
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7615
Hon. Greg Rickford.....	7615
Mining industry	
Mr. Stan Cho	7616
Hon. Greg Rickford.....	7616
Flooding	
Mr. Ian Arthur	7616
Hon. John Yakabuski	7617
Forest industry	
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	7617
Hon. John Yakabuski	7617
Children's mental health services	
Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell	7618
Hon. Michael A. Tibollo	7618
Correction of record	
Ms. Laura Mae Lindo.....	7618

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, 2020, Bill 175, Ms. Elliott / Loi de 2020 pour connecter la population aux services de soins à domicile et en milieu communautaire, projet de loi 175, Mme Elliott	
Second reading agreed to	7619

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Mr. Tom Rakocevic	7619
-------------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DE COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies	
The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott)	7619

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Somali Heritage Week Act, 2020, Bill 180, Mr. Hassan / Loi de 2020 sur la Semaine du patrimoine somalien, projet de loi 180, M. Hassan	
First reading agreed to.....	7620
Mr. Faisal Hassan	7620
Supply Act, 2020, Bill 181, Mr. Bethlenfalvy / Loi de crédits de 2020, projet de loi 181, M. Bethlenfalvy	
First reading agreed to.....	7620
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	7620
Franco-Ontarian Emblem Amendment Act, 2020, Bill 182, Ms. Kusendova / Loi de 2020 modifiant la Loi sur l'emblème franco-ontarien, projet de loi 182, Mme Kusendova	
First reading agreed to.....	7620
Mme Natalia Kusendova	7620

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Long-term care	
Mme France Gélinas	7620
Fish and wildlife management	
Ms. Goldie Ghamari.....	7620
Municipal restructuring	
Mr. John Vanthof	7620
Government's record	
Ms. Goldie Ghamari.....	7621
Telecommunications in correctional facilities	
Ms. Rima Berns-McGown	7621
Automated external defibrillators	
Mrs. Robin Martin.....	7621
Adoption disclosure	
Miss Monique Taylor	7622
Public transit	
Mr. Jim McDonell	7622
Education funding	
Mr. Tom Rakocevic.....	7622
Agri-food industry	
Ms. Goldie Ghamari.....	7623
Post-stroke treatment	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	7623

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Time allocation	
Hon. Paul Calandra	7623
Mr. Gilles Bisson	7624
Hon. Ernie Hardeman.....	7627
Miss Monique Taylor	7629

Mr. Toby Barrett.....	7630
Ms. Catherine Fife	7631
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	7632
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7635
Vote deferred	7638

**Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act,
2020, Bill 141, Mrs. Martin / Loi de 2020 sur
l'accès public aux défibrillateurs et leur
enregistrement, projet de loi 141, Mme Martin**

Mrs. Robin Martin	7638
Mme France Gélinas.....	7641
Hon. Paul Calandra.....	7643
Third reading debate deemed adjourned.....	7644

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 10 March 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 10 mars 2020

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning. We'll begin this morning with a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO HOME
AND COMMUNITY CARE ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020

POUR CONNECTER LA POPULATION
AUX SERVICES DE SOINS À DOMICILE
ET EN MILIEU COMMUNAUTAIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 9, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to amend and repeal various Acts respecting home care and community services / Projet de loi 175, Loi modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les services de soins à domicile et en milieu communautaire.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this bill, the member for Timmins had made a presentation. Now we're going to do questions and responses related to his speech. Questions to the member for Timmins?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I recall we were partway through the questions and answers for the member for Timmins. I think we were discussing the important role of PSWs and our view that this legislation will actually help change the framework for PSWs so that they could have a better situation and better scheduling etc., and things that make the jobs where they can earn a decent living. I wanted to ask the member opposite if he wouldn't support these changes as a way to make our health system more integrated, a way to make sure that PSWs are part of an integrated health team so that they can input into the care of a patient across the team and have feedback from other members of the team, and thereby make their contribution more valued. Because from what I hear from PSWs, that is something that they are very concerned about.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, PSWs are already integrated into the system. It happens to be with the LHINs at this point. They always have been. The issue is what we pay them. I look at this legislation, and I don't see anything earmarked in it that is going to make sure that we pay these PSWs what they're worth. So unless the government is prepared to do something when it comes to compensation,

no matter what we do to try to reorganize them, it's going to be hard to keep the ones that we have and to attract the new ones that come into the field, because it is really a very tough job that they get paid very little to do and it's becoming harder and harder to retain people within the field.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This is a very, very crucial moment, I think, in health care. It truly is something that's going to set the tone for what home care and community care is going to look like. We know that this government is opening the doors more so to privatization and for-profit companies, so I just wondered if the member can speak to how that's going to effect the community and quality care and workers that deliver that care in this great province?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This is a large part of the problem of where the government is going. The former Liberal government made the mistake of privatizing much of what's inside the home care sector. And what that has meant is that the money that used to be there, that we, the taxpayers, pay, that went to providing services to the residents in our community, now goes to the bottom line of some corporation that's trying to make a buck.

Now, I don't have anything against somebody trying to make a buck, but go and do it in another field. Health care is one of those things where we, the taxpayers, have so little money to give our governments when it comes to being able to run our health care system. Every penny, every dollar that we divert to the bottom line of some business or corporation is a dollar that is not going directly to the services of the people that are needed across this province. So I think it's a bad mistake on the part of the Liberals, and that you guys want to repeat the mistake of the Liberals is, to me, a little bit shocking.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise briefly and speak to this topic. As we discussed yesterday in questions and answers on this, I think the bill makes a lot of progress in a number of areas, particularly in connecting people in the community to their health care services.

I've said on a number of occasions—and it's not anecdotally, it's from people within the community and experiences of my own—once people are in the system and have the care, everybody usually is universally happy with the quality of care that they get from our health care professionals. The big problem that people have been experiencing is actually getting the care that they need, and managing their way around the system. This bill helps, of

course, to untangle that so that it's easier for people to get connected to services.

I know one of the members raised concerns with respect to First Nations. I think this bill finally helps to address some problems by bringing First Nations into the process as well.

With that, I'm certainly anxious to see this bill move forward and get to committee, so I move that the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Calandra has moved that the question be now put. We've had 10 hours and 25 minutes or more—starting today we had 10 hours and 25 minutes with 27 speakers—I'm satisfied there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Boo.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Why do I feel I'm at a Raptors game?

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

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

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

REBUILDING CONSUMER
CONFIDENCE ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020 VISANT À RÉTABLIR
LA CONFIANCE CHEZ
LES CONSOMMATEURS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 5, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection / Projet de loi 159, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la protection du consommateur.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I believe when the debate had ended on this the last time, the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville had the floor.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you.

Last time when I was debating this bill, I was talking about the great work our minister and the parliamentary assistant, who actually just sits right in front of me, have done in preparing this bill.

This bill is about protecting Ontarians and building confidence in Ontarians about what we as a government are doing for them. Our government is listening to the needs and concerns of consumers to help better protect them.

0910

Throughout 2019, the government consulted on three main pillars:

(1) protecting the privacy of Ontarians, which I believe is extremely important, because privacy is something that

we all deserve, and our government is listening and making sure that Ontarians have the privacy that each individual deserves in this province;

(2) enabling businesses to compete digitally; and

(3) enabling better, smarter, more efficient government to help inform the creation of Ontario's digital and data action plan.

While going through the bill, there are many ways that it will help Ontarians. One of those ways is to improve transparency while buying tickets for events. Bill 159 will change the game to the Ticket Sales Act. This change would require all amounts in ticket offers to be listed and charged in Canadian currency for Ontario events. This bill will help with the regulation of ticket sales within the Ticket Sales Act. Bill 159 will help ensure all ticketing events in Ontario are priced in Canadian dollars—not US dollars, but our actual national currency or, as I say, the mighty Canadian dollar.

Mr. Speaker, let me share with you an experience of one of my friends. We were having this conversation, and it was really an eye-opening conversation about his experience of buying a ticket online for a Blue Jays game—and absolutely, I would love to wish our Blue Jays the very best in the upcoming season. Go, Jays, go.

At the time I remember the Blue Jays were on a hot streak, playoff-bound, and to purchase any tickets directly was a challenge. However, during our conversation, my friend mentioned to me—he is a diehard Blue Jays fan—he was anxiously looking to buy tickets at any cost. He found an alternate source and purchased four tickets for approximately—I think the value was roughly about \$350, which actually, unfortunately, turned out to be \$350 US dollars.

I'm sure I do not need to remind everyone here that the Canadian dollar, give or take right now, is about \$1.35 to \$1 USD, so I'm sure you can see how much he paid for those four tickets, just because there was confusion. The increased price took a toll, I'm sure, on his wallet. I know, being a diehard fan, it didn't really matter, but there was confusion at the end of the day. But, Mr. Speaker, those days are gone now, and people can buy tickets for events with confidence and assurance that they are paying in Canadian funds.

This change is one of the many that will help Ontario consumers buy with confidence and be protected. Bill 159 is needed in our day and age, especially, as I say, we live in a digital world, and we need the protection.

Our government is always at the forefront of positive change to creating a better Ontario for all Ontarians. This legislation will fix a broken warranty and protection system. It will restore consumer trust by curbing the influence of home builders and protecting consumers during what may likely be their biggest purchase. The proposed legislation also responds to recommendations from the Auditor General's 2019 special report on the Tarion Warranty Corp.

Our government understands and acknowledges that the current system of governance and transparency requirements for administrative authorities is not meeting the expectations of Ontarians. Through Bill 159, we are

proposing changes that meet the needs of today's consumers. It will help reform Tarion and overhaul the Ontario new home warranty and protection program. By amending and changing the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act and the New Home Construction Licensing Act, 2017, if passed, the bill would overhaul Ontario's new home warranty and protection program by providing Tarion with a stronger consumer protection mandate and by requiring Tarion to enter into a binding agreement with the Minister of Government and Consumer Services to strengthen oversight and Tarion's accountability.

This will also enhance the warranties and protections dispute resolution and claims process by establishing a mandate for Tarion to promote the resolution of claims as soon as reasonably possible and by providing Tarion with the ability to use a range of processes to resolve disputes between homeowners and home builders or vendors.

This bill will definitely promote the construction of better-built homes by requiring Tarion to increase the scrutiny of applications to build or sell a new home to better prevent bad actors from operating and by establishing a mandate for Tarion to promote the construction of properly built homes.

The proposed amendments would also support the anticipated proclamation of NHCLA and the designation of a not-for-profit corporation as the new home builder and vendor regulator under the act.

This bill will also enhance the current administrative authority model for outdated consumer-related acts. The proposed changes would update, harmonize and strengthen certain key accountability, governance and transparency requirements.

Our government is continuing to move forward with its plan to work smarter by putting consumers first. Our government recognizes that the people of Ontario need stronger protections and confidence when buying. If Bill 159 is passed, the proposed updates will provide consumers with confidence and trust. They will know that there are strong protections actually in place or that they are being developed to protect them and their families when they buy a new home.

I remember after graduating from university, I started my career in the financial services industry. Being part of financial services, you help families and individuals to buy their biggest investment that they may make in their life. It's all about buying homes. I remember when I used to have families and individuals sitting in front of me and we were going through that experience of mortgages. Each time I had a customer in front of me, to me, it was like I was buying a new home. I remember that it was a very stressful time for these families, because they were about to make the biggest purchase of their life. We used to go through the documentation, line by line, and then they used to ask some great questions, because for them, it was like, "This is my life's earnings. I want to make sure that tomorrow I don't end up making a mistake that is going to cost me or my family."

0920

Now, being part of this amazing government here, I can confidently say that we are making sure that the people of

this province are going to be well protected. We are making life easier for the people of this province—and affordable as well, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure that they have peace of mind when they're going out there, whether they are buying tickets online, or the example of my friend buying his Blue Jays tickets and thinking it was in Canadian dollars when it was in US dollars, or someone who is buying his first home or his first house. We just want to make sure that they get peace of mind and they know that their government is working for them.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario consumers would also know that many administrative authorities that were created to carry out important regulatory, public safety or other functions are subject to more consistent accountability, governance and transparency requirements. Through Bill 159, consumers will feel confident about their new home warranties and protections, and that administrative authorities operate under a consistent and robust oversight and governance framework.

Mr. Speaker, I truly hope that we get the support from all parties and my colleagues from the other side to make sure that together we protect Ontarians. I hope to see this great bill passed as soon as possible. Once again, congratulations to the minister and my colleague for bringing such a great bill forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): And now, for the next 10 minutes or so, colleagues on both sides of the House will have an opportunity to pose questions on what you just heard. Questions?

Mr. Michael Mantha: To the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville: I'm just wondering, Bill 159 fails to make delegated authorities subject to the oversight of the Ontario Ombudsman. He might have an answer for that because the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry had proposed that in a previous bill that he had brought in front of this House in 2018 as Bill 56. Why?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. What we are trying to do here with this bill, as I mentioned in my speech as well, is to protect Ontarians by making sure that whether it's a purchase of an online ticket or the purchase of a home, we just want to make sure that they are well protected and that they are aware of what they are getting into.

As I said, our main goal is to make life easier for the people of this province. I think that this bill shows great intentions as a government. We want to make sure that we are taking care of the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions?

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the member: One of the biggest purchases anyone makes in their life is the purchase of a new home. But often things don't go according to plan. We may be, as an owner of a new home, dealing with unscrupulous, if you will, builders or contractors who leave homeowners with a mess. But this bill is really offering protection for people who are entering into this massive purchase, this massive move in their life. Can the member please share with us how this bill will offer certain protections through changes to Tarion, to ensure

that young people and anyone who is entering into such a large contract will be given some more reassurance in terms of what they are heading into?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will allow individuals who are buying homes for the very first time that peace of mind, because now the home builders are going to be working together with Tarion to make sure that these purchases are well protected.

A good friend of mine was mentioning to me that not too long ago he and his family decided to go for the purchase and they had some issues. He said that this bill is going to help families moving forward, to give that peace—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: I have a question for my friend MPP Rasheed.

A lot of what I've heard in this House about Tarion gives me hope that there could be action. Your colleagues on that side of the House have talked about Tarion as being broken. Some of your colleagues have been working on this for a very long time. The previous minister has talked about that. Her predecessor did a press conference with the spouse of a man who had fought Tarion for 27 years and took his own life.

Back home right now, Bill Hillier from Orléans is watching this. He lives in the Cardinal Creek development. Mr. Hillier has been fighting Tarion since 2017.

We have not seen anything happening at Tarion except a bunch of executives enriching themselves. We're talking about \$4 million in compensation for Tarion executives that they have lavished themselves with.

So my question for you, MPP Rasheed, is this: Why would you subscribe to a plan in this bill that would leave parts of the management team that's at Tarion right now, which has shown itself to be corrupt, intact? Why leave them in charge?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

The previous government, for the last 15 years, did nothing. People were just talking. There were issues, one after the other, but they never did anything.

What this government is doing is making sure, as the member opposite just mentioned, we fix that broken system so that individuals—the member opposite mentioned his constituent who's watching—can have the peace of mind that this government is going to make sure that the people of this province can confidently make those purchases without—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Questions?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I enjoyed listening to this debate.

Our government has been fighting long and hard to protect consumers from bad actors. I know the minister has been talking to the previous minister, and it has been top of mind.

How can our government ensure that the administrative authorities act is the best way to protect Ontarians?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member for the question.

What we, as a government, are doing here is to protect Ontarians—bottom line—through this bill. We want to make sure that the members of the boards, especially at Tarion and any other, understand that they have to work with the government to make sure that we are protecting the people of this province. This bill—I keep going back to the protection part—is all about making life as easy and as comfortable as possible for the people of this province and giving them the peace of mind of having that protection, or the warranty, that any purchase—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Questions?

0930

Mr. Joel Harden: MPP Rasheed, I'm thankful for the response, but I have to tell you, it's not going to console Bill Hillier, living in Cardinal Creek right now—a senior who is currently battling cancer and since 2017 has had to put up with a ridiculous administrative bureaucracy standing in the way of a new home having mould and ice in its walls.

Your government needs to do better. Rule number one of consumer protection ought to be: Don't let the fox guard the henhouse. We've had Tarion fleecing consumers for decades in this province, with a culture of management that rewards its executives through bonus programs, we found out the through the Auditor General's report, rewarding people who prevent claims from being met.

So MPP Rasheed, I beg you, as the critic for seniors, as someone whose job it is to look after their seniors: What can Bill Hillier count on in amendments to your bill to make sure your government looks after him?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. What I can say here to Bill is that this government is working for you, and we want to make sure that the people of this province are well protected. As the minister had said previously as well, we are working to make sure that we find ways to protect the people of this province. This bill is about protection of consumers.

I can definitely say that the minister and the parliamentary assistant have listened to consultation. There has been an extensive consultation that has taken place. Part of the outcome of this consultation is this bill here, and making sure that the board understands that what the previous government didn't do was take action. Here, the minister and the PA are taking action.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): There being no further time for a quick question or a quick response, we'll move on to further debate.

Ms. Sara Singh: It's a pleasure to rise to contribute to the debate on Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection. I think it's very interesting that this is the title of the bill and yet it does very little to actually further consumer protection here in the province of Ontario.

I had the pleasure of travelling through the province to Windsor, to my own city of Brampton and as far as Ottawa in order to hear from people on this bill through the justice committee process. It was very clear at committee that stakeholder after stakeholder and community member after community member in those three regions said that the government was failing to actually do anything meaningful here to protect consumers. In fact, many used the language that they were just simply “tinkering around the edges.”

Many of the issues that this bill seeks to address are not new issues; they're issues that have been around for decades. This piece of legislation has 10 different schedules which seek to amend various acts with respect to consumer protections, the major one being protections around Tarion and home warranty programs here in Ontario.

Tarion is supposed to ensure that builders honour their warranties on new homes. The service is mandatory for new home buyers, and the cost is typically built into the price of their new home. So one would assume, in purchasing this warranty, that there would be some protections in place for the consumer because here is something that's mandated for every homebuyer. And yet what we've heard, for decades now, is that this protection service has failed consumers at the very core.

People are literally dying in this province because of the failures of the previous Liberal administration, and now the failures of this Conservative government, to adequately address the real concerns.

The government is promising here a complete overhaul of the Tarion home warranty system. In fact, what it did was very little in terms of overhauling how the system would work.

Speaker, we heard from stakeholders like Canadians for Properly Built Homes, who said that Bill 159's changes to Tarion comprise more tinkering about the edges of a mandatory monopoly which is beyond repair. This is a mandatory monopoly, and I think that's very aptly put, because this is mandatory for consumers in this province, and yet there is a monopoly with very little protections for those actual consumers.

We heard from people at committee about what Tarion has put consumers through in this province—shocking, shocking testimony. I couldn't believe some of the stories that we heard about people fighting for years—one for 27 years, on their death bed, having to fight with an agency that was set up, in fact, to protect them.

I'm just going to read some of that testimony from Krista Shuman, the widow of Dr. Earl Shuman, who unfortunately took his life in 2016, after fighting Tarion for 27 years. Can you imagine purchasing a new home—what is, in fact, the biggest investment for most people in their lifetime—to find out that that home, your dream home that you saved your entire life for, is rife with mould, rife with construction problems, and that brand new windows are letting in cold air because Tarion failed to do its job? As Krista Shuman points out:

“Numerous, serious issues for consumers with the Tarion warranty program have been ongoing for decades.

For 25 years, my husband and other advocates worked to correct the unfair treatment related to construction deficiencies in their newly built homes. My family was hopeful for long overdue change when the 2017 report by Justice Douglas Cunningham and, more recently, by the Ontario Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk only a few months ago were released. These reports clearly indicate the dysfunction of Tarion because of its monopoly and its preferential treatment of the home building industry over Ontario homeowners, with thousands of legitimate claims ignored and dismissed. The impact of the Ontario government's inaction and its lack of oversight has been devastating for many families. It is extremely disappointing one year after MPP Walker's announcement of their promise to correct Ontario's new home warranty program, and not enough has been done.

“Through Bill 159, the Ontario Conservative government had an opportunity and also a duty to protect Ontario families in the most important purchase that homeowners make. Our government has failed to protect us from building code violations and the impacts on the financial, physical and mental health of Ontario families, including my own.”

Speaker, it's disappointing when people like Ms. Shuman, who has struggled for decades to see reform in the system that would protect people and ensure that they were given what they were owed—that this government chose not to properly overhaul the system and, in fact, not make the changes that were actually needed to put consumers at the heart of the decisions that were being made.

Our Auditor General released a report regarding Tarion: She “found the agency, which also regulates the industry, has until recently operated with very little oversight and was allowed to write its own rules. She found that “most of the public complaints about Tarion's dispute resolution process were justified.”

So the public was justified in making these claims. Because as we heard time and time again, newly built homes were filled with black mould, causing all sorts of health conditions: respiratory illnesses, and potentially cancer for some people. So they were right to be making these claims to Tarion, yet Tarion failed to actually address those claims in a timely, effective and efficient manner. Oftentimes, consumers were out hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to fight Tarion when they were actually owed that money because of the failure of the building inspections and the failures of Tarion to do what it was set up to do, which was protect those consumers when they made the biggest purchase of their life.

0940

The Auditor General also found that the Ontario Home Builders' Association actually had disproportionate influence over Tarion's decisions and operations. How is it that the very agency that is constructing these homes, that is responsible for the delivery of that supply, is also in charge of making sure that folks' claims aren't going any further? This doesn't sound like a just system to anyone. It's sort of like having a fox guard the henhouse: I don't think we're going to see very many hens leaving. In this case,

what we see is that claim after claim after claim after claim, for decades, was being denied.

What we also found with Tarion was significant issues in customer service. People were being given incorrect information when they would call in; they were being told that they didn't have valid claims when, in fact, they did. And so, given that we know all of this and that we've known this, again, for decades, if I can quote from a Hansard transcript from earlier, when the member, who is now the member from I believe it's Haldimand-Norfolk, was an MPP and the former critic to the minister. He said, "It was incumbent upon this government," back then referring to the Liberals who were in power, "to give consumers a dispute resolution process that they could trust"—Speaker, that they could trust.

And yet, here is this government now in power. Many of those former critics are now ministers in charge of this file, and they had an opportunity to provide consumers with a real dispute resolution mechanism. And what did they do now that they were in government with a majority that could ram through any piece of legislation they'd like? What did they do, Speaker? They failed to actually address the problem; they failed. Even though in committee we heard time and time again from every single one of those stakeholders that walked in across the province, again, that they wanted to ensure that Tarion was reformed to the point that consumers were actually protected, and when they made complaints, that those complaints were taken seriously.

What did this government do? Well, they cleaned house—but they didn't actually do anything meaningful. Just because they replaced the players at a table didn't actually change the way that the system functions. That's going to mean that while there were changes to the board composition, they actually didn't go far enough. Because we can't ensure consumers are going to be sitting at those tables, that people who were impacted by the decisions of Tarion are going to be at those tables. We have no real assurance here that there's not going to be a conflict of interest again with, potentially, people from the Ontario Home Builders' Association overruling some of the decisions that are being made at those tables.

So when they had an opportunity to make meaningful change happen, this government chose to side again—as they've demonstrated through numerous bills in this House—with developers and their friends and insiders. It wasn't consumers that were put first, in fact, it was those builders—to ensure again that perhaps homeowners are not at the heart of the decisions that are being made. Really and truly, it is the profits of those home builders and developers that are at the forefront of the decisions that this government has made.

I mean, I sat there. We spent hundreds of thousands of dollars travelling this province. It's astonishing to me that we would spend all that time, three days, going to all these cities—in fact, a week out of members' time; three days out of the public's time; we still don't know how many thousands of dollars the cost of that consultation the committee hearings across the province are going to cost

taxpayers—and yet, to do that and not take into consideration what those people shared with us, and actually put meaningful amendments forward to address those concerns, is shocking to me. Why would we waste the taxpayers' money going around having a sham of a committee hearing process and then not actually put into effect any of those changes we heard and the real concerns that consumers brought up? It's just baffling to me that this is how this government chooses to operate when it has the opportunity to create change here. Justice Cunningham laid out a very, very well-thought-out framework and called for specific changes, many of which haven't even been taken into consideration here.

We heard from the Canadians for Properly Built Homes, who said, "After careful study and consultation, and more than \$750,000 of taxpayers' dollars spent on the Tarion review"—\$750,000 spent on a review—"in 2016 Justice Cunningham recommended that a multi-warranty provider model be adopted in Ontario. In 2018, before the ... election," the Premier "said that he does not support monopolies. As a party, before the June 2018 election," the Conservatives "committed to ending Tarion's monopoly." And yet they "decided that that monopoly will remain.

"Despite repeated requests, Minister Thompson has not provided her 'extensive' research that she said convinced her that Tarion's monopoly needs to stay. Nor has Minister Thompson been willing to meet with us or respond in a meaningful way to the many emails that we have sent to her since she became minister."

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: That's not true. Withdraw.

Ms. Sara Singh: Sorry, Minister. These are not my words; these are the words of the Canadians for Properly Built Homes. So I appreciate that—

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'll meet with you this afternoon.

Ms. Sara Singh: You can meet with me this afternoon, but they would really like you to meet with them. The point is that these stakeholders have valid concerns that they would really like the minister to take into consideration. Unfortunately, what stakeholders are telling us is that the concerns that they've raised have not been adequately addressed by this government. And what I'm sharing is that, through the committee process, those concerns were raised, and yet none of those concerns were adequately addressed.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Government members, come to order.

Ms. Sara Singh: The minister can continue to heckle. We will definitely have a conversation later, but what I'm trying to do is raise the voices of those stakeholders, people in our communities who have been exploited by the previous government, Tarion and now this current Conservative government, which is failing to do its job to adequately protect those consumers.

I'll read some quotes from Dave Roberts, a former Tarion enforcement official. Sure, maybe we don't want to listen to the homebuyers and the consumers, but maybe

we should listen to people who were actually responsible for going in and enforcing what Tarion was supposed to be doing, because these people have perhaps a lived experience that the government will be willing to listen to.

At committee, it was very interesting, because Mr. Roberts really put the consumer at the heart of the conversation. He indicated that in addition to some of the changes that were needed to the board composition, what was also needed were proactive measures. This piece of legislation fails to even take into consideration proactive inspections that could be done, which could help prevent potential claims even going to Tarion, because those problems were addressed right at the forefront. But instead, consumers have to wait.

Mr. Roberts says, “A proactive inspection process is one that would work collaboratively with industry members to mitigate claims. One that would work towards building claims free homes.” Think about that. Wow. If we could get the inspections done from the outset, then perhaps whatever construction-related concern that has arisen in the process could be mitigated, sight unseen.

But without those types of mechanisms being put in place in the dispute resolution process or the inspection process, unfortunately, consumers have to wait, and they have to wait until the problem gets really bad in order to have it addressed or even be able to put forward a claim to Tarion. But this type of model not only would save the associations money, it would save the consumers money. So I just don't understand why, when we heard, time and time again that mechanisms like this would actually protect consumers, save taxpayers money and make the system more efficient, that this government chooses not to implement these types of strategies. It boggles my mind.

In addition, what we heard was that there were a number of issues with Tarion, but, again, as I said, this bill goes through a number of different acts, one of those being the Condominium Act. I'm just going to pull a Hansard record and quote a little bit from Mr. Armand Conant, who shared with us some concerns that he had around the changes that the government was making. Again, here is an opportunity to ensure that we protect consumers, that we clarify language, some of the technical language in the acts, to ensure that—if, again, our goal is to respect consumers and protect them, then we would ensure that the language would be reflective of that.

0950

What Mr. Conant shared with us is that words in the act, the words “annoyance” and “disturbance,” were not clearly defined within the act. He brought this up at committee. The changes that the government has proposed would actually make things more difficult for consumers, potentially create more complaints, and would perhaps create confusion amongst the condo board and its owners.

“So,” he asked, “the words ‘annoyance’ and ‘disturbance’ should be defined; maybe changing it from ‘unreasonable’ to ‘reasonable.’ Then look at the individual words,” for example, “‘light,’ ‘odour’ and ‘infestation.’”

They need more clarity on this. This is what Mr. Conant was saying. Yet, when the opportunity arose at committee

to clarify that language to ensure that there weren't going to be future legal battles that the condo board was going to have to engage in with owners and tenants, this government chose not to address those concerns in a meaningful way.

What I asked Mr. Conant was, do you think this is going to result in, potentially, more claims coming forward or concerns or complaints from the condo board and tenants? He said absolutely, because there was no real clarity to protect either the condo board or the homeowner.

Someone could say, “Well, you know, this is annoying; this is a nuisance,” but there was no clarity. How do we define that? Is my loud music a nuisance? At what decibel does it become a nuisance? These are the things that they were saying. Smells, for example, odours, are listed in here. Well, what if what I'm cooking for dinner is offensive to my neighbour? Does that warrant some sort of complaint being filed against me because the odours coming from my apartment are a nuisance?

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. And now colleagues on both sides of the House will have an opportunity to pose questions to the member from Brampton Centre. The Minister of Government and Consumer Services would like to pose a question.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: To the member opposite: I just have a straightforward question. I'm wondering if you'll correct your record because I've never refused a meeting and I certainly am available, and/or any member of my team, to meet and clarify.

Ms. Sara Singh: I'm not sure if another member can request that a member corrects their record, but I will just clarify for the minister that what I was reading were letters that were sent to us on behalf of Canadians for Properly Built Homes, and they, in fact, have indicated that they have requested meetings and have not been able to gain your time in order to discuss their concerns. Perhaps what we can do later on today is we can connect. I'm happy to share that information with you, and I'm sure that those organizations would really love to meet with you in order to discuss their concerns.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I have spoken with them.

Ms. Sara Singh: Again, I'm just reading what I have, so we can clarify any confusion that might be there.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I want to thank the member for Brampton Centre for her eloquent speech. Of course, all of the, I guess you could say craziness that has been going on with Tarion lately—I want to talk about the claims aspect of Tarion and see if you can maybe give some answers to this. The same agency protecting consumers is also responsible for addressing claims, which seems a little bit, like you said, like the fox guarding the hen. Claims are often dismissed by Tarion; difficult timelines—giving 30-day windows to file a claim. My question to the member from Brampton Centre is, do you feel that there is anything wrong with that type of structure, and how would you go about fixing it?

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you very much to my colleague from Brampton North for the question. I think it's an excellent one. What we heard, time and time again through the committee process, was that consumers felt that the way that Tarion was structured, its board, was unfair and was not really putting the needs of consumers first.

One of the recommendations that we made was to ensure that the board was well-composed and that there were conflict-of-interest mechanisms put in place to protect the consumer. Unfortunately, at committee, government members did not support those NDP amendments to ensure that there weren't any folks being appointed to those boards who would present a conflict of interest—a potential builder, a potential developer. We really felt that the board should focus on the consumer.

Again, I think we need to look at how much those executives are being paid, but we need to ensure that consumers are reflected in the board composition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to the member from Brampton Centre for her speech. Certainly, a home purchase is the biggest purchase most of us make. On this bill, I'm just a little curious about her comments with regard—she seems to not like the fact that the bill was travelled. I understand that it travelled to Windsor, Brampton and Ottawa, and it was an agreement of all the parties. I'm a little surprised that the member doesn't want to get outside of the Queen's Park bubble and actually listen to people on this important bill.

It should be pointed out that there was the unusual step of having first reading without any debate and then travelling the bill. It has been to committee. I believe there have been over 20 amendments made to the bill, including having more balanced representation in terms of the board of directors of Tarion, and that there will be further committee after second reading.

What changes would the member like to see to the bill, as it is a work in progress; the way it should work—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you for the question. I just want to clarify: I did not have a problem with us travelling this bill. In fact, NDP members requested that we travel to other cities so that we could hear from people in the province, including cities like Peterborough. What I had an issue with was that we spent thousands of taxpayer dollars going around this province and yet failed to actually make meaningful change happen based on what we heard at those committees. That was what I was saying was an issue. If we're going to spend taxpayer money on travelling a bill, regardless of what bill that is, and we are looking to elicit conversation and elicit recommendations, then we should be taking those recommendations into consideration. Unfortunately, this government failed to listen to consumers and to people at committee. That was my issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: To the member opposite: I have been very, very fortunate over the years to spend a lot of time on public accounts, addressing the concerns of the Auditor General, an independent officer of Parliament. As we all know, they have a significant number of resources and time and expertise. On this particular bill, I know the Auditor General made 29 recommendations to be able to move forward to address this bill. These recommendations, for the most part, are basically adopted in this bill.

I'm wondering why the member opposite would not have confidence in the Auditor General's suggestions as to the improvement of this bill—and obviously enacted in the bill.

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you very much to the member for the question. I would just respectfully say that while there were many recommendations made and adopted, there were also several that were not, and I think that's what we're taking issue with.

The concerns that were brought forward around Tarion, as consumers made clear, required a complete overhaul of how that system was structured. Simply changing a few things here and there was not really going to build consumer confidence the way that consumers in this province truly needed. A multi-provider model was one of the recommendations that was made and not adopted here. At the end of the day, what we're saying is that it's consumers who were looking for real protections, and this government truly failed to actually make that meaningful change happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: It appears that the government was not listening to what the member from Brampton Centre was saying. Let me actually give you a question, because I don't think we've even had a question from the other side.

Homeowners, obviously, through Tarion, have not been protected, and you've so eloquently showed us that with some of the messages from disgruntled homeowners.

The member from Humber River–Black Creek also tabled the Home Warranties to Protect Families Act. He's not in the room today, but he did mention that.

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He wanted a new crown agency to end Tarion. Where in this would you see is the benefit to have a new crown agency taking over where Tarion has left off?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I will remind the member from Brampton North that he is not to say who is not in the room today, especially if it's one of his own members.

The member for Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I think that what people were really looking for was some real, significant change. That would have come with replacing and completely restructuring the way that Tarion operates and the way that consumers can access what is a mandatory home warranty program. They should have choice.

Here is a government that's supposed to be open for business and yet it seems to want to allow a monopoly that is harming people in this province to continue.

I think what we could have done was replace Tarion completely. While we replaced executives, we still don't know if those executives are going to be earning the same levels of compensation that the previous members did. So I think what we needed was a completely independent, completely separate entity. This government had the opportunity to do that, and did not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for one more quick question and quick response.

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the member from Brampton Centre: There are a number of changes in this act beyond Tarion—strengthening compliance to improve elevator safety and availability, for example. Due to the construction boom, there are a growing number of issues surrounding elevators that do need attention. Out-of-service elevators can lead to problems for safety, accessibility etc. Is this at least one measure in this act that you and your side of the House, the opposition, would support?

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you to the member for the question. I think there are definitely some aspects of this bill that we support, as we demonstrated in committee. But I think as a whole, the point that we're trying to make is that we had the opportunity to actually put consumers at the heart of some of the decisions that are being made.

I know that the minister has said that this is a work in progress and we understand that. That's why we put forward amendments in committee at second reading to ensure that some of those changes were reflected while we supported some of the amendments that the government put forward. So it isn't to say that there aren't aspects of the bill that we support, but wholeheartedly and fulsomely this bill does nothing to really, truly protect consumers.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 159, the Rebuilding Consumer Confidence Act. Few bills that pass before us will have such a profound and lasting effect on the lives of everyday Ontarians, from enhancing the safety of products and services that we rely on to improving our ability to expand our use of the digital world, to conduct transactions quickly and safely, to improving and streamlining protections for people who find themselves victims of unscrupulous business practices or shoddy workmanship.

Though Bill 159 may not have the splashy appeal of some bills that capture media coverage or public attention, I can assure you that its impact will be felt in the dozens of ways it will make life simpler for consumers and for business by improving efficiency, effectiveness and clarity.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that the people of Ontario need stronger protections. We want them to feel confident that they are well informed and well protected when they shop online or enter into a contract, and we want them to know they have a voice in helping us create stronger rules to protect them and to protect their families.

The work that Minister Thompson and her ministry are doing is part of our plan to build a smarter government that works better for people. It's about updating outdated legislation and adopting digital practices to strengthen protection and promote trust and confidence for the people of this province. We are building the foundation for a modern and equitable system that truly puts people at the centre of everything that we do, both now and for future generations.

An example of this, one of the most exciting and significant purchases a family will make, is that of a new home, but unfortunately not everything always goes as planned. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, consumers are victimized by unprincipled builders or substandard workmanship and have then been left to navigate through the maze of regulations and policies to try and obtain compensation.

We have heard from home buyers and homeowners loud and clear, and we have listened. We are also responding to recommendations made in the Auditor General's Special Audit of Tarion Warranty Corp. by taking steps to make significant improvements that would make the new Ontario home warranty and home protection program more responsive to the needs of consumers.

In relation to the new home warranties, the changes proposed in this bill would overhaul the new Ontario home warranty and protection program to make it consumer-focused by enhancing the current single-administrator model for the administration of warranties and protections. A new and improved warranty and protection program is anticipated, if this bill passes, to be in place in the fall of this year.

In addition, it would support new consumer protection priorities that the government committed to last spring as part of the overhauled program. This includes enhancing the dispute resolution process and delivering new measures to promote better-built new homes. With regard to the dispute resolution process this bill also includes proposed changes to the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act. If passed, these changes would:

- establish a new mandate for Tarion to promote the resolution of claims as soon as reasonably possible;
- provide Tarion with the ability to use a range of processes to resolve disputes between homeowners and builders or vendors;
- restore balance for consumers by removing builders and vendors as parties at the Licence Appeal Tribunal and disputes between homeowners and Tarion over warranties and protection claims unless regulations specify otherwise; and
- enable the government to prescribe adjudicative bodies other than the Licence Appeal Tribunal to resolve disputes between homeowners and Tarion over warranties and protection claims.

I think that these steps, if passed by the Legislature and by committee at the review, would go a very long way to solving a lot of the concerns and disputes that came forward.

Further, if the Legislature passes the Rebuilding Consumer Confidence Act, the Ministry of Government and

Consumer Services plans to publicly consult on regulatory proposals that would be required to bring many of these changes into effect. This would include further measures to enhance dispute resolution.

Mr. Speaker, we know how important it is to have an effective and consumer-focused new home warranty and protection program here in Ontario. That is why last spring the government conducted focused consultations with key stakeholders, including the insurance industry, consumers, home builders and vendors, other professionals and subject matter experts, other Canadian jurisdictions, and lastly, Tarion.

We recognize that the administration of new home warranties and protections in this province is deeply flawed and that Tarion has not done nearly enough to fulfill its responsibilities to protect new home buyers. We have already taken action to ensure that Tarion is more transparent and that protections for consumers are improved.

So far, we have taken steps to support the establishment of a separate regulator for new home builders and vendors, known as the Home Construction Regulatory Authority, which we anticipate will be designated as the regulator in the fall of 2020.

Additionally, in October of last year, Tarion Warranty Corp. announced that new measures are being put in place to help educate and inform prospective new home buyers, measures that our government requested be implemented to especially help consumers buying a residential unit in certain pre-construction condominium projects.

These measures include the addition of new search tools on Tarion's Ontario Builder Directory and a new detailed information sheet that highlights potential risks of purchasing certain types of residential units in a pre-construction condominium project. Buyers of these units will benefit from these new rules requiring purchase agreements to be accompanied by an information sheet highlighting risks and considerations that come with the purchase, including the expected date when a purchaser can take occupancy and early termination conditions that would allow a developer to cancel a project. These mandatory disclosures in purchase agreements and additional information on new home builders and vendors will help improve transparency and consumer protection for new home buyers.

As anyone who has bought or sold a house in the past 20 years knows, the real estate market in Ontario and across Canada has seen enormous changes. The total value of all residential properties more than doubled in Ontario, and housing values are sky-high.

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To help ensure that people who are buying and selling homes continue to benefit from strong consumer protection, our government has proposed enhancements to the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act.

These changes will improve consumer protection and choice in the market, providing more transparency in the purchase and sale process, and clearer information for consumers about what a real estate brokerage and profes-

sional must do for them. These changes would also improve professionalism, and put more teeth in place to support industry compliance.

In addition, they would create a stronger business environment for registered real estate brokerages, brokers and salespersons by allowing real estate professionals to incorporate and to be paid through the corporation, bringing regulations up to date and reducing regulatory burden.

These proposals have come about as a result of extensive consultation with those in the industry and with homeowners, so that we could effect changes that streamline, strengthen and improve the entire process for all involved.

People across the globe have become used to 24-hour access, accessing the goods and services that they want when they want them, where they want them. They are used to buying goods online and having their purchases delivered to their door, sometimes even on the same day. They expect convenience and services that work for them, on their own terms. Ontarians are no exception.

That's why we made frequently used condo forms more easily accessible online, as of January 1 of this year, on the Condominium Authority of Ontario's website, which already houses other condo-related forms.

As a first-time condo buyer, there is a lot to learn, and the more you know about buying your first condo, the better your decisions will be. The Condominium Act lacks clear, plain-language information to help first-time homebuyers and condo residents understand condo life when buying and living in a condo.

We are consulting on regulatory changes under the act, to help improve condo living and protect consumers' financial investment—changes that could come into effect starting this summer. This could include requiring the Condominium Authority of Ontario to develop a condo guide for buyers, and requiring developers to provide it at the point of purchase.

We will also be consulting on providing condo corporations with clearer guidelines or standards for the procurement of services and goods, and strengthening the financial management of reserve funds.

Due to the construction boom that is happening in our province, there are a growing number of elevators that need attention. An out-of-service elevator can lead to accessibility issues for vulnerable populations, especially seniors and those with disabilities. There are also safety issues that can arise, as a lack of access for first responders can mean life or death in the event of an emergency. We need more protections so that elevators are maintained properly and on schedule.

We will be addressing these issues under the Technical Standards and Safety Act by consulting in the spring of this year on the use of administrative penalties as an enforcement tool, to improve compliance with elevator laws. This proposal is aimed at promoting more efficient maintenance, making life safer for everyone who uses elevators.

We need to ensure that people are able to access their homes and their businesses, and that first responders are

always able to access peoples' homes in the case of an emergency, regardless of where they live.

Another area of modern life that can be among the most frustrating, and vulnerable to unscrupulous actors and confusing purchase directions, is that of event ticket sales. Currently, under the Ticket Sales Act of 2017, a business is required to display if the purchase price is in Canadian currency or not. But unfortunately, many do not adhere to this until late in the transaction.

Most tickets listed on online platforms are purchased with a credit card. If tickets are offered in non-Canadian currency—for example, in US dollars—credit card companies may charge a foreign currency conversion fee, which adds to the cost for consumers.

For a consumer, this could mean that a ticket they purchased in Ontario, for an event being hosted in Ontario, could cost them the exchange on the US dollar and their credit card's commission fee, all for an event that is right here at home—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize for interrupting the member, but I have to announce that it is 10:15 and we are now moving to members' statements.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Miss Monique Taylor: Sunday was International Women's Day, a day when we honour the trailblazing women who came before us and inspired the next generation of women leaders. It's especially important now as we have a government at Queen's Park that is making the lives of women harder.

Right now, teachers, EAs and social workers are out on the picket lines because of cuts. These are jobs usually performed by women, and Ford is signalling that their work isn't valued. Midwives across Ontario are currently fighting for pay equity. Child care workers and PSWs are fighting to keep their wages above the poverty line. Marginalized women are feeling the brunt of this government's policies. Last week, the Ford government cancelled funding for sexual assault crisis centres and then quickly backtracked once the news of their cruelty got out. We've seen mothers with precarious jobs get penalized because our labour laws don't give them a sick day.

On International Women's Day, we need to remember that many of these systemic barriers still remain. This government could easily remove them if it valued the work that women do.

I also want to congratulate all the winners at Hamilton's Women of Distinction Awards this weekend. They are: Selbina Mwendwa, Diana Weir, Emily O'Brien, Monique Lavallee, Linda Plourde, Dr. Audrey Hicks, Dr. Heather Sheardown, Chyler Sewell, Kayonne Christy; and in particular I would like to mention Lena Sutton, who won a lifetime achievement award for her years of relentless advocacy on behalf of women.

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

I'm going to remind the members that when we're referring to each other in the House, we refer to each other by our ministerial title, if applicable, or our riding name.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Parm Gill: As the MPP for Milton, I was proud that my team organized an inspiring women in skilled trades panel discussion and networking session last Friday. I am fortunate to have a great team in my office that worked hard to put this panel together. It included female business owners, skilled trades professionals and the minister responsible for children and women's issues.

I also want to recognize Conestoga College for being part of the event in celebration of International Women's Day and to highlight the opportunities for women in the skilled trade sector.

In Ontario, for every dollar earned by a man, a woman makes \$0.74. That is a gap of 26%. I am proud to stand alongside the women and men who are working hard to close this gap each and every day.

The resources we have locally in Milton that can help women transition into a career in the trades include the Halton Industry Education Council, Habitat for Humanity Halton, as well as the Centre for Skills Development, and the many businesses who are working to hire more women into the skilled trades and other professions.

I want to thank everyone again for attending and all those who are working every day to close the gap.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Kevin Yarde: At the recent Canada 360° Economic Summit the Premier said, "Buy-American policies are hurting Ontario businesses and workers." D&R Electronics, a proud Ontario business with headquarters in Bolton, Ontario, has written twice to the Premier to express their concerns that the Ontario Provincial Police continue to purchase and equip OPP enforcement vehicles with US-manufactured vehicle equipment.

D&R manufactures similar vehicle equipment to that purchased by the OPP in the United States. They already sell this equipment to other police forces in Ontario, like Durham, Waterloo and York region to name a few. They employ local people throughout Peel region. A contract of this type can create 75 to 100 good-paying jobs, so it's unusual why the Premier won't answer the concerns of an Ontario manufacturer. This shows there is a lack of interest in Ontario companies on the part of this government.

1020

The business economy wants to see a stronger Canadian economy. Losing business to American companies is very unfortunate. We have to ask ourselves: Why is this happening? There is a call to action on the part of this government to get it right. We need to get in front of these Canadian companies and work with them at all levels to

make sure we change this narrative. We can't afford to continue to let this happen. It puts at stake the very fabric of our country. Take advantage of our skills and take advantage of our dynamic workers so that we can build a stronger workforce that would have tangible impacts on the lives of Canadians. This government should invest in Canadian companies like D&R—

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

The next statement?

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Toby Barrett: Ladies and gentlemen and my fellow members of Parliament from all political parties, I rise today yet again to restate my position: The illegal blockade of Highway 6 at Caledonia must come down. I'm calling on the federal government yet again to step up and take responsibility for the group of activists blocking our highway.

The blockade on Highway 6 is part of a national effort to block roads and rail lines in a show of solidarity with hereditary Wet'suwet'en chiefs opposed to the construction of the Coastal GasLink natural gas pipeline in British Columbia.

Caledonia's illegal blockade is very dangerous. Traffic is now being routed over a 1927 bridge that should have been replaced 18 years ago. The blockade seriously hinders the movement of goods, services and people.

Our area's economy, on both sides of Highway 6, is struggling. Stores are closing. It's disheartening that the Canadian government continues to remain silent.

We need a coordinated plan to see these illegal blockades dismantled immediately. We respect the right of a peaceful protest, but enough is enough. Tear down this blockade. Caledonia has been helpless for 14 years and 10 days now.

If you want to help, contact me at toby.barrett@pc.ola.org.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Jamie West: In 2018, 230 Ontarians died from workplace-related incidents or occupational disease. In my riding of Sudbury, when a life is lost to a preventable workplace injury or disease, our entire community mourns together. Speaker, I've been to the funerals of dozens of workers who have been killed in the workplace. No family should ever lose a loved one this way.

For years, the Liberal and Conservative governments have turned their backs on the life-and-death issues of workplace health and safety. For example, the Auditor General's report last year revealed that the Minister of Labour repeatedly let unsafe employers off the hook for the same dangerous problems.

Instead of investing in more inspections and more enforcement, this fall the government created a program that will give corporate giveaways to employers who go just three years without a reported injury. This is another harebrained idea that they stole from the Liberals. For years, the Liberal government ran a similarly flawed cash

incentive program. As a result, unscrupulous companies worked the system. They pressured workers to hide injuries. They rushed the wounded back to work.

Handing out "excellence" rewards for only three years without a recorded injury is shameful. The government is wasting money on a program that we already know doesn't work and will put lives at risk. It's unacceptable. Instead of encouraging people to hide their injuries, we should be working towards zero injuries, zero fatalities and zero occupational diseases.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Ontario currently is facing a human trafficking crisis that targets young women and girls.

I would like to commend the great work that the Minister of Infrastructure has done in the past on this particular issue. I'd also like to thank the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues for taking action on this file.

Human trafficking is one of the fastest-growing crimes worldwide. It includes sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced marriages and even extraction of organs. Globally and locally, the overwhelmingly targeted victims are young women and children. Nearly two thirds of police-reported cases in Canada are taking place here in Ontario, and over 70% of human trafficking victims are identified as being under the age of 25.

Speaker, nobody is excluded from being a potential victim. Take the region of Halton, where, for example, several months ago, 12 women were rescued from human trafficking that resulted in 72 charges being laid.

We must be thankful to our local police enforcement and community organizations that help victims escape human trafficking. I'd like to thank the great organizations in Oakville and Halton, including Radius Child and Youth, the Women's Centre of Halton, Halton's Women's Place, and SAVIS of Halton, for their great work helping victims.

Our government is taking swift and decisive action to combat this horrific crime. Our new five-year, \$307-million strategy reflects the valuable input we have heard from survivors of human trafficking, Indigenous communities and organizations, as well as law enforcement and front-line service providers. I'm proud to be part of a government that is putting an end to these heinous crimes.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Jeff Burch: Gaston Tremblay was first homeless at 14. For over a decade, on and off, he lived in shelters across Canada or on the street. He was suffering from an undiagnosed mental illness and unable to keep stable employment. Decades later, Gaston is an active member of my community in Welland and a fierce advocate.

Gaston is one person of thousands in Niagara who have experienced homelessness. Niagara is facing a crisis that has become critical. Thousands of our residents are in shelters or emergency hotel accommodations, unable to

find affordable housing. We have heard stories of people in our community forced to sleep under bridges.

Niagara shelters continue to operate at over 100% capacity, with a 160% increase in hotel use from 2017 to 2018. On any given night, 625 people are homeless in the Niagara region; 144 of those people are children.

Niagara has fallen behind in funding for homelessness prevention since 2012. Each year that this problem persists, the region is unable to meet the growing demand to assist those with housing shortages adequately. What is needed is a funding model that matches local demand for homelessness services and ensures equitable allocation.

It is vital that this government declare a homelessness emergency. Housing is a human right. No one should have to live on the streets, especially not in one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson: Many small towns across the province are struggling to make accessibility upgrades to their community halls. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act has created accessibility standards that all levels of government, including municipalities, must comply with by 2025.

Clearview township in my riding has seven community small halls. These halls serve as gathering places for community events where people can socialize and play cards or mark important occasions, like birthdays, weddings and family reunions. Clearview's small halls are the heart of their communities and form the foundation of the township's agricultural heritage. Clearview township founded the Small Halls Festival in 2014, which is held every year in October and features a number of community concerts and events.

Mr. Speaker, Clearview estimates the cost of accessibility upgrades to their seven small halls to be in the range of \$6 million to \$8 million. The township wants to know what will happen if the 2025 deadline is missed. Will the township have to close the halls or will the Ontario government help to keep them open? Will there be any stopgap measures that can be undertaken that would allow the municipality to prioritize renovations? These are just some of the questions the municipality has posed.

While the township values these facilities and wants to do the right thing to keep them open, the cost may be too prohibitive. These buildings are important to the communities they serve. They are the lifeblood of rural Ontario in the areas they serve, and they're significant to my riding. As such, I look forward to the government's response to this important issue.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today Mr. Thomas Seshie, the consul general of the Republic of Ghana in Toronto. He is accompanied by his wife and by Mr. Alexander Ben-Acquaah,

consul at the consulate of the Republic of Ghana. They are here today for the flag-raising ceremony in celebration of Ghana's 63rd Independence Day. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislature.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Also in the Speaker's gallery this morning are members of the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians job shadow program: Kyuyeon Sung, Ahmad Fahiez Azizian, Lily Dina Frimpong, Roxana Comsa and Bryan Liceralde. They're joined by the chair of the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians and former Speaker of the Legislature, David Warner. They're going to be here later on today and this is the time that we can acknowledge that they're going to be here.

1030

Miss Monique Taylor: From the Ontario Autism Coalition, I would like to welcome Faith Munoz, Amanda Mooyer and Michau van Speyk. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Hon. Todd Smith: I also have some guests in the Speaker's gallery this morning. I would like to welcome Kristen, Manal, Maurissa, Ricardo, Claudius, Kristy, Brandt, Marissa and Evan. They're all from March of Dimes Canada's LIFE program, and they're joined by their wonderful program instructors, as well as Leonard Baker, who is the president and CEO of March of Dimes Canada. Welcome to Queen's Park, everyone.

Mr. Jamie West: On behalf of the member from Nickel Belt and me, I would like to welcome Jo-Anne Palkovits, president and CEO of St. Joseph's Health Centre in Sudbury, to the Legislature. Jo-Anne is here for Catholic Health Association of Ontario awareness day. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's my honour to welcome Raechelle Devereaux, the executive director of the Guelph Community Health Centre and one of the leaders in our local Ontario health team, to Queen's Park. Welcome, Raechelle.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I would like to welcome to the Legislature, from the Public Affairs Association of Canada, Cristina Onosé and Harvey Cooper.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm proud to welcome home warranty advocate Barbara Captijn from the riding of Toronto—St. Paul's.

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to welcome the Catholic Health Association of Ontario here this morning to Queen's Park. I had a great meeting this morning at breakfast.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I have the pleasure of introducing some folks from Shaw Communications and Freedom Mobile who are here today. I also want to remind my colleagues that they will be having a lobby day down in the dining room in the late afternoon today.

I would like to welcome Mai Nguyen, Chima Nkemdirim, Colin Lavery, Ian Phillips and Hardave Birk to Queen's Park. Thank you for coming here today.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am delighted to welcome Catherine Dunne, vice-president of Western University Students'

Council and also the president of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, who is here today with 24 amazing young women student leaders for the USC's Women in House program. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to welcome the parents of a legislative page from Brampton West, Aditri Janapatla, who's also a page captain today: her father, Jagadeesh Kumar, and her mother, Hariitha Janapatla. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: First, I'd like to welcome someone with a great name, Dr. Gillian Kernaghan, president and CEO of St. Joseph's Health Care in London, who's here with the Catholic Health Association of Ontario—and no, Speaker, we are not related.

I would also like to introduce guests today from the Western University Students' Council Women in House initiative, including Catherine Dunne, Nick Soave, Cecilia Liu, Camilla Wong, Fatima Amir, Olivia Keenan, Micah Ton, Si Zhe (Lily) Yuan, Tamsen Long, Mattie Cliche, Claire Adams, Megan Rauser, Hannah Diebold, Erin McAdam, Rushil Malik, Rebecca Oeyangen and Fatima Amir. Welcome, everyone, to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I would like to welcome Jennifer Han from the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme. Welcome to our team and welcome to Queen's Park, Jennifer.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to welcome Janice Kaffer and Bill Marra, both from Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare in Windsor. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I would like to welcome Ron Noble, CEO of the Catholic Health Association of Ontario; Bill Marra, vice-president of external affairs and executive director of the Changing Lives Together Foundation, Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare; Janice Kaffer, president and CEO of Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare; Brian Payne, board chair, Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare; and Glen Wood, trustee, Catholic Health Corp. of Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joel Harden: Just a quick word of welcome to our friends from March of Dimes: Thank you so much for being here today. It's great to see you up there.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm also pleased to welcome Mona Khan, a political science student from Ryerson University, who is doing a placement in my office. Welcome to Queen's Park.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. Families are watching the global developments around the spread of COVID-19 with growing concern. They're wondering how a health system already struggling with the challenge of hallway medicine will cope with the spread of this disease. They're wondering what the impact on their jobs and savings will be as they

watch volatile stock markets. More than ever, people need to know their government is prepared to act and has a plan.

Can the Premier provide that assurance today and, more importantly, start informing Ontarians of the contingency plans to deal with the economic and health system impacts of the COVID-19 virus?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, I can say to the leader of the official opposition that we certainly do have a plan. We have had a plan in place since this coronavirus, COVID-19, came forward. It was developed after the experience that Ontario had with SARS 17 years ago. There have been protocols developed. We have a public health agency in Ontario now. We have had a plan that has been ready to be set in motion, and it has been set in motion.

We are already doing the screening of people coming forward who are travelling from other countries. We're ready to enhance that if we need to. We are looking at this day by day. We have a command table that has been set up that is operated by the Deputy Minister of Health and Dr. David Williams, our Chief Medical Officer of Health.

We are taking the steps that we need to take as the situation develops, so you can be assured, and the people of Ontario can be assured, that the plan is working and that the risk to Ontarians still remains very low.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the COVID-19 virus is creating unique challenges here in Ontario and all over the world. Businesses are wondering how they will deal with supply chain disruptions and volatile markets. Working women and men, particularly in precarious work in industries like entertainment and tourism, are wondering if they'll be able to take time away from work if and when they'll need to, and how their industries are going to survive. Many are wondering what the impact of more government cuts will have on a softening economy.

I wrote the Premier yesterday asking him to meet with me to discuss how the Legislature can move quickly to address these concerns as they develop. When will the Premier meet with me for this important discussion?

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

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. On the health front, as the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health has pointed out, we have a plan, and that plan is working. We should all be very pleased with the work of our public health professionals and the rest of the health care sector, including our front-line workers.

When it comes to the economic impacts, as I said yesterday in this Legislature, we are monitoring those impacts. The steps that our government has already taken to make sure that Ontario has a robust economy, that the private sector is strong and that we are supporting the working people of Ontario are now going to come home in a very positive way.

We are coming into this from a strong position in terms of job growth, but we are monitoring this on a day-to-day

basis, and we'll make sure that the supports are necessary, both for our health workers and for our economy to keep Ontario strong and to keep Ontario healthy.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I was at the chamber of commerce event last night and I spoke with folks yesterday afternoon as well, and people are wondering where is the plan? It's not good enough to monitor. You need a plan, and you need to communicate that plan so people have an understanding of what's going on.

Sadly, when people look at this government for a plan, they see a Premier that's moving in the wrong direction; moving ahead with cuts and forced amalgamation of public health units in the midst of a public health crisis, taking away legislative protection of sick days at exactly the moment when health experts are urging people to stay away from work when they're ill and plowing ahead with an agenda of cuts that will put a drag on the economy at a time when we need to boost it.

Is the Premier prepared to work with all parties in this Legislature to ensure their government can respond swiftly and practically to all aspects of COVID-19?

1040

Hon. Rod Phillips: To the Leader of the Opposition: Of course we will continue to work co-operatively with all members of this Legislature.

But quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, this kind of alarmism that the Leader of the Opposition is raising is not helpful. The thought that the boards of trade and chambers of commerce of this province are leaning on the NDP, after their anti-business, anti-investment agenda—are leaning on them for advice or support at this time is, quite frankly, ludicrous.

Mr. Speaker, I have been in touch with senior business leaders. I have been in touch with the chambers of commerce. I met this morning with the president of the CFIB. They appreciate the work and the confidence of this government, both when it comes to the health issues we are facing and the way they're being addressed, and the strength that we are putting behind the growth in the Ontario economy.

We will continue to work with everyone, including the Leader of the Opposition and the members of this Legislature, the business community and our health professionals, to deal with the COVID-19 crisis.

I want to say that I'm looking forward to the meeting that I've asked for, to get updated on what this government's plan is. Hearing just this moment that a whole floor of an RBC building in Mississauga—the whole floor of workers—is now under self-quarantine because of COVID-19, I think, should give a wake-up call to this government that they need to be more proactive in terms of how we help businesses weather this storm.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. As the Premier knows, or should know, hospitals

in Ontario have been routinely operating beyond capacity for years and years and years now—and this was before the challenges that are posed now by COVID-19.

What resources is the government allocating to deal with increased pressures that hospitals may be facing?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Deputy Premier and Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the question. It is a very important one. We want the people of Ontario to know that we do have a plan that includes our hospitals and includes all of our health workers, who are doing a fantastic job, as well as our public health workers right now.

We have a plan in place that's going to deal with that. We have an enhanced pandemic response that formally brings together a wide range of partners to strengthen and implement the plan, and we have tables to deal with each of those issues. We have the command table, as I've indicated before, to act as a single point of oversight and direction. We also have five regional planning and implementation tables that are going to review the regional plans and bring together the providers, should the circumstances change. We are ready for any change in circumstance. We have a collaboration table, where we receive, with members from key health sector organizations, to advise the command table, and other important health sector partners, all of whom are engaged in making sure that the health and safety of all Ontarians remains our number one—

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

The supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, yesterday the Ford government confidently predicted that in the event that a hospital had to go into lockdown because of being overwhelmed from people coming to get tested, other hospitals could step up and take over primary responsibilities. It is astounding that that's the response of the Minister of Health when she knows that our hospitals are operating over capacity.

We have been in a crisis for years because of what the Liberal government left us with. Hospitals in greater Toronto as well as Hamilton, London, Sudbury, Peterborough and Niagara Falls are all routinely operating over capacity. So unless—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry must come to order.

These are important issues that are being discussed in the Legislature this morning. The people of Ontario would expect us to treat the issue with the importance—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The Speaker is giving a speech.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry will come to order.

I have to be able to hear the question and the answer. These are important issues.

I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition. She had the floor. Start the clock. Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. I'll just repeat that hospitals in the greater Toronto area as well as Hamilton, London, Sudbury, Peterborough and Niagara Falls are all routinely operating over capacity. We have raised this issue time and time again. The former government did nothing about it. This government is not on track. But unless they're adding new resources to these overcrowded hospitals, I don't see how anything is going to change. What is the government prepared to do?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I can certainly agree with the leader of the official opposition that the situation with Ontario's hospitals being overcrowded was something that took 15 years in the making. It was not created by this government. However, we are duly working on that and trying to reduce the numbers.

That said, I think it's really important, Mr. Speaker—and I'll say through you to the leader of the official opposition—it is very important that we remain calm and rational about this situation, and look at the resources we have and how we can use them most appropriately. That is what we are doing. That is what our plan contemplates. That is what we will do, should the situation escalate. There is a detailed plan in place in order to deal with that.

Our comprehensive response planning includes: effective surveillance, prompt laboratory testing—and we are increasing our laboratory testing resources—appropriate care and treatment, evidence-based public health measures—and our public health partners are doing a terrific job here—and transparent communications. That is very important. The people of Ontario deserve to know what's going on. We have been open—

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

The final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Despite the government's promises of ending hallway medicine, the Ford government has continued the Liberal policy of freezing hospital budgets. This year, hospitals indicated that increased investment is crucial if they're going to tackle hallway medicine, much less deal with increased demand. Is the government going to make these investments?

Look, the budget is coming. We know it's printed. We know it was delivered to the Premier. What we want to see in that budget is evidence that this government is prepared to fund hospitals, not only to the amount that they request just to keep a broken system afloat, but so that they can actually respond to the issues that we're now facing with the outbreak of COVID-19 here in Ontario that appears to be picking up speed.

So my question is, how exactly do they plan to respond to the increased pressure that is occurring as a result of COVID-19?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Ending hallway health care was a key commitment that we made to the people of Ontario during the last election, and we are delivering on that commitment.

We have increased the funding to hospitals by over \$340 million this year, in addition to an extra \$68 million for small to medium-sized hospitals that were dealing with a funding pressure that was created by the previous government, not by us.

We are working on ending hallway health care, but at the same time, we are working on our comprehensive plan to deal with COVID-19. We will be able to deal with it, should the situation escalate, but we are doing excellent work to try and contain right now with people who are returning to Canada from other countries. We are continuing to offer incredible surveillance with that and testing so that the people of Ontario can know that there is a plan in place, the plan is in operation, and the risk to Ontarians remains low.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Health. An emergency physician at both Grand River and St. Mary's hospitals is calling for COVID-19 screening to be taken out of Kitchener-Waterloo emergency departments. Currently, individuals who require testing are taken through acute areas of the emergency room to reach the screening area. To quote the emergency physician:

"We know COVID-19 will kill the eldest and sickest patients in a higher amount than the general population.

"So when your grandmother goes to the emergency room for a fainting spell she is putting herself at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 purely because she's in the location where patients are forced to be screened."

I support these doctors and their call to move COVID-19 testing out of our local hospitals. Is the minister working with the public health organizations to make sure this happens as soon as possible in Waterloo region and across the province? Because, as of this morning, this had not happened.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, the short answer to the member's question is yes. Of course, we are working with all of our hospitals across Ontario to make sure that Ontarians remain safe.

1050

We are working through our regional tables to make sure that the appropriate hospitals are open and that we have appropriate test centres. We are receiving applications from centres that want to continue to do the testing if it's not appropriate at certain hospitals. Of course we want to make sure that people are kept safe and are not exposed, inadvertently, to the COVID-19 virus.

So, yes, of course, Dr. Williams and the team, and the team at the ministry, are working very hard to make sure that Ontarians remain safe and that appropriate locations are the ones where the testing is going to be done to determine whether people have COVID-19 or not.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Speaker, another physician at Grand River and St. Mary's wrote to me desperately calling for out-of-hospital testing for suspected COVID-

19 cases. This doctor said that out-of-hospital screening will protect our most vulnerable populations; protect our front-line health care staff, who are desperately needed to fight this pandemic and are holding our already stretched hospitals together and will be under even more pressure if COVID-19 continues to spread; and reduce the need for personal protective equipment in the emergency rooms, which is in short supply worldwide.

These doctors want to know what the minister is doing to ensure that testing will be moved out of hospitals immediately, and that the front-line health care workers are properly equipped to handle the outbreak. This needs your urgent attention today.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I certainly agree that it is an urgent situation and one that we are dealing with through the regional tables and through the command table. We are looking at making sure that the right decisions are made as to where the testing should occur. That is being determined right as we speak.

In terms of personal protective equipment, we have a table that is dealing with that to make sure that we have the right supplies in the right place to protect our front-line health care workers because they're the ones who did suffer during the SARS epidemic. We know that. We want to make sure that they remain safe because they are doing the work on the front lines.

All of these issues are being dealt with as we speak. We look forward to having the meeting that has been requested by the leader of the official opposition to inform her in greater detail about what is being done. This is open and transparent.

Dr. David Williams, our Chief Medical Officer of Health, has been the lead on this. He is the one who is providing this information. That is something that is very important to us—that the medical and scientific advice come forward—and we are relying upon that, as we should be.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a question to the Minister of Health. According to the World Health Organization, the novel coronavirus has gained a foothold in many countries. In Canada, we have confirmed cases in several provinces. The Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health Ontario and local public health units have been working closely with the Ministry of Health to respond to COVID-19 in our province.

We have had clear communication every step of the way, both on the current status of the outbreak and on the readiness of our health care system to respond. When I see our health care professionals working together, it gives me confidence in Ontario's ability to handle COVID-19 and future outbreaks.

Can the minister update this House on the steps Ontario has taken so far to manage this situation?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member from Thornhill for her question. I know that this is an issue that is very important to you as well.

Our government appreciates the hard work of our health care workers and of our public health authorities. We will continue to work closely with them and with our provincial and federal partners to ensure readiness.

Our government acted immediately by strengthening Ontario's ability to detect, monitor and contain this virus by declaring COVID-19 a reportable disease. We created dedicated resources in a variety of languages to help Ontarians learn how to protect themselves. Ontario's Emergency Medical Assistance Team, supported by the federal government's repatriation efforts at CFB Trenton and the NAV Centre in Cornwall, is responding to the needs of many Ontarians returning to Canada.

We will continue to communicate clearly about this situation, and I look forward to discussing the enhanced measures in my supplemental.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to thank the minister, but I also want to especially thank all our health care workers for all their hard work. Ontario can have confidence that the system is working.

As we get reports from China, Italy and the United States, Ontarians have questions about our preparedness for possible scenarios related to COVID-19. I am reassured that our government has already implemented these measures to safeguard Ontarians from this virus.

I know that our team has been working diligently to prepare our province with respect to personal protective equipment for our front-line health care workers, while improving hospital capacity and testing efficiency.

Can the minister update us on what Ontario's enhanced response to COVID-19 looks like?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We are implementing an enhanced response that formally brings together a wide range of partners to make sure that we are effectively dealing with COVID-19. That includes a new command table to provide a single point of oversight as we continue our efforts to contain this virus. We've also established regional planning tables and implementation tables, and a personal protective equipment table. We have a collaboration table with key health sector partners, to receive their ongoing advice. And we have enhanced screening at long-term-care homes.

We are also preparing for escalation, should it occur. For example, we are establishing dedicated assessment centres to ease pressures on hospitals, as we also expand our lab capacity.

As we enter this next phase of preparedness, every Ontarian can have full confidence that these efforts will continue to keep them safe.

LICENCE PLATES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Acting Premier. Ontarians can clearly see the personal priorities of this Premier. Right out of the gate, it was buck-a-beer and stickers, then border signs, licence plates—and soon, flashy billboards. All of these endeavours have attracted

attention—arguably, not the kind that a responsible, grown-up government would want. It isn't the stickers, but instead licence plates that will stick with this Premier.

Despite the non-disclosure and the veil of secrecy around these plates, folks learned yesterday that it was the Premier who personally picked out the plates. We've had glimpses of the Premier's true colours. This is just one more brilliant example of it—Q-tip blue on blue.

Today, to media, when answering about plategate, the Premier shared that it “breaks my heart.” So it isn't women and children turned away from shelters, communities without drinking water, or seniors struggling without quality care that breaks his heart, it is giving up on the dream of PC-blue plates on every Ontario car that touches the core of this Premier.

Speaker, it isn't clear to Ontario, because the Premier is as hard to read as his plates: What else breaks his heart in this province?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Government and Consumer Services to reply on behalf of the government.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to stand in this House to affirm with all of Ontario that our government is focused on delivering, in a timely, secure and efficient way, licence plates in an enhanced manner. We've heard the concerns of Ontarians and I can sincerely say we've taken their feedback seriously.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partners and thank our stakeholders and our teams who have worked so diligently on the enhanced plate.

I can't say enough that the fact of the matter is, we have taken their feedback very seriously. We're moving forward, and we look forward to updating this House with our plans in the days and weeks to come.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: People are mystified about how a responsible group in charge of a province could end up with such an absurd fiasco as these blue vanity plates. Now that we know that they really and truly were the Premier's pick and truly reflective of his party-blue branding goals, it seems somehow even more absurd.

People are not happy that this government has found a way to protect their secrets with 3M through a sneaky non-disclosure agreement. This was a deal with public money. It shouldn't be allowed for them to hide the details. This morning, to media, the Premier declared that 3M will “pay for it.” Well, we will have no way of knowing if they really will pay for it, or who will. Are we just supposed to trust this Premier? That's not going to happen.

How can this government justify hiding the Premier's personal party plates, bought with public money, behind a secretive non-disclosure agreement?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, I want to again reiterate the fact that what is most important here is that we listened to the concerns of Ontarians. We've taken decisive action and will be delivering an enhanced plate that reflects the feedback we've received. We'll be updating the House in the days to come as we proceed with

our plan on delivering plates that have taken seriously the feedback from Ontarians.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Minister of Health. In my riding of Guelph, local health care leaders are working hard to build on their existing foundation of integrated service delivery to design a more coordinated health care delivery model as part of the government's Ontario health team initiative. I must say they're doing a good job, but between pressure from overcrowded hospitals and now COVID-19, local health care teams will need financial support through the OHT transition.

1100

The government cannot expect health care providers to deal with hallway medicine, COVID-19 and reorganize health care delivery at the same time without additional financial support. Will the minister commit today to provide funding increases for local health teams so that health care reorganization initiatives do not divert resources from front-line services?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for the question. We are very pleased with the way that the local Ontario health teams are developing. This is a way to really integrate care for people and to bring care to local communities.

As opposed to what the local health integration networks were doing, this is making sure that the people who provide the care on the ground are going to be able to continue that care. They know their own geographic area, they know what the most important issues are in that area and they will be able to respond to those needs, as well as fill in the gaps.

We have had a number of discussions with the local Ontario health teams about what additional resources they need. Their needs are actually quite modest. Some of them require help with technology. Some of them require help with administrative assistance. We are certainly responding to those needs and we will provide the financial assistance they need in order for them to be successful.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I agree that the local leaders are doing a great job. As a matter of fact, one of those local leaders is here at question period today. But with the minister's answer, and to date, the government has not made a clear commitment to support the staffing, leadership and development of Ontario health teams in our communities. I don't know how the government can say that its signature policy to tackle hallway health care can be successful if we don't adequately fund the reorganization of local service delivery.

While patients are crammed in hallways and now COVID-19 is putting additional stress on our local health care system, the government is trying to sell a new organization chart. Well, I'm sorry; the Premier's rebranding efforts have not worked so well in the past.

I'm asking the minister today to ensure that Ontario health team reorganization is more than an underfunded rebrand, by providing local OHTs the funding they need.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you for the question. What I would say to the member, Speaker, through you, is that the status quo was not acceptable. The way that health care was being delivered before, through the local health integration networks, was not working. There were gaps in care. People weren't receiving the care they needed. They ended up back in hospital with emergencies because they didn't get the home care they needed. That's why we knew the situation had to change.

That's why the local Ontario health teams will be successful, because they will respond to individual needs. They will fill in the gaps in care. They are eager to get started, but we know that they will need some help. We know that they will need resources and we will provide them with those resources, so they will be able to provide the integrated care that the people of Ontario expect and deserve.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: My question is for the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. Those affected by human trafficking often require unique supports in times of crisis and well after they escape trafficking. In the recent announcement of Ontario's anti-human trafficking strategy, it was emphasized that these victims need support programs that help them escape violence as well as heal from their trauma.

This is an issue that needs to be addressed across ministries and across industries. This is a societal issue, and we all have a role to play, including our partners in hospitality, law enforcement and health care. That is why I am so pleased that many ministers in this government are taking a proactive approach, including our Minister of Education, by introducing human trafficking into our curricula; our Minister of Transportation, by supporting partners such as truckers against trafficking; and our Attorney General, by increasing and modernizing victim supports to better respond to victim needs.

Speaker, can the minister please tell this House what this government is doing to ensure that the services provided to victims are culturally appropriate, trauma-informed and truly support the victims in this difficult journey?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member from Mississauga Centre for the great question, and for your work and passion on this file.

The member is absolutely correct. We know that survivors of human trafficking require specialized, trauma-informed, community-based supports to help them heal and rebuild their lives, and to reduce the risk of re-exploitation. I am proud of the fact that our strategy has been designed with a strong focus on survivor-centred initiatives, including counselling, mental health supports, education and housing assistance.

As Indigenous women and girls are particularly targeted, Indigenous-led, culturally appropriate approaches

are crucial to address the needs of First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities. This is why we are increasing community-focused anti-human trafficking services and supports, designed for and by Indigenous people, by investing up to \$4 million per year in new funding for the Indigenous-Led Initiatives Fund.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I thank the minister for her answer, and I also thank her for spending some time in my region of Peel to listen to the front-line workers who help support our victims on a daily basis.

My supplemental question is to the Solicitor General. Human trafficking is a heinous crime, and those who participate and enable it are some of the worst criminals. They often have ties to other organized crime operations. Crime should not pay, especially not at the expense of Ontario's vulnerable women and girls. As Premier Ford has said, "We must put an end to this disgusting industry and take immediate steps to keep our kids safe."

Can the Solicitor General share how our new anti-human trafficking strategy will work to protect women and girls by bringing offenders to justice?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Mississauga Centre. I think it's important that we understand and appreciate how engaged we are on this file. The member for Mississauga Centre and, of course, my parliamentary assistant, the member for Cambridge, hosted a number of round tables that informed part of our strategy. I never want people to forget the fact that the average age of recruitment of these young women and girls into human trafficking is 13 years old.

What we are doing is giving law enforcement more specialized crown prosecution support for human trafficking cases; strengthening intelligence gathering in the correction system; investing in police services to help coordinate anti-human trafficking investigations; and expanding the Ontario Provincial Police child exploitation unit, which will allow them to work with other municipal forces. Because, as we understand and can appreciate, these people do not respect municipal boundaries.

EDUCATION

Mr. Gurratan Singh: We know that for months now, Conservatives have been told by parents, by students, by experts and by educators that e-learning hurts students. They were told this in the consultations that they ignored, and the Conservative government has been told this day in and day out by Ontarians across the board ever since they took the axe to our education system. I've heard from parents in Brampton that online learning won't help our kids, and that increases to our class sizes will leave our kids behind.

My question is to the Acting Premier: Why does this Conservative government continue to punish students instead of listening to what families are telling them?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. The government remains absolutely focused on getting a deal. That's why we're before two of our partners today, the Catholic teachers and French teachers: to get a deal that delivers stability for every member of this province, particularly parents and their children.

Our aim is to provide parents with an opt-out to give them that say, put them in the driver's seat of decision-making. It's to empower every student to ensure they have classroom sizes frozen: for high school at 23; and elementary school, a provincialized average of 24.5. We're protecting full-day kindergarten. We're ensuring that merit guides hiring. That remains our priority. We want a deal, and the time is now.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Back to the Acting Premier: Students in Brampton are already facing systemic barriers in school every day, and the Conservatives' plan to kick kids out of classrooms and onto the Internet is going to make things worse. E-learning disproportionately hurts students who are already struggling to learn. It hurts marginalized and racialized students, and it hurts students with lower financial means, who may not have access to the Internet or a computer at home.

But this government doesn't seem to care. In fact, yesterday, when the Premier was asked about kids being forced out of classrooms and into online courses, he said it was a good thing because it allows kids to work part-time jobs.

1110

Speaker, students should be in the classroom where they belong, not forced into work like the Premier bragged about yesterday. Why does this government think that kids in Brampton don't deserve to be in the classroom?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: What parents deserve is a choice, and that's what we're codifying by providing an opt-out for online learning. They deserve to be in the driver's seat—not the opposition, not a union, not a public servant, but a parent in this province in consultation with their children.

We are focused on getting a deal. We're before two partners today. We'll be with the elementary teachers' federation tomorrow, with a singular aim to drive a deal that is good for students, that ends this process of 300 days of negotiating.

We're going to freeze classroom sizes. We're going to ensure that special education funding continues to flow to those with the greatest needs. Speaker, we're going to continue to make the case of merit-based hiring in this province.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Last year, when the minister wasted over \$230 million to cancel renewable energy projects, he told Ontarians that we did not need the electricity. He also said that we would not have to burn fossil fuels when nuclear plants came off line in a few years.

But right now, as we speak, an application sits before the Ontario Energy Board to build a natural gas pipeline through Hamilton that would contribute to a 400% increase in climate pollution from natural-gas-fired plants.

Since the energy minister wasted hundreds of millions of dollars cancelling clean energy projects, because he told us we didn't need the electricity, will the minister make a commitment today that Ontario will not see an increase in gas-fired electricity generation?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Outside of the extraordinary work of my colleague the Associate Minister of Energy in his natural gas expansion, the answer is no, and here is the reason why, to the thoughtful member from Guelph.

A lot of our natural gas goes on standby in this system. You know why, Mr. Speaker? Because when the sun ain't shining and the wind ain't blowing, we've got to fire up those natural gas plants to pay for the ridiculous scheme of the previous government that created a wind and solar system that generates 9% of our energy and costs 27% of it.

So thank you very much, but I think we'll stand by natural gas expansion. I think we'll see families and businesses experience energy savings, especially in rural and remote parts of this province—another option. And as we move ever closer to the decarbonization of natural gas, it's in play in this province.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: The minister's ideological support for fossil fuels will cost consumers, ratepayers and taxpayers more money, and it will undermine our efforts to address the climate crisis. According to the OEB filing, Ontario gas consumers will be forced to pay an extra \$120 million to subsidize the cost of building this pipeline, and electricity consumers are going to pay more as well.

Alberta recently signed contracts for wind energy at 4.9 cents a kilowatt hour. Energy efficiency and conservation programs can save electricity at a cost of 2.2 cents a kilowatt hour. Natural-gas-fired electricity costs 11.8 cents a kilowatt hour.

Speaker, why is the minister supporting an increase in fossil fuel use that is going to cost taxpayers more money, ratepayers more money and natural gas consumers more money?

Hon. Greg Rickford: We applaud Alberta for that. If only the previous government had signed contracts at 2.2 cents a kilowatt hour for wind and solar, it would be a different story. Instead, they locked us down, all future governments, for decades and decades at contracts that were 14.5 cents to 80 cents. Some say it's even higher.

This system is so ridiculous and so unreliable that it has made it virtually impossible for a small business or for families, particularly in isolated and remote and rural parts of this province, to put a price on their electricity from one month to the other. That rests squarely with the previous government, Mr. Speaker, when they were in cahoots with the NDP to build one of the most expensive systems in this province—and North America knows about it.

We're creating opportunities by investing in clean, green renewable energy that comes in the form of nuclear,

that supplies great jobs for the Durham four, that creates an opportunity—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please take your seats. The next question.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Minister of Health. Ontarians have long struggled to find the help they need for mental health and addiction challenges. Under the Del Duca-Wynne Liberals, Ontario spent 15 years without an effective plan for—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Take your seat.

We're going to refer to other members in the House by their ministerial title, if applicable, or their riding name. And if it persists, I'm going to have to start cutting people off mid-sentence, and that will affect their clip, I guess. If that's what I have to do, that's what I'll do.

Start the clock. I would ask the member for Peterborough-Kawartha to place his question.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has a plan. The Roadmap to Wellness will help fix the gaps in care that have left too many on wait-lists, sometimes for months at a time. It will ensure that services are accessible to the people of Ontario, no matter where they live in this province.

Can the minister tell us more about this plan and how this plan lays a path for meaningful improvement in how we access mental health care in Ontario?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member from Peterborough-Kawartha for your question. When we were elected, our government inherited a system where Ontarians facing mental health challenges felt lost. Services were not accessible or tailored to their needs. They were left to navigate a system with no support.

Our government has undertaken the hard work to transform the system and make sure that people get the care they need when they need it. The Roadmap to Wellness will support the expansion of existing mental health and addiction services, and also proposes innovative solutions like Mindability. The Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence will make sure that these services are of high quality and are accessible to all Ontarians regardless of where they live.

After years of inaction, Ontarians will finally see real results in mental health and addiction services.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Mr. Speaker, through you, I would like to thank the minister for her answer, and thank the associate minister for his work on this file. I'm glad we finally have a government that takes this issue seriously.

The Liberals failed to give Ontarians the mental health and addiction services they needed. In fact, when Steven

Del Duca wanted to help with addiction services. He attended an all-male, cash-for-access wine and grappa tasting—a wine tasting, Mr. Speaker—to raise money for addiction services. Ontarians deserve better support for addiction service than an event featuring wine and spirits.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us more about our real plan for mental health and addiction care?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister for Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member for Peterborough-Kawartha—or as he likes to call it, God's country—for that question. We are a government, Mr. Speaker, that fully believes that mental health is health and, without mental health you cannot have health.

Mr. Speaker, I had the chance to travel across the province to connect with diverse communities about their unique needs. Our sessions have been very informative.

We are building a high-quality system that will support Ontarians across their lifespan. Our government will develop a new core services framework to enable \$3.8 billion in funding for mental health and addiction services. We're offering innovative solutions such as Mindability, and through Ontario health teams and a new toll-free number, we're improving system navigation. Mr. Speaker, this is a system that will support all Ontarians where and when they need it, and we will be putting forward real solutions for our health care system.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last week, the Premier once again boasted that he was going to cut hydro rates by 12%, just like in the election. But this government has had the better part of two years to provide Ontarians with relief from sky-high hydro bills, and do you know what's happened since they've been elected? They have gone up.

The one thing the Premier has done is he borrowed another \$5.6 billion to add on to the \$40-billion failed Liberal hydro scheme to artificially subsidize and lower people's rates.

1120

Mr. Speaker, why is the government continuing to maintain failed Liberal policies when it comes to our hydro system?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Greg Rickford: It's quite incredible that the member opposite has never accounted for the fact that the Auditor General made it very clear that the Fair Hydro Plan was anything but. In fact, it was time to move swiftly to dismantle the Fair Hydro Plan and to let the people of Ontario know exactly how much their bill would be and how much of the rebate—or subsidy—was coming from the tax base.

That's exactly what we have done. We followed the Auditor General's reports. We have gotten rid of \$790 million of those contracts that the member for the Green Party was just complaining about costing our system so much money—the unreliability, the unpredictability that's

particularly touching the homes and businesses of people in his riding and across northern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we're getting rid of the fat in this system. We're making it more lean and efficient. We're going to be delivering on a rate that people can afford and create greater certainty for them as they manage—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. John Vanthof: This government, as the minister just said, is often critical of the previous Liberal government when it comes to hydro, but they've kept the same disastrous policies. They continue to borrow money on the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan: another \$5.6 billion.

But this isn't the first time we've seen this, Speaker. The government also supported the Liberals when they sold off Hydro One. They were in full support. Actually, truth be told, the Progressive Conservatives were the ones that started the process. The Liberals actually copied them. The Conservatives started selling Hydro One.

Enough is enough. Ontario families want real relief. When will this government stop copying failed Liberal hydro policies and actually offer people relief on their hydro bills?

Interjections.

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

The minister to reply.

Hon. Greg Rickford: That's a good one. You know, his daffy anecdotes mean nothing to me.

Here's the reality, Mr. Speaker: It's costing \$5.6 billion to keep hydro rates at the rate of inflation. Once we followed the Auditor General's instructions to make it more transparent so that the people of Ontario actually know what it costs at the current rates—that the previous government, under the Fair Hydro Plan that was anything but, hid, and it was acknowledged later on by the former Premier that she was quite happy to punt that debt down the road. We exposed that.

We made the system more transparent. We've held Hydro One to account. The six-million-dollar man is gone. The c-suites in utilities or private and public companies that are owned in part or in whole by the people of Ontario—they have an expectation that they will become lean, more efficient, and ensure that, moving forward, we have a competitive rate for homes, small businesses and large employers in this province.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Stan Cho: We heard yesterday about some very exciting announcements that the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines made last week, including a truly historic agreement to move forward with the corridor to the Ring of Fire. Our government is creating partnerships with First Nations and industry that will help our mining sector flourish.

The value of mineral production in Ontario was \$10.7 billion in 2019. Will the minister tell us about the important investment he announced in Sudbury last Thursday?

Hon. Greg Rickford: It was great to be in Sudbury last week and announce \$63.3 million over five years for the Next Generation Network Program. Notwithstanding the NDP's opposition to this kind of investment—which people in Sudbury took note of, actually—we launched the CENGN Smart Mining Testbed at NORCAT.

NORCAT is an extraordinary facility in Sudbury, and it should be, when 50% of iron ore harvested in northern Ontario actually comes through Sudbury. This is a place where smart technology should be developed.

The test bed is going to play a key role in developing technologies that test the boundaries of traditional mining places and help companies develop world-leading technologies to make mining safer, smarter and more productive.

Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, Sudbury, Timmins and North Bay are fast becoming world-class service-and-supply mining places and destinations, and we support them.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you for that response, Minister. It sounds like agreements like these, investments like this, will help companies create a lot of good-paying jobs.

As we move forward with historic agreements like the Ring of Fire, our government has been taking steps to address the labour shortage in the skilled trades. Can the minister tell us some of the investments that we've made in skills development, available particularly to young people and to the mining sector?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I was off to Thunder Bay to make perhaps some of the most important announcements that we could make as we look to a new workforce, an exciting workforce in northern Ontario. I announced more than \$2 million on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

One of those announcements was the Anishinabek Employment and Training Services centre: \$750,000 in two pre-apprenticeship training projects for 35 Indigenous workers to get their start in high-demand trades. This was led by a young Indigenous Red Seal-trained worker who could hardly contain his excitement, especially when he spoke to the media and called on the members of provincial Parliament in Thunder Bay to get behind these kinds of projects and stop voting against them.

Whether it's the east-west tie legacy corridor into the Ring of Fire—we need trained and skilled Indigenous workers. That's an important part of reconciliation, that's what I heard from them, and that's—

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

The next question.

FLOODING

Mr. Ian Arthur: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last week in Kingston, hundreds of residents gathered to discuss unprecedented flooding that is already devastating my community. Wolfe Island has been particularly hard-hit, with homes and businesses damaged, shoreline eroded and wells contaminated. Big Sandy Bay Conservation

Area, a major tourist draw, has been closed because there's just no more sand.

Many of my constituents have paid dearly over the past three years of flooding, spending tens of thousands of dollars of their own savings to try to preserve their homes. So yesterday, when the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry unveiled his much-anticipated flood strategy, I was hopeful. I thought there was some relief on the way for constituents in my riding. But that strategy is rather light on details, and there isn't one cent of funding attached to it—not one cent.

Why is this government yet again leaving whole communities that live along the Great Lakes to fend for themselves during another year of record-breaking floods?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I thank the member for the question. We were very pleased yesterday in Minden, Ontario, to announce Ontario's Flooding Strategy. As you know, the events of 2019, which was the first flood event of our government—we moved rapidly after that to appoint a special adviser on flooding. My colleagues in the government—nine ministries were involved in this to develop a flood strategy that focuses on three issues: preparedness, response and recovery.

We're working with all our stakeholders, all our partners, including property owners, to be able to forecast better when and where floods will occur so that we're in a much better position to respond to those floods, providing the resources through municipalities, ministries, and working with the federal government as well, to ensure that we can recover as quickly as possible after a flood event.

One thing was made clear by the special adviser: We cannot prevent flooding in the province of Ontario. It is how we react to it and how we deal with it—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Ian Arthur: With all due respect, it may be the first flooding event of this government, but when you were in opposition, were you just blissfully unaware that it was happening?

After record-breaking high water levels in Lake Ontario in 2017 and 2019, experts are anticipating another record year in 2020. Yet instead of taking this devastating flooding seriously and putting some money behind it, they're not allocating a single cent to help communities like Wolfe Island, like Kingston, like Essex, like Windsor and like all these other communities that are affected by this.

1130

Why won't this government follow their own independent adviser's recommendations—the minister was unable to even answer how many of the recommendations were being followed—and properly fund flood mitigation efforts? There are people's homes and businesses that are hanging in the balance. They need help now.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I will point out that we are the first government—well, it was my first flood event—to appoint a special adviser in flooding, which is a major step forward from previous governments.

Speaker, let's be clear: Our government, through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, has in place the Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians Program, which does assist homeowners in the event of flooding—up to \$250,000 for eligible expenses with regard to repairing their properties and homes. Our forecasting, working with our partners across sectors, across governments, is increasing our ability to forecast flooding.

But I want to say to the member from Kingston and the Islands, the flooding on Lake Ontario and the levels on Lake Ontario are governed by the International Joint Commission. We have a membership on it, but we do not set the water levels on that. I would suggest that he take his issue—we will continue to fight for those people, but it also has to be an issue taken up—

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

The next question.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim McDonell: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Our government has a plan to build Ontario together with better a quality of life and a higher standard of living for every region of this province.

For northern and rural communities, that means supporting the forestry industry. Forestry is a critical source of employment for these communities, providing well-paying jobs in regions with few other industries. The industry also plays a key role in meeting growing consumer preference for renewable and more environmentally conscious products.

Ontario is a world leader in sustainable forest management through the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. Our government is proposing to clarify the act's role to eliminate any unnecessary duplication. Can the minister inform us what our government is doing to support this critical industry?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the great member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for the question. The communities of northern Ontario have told us just how important it is to remove unnecessary duplication, given the Crown Forest Sustainability Act already provides for the protection of species at risk.

Mayor Wendy Landry of Shuniah and president of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association said, “We are very encouraged by the government's announcement of a draft provincial forest sector strategy.... However, the most important action the government must take is a permanent recognition of the CFSA as the main legislation for managing species at risk.”

Jason Lacko of the United Steelworkers said, “Our 2,500 forestry workers in Ontario are depending on a long-term workable solution to the ESA. Forestry matters and we need action now.”

Speaker, our government is listening to the people of northern and rural Ontario.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Minister, for that response. The forest sector has been a vital segment of Ontario's economy for generations. This \$16-billion industry provides 155,000 direct and indirect jobs across the province. Renewable wood products can also mitigate climate change by reducing our reliance on products like single-use plastics. It is great to hear that our government is working hard to help Ontarians develop sustainable industries.

The previous Liberals neglected the forestry industry and the people of northern and rural Ontario for 15 years, all the while supported by the NDP. It is clear you, Minister, have worked hard with these communities and the forestry sector, unions and First Nations to ensure that forestry is done in a way that is sustainable both economically and environmentally. Can you share with us what you've heard from these people across the province?

Hon. John Yakubuski: Thank you again to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for the supplementary. We've heard from unions, municipalities and First Nations across northern and rural Ontario: "Representing 40 First Nations across Ontario, Deputy Grand Council Chief Edward Wawia recalled, 'We are grateful for the hard work on the new strategy; however, we demand that government make a decision as soon as possible on the ESA. How can our communities look to a future in the industry without a long-term solution to the ESA?'"

Speaker, unlike the opposition parties that do nothing but talk and talk about supporting the hard-working people of Ontario, our government is a government of action. We have engaged extensively with people from across the province, and we have a plan to build Ontario together. The success of forestry across this province is part of that plan to build Ontario together. Get on board, I say to the opposition.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: My question is for the Acting Premier. There is a crisis in children and youth mental health and addictions care across Ontario. There is a 348-day wait for counselling and therapy and a 207-day wait for intensive treatments in Thunder Bay.

Tesa Fiddler, a parent and educator, at a recent press conference, stated, "In many of our rural and remote communities there is no wait-list to get on, because the services do not exist."

Diane Walker, CEO of the Children's Centre, at the same press conference, stated, "No child should wait in hospital hallways or on wait-lists for the critical treatment they need."

My colleague the member for Parkdale–High Park has tabled a bill that would ensure that children and youth can receive mental health services within 30 days. Will the government finally pass this bill so children and youth can access the mental health services they need?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Mr. Speaker, our government is delivering real action by investing an historic \$3.8 billion over 10 years to build a comprehensive, integrated and connected mental health and addictions system—one that is evidence-based, data-driven and meets the needs of patients and their families. Under the leadership of our Premier, our government has invested an additional \$10 million annually in child and youth mental health core services funding in communities across the province. Nearly \$40 million has been invested and targeted to mental health supports for Ontario students; \$6 million in intensive services for youth with addictions, including withdrawal-management services and residential treatment; \$3.5 million for early psychosis intervention services; and \$1 million for a new provincial eating disorders prevention and early-intervention program.

Mr. Speaker, we are building a system for all Ontarians, including children and youth.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand that the member for Kitchener Centre has a point of order.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: On a point of order: I'd like to correct my record.

In my question yesterday, I referenced how the Attorney General's appointee to the Ontario Human Rights Commission would need to recuse himself 70% of the time during commission work that deals with policing matters.

In fact, the OHRC estimates that—and I'm quoting from Integrity Commissioner David Wake's letter to TPS Constable Randall Arseneault: "Based on data from the last six months, the OHRC has estimated approximately 30% of its overall workload was devoted to the TPS specifically and"—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. There is provision in the standing orders to allow members to correct their record if they've really made a mistake, but it's not really there to provide additional information over and above what was said previously.

DEFERRED VOTES

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020

POUR CONNECTER LA POPULATION AUX SERVICES DE SOINS À DOMICILE ET EN MILIEU COMMUNAUTAIRE

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to amend and repeal various Acts respecting home care and community services / Projet de loi 175, Loi modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui

concerne les services de soins à domicile et en milieu communautaire.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on the motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 175, An Act to amend and repeal various Acts respecting home care and community services.

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

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On March 2, 2020, Ms. Elliott moved second reading of Bill 175, An Act to amend and repeal various Acts respecting home care and community services. Mr. Calandra has moved that the question now be put.

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

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harden, Joel	Schreiner, Mike
Arthur, Ian	Hassan, Faisal	Shaw, Sandy
Begum, Doly	Hatfield, Percy	Singh, Gurratan
Bell, Jessica	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Sara
Berns-McGown, Rima	Kernaghan, Terence	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bisson, Gilles	Lindo, Laura Mae	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Mamakwa, Sol	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Fraser, John	Miller, Paul	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gates, Wayne	Morrison, Suze	Yarde, Kevin
Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom	
Gretzky, Lisa	Sattler, Peggy	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 59; the nays are 37.

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

Ms. Elliott has moved second reading of Bill 175, An Act to amend and repeal various Acts respecting home

care and community services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 59; the nays are 37.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard a no. Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard some noes, so it has to go to a committee. I ask the minister which committee.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Social policy, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm happy to welcome new home warranty advocate Barbara Captijn, who is here today at Queen's Park.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated March 10, 2020, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 111(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SOMALI HERITAGE WEEK ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA SEMAINE DU PATRIMOINE SOMALIEN

Mr. Hassan moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 180, An Act to proclaim Somali Heritage Week /
Projet de loi 180, Loi proclamant la Semaine du patrimoine somalien.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member care to give a brief explanation of his bill?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By proclaiming the week of June 25 through July 1 as Somali Heritage Week, the province of Ontario recognizes the economic, political, social and cultural achievements and contributions of Somali Canadians in all aspects of Ontario society.

Like many refugees and immigrants who have made Ontario their home, Somali Canadians are proud to be part of diverse communities across the province.

SUPPLY ACT, 2020

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2020

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 181, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020 / Projet de loi 181, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2020.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the President of the Treasury Board wish to give a brief statement explaining this bill?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Yes, he would, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. The Supply Act is one of the key acts in the Ontario Legislature. If passed, it would give the Ontario government the legal spending authority to finance its program and honour its commitment for the fiscal year that is to close at the end of the month.

FRANCO-ONTARIAN EMBLEM

AMENDMENT ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'EMBLÈME FRANCO-ONTARIEN

Ms. Kusendova moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 182, An Act to amend the Franco-Ontarian Emblem Act, 2001 / Projet de loi 182, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur l'emblème franco-ontarien.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Mississauga Centre care to explain her bill?

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Oui, merci, monsieur le Président. Le projet de loi modifie la Loi de 2001 sur l'emblème franco-ontarien afin de reconnaître le drapeau franco-ontarien comme un emblème de l'Ontario. Merci.

Le Président (L'hon. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Sue Dufresne from Hanmer in my riding for this petition.

"Time to Care...."

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

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

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

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the LTC Homes Act ... for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Daniel to bring it to the Clerk.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I proudly affix my signature to this petition and will give it to page Daniel.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr. John Vanthof: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the amalgamation of Scadding and Rathbun townships into the city of Greater Sudbury has separated and divided an existing community established in 1955 under a service roads board. We were a proud, vibrant,

self-sustainable, safe community. Reunite us and we can be that again;

“Whereas this forced amalgamation has resulted in the main access, Kukagami Lake Road, being maintained in sections by different entities. This results in different standards, which often results in unsafe conditions and concerns for people travelling this road. We are physically isolated from the city of Greater Sudbury by 17 kilometres; we leave the city, travel through Markstay-Warren and a section of roads board before re-entering the city. We are in a wilderness rural area, not an urban setting, which is not conducive to being amalgamated into a city;

“Whereas we are in the provincial riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane not Sudbury or Nickel Belt;

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

“To direct the Minister of Municipal Affairs to consider a request that the townships of Scadding and Rathbun be removed from the city of Greater Sudbury.”

I heartily agree and give my signature—and to page Hannah.

GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: This petition is entitled “The First Year of Premier Ford’s-led Government (Supporting and Promoting the Timeline of the Government for the People).”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas almost one year ago, Premier Ford’s PC-led government was elected with an overwhelming majority; and

1510

“Whereas the government was elected on a mandate of restoring Ontario’s finances, as well as delivering responsible, accountable and transparent government; and

“Whereas since being elected, the Premier Ford government has passed a historic amount of legislation to get Ontario on the right track, including:

“Bill 2, Urgent Priorities Act, 2018;

“Bill 4, Cap and Trade Cancellation Act, 2018;

“Bill 5, Better Local Government Act, 2018;

“Bill 32, Access to Natural Gas Act, 2018;

“Bill 34, Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018;

“Bill 36, Cannabis Statute Law Amendment Act, 2018;

“Bill 47, Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018;

“Bill 48, Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, 2019;

“Bill 57, Restoring Trust, Transparency and Accountability Act, 2018;

“Bill 66, Restoring Ontario’s Competitiveness Act, 2019;

“Bill 67, Labour Relations Amendment Act (Protecting Ontario’s Power Supply), 2018;

“Bill 68, Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, 2019;

“Bill 74, The People’s Health Care Act, 2019;

“Bill 81, Supply Act, 2019;

“Bill 87, Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, 2019;

“Bill 100, Protecting What Matters Most Act (Budget Measures), 2019;

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

“Continue to fulfill your mandate to protect what matters most to the people of Ontario while working to reduce immense debt and deficit shamefully left by the previous Kathleen Wynne Liberal government.”

I proudly affix my signature and will be giving it to page Hamza.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My petition is “Give Prisoners Access to Free Phones Now!”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the House of Commons, and Bell Canada:

“Whereas Bell acts like a champion of mental health, they jeopardize the well-being of prisoners and their families by putting up barriers to communication;

“Whereas Bell has a monopoly over the federal and provincial prison phone systems in Canada and Ontario;

“Whereas phone calls cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars per month for prisoners and their families, and collect calls can only be made to land lines;

“Whereas disconnection and isolation can result in poverty, mental health challenges, and suicide—and creates barriers for community reintegration upon release;

“Whereas phone companies like Bell and the province of Ontario profit off of the most marginalized among us; and

“Whereas Bell’s contract with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is up for renewal in 2020;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the House of Commons, and Bell Canada to ensure free calling for prisoners; direct calls to cell phones and lines with switchboards; and no 20-minute cut-off on calls.”

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

AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS

Mrs. Robin Martin: I have a petition here for the registry of defibrillators.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas every year, 7,000 Ontarians will experience a sudden cardiac arrest;

“Whereas up to 85% of cardiac arrests occur at home or in public;

“Whereas a defibrillator, when used in conjunction with CPR in the first few minutes after a cardiac arrest, would dramatically improve cardiac survival rates by more than 50%;

“Whereas ensuring that automated external defibrillators are readily available under a registry to members of the public may prevent tragedies and fatalities from occurring;

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

“Help save cardiac arrest victims by proceeding as expeditiously as possible to pass Bill 141, An Act respecting registration of and access to defibrillators, 2019, so that,

“(1) defibrillators will be readily available with easy access when a sudden cardiac arrest occurs;

“(2) all defibrillators will have proper signs to indicate location of the defibrillators;

“(3) 911 operators will have access to the full registry and assist to direct callers to the nearest defibrillator;

“(4) defibrillators in Ontario will be properly maintained in accordance to regulations and be readily available for use when necessary; and

“(5) cardiac arrest victims will have a higher chance of survival.”

I support this petition wholeheartedly, will affix my name hereto and provide it to page Nyle.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to thank Lynn Mayhew and Origins Canada for this petition. It is titled “Extend Access to Post-Adoption Birth Information.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas current legislation does not provide access to post-adoption birth information (identifying information) to next of kin if an adult adopted person or a natural/birth parent is deceased;

“Whereas this barrier to accessing post-adoption birth information separates immediate family members and prohibits the children of deceased adopted people from gaining knowledge of their identity and possible Indigenous heritage;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to extend access to post-adoption birth information (identifying information) to next of kin, and/or extended next of kin, if an adult adopted person or a natural birth parent is deceased.”

I support this petition. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Connie to bring to the Clerk.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many Ontarians are looking to their government to demonstrate a real commitment to delivering transit faster for the people in the greater Toronto area, reducing congestion, and connecting people to places and jobs; and

“Whereas everyone can recognize that there is an increasing demand for safe and reliable transportation options; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto has agreed to partner with Ontario to remain committed to removing roadblocks, engage local residents and businesses, as well as Indigenous communities; and

“Whereas Ontario deserves public transit that is more attractive, safe, affordable, and low-stress;

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

“Help deliver Ontario’s four priority subway projects on time and on budget by proceeding” to expedite this as quickly “as possible to pass Bill 171, Building Transit Faster Act, 2020, so that:

“(1) Hearings of necessity for expropriations of property along the transit corridors if the expropriations are for the purpose of the transit are eliminated;

“(2) A mechanism is created by which utility companies may be required to remove utility infrastructure, if necessary for the transit;

“(3) Municipal service and right of way access may be required to be provided for the transit, with the process being based around negotiation, with the possibility for an order if negotiation fails.”

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This petition is entitled, “Invest in the Schools Our Students Deserve: Stop the Cuts!”

“Whereas the provincial government has announced over \$1 billion in funding cuts to our schools, which will result in:

“—much larger class sizes in grades 4 to 12;

“—significantly less support for our most vulnerable students, including those with disabilities, special needs, and English-language learners;

“—forcing secondary students to take four online courses;

“—further deterioration of schools already in need of repair; and

“Whereas Ontario already ranked last in per pupil funding when compared to the per pupil funding of 18 northeastern and Great Lakes states and provinces prior to these cuts;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately halt and reverse all funding cuts to our public education system; eliminate mandatory e-learning;

“(2) amend the education funding formula to: increase program and resource support for special education; lower class sizes in kindergarten and grades 4 to 12; and increase school boards’ capacity to deliver front-line services by paraprofessionals;

“(3) support the development of an Ontario-wide ‘state of good repair standard’ for all publicly funded schools so that these public assets are safe, healthy, well-maintained buildings that provide environments conducive to learning and working;

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

I support the petition, will be signing it and giving to page Nathan.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: This petition is called “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 into 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, 2019.”

I proudly affix my signature to this petition, and I will be giving it to page Daniel.

1520

POST-STROKE TREATMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: I’d like to thank the good people of Oshawa and Ajax and Pickering for this petition. It’s entitled “Ask the Government of Ontario to Support Young Adult Stroke Survivors.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s young adult stroke survivors continue to be denied OHIP funded stroke treatment/physiotherapy on the basis of age;

“Whereas stroke survivors on ODSP are denied treatment in violation of existing health care regulations;

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

“To immediately eliminate all arbitrary age restrictions on post-stroke treatment and deliver publicly funded post-stroke treatment to all Ontarians.”

It is my pleasure to affix my signature in support of this petition and give it to page Rachel.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, pursuant to standing order 50 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 156, An Act to protect Ontario’s farms and farm animals from trespassers and other forms of interference and to prevent contamination of Ontario’s food supply, the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet on Friday, March 27, 2020, and Monday, March 30, 2020, in London and Northumberland–Peterborough South for public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 156:

—Notice of public hearings;

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 18, 2020;

—That the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee and their designate following the deadline for requests to appear;

—That each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk by 12 noon on Friday, March 20, 2020;

—That each witness receive up to 10 minutes for their presentation followed by 20 minutes for questioning, with eight minutes allotted to the government, eight minutes allotted to the official opposition and four minutes allotted to the Green Party independent member;

—That the deadline for written submissions be 5 p.m. on Monday, March 30, 2020;

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 noon on Wednesday, April 1, 2020; and

That the committee meet on Monday, April 6, 2020, during its regularly scheduled meeting time, and on Tuesday, April 7, 2020, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That on Tuesday, April 7, 2020, at 3 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period, pursuant to standing order 132(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Wednesday, April 8, 2020. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall

be deemed passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on General Government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings of the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 15 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Calandra has moved government motion number 75. Mr. Calandra.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to debate this motion for a little bit of time. I won't take too much time. It really is just an opportunity for us to, again, talk about just how open and democratic this government really is.

We know that the concept of time allocation was really brought in by the NDP when they were in government. We, of course, have decided to move in a bit of a different direction since we've been in government.

The particular bill we're talking about now received multiple hours of debate—I believe, over 10 hours of debate—and really, it highlights what we've been doing since we've been back. I think that hundreds of speakers have spoken to the legislation that we have brought forward. We have not had to have time allocation of any bill brought forward to the House, but we obviously would hope that the opposition would work with us when it comes to debate at committee.

I have heard the members opposite often talk about the fact that we need to work together, that they do understand that the government has an agenda that it has to get through, and that there has to be a little give and take. So when we see that the agenda of the government is somewhat frustrated, especially on such an important piece of work—the Minister of Agriculture, in particular, and his parliamentary assistant, the member for Perth–Wellington, if I'm not mistaken, did some really spectacular work on this file.

I'm not going to speak to the specifics of just how good this bill is and how important it is to the people of Ontario, because they have done that on their own. I think, by and large, it has received support from both sides of the House, Mr. Speaker. That's why I'm somewhat surprised that we have had to take this little extra step in order to ensure that the bill does make its way through committee and get back into the House.

Even though today is March 10, we're still giving a lot of time for this bill to be considered. It's not scheduled to come back until early April. So there will still be a lot of time. That's something that we have decided that we need to do because, as we've said, this has become really one of the most open and democratic governments that this province has seen, at least since 2003, since Mike Harris's time in office.

Given that openness that this government has displayed—and our desire to see things debated in the House and then dealt with at committee in an appropriate

fashion—that's why we have decided at this point that we have to come forward with this motion.

The members opposite: I know they have talked about just how important this bill is to them. So I suspect that they will likely want to support this motion, given that food safety is in everybody's best interest. I can't imagine that anybody would disagree with the importance of food safety. I can't imagine that anybody would disagree with the importance of protecting our farmers. So I am excited that we can actually move this forward.

I want to just thank the good work, as I said, not only of the parliamentary assistant but of my own team in helping ensure that we're able to move legislation—not only this one, but legislation through the House.

With that, I'll close it there. I want to move forward to this. Again, thank you to the Minister of Agriculture, his team, and to the parliamentary assistant, who will, I know, make sure that Ontario and its food safety are a priority, and get this bill through committee and back to the House in as quick a fashion as possible.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wow, that was kind of interesting.

We're all good at giving our side of the story—as they call it, “providing spin”—but that was pretty good spin, I thought.

1530

Listen, the government talks about, “We're clearly an open and transparent government, the best transparent, open government in the history of the world.” That is, like, really a bit of a stretch. We can't even get the government to—we've got this licence plate thing going on, right? The government decided to change the plates in Ontario, and they've now had to sign this deal, finally, with the people who did part of the manufacturing on it, and they've closed the deal to any type of public scrutiny. You can't come into this House and say, “We're the most open and transparent government,” when you're looking at what you're already doing—not being open and transparent—on something as simple as a licence plate.

But anyway, back to time allocation: What's interesting here is that the government has decided to time-allocate something that, quite frankly, probably didn't need to be time-allocated. Our critic on this particular file and members who have spoken to this issue have gotten up, time and time again, and said, “Listen, we are in favour of the bill at second reading, but we need to look at a number of issues.” Our agricultural critic, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, will list those issues later.

We argued that the bill needs to go to committee in order to be able to hear from those people affected, and that's the farm community—for them to be able to come before this committee, to be able to ask questions and make comment on what they think the strengths and weaknesses are. Hopefully, we can tweak this bill in committee to deal with the number of issues that have been raised.

I'll just use one as an example. There are people in Ontario who are First Nations members, who feel, rightly

or wrongly, that they are being somehow denied their Aboriginal hunting rights as a result of this bill. Now the government has said no when it comes to the debate here, and I'll take that at face value, but, for example, when we send this bill to committee, it would be good to hear from First Nations communities and, if we're serious about not infringing on First Nations' harvesting rights, that we put a non-derogation clause within the bill. I would hope that the government would look at something as simple as that.

There are other issues in regard to the whole issue of security and how we're going to deal with issues of trespass when it comes to how that mechanism is going to work. I'll let the critic speak to those things specifically. But the way that we find out more about that, about how we can tweak the bill to make it do what we all want it to do—because the government and the official opposition are not far off when it comes to trying to deal with some of the issues that you're trying to deal with. We understand. My colleague the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane was an active farmer for many, many years—a dairy farmer—and understands the issue well. He sat on the board of the DFO, the people who deal with milk marketing etc., and understands this stuff well. He sat also with the Federation of Agriculture. So we have a number of members in our caucus who understand this issue from that perspective as well.

There is a second perspective. We need to be able to look at how we make sure that we protect the security of the farm and where we process food but, at the same time, that we secure the rights of individuals, because we don't want to overstep our bounds and all of a sudden put ourselves in a position where we pass a bill that gets challenged in the courts, and then we have to strike the bill down because we didn't do a good job of drafting it in the first place. If we end up doing that, we're not helping the farm community; we're just creating more confusion.

So I look at the government House leader, who says, "I have to time-allocate this in order to be able to deal with it, because the opposition is trying to hold us up"—no such case. We were pretty darn clear through this entire debate that we would be voting for this bill at second reading, which we did, and that we wanted the bill to go to committee and to give it proper time, and that time is determined by people who apply. It shouldn't be up to the government House leader to decide, "Oh, I'm just going to limit your hearings to one day, two days, three days," or whatever you happen to give in community X, Y or Z. As we did here before, for many years, we should open up the process to the public, find out who wants to come before us and depute, and then accommodate the numbers of people who decide.

In some cases, in some bills, you may have hardly any public hearings because they don't ask to come before the committee. We've had that happen before. In other cases, there may be sufficient interest that there be more than one, two, three or four days. There may be interest in eastern Ontario, southwestern Ontario or northern Ontario, if you make that offer to the farm community and others to be able to come before the committee.

For the government to take the position that they have to time-allocate this bill, I think, really leads to drafting and passing bad legislation in the end. But also, it really kind of cuts the public, and those interested in this bill, out of the process. I have to say—and I've said this before in the House, Mr. Speaker—the public looks at us and they disconnect from politics to a great degree. They do that because they don't see themselves in the decision-making process. They sometimes feel that, "Oh, those people are just going to do what those people do up at Queen's Park. The government is going to do what the government does." I think that's a real disservice to the public. I think we're better served, both as government and opposition, to give the public the opportunity to have their say.

That's the beauty of the British parliamentary system. The way that we have set up our committees, in places like the Ontario Legislature, we have a mechanism where we can open up the legislative process to the public so that they can come before us and pronounce on how they feel, one way or another, on the bill. What's dangerous about that? Absolutely nothing. If you have a bill that goes through the scrutiny of the public and we're able to listen to those people who have some knowledge on this particular issue from whatever perspective, and we listen to what they have to say, and we amend the bill accordingly—with the stated goal of what you want as the basis of the bill, but amended according to some of the red flags that are raised as we go through bills like this—you'll end up with a better bill.

When I first got here, along with others—well, there are only three of us now that came from the class of 1990. But when I got here, the way that it used to work was that bills went into committee for the amount of time that was needed. It wasn't, "We're going to time-allocate a bill for a day, two days, a week or whatever." Some bills had a very short time in committee. We had many a bill that was drafted by the government, or drafted by a member of the opposition as a private member's bill, and the bill got into committee and had very little time because everybody kind of agreed that it was a good bill. We would always make it available for people to be able to apply to come before committee, and in some cases we just didn't get a lot of take-up. Not a lot of people were applying to be before the committee. So those bills didn't have to stay in committee very long, but other bills did. For example, changes to the Planning Act when I was in government: We travelled pretty extensively on changes to the Planning Act. When the former Conservative government was elected, under Mr. Harris, it was the same. We made changes to the Planning Act—I think, in fact, I sat with the Minister of Agriculture on that committee—and we travelled across Ontario for about three weeks on that particular bill, because there were a lot of people at the municipal level, including developers and others, who had something to say about that bill and who provided us with some good information about how we were able to amend it. It just made for better legislation.

The problem we have now in this sort of truncated legislative process that we have got ourselves into over the

years—and I'm not going to blame this current government as being the only one who had a hand in it. We've all had a hand in it; I recognize that. But I'll tell you what has happened: We have moved from time allocation being the exception to the rule, to time allocation being the rule. Even when time allocation was first brought here in 1993, I think it was—whenever it was, it was in the time that I first got here. It was used, obviously. It was used, I think, first because there was a budget that was held up by the opposition and we needed to get the budget through, so time allocation was introduced as a concept.

But time allocation wasn't always used. For example, we created sustainable forestry development without time allocation. We created the Mining Act that we now have when it comes to mine closure plans, which is seen—and the minister would know, across the way—as one of the best systems in the world when it comes to planning how you develop a mine and how you decommission a mine and not leave the public stuck with the bill when there's some environmental disaster. Ontario is a shining light across the world when it comes to how we deal with mining and forestry, from the perspective of making sure that—

Interjection.

1540

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, the minister laughs and shakes his head. You don't think that we need to have a good planning process for how we build mines and how we approach forestry? I can't believe you believe that, Minister.

We actually have that system in place because we had proper time in committee. And do you know what? We may have been the government when we did it, as New Democrats, but there are plenty of Conservatives and Liberals who sat on committee and who had a hand in amending that legislation to make it stronger. I think of Chris Hodgson, who was the member from—I forget his riding, but he was somewhere in central Ontario. He was very active on that committee, as a Conservative—especially the bill dealing with sustainable forestry development, in order to get some changes that got the bill right.

I remember our friends on the Conservative side, under Mr. Harris, who brought different legislation before us as well. He didn't time-allocate absolutely everything. He time-allocated a fair amount. But in his first term, the Harris government did not time-allocate every piece of legislation.

Where we're at now is, time allocation is becoming the rule and not the exception. I think that's a problem.

We could have quite easily come to an agreement about how long this bill had to be in committee, based on the applications. We would have said to the government, "Put the advertisement out there, as far as anybody who is interested across Ontario being able to apply to present to this committee. Leave it out there for a bit"—it has to be out there for a week at least, or maybe a little bit longer, so the public gets a chance to apply—"by putting advertisements in the paper and putting it on our website etc. If you have five people who apply, then that's the only

amount of hearings you need. If 50 people apply, then you adjust. You may not be able to take all 50, but you should be able to take a good chunk of that."

I think that's rather unfortunate.

Again, the Minister of Agriculture would have been here—back in the day, when he first got elected, I believe in 1995, if I'm correct. When he was elected in 1995, I was a returning member when the Harris government was elected for the first time. The process for committee back then was, we would discharge a bill from the House, and the subcommittee would meet, and the subcommittee would then decide how much time we needed, based on the interest that people had in the bill. They would advertise the bill extensively so that people could find out about it. We would wait to hear how many people were applying to come before committee to present, and then we decided how many days, based on what the demand was.

You would think that the government understands the principle of supply and demand. It's kind of the same thing when it comes to the committee process.

So I just say to the government across the way, you didn't have to time-allocate this bill. We would have been perfectly happy to find a way to get adequate public hearings so that the public who wants to speak to this bill, or organizations who want to speak to this bill, would be able to get before the committee. I say to the government across the way, I think it's unfortunate, because what this will do is provide short shrift when it comes to being able to allow those who are interested to come before our committees to speak to it.

Again, I go back to the point that I made at the beginning of this particular part of my speech. If we want the public to increase their faith in us, as elected members, we need to find ways to reach out to them so that they're able to say, "Yes, they're listening to me." In the end, the public gets it: The government, in the end, has to make a decision, and this assembly has to make a decision, and the decision will not always go the way that one wants. But I can tell you this: At least if people are heard, they feel as if they've had their say. This is what I believe is the shortfall in what the government is not doing when it comes to having to force time allocations such as the one that we have here before us.

Those are pretty well my comments, Mr. Speaker. I know that our critic the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane will speak to this more fully when it comes to the details.

But again, I urge the members across the way: You know, time allocation should be the exception; it should not be the rule, especially on a bill like this, where you know that we support you, on the government side. Yes, we have concerns. Yes, there need to be amendments. Yes, there are problems in regard to how you drafted the bill, and those are very real. We've heard on both sides of the House from those who have those concerns. But you can't have those concerns adequately addressed if the government is not prepared to allow those who want to depute before the committee to be able to get here and to do that.

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

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the motion for public hearings on the proposed Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act.

I'm also proud of the immense support received from my fellow caucus colleagues in the last few months. They are giving a voice to the farmers in their constituencies—a voice which, I can assure you, our government has heard.

After 15 years of neglect by the Liberals, we have a government that has made it clear: Rural Ontario and Ontario farmers are a priority. We are a government that rural Ontario can count on. That's why this motion takes the committee hearings of this bill to southwestern Ontario and goes east of here, to rural areas, to ensure that people impacted by on-farm trespassing have an opportunity to have their voices heard. We want to hear from the people in southwestern Ontario about their experiences. We want to go east of Toronto to hear from people in places like Peterborough, Campbellford and Lindsay, places like Greater Napanee, Brighton and Quinte West. We want to hear from rural municipalities and mutual insurance companies who have called for us to address this problem.

Bill 156 aims to protect farmers, agri-food businesses, agri-food sector workers, farm animals and Ontario's food supply against the risks of on-farm trespass and interference with livestock transport.

I'm very proud that consultation and engagement has been the cornerstone of our approach to develop Bill 156—and it will continue to be, as the legislation moves through the next steps.

When we introduced this legislation, Keith Currie, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, said, "We truly appreciate the consultation that was done throughout the industry that's behind this new legislation."

I consider the fact that people know you are listening to be very high praise. We've heard from many, many different organizations, both through our consultations and after we introduced this legislation, and I'm looking forward to hearing more from them during the committee hearings.

We have received thousands of letters in support of this bill, and we received some thoughtful comments and suggestions on ways to improve it. I want you to know that we are taking the comments and feedback that we're receiving into consideration.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, our proposed legislation aims to: ensure that farmers and their families feel safe at their places of work and in their homes; protect the welfare of animals; and safeguard the integrity of the province's food system.

The proposed bill balances security for farmers and their families and our food supply while protecting the right of people to participate in legal protests.

These are serious and complex matters, and they matter to all Ontarians. The fact is that we all benefit from the good work farmers do every day. When we pick up our groceries and cook a meal, and when we eat in a restaurant,

we're making a choice to trust the farmer who ensured that we have good, safe food to eat.

People don't often think about the food on their table and how it gets there. Farmers go to great lengths to ensure that the quality of the food in Ontario is the best in the world. In doing so, farmers support all of Ontario. And it's time for us to support them.

I was pleased to appear on TVO's *The Agenda* with Steve Paikin recently to talk about our proposed legislation. I discussed the proposed bill on *The Agenda* alongside the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, and I believe we both appreciated the opportunity to highlight how important it is to ensure the safety of farmers and their families, as well as food safety. I'm looking forward to further discussions with the member on this bill, and I'm also greatly hoping for and looking forward to receiving his support.

As I've stated many times, the proposed legislation does not impact the right to participate in legal protests, but legal protest does not include trespassing on farms and in agri-food businesses or interfering with livestock transport.

1550

From the early days of this proposed legislation taking shape, we recognized the strong need to have strong communications and thoughtful discussion on it. We received hundreds of letters from people and organizations calling for action. We knew we needed to collaborate closely with individual groups and organizations across the board to truly understand their concerns about the risk of trespassing.

Let me be absolutely clear: There is nothing you can legally do now that would be made illegal by this bill. Trespassing is illegal. Under this proposed legislation, it will remain so.

I'm very proud of the time and effort we have put into stakeholder engagement and consultations on this proposed legislation, and I'm looking forward to hearing from more people throughout the committee process.

Often, under the former Liberals, we saw allocation motions coming forward which would give people almost no time to prepare for their committee presentation. That meant it was challenging for people to bring forward thoughtful presentations. I want to point out that, in this motion, it gives people almost three weeks' advance notice of the hearings. The presentation itself is 10 minutes, followed by up to 20 minutes of questions and discussion—again, longer than under the previous government. Under the previous government, I remember motions where notice was so short that the only people who saw it were the lobbyists and the insiders.

I also want to point out that this motion allows for written submissions to be submitted until March 30, which is more than three weeks from now. If someone is unable to attend the committee hearings in person but has ideas, suggestions, or concerns, I encourage them to send a written submission to the committee. We want to hear from people on this bill.

This issue is not something that we take lightly, Mr. Speaker, because farmers told us they simply did not feel

safe in their homes anymore. They told us that people entering their farms under false pretenses were becoming increasingly problematic. They told us it was necessary to address this in this bill.

Nobody in this province, whether you're in an urban centre or a rural community, would accept being deceived or pressured by others in order to gain entry to your home or your workplace. That is not an accepted practice anywhere. I hope, if this motion passes and we have the proposed committee hearings, that the opposition will listen to what our agriculture community tells them on that point.

I hope that all members of the committee, including those who aren't from rural areas, will have the opportunity to hear first-hand about the problem that this bill is intended to solve.

Some people have expressed skepticism that such things are happening at all. They're asking why we need this bill. This is surprising, Mr. Speaker, because farmers have been dealing with these issues for years. Trespassers have grown bolder over time, and show no signs of changing their behaviour.

To provide a very recent example, on February 18, King Cole Ducks in Stouffville was targeted by a large group of trespassers. Let me read you what the owner of the farm wrote to our government:

"The activists broke into the barn when our birds were still sleeping. Our animal welfare management protocol is that we have only one person in the barn to ensure a stress-free environment: The impact of a large group of people rushing in, shining flashlights in the early morning panicked the flock. Their instinct was to flee and the result of Tuesday's invasion compromised the overall health and well-being of the flock. They are all under special veterinarian care as we monitor their recovery.

"On top of this, our staff are nervous to come to work. In our country, people should feel safe in their workplaces and on their farms which are often also their homes."

They state, "If there ever was a current, compelling reason for Bill 156 to be passed, we believe this is it."

Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the sort of thing we are talking about. Many of us, on both sides of the House, were at King Cole in 2016—I'm not sure if the member opposite was there—for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture field day. It shows that this issue has many layers. It was not only the family-run farm business that was affected. It was the workers who now fear going to work because of these events. It was also the ducks themselves who are now under veterinary care as a result of these actions.

Mr. Speaker, from biosecurity to food safety, this proposed legislation is protecting farm animals from trespass as well. Those who trespass are unlikely to understand the sensitive biosecurity protocols in place that ensure that farm animals are kept safe from disease, and that ensure the quality of our food supply. Members of the opposition have voiced support for biosecurity protocols, but supporting biosecurity protocols without providing farmers with the necessary protection to ensure that they are followed

will not solve the problem. Farmers need to be supported in every layer of the issue, and we're addressing that issue in this proposed legislation.

Ontarians deserve to know that every effort is being made to hear directly from those impacted by trespassing, to ensure legislation that is fair and appropriate. We are striving to address these concerns in a way that is balanced. Once again, our government has been absolutely clear. For 15 years under the Liberals, our party was the sole voice for Ontario farmers and rural communities in the opposition. We are not letting their concerns fall on deaf ears anymore. This proposed legislation deals with a great many of their concerns, but it does not mean that we have stopped listening.

Another point I would like to make very clear is that our government has zero tolerance when it comes to animal abuse. If anyone suspects animal abuse, they should immediately call the authorities at 1-833-9-ANIMAL. Our proposed legislation, along with the new PAWS Act, will ensure Ontario has the strongest animal health and welfare laws in the country.

Several weeks ago, I had the pleasure of touring all across Ontario and speaking to farmers in different communities so that I could hear their concerns and input on our proposed legislation. It's important to have the public hearings on this proposed legislation go to different places. That's why we have chosen two different locations—southwest of the city of London, and one in eastern Ontario in Northumberland—Peterborough South—so that individuals can have the opportunity to provide feedback on the legislation. These are different areas and different parts of the province, which will ensure that we will hear different perspectives.

Nothing can replace the power of hearing directly from people who are impacted by trespassing. They deserve to be able to share their experiences with us and to be able to ask questions that relate to their own circumstances in their own communities.

If we have learned anything so far from our consultations on Bill 156—and I'm referring here to the many meetings and consultations we held with farmers, municipalities, commodity groups, accredited farm organizations, Indigenous groups, law enforcement, livestock transporters and individuals—it is that each experience is unique, and there are many factors that can complicate matters.

Over the past few months, we have continually been hearing about the many experiences farmers have had with trespass. They have told me that they are scared and they are frustrated. We have also heard about the fears they have for the future if this issue is not addressed.

I, along with my caucus colleagues who have joined me for the many round tables across Ontario, have heard these concerns as well as the ideas that farmers have for how this bill can best protect them. I strongly believe that as the bill moves forward through public hearings, it is important that we continue doing so in the spirit of open dialogue that we have encouraged to this point.

We believe this approach can be best served by holding public hearings in the very communities where the

trespassing incidents are taking place. It's easy to say that you support rural Ontario, but by putting forward this bill and by proposing to travel with the committee hearings, we are doing more. We are demonstrating that we understand rural Ontario, and that they have a government they can count on.

Mr. Speaker, as the government that has committed to hearing the concerns of rural Ontario and bringing their voices to the Legislature, we must also commit to hearing them where they are. We want to make it as easy as possible for individuals to participate in these hearings. We would not only be making this process more accessible for people in their communities, but we would also be sending an important signal about the priorities of our government.

I hope that the members opposite will join us in showing rural Ontario its importance by supporting this motion. We feel strongly that it's important to continue to provide opportunities to communicate about Bill 156 in rural Ontario and to hear from them.

1600

The motion to allow public hearings in different parts of the province is an important step to ensure full participation and collaboration on this legislation that affects all Ontarians. As I mentioned, consultation has been an important part of the proposed legislation from the onset and has been demonstrated throughout the last several months. During the month of February in the period leading up to second reading for the proposed bill, I travelled across Ontario for a series of round table discussions on the proposed legislation with farmers and farm organizations, from Cornwall to Chesley and from Brantford to Lambton. I met with francophone farmers and received the support of their organization for this bill.

Farmers asked me very in-depth questions. They asked about specific details of the proposed legislation, including the clarifications around animal protection zones. Farmers want to make sure that, at the end of the day, this proposed legislation would provide them with the protection that they need. They asked me about the legal scope of the bill and questioned the fines outlined in it. They expressed concern about the safety of livestock truck operators, who often face harassment by protesters while on the job.

Let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, there are many layers in this issue. Just like at King Cole Ducks, we have workers who feel unsafe in their work environments. This simply is unacceptable. They also shared personal accounts of challenging circumstances they have experienced and witnessed. Livestock transporters told us about incidents where trespassers forcefully opened their cab doors, risking the driver's safety and the safety of the animals in transit. I heard from a mother who was scared to let her children go out to the barn at night to turn off the lights, in case there were trespassers in the yard.

I was very impressed by the depth of questioning and the level of interest taken by those attending the round tables. They have clearly done their homework on the proposed bill, and their questions kept me on my toes. These face-to-face discussions with farmers raised many

valid questions and points of view. We take them to heart because they help to properly inform the legislation and to make sure it meets the needs of the agricultural sector.

It's important that we hear the perspectives of those who are directly impacted by trespassing, and that is why we are putting forward this motion today, because, after all, we want farmers to be able to continue working safely and productively without fear for their safety or the safety of their families and their employees, so they can keep feeding us, employing Ontarians, contributing to the quality of life in rural Ontario and supporting our provincial economy.

I'll say it again: Every day, we trust our farmers to provide us with the food at our tables and in our restaurants. Just because we don't think about how the food gets there doesn't mean we don't make the decision to trust our farmers. If we trust farmers to support us, farmers should trust us to support them.

Ontario's diverse agricultural sector is such a significant economic driver in this province. Our provincial agri-food sector supports more than 837,000 jobs in Ontario. In short, that means one job in eight in this province is tied to agriculture. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of agriculture in our economy. After all, these aren't simply economic benefits; they are people providing our food.

Everyone in Ontario has a right to a safe workplace. This is especially true for farmers, whose home and work are often the same place. A worker should not have to come to work every morning fearing for their safety, nor should a farmer fear letting their children play in the fields because of the risk of trespassers.

Mr. Speaker, if we all want to stand behind Ontario's farmers, let's do the best we can to continue an open and accessible dialogue on this proposed legislation, because this proposed bill directly impacts the working individuals and innovative businesses driving the agriculture sector to success. We welcome input to this proposed legislation, and I look forward to hearing diverse feedback from all points of view. At the end of the day, we believe consultation and engagement make for better legislation, and we are committed to doing the best we can for Ontario's farmers.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the time to make this address.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have a moment to participate in this debate—not so much about Bill 156, because I'll leave that to the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane, but about the process of time allocation and what that truly does to public consultation here in the Legislature.

We have seen many things pass here in the Legislature with very little public consultation. We have seen families come through this Legislature with absolutely no trust in this government to do the right thing—and I can speak directly of the families with autism and their lack of trust in this government to do the right thing. When you start to

time-allocate bills before this House, then you're truncating that opportunity for people to have their say.

Within this motion itself, it talks about the time when they're going to travel to different parts of the province, yet they're leaving out the north. Did the north not need to be consulted? Should the people in the north not have the opportunity to have a say on this bill? That's the problem when we see time allocation.

The Liberals time-allocated everything. Every bill that came before this House, the Liberals time-allocated. But what the Conservatives did, in a different form, is they changed all of the standing orders. These are the standing orders that are in our desks and tell us how this House functions on a daily basis. They set out times, breaks—every possible thing that could happen in this House is set out in the standing orders. The Conservatives, with the help of the Liberals, changed the standing orders so that they could move legislation fast through this House. They can now call one bill twice in one day. Before, it had to be spread out, to give time for the bill to go through, to be able to digest what has been said in this House. But the Conservatives have already taken that away. They've already made things tighter so that things can go through quickly. So, really, there's no need to have this time allocation bill before us today.

When the ministers and the House leader talk about trust and transparency, they'd better be looking in their own mirrors to see if that's really the kind of legislation that they're putting forward through this House, because that's not what I see before me. When I see time allocations come before me after they've already made the process tighter, I think there's something to be concerned about, and I'm sure many people in the province feel the same way.

Thank you for the opportunity.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly thank our Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs for leading off this debate on a very important motion. Our minister reinforced for all of us today that consultation is a key focus of Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act. I've been very proud to support the minister's efforts, not only as the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, but also as the parliamentary assistant for agriculture and food. We're delighted that the bill has passed through second reading, and I was very pleased to see unanimous support in the House for that vote. We look forward to its next steps in the Legislature.

That's what we're debating here today: giving this House the ability to take the public hearings on Bill 156 on the road so we can have the best opportunities possible to hear from those people that this legislation, if it's passed, could impact the most.

I've supported our minister's approach from the outset. We make every effort to hear from stakeholders and from the public.

I, along with my colleague the member for Perth-Wellington—I know he will be following me, on the

government side of the House. I just have a note: I'm going to be sharing the remaining time with MPP Pettapiece.

Along with our minister, we're very fortunate to have learned a great deal on this file by listening to those directly impacted by trespassing. I certainly had some personal experiences myself on our farms north of Port Dover.

I feel it's equally important that our colleagues in the Legislature can participate, can learn through public hearings. We're looking at travelling in eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario, as I understand.

1610

As the minister indicated, there's really no substitution, Speaker, for hearing directly from people about their own experiences, and especially to hear them in those areas where some of these incidents have taken place. I also hope that the motion to hold public hearings in the southwestern and eastern regions of the province will enable other MPPs from all sides of the aisle to be part of this discussion. So I share the minister's view that holding consultations in these areas will benefit all concerned.

I remain confident. We share a common goal to implement legislation that is well informed by the stakeholders that are living some of these experiences. I commend the minister for his listening tour back in early February. He travelled across the province, from Cornwall to Lambton, to hear from farmers and others in rural Ontario on how this proposed legislation would affect their lives on a daily basis.

I'd like to make sure that we do not underemphasize how much listening we've already done with regard to this bill. Whether it's the minister's tour, consultations, or proposed consultations, the minister and our government have made sure we listened to the people—to make sure we get this thing right, obviously.

Speaker, I'm not sure if you'd remember, but when the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs first introduced this legislation back in December, the gallery behind me was full of farmers and representatives from municipal organizations and other groups whose lives would benefit from legislation like this, simply to have assurances that they could be safe on their own property, on their own home.

I remember when the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane even remarked at the time that he was "looking forward to debating this bill, looking forward to continuing to work with farm groups, and continuing to work with the minister and the ministry to try and get the best solution possible."

Speaker, this is yet another reason why we introduced the motion. We want to be able to listen to all parties, to all concerned, to make sure we're getting things right. Taking the legislation on the road is clearly one of the best ways to do that.

I'd like to take the opportunity to share some of what we've already heard regarding Bill 156. I'd like to quote Rob Dougans, president and CEO of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, the CFO:

"Ontario chicken farmers follow high standards of animal care. Those standards of care include biosecurity

protocols designed to protect animals from disease. Anyone entering barns or farms, handling animals or moving between barns without following proper biosecurity protocols puts the health of animals, the safety of food and the livelihood of farmers at risk.” I appreciate Mr. Dougans’s comments, as someone—myself—who grew up raising broilers.

Allan Thompson, chair of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, ROMA:

“Biosecurity is critical to the success of rural communities and the protection of Ontario’s food supply. The Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) is concerned about trespass activities on private farm properties that pose a safety risk to the public, farm families and animals. We appreciate this effort to provide new tools to help keep our communities safe.”

John Taylor, president of the Ontario Mutual Insurance Association, OMIA:

“Ontario’s farm mutuals have been insuring farms and farm families for over 160 years. As community-based insurers, we understand the value and importance of safety and risk management of our food supply and our farms. Farm incursions and trespass pose a significant risk of harm to livestock, food security, farmers and farm property. Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, provides basic protection against illegal activities, and we support this common-sense approach to enhancing farm safety and food security.”

Speaker, as a former board member of a farm mutual insurance company which is part of OMIA, I’m certainly with Mr. Taylor with respect to his sentiments.

This motion will allow us to hear from more people and more organizations that are impacted by farm trespass. We know that Ontarians support our farmers and the great work they do to bring hundreds of home-grown products to our tables. Strangers showing up on your property or even in your own home is a frightening thought. But for Ontario farmers, that fear is a story all too real for them and their families. Every day in this province, farmers live in fear that trespassers will enter their property and cause unknown harm to them, their families, their farm animals, and their livelihoods.

Ontario’s farmers and food businesses work hard to protect and care for their animals and to protect the quality and the safety of the food they produce. They do so by following a series of procedures to ensure food safety and biosecurity. They follow procedures to prevent the introduction and the spread of disease and pests on agricultural premises. These procedures, these processes, are key pillars in our ag sector. Procedures are followed everywhere livestock are present, to keep animals healthy and to make sure that our food system is safe. Many farmers go to great lengths to quarantine animals that are sick, primarily to protect the rest of the herd.

We have a very serious responsibility, along with many partners at the federal level, to protect our food system and lower the risk of spreading disease. On-farm animal abuse is rare. It is an unfortunate occurrence at times. Our farmers care deeply about their animals. Our province has

laws to protect those animals. There’s no place for the mistreatment of animals in Ontario, and our government has zero tolerance for animal abuse.

Speaker, as you will know, that’s why our government recently passed tough new legislation, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, also known as PAWS, to protect animals everywhere in Ontario. PAWS now gives Ontario the toughest penalties in Canada for convicted offenders who think that abusing animals is a good idea. Our government plans to hire 100 new animal welfare inspectors by the end of this year, some of them specialized in livestock and, of course, horses. These are the people best suited to investigate and protect the welfare of farm animals in Ontario when abuse is suspected. They’re trained and they know the importance of following biosecurity protocols. It goes without saying: Trespassers, interlopers, do not.

In his remarks today, our minister brought up several facts about the importance of agriculture in our Ontario economy. And it’s important to recognize the critical role that agri-food businesses play in regional economic development as they contribute to our broader economy.

Sometimes what gets lost is the idea that agriculture only benefits rural communities, but that’s not true. It also benefits both rural and urban Ontario. Ontario’s agri-food sector contributes more than \$47 billion to our gross domestic product, making it one of the largest parts of our province’s growing economy. Really, it boils down, when you dig deep, behind the statistics, we’re talking about real people looking after livestock: thousands of hard-working farmers and hard-working farm families. It’s so important that we not lose sight of the fact that farms are not simply just businesses; they’re also homes, with families who are responsible for producing our safe and healthy food. They live together on farms with their children, with seniors. The workplace is truly the home; the home is truly the workplace.

So I would like to end here, Speaker, and I’m looking forward to further comments from our parliamentary assistant for rural affairs.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s interesting to be in this House at this particular time. We’ve heard members from the PC caucus speak extensively about how important it is to debate and to discuss and to consult, and yet we have a time allocation motion right here on the floor, limiting our debate on Bill 156. I’m going to leave the semantics and the details of Bill 156 to our excellent critic on this portfolio.

But I have to say, some of us who have been here for a while have PTSD, if you will, around time allocation, because the Liberals should have had T-shirts made up that said: “Liberals: Here to time-allocate.” They only wanted to hear what they wanted to hear. My colleagues on the other side who served—we’ve been through this process before. They made so many drastic mistakes that were needless because they rushed the process. We used to say to them—you remember—“Process matters. The crafting

of legislation matters. Including all voices and perspectives matters.” When we went through many of those debates on legislation—there are so many examples. They truly messed up the pit bull legislation. They messed up the green energy—and this was when the then Premier, Ms. Wynne, said that she was from the activist centre, and they privatized hydro transmission lines. Nobody could figure out where that party was going.

1620

That is why we value the discourse in this House. It is our responsibility to bring the voices of people to the floor of this Legislature, just as I did this morning with the doctors from my riding who have sincere concerns around the screening of COVID-19. They want to pull that out of the emergency rooms; they think that’s the best practice. That’s my responsibility, and I take that seriously, as do many people in this House.

I was thinking about the Speaking of Democracy display that the Lieutenant Governor did in her suite before Christmas. This is about holding our democracy together and ensuring that the voices are respected in this House and that we remember our responsibility as legislators. One of the quotes from that is, “One is to think. Democracy is complex and untidy. Tasks like listening to the voices of a vibrant civil society, balancing rights while upholding the rule of law, or building resilient institutions do not come easily”—and it does not. There is no easy way to get to a perfect piece of legislation, but you can start by not limiting the voices that need to be part of that debate. That’s a good place to start. Many of us should have learned from the many, many mistakes that the Liberals made.

When you limit debate on a piece of legislation, you are preventing public information from becoming a driver of policy change. Some of the best legislation that has happened in this House has had extensive debate. I’m thinking of the banning of conversion therapy, the concussion response around Rowan’s Law, and the missing persons legislation. None of this came easy. It took time, and it took a concerted effort on both sides of the House.

Sometimes I think we forget, when you just flippantly announce, “We’re going to limit the debate on Bill 156,” that the citizens still are very interested in this legislation—the farming community, the civil liberties communities. They want to be part of this process. I think, and they would like us to truly create a piece of legislation that finds that balance, but you will not get there by time-allocating and limiting debate.

Mr. Speaker, I will leave it at that. We could go on for a long time but we don’t have the time to do it. We don’t have the time because the government has said, “We’re going to truncate this debate on Bill 156 and we’re going to rush this through.” That truly is a missed opportunity, because we also have farmers in our communities—we’ve heard those voices, we’ve listened to their concerns. And then we also have heard the voices on the other side. As our critic has pointed out, there are very few details on the financial support to make sure that this piece of legislation could be successful. We’ve also voiced some of our concerns with this legislation.

So what I would say to the members on the other side who have served through all of those time allocation years: Let’s not print out the T-shirts yet, and let’s make this practice of limiting debate on legislation a one-time thing.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I appreciate the opportunity to follow my colleague the member for Norfolk-Haldimand—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Haldimand-Norfolk. Sorry, Speaker. Thank you very much.

I’d like to add that I also support the motion to hold public hearings on Bill 156 in southwestern Ontario in the city of London, not far from my riding, and in nearby eastern Ontario in Northumberland-Peterborough South. These are two very different areas, but the people in these areas of the province have been impacted by on-farm trespass, and we certainly want to hear from them.

I know I can speak for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in saying that we all appreciate our colleagues in the Legislature taking part in the round table discussions to date. In early February of this year, the minister came to my riding of Perth-Wellington for a round table discussion. Nearly 40 local farmers came out to share their stories of feeling angry and violated by trespassers to their farms and to their homes. They stayed long after the round table was over, just to keep talking and sharing their stories. We heard many concerns from farmers who are frustrated that not enough is being done to ensure that unauthorized trespassing is addressed.

We’d like to encourage all MPPs to be part of this conversation. That is why we are putting forward this motion to allow the committee to travel. This is also why we are giving people almost three weeks to provide written submissions on the bill, to share their thoughts if they are unable to attend these hearings.

I have been very proud of the proposed legislation’s progress to date. It has been a pleasure to work alongside my colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. It’s not every day that we get to be part of such an important grassroots initiative to address challenges that may impact so many individuals and businesses. This is an opportunity to come together and protect and support Ontario farmers and the integrity of our food supply. I have considered being part of this effort a great responsibility and a great honour.

In this case, the motivation for our action came from the wave of concern relayed by farmers, municipalities, livestock transportation—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Opposition members, I’m having trouble listening to the speaker. Keep your voices down, please.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: In this case, the motivation for our action came from the wave of concern relayed by farmers, municipalities, livestock transportation representatives, processors and other organizations such as the Ontario Mutual Insurance Association.

From Eric Schwindt, chair of Ontario Pork:

“Over the past year, we have seen protesters move beyond peaceful protest to illegal activity. Recent actions including trespassing onto our farms—our homes—and stealing animals have created not only a food safety issue but also that of human safety. Farmers need the support of government through the creation of new legislation to protect farm families and our food supply.”

From Norman Beal, CEO of Food and Beverage Ontario:

“The integrity of our food system is paramount for people to have confidence in the Ontario produced foods they consume. We welcome any action that strengthens the safety of the province’s food supply and processing sector.”

These concerns could not be ignored. Now approximately 100 municipalities and towns, including the township of Wellington North in my riding of Perth–Wellington, have passed or supported council resolutions that call on the government to strengthen the protections of these targeted operations.

I would like to describe some of the incidents that have taken place in recent months, to provide context for the situations that Ontario farmers are dealing with. For example, trespassers have entered farm properties with no regard for provincial food safety protocols. I can describe a very recent trespassing incident at a provincially licensed abattoir in the Newmarket area. On February 18 of this year, a large group of animal rights protesters gathered near King Cole Ducks, a business that has been operating for many years. The protest resulted in York Regional Police closing a stretch of roadway on Warden Avenue in Whitchurch-Stouffville. Some of the trespassers entered one of the barns and caged up about 30 birds and removed them from the premises.

I recently had a chance to speak to King Cole Ducks at the Restaurants Canada Show, where they were still visibly shaken up by the incident and continuing to deal with the aftermath and the negative impact it had on their birds.

1630

For those of you who live in a rural area, you know that you start to get familiar with the cars that drive by your house. So when one you don’t recognize comes around, it tends to stand out. One farmer from my riding who attended a round table discussion on Bill 156 shared how, while his wife was at home with their two small children, she noticed a strange car on the road in front of their farm. She got on the phone right away to her husband because she was very nervous about who might be out there. This is an awful way to live. This is the type of undue stress our farmers don’t need—farmers and their families who work tirelessly to provide food to our consumers.

In other incidents, some individuals even harassed the owner of the farm, and livestock transportation companies have reported individuals stepping out in front of moving trucks.

Mr. Speaker, I’m not sure how many know this, but I used to drive a truck not that long ago, and I transported

livestock. I know first-hand the risk that is involved when people are interfering with operators, their trucks and the livestock they are transporting.

I also know how important it is to load and unload livestock in a manner that would not cause injury to the animals, ensuring animal safety and a safe food supply for the consumer.

Susan Fitzgerald, the executive director of the Ontario Livestock Transporters’ Alliance, says it best: “The members of the Ontario Livestock Transporters’ Alliance are very pleased that the Ontario government is moving forward with steps to better protect those who are employed in the transport of livestock from harassment and other unlawful practices.

“Our operators care very deeply for the well-being of the animals they transport and are grateful for the Ontario government’s efforts to improve safety around transporting livestock as well as other measures that will improve our working conditions.”

Others have blocked entrances to farms and processing facilities. All these activities present significant safety concerns not just to the workers, but also to the animals and the individual trespassers themselves. They cause mental health strains on farmers and the truckers who are responsible for the safe transportation of livestock. They can also cause undue stress on the animals themselves, as well as pose a risk of introducing diseases or other contaminants to the animals and ultimately Ontario’s food supply.

This proposed bill will go a long way to protect those animals in transit as well as the individuals who handle their safe transport.

In the wake of these incidents, over the past months, stakeholders have sent MPPs across the province thousands of letters. In fact, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has now received almost 5,000 letters in support of Bill 156. In these letters, individuals have expressed their concerns with the increased rate of trespassing they are documenting. They have voiced concerns over the safety of their families, their properties and the livestock they care for.

We consulted with farmers, municipalities, commodity groups, accredited farm organizations, Indigenous groups, law enforcement, livestock transporters and individuals. The current legislation, the federal Criminal Code of Canada and the provincial Trespass to Property Act do not address the unique risks that trespassing on farms and on agri-food facilities presents. There are challenges in the current legislative framework. These challenges have made it difficult to prosecute these agri-food trespassing cases.

For example, under the Criminal Code of Canada, it can be difficult to prove that an individual had the intention to commit an indictable offence when breaking and entering. The Trespass to Property Act does not capture agri-food transportation. This act would address those challenges by requiring explicit consent for someone to enter an animal protection zone, which includes animal enclosures such as a barn.

It is important to note that current trespass-to-property legislation does not include escalating penalties or aggravating factors to deter repeat offenders from trespassing, whereas the proposed legislation includes these aspects.

The proposed bill will also allow courts to order restitution for owners/occupiers and drivers who have suffered damages, which could include items such as loss of livestock due to disease infection or loss of food due to contamination.

Our proposed legislation will strengthen the existing legislation framework for agri-food trespassing. It also aims to deter trespass activity and provide more tools to effectively prosecute and convict offenders.

To emphasize again: This bill does not change the fact that trespassing is illegal in Ontario. Rather, the bill is aimed at addressing the unique issues that trespassing can create for the livestock and agri-food sector, with the ultimate goal of deterring individuals from trespassing in the first place.

As the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs stated, he has travelled across the province, holding round tables to get a better understanding of how farmers feel about our legislation—from Cornwall to Peterborough to Innisfil to Lambton—and to hear about what kinds of issues they are facing. These farmers know what it means to have someone walk on their property and interact with their animals, and to feel that there is nothing they can do about it. They are scared, and they are frustrated.

During our consultations, the minister met with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario to discuss trespassing issues. Again, it was important for us to hear and understand the range of perspectives from all individuals and organizations across the board. Several of our colleagues from the Legislature have been part of these discussions, and we appreciate their participation and interest in hearing from constituents directly.

Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to appear on TVO's Political Blind Date with the member from Guelph. It was a great day, and we had the opportunity to visit some great farms in my riding. These farmers were proud to show off their operations and how well they care for their animals, because we'd called and asked for permission and we respected their biosecurity protocols. We worked with the farmers to ensure that we didn't put animals or food safety at risk.

I was pleased to see the member for Guelph supported the bill, and I hope that he and all members of our Legislature will support this motion so that we can go to southwestern and eastern Ontario to hear from farmers like those in my riding about the real concerns that they are facing.

As the Speaker will well know from that show, I did leave my glasses on the table as I was leaving. However, I did go back after the filming was over. They didn't get that on film. Thank goodness.

And thank you for watching the program, Speaker. It shows that you're interested in rural Ontario.

Ms. Catherine Fife: There wasn't anything else on.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Oh, really.

The committee can hear from many of my municipalities and the livestock transporters of my riding about why they want this legislation. They can hear first-hand from people in rural communities about why it is important not to weaken this bill. That is why we continue to encourage MPPs to participate in public hearings.

Extensive work and thoughtful consideration have gone into developing this legislation. This approach underscores the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' commitment to support success for our agri-food sector in rural Ontario. After all, the ministry prides itself on growing Ontario.

We are heartened to say that farmers across the province are thrilled that our government has put this legislation forward. They see that we are standing with them to do something to address the difficult circumstances they often face.

1640

We understand that addressing farm security and safety requires an ongoing commitment. We take the matter very seriously, because we want the best for our Ontario farmers. Our government is one that is listening to rural Ontario.

Speaker, I have some other examples that I would like to share with the House of those who are supporting this legislation and want us to get it to committee and out into the province so that we can have these consultations.

I want to read a quote from Keith Currie, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture: "We appreciate the support of the Ontario government in taking the concerns of Ontario livestock and poultry farmers seriously and acting swiftly to address them. Farmers implement biosecurity measures to protect against unwanted diseases as well as stress on our farm animals. The actions of today's activist trespassers compromise our efforts and put our herds and flocks at risk, jeopardizing the integrity of our food system."

From Clarence Nywening, president of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario: "Farmers are worried about the potential threats to their families, farm animals and businesses. They're concerned current trespass legislation is not enough to protect them from unwanted visitors who risk hurting both their livestock and farm property. We urge the Ontario government to improve protection for our farmers from the risk of illegal activism."

Speaker, I've said previously that we take this matter very seriously. We need to get this bill out to these places in Ontario, certainly, to hear from both sides on the matter. That will help us make sure the bill is right and that it is strong enough to protect our farm families, our livestock transporters and also our processors.

The ultimate goal of this legislation is not only to protect farmers; it certainly is to protect our food safety chain. That's something we have to recognize and we have to make sure is strengthened.

Our government is one that is listening to rural Ontario and certainly listening to Ontario farmers. I think that has been demonstrated here today by the previous comments by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. It

has been demonstrated by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, who is the other PA for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Speaker, I can say, as sure as I'm standing here, that we will continue to support our farmers, we will continue to support those involved in the agriculture business and we will continue to do this as we proceed through the committee stages of this bill.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House. Today, I'm speaking on the time allocation motion that is going to curtail committee debate on Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act.

The members of the official opposition have already done a pretty good job of laying out the issue regarding time allocation. They have mentioned, and the government has mentioned several times, that the official opposition has voted on second reading for Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act.

Why we voted for it on second reading is because there is a very serious issue in this province. Farmers are feeling threatened, their families are feeling threatened, and biosecurity is at times threatened by people who trespass on farms, whether unknowingly or sometimes knowingly—people who have a very different view of animal agriculture than farmers do. So we voted for this bill on second reading, hoping that it would go through a fulsome committee process and that we would be able to talk to as many people as possible in as many parts of the province as possible. That isn't really what's happening here. Two parts of the province—two is better than zero, but two isn't 10. Having said that, that's a bit disappointing.

There is no reason, actually, for this government to want to time-allocate this issue. They are very proud of this bill. I'm not sure they should be as proud as they are. I don't understand why they don't take it to 10 places, do committee hearings at 10 places and talk to farmers all over the province. I don't understand why they're doing what they're doing; I really don't.

Why they are time-allocating the part where the farmers, the farm families and the food processors and—maybe because they're afraid of the people who have a different view. But they also have a legitimate view. There is no debate that people in this province are allowed to have opposing views. I don't think there is a debate on whether people of an opposing view are allowed to trespass on a personal property.

Actually, if you look closely at this bill—and this bill has a couple of problems, which I will outline in a second. But what the bill basically does—it's protecting food safety. All it does, basically, is increase the severity of the fines for trespassing. It creates a zone around where animals are housed, where they're trucked and where they're processed, and it increases the severity of the fines. That's basically what it does.

It also increases, if someone is trespassing in one of these zones—if they damage something, there is a possibility that if they go through the court system, they will

have to pay retribution for those damages. But that's actually all the protection this bill provides.

Now, the government will say, “Well, that's the whole point.” Where the minister and I totally disagree is, the minister, I think, believes—I don't want to put words in the minister's mouth; we've had this discussion—that this deterrent, and that's what this is, is going to be enough to stop the issue. We disagree.

We agree with the deterrent. I said when I was on The Agenda with the minister that we don't have a problem with the fines for the trespassing. But the issue is, this might not deter those people. Some people will not be deterred by this. So for the mother and the children in the house, or for the teenager out milking cows, if those people decide to—if they're not deterred, this bill provides no more protection—actually, less than they had before. Why? Because the increased fines could very well make these people martyrs. It actually puts farm families, in an odd sort of way, at more risk.

The weird thing is, the government says they're so committed and they understand agriculture. I've said this in question period: There is no funding attached at all. The minister said, “Well, you don't need funding.” Well, if you're dealing with people who have very strong beliefs, you should have some funding attached. Why? Because if those people come and they're not deterred, what happens on the farm?

This bill goes to fairly great lengths in describing citizen's arrest. At no time does it say, “Dial 911.” It says, “You know you have the opportunity”; it describes it in detail, citizen's arrest. “After you make the arrest, then call the police.” Well, you know what? Don't you think that if you describe how to do that in the bill, perhaps you should attach some funding to train farmers on what actually is reasonable force during a citizen's arrest? What happens when the first citizen's arrest goes wrong? No. That is a very serious issue.

1650

I've heard the minister and the parliamentary assistants say that all these organizations are solidly behind this bill. I've spoken to many of them, and I got the 6,000—I think there are 6,000—emails so far, pro, and several thousand anti. I've asked several of these organizations, “Who is going to be responsible for teaching, for training your members what reasonable force is?” And they say, “Whoa, we don't want this responsibility. We don't want that liability.”

Well, someone's going to take the liability, because we know very well what's going to happen if you have determined people who are willing to risk the deterrent, willing to risk our court system—and our court system is pretty backlogged, so they might not even be taking that big a risk. If they're willing to do this, and an untrained farm family member, an untrained employee, does something that the court, after the fact, is going to have to rule on, the farmer or employer is going to end up in court having to justify what reasonable force is. And if the court decides that perhaps a baseball bat is not reasonable force, it could very well be the farm family member who ends up

criminally charged before the trespassers are fined. Now, again, that is a possibility that this government should think about, and it should make sure that there is funding in place for training.

One of the frustrating things that I've heard from farm families is, in many cases, police have so much on their plate that it takes a while for the police to come—and farms are so spread out. This bill doesn't add anything to the police. When I asked that, to the minister—"We're going to need less policing because there's more of a deterrent." Well, you might deter the college kids, but I think you're dreaming if you think that this is going to deter the people who are truly opposed to animal agriculture. I think you're dreaming, and that's what we're trying to warn you of.

That's why I'm so disappointed, because I want, in a perfect world—and we went to 10 communities, and we could have this discussion 10 times, 10 days over, with all these people and see how we're going to deal with this. I hope I'm wrong. This is one where I hope, I pray—and I'm not even a religious person—that we're wrong on this.

Hon. Todd Smith: You're wrong.

Mr. John Vanthof: The people across the way say that we're wrong. I hope that we are, but I'm not sure that that's the case.

The next issue: There is a part of this bill that doesn't directly protect farm families or biosecurity. I use the term "retroactive trespass," which nobody understands. Some people use the term "ag gag." I hate that term. I'll never use it again. But it is anti-whistle-blower. The part where, if you are hired on a farm or in a processing plant and you leave that processing plant or farm at any time, and, up to two years later, you publish an article or a picture, and you can be retroactively charged for trespassing—that I understand, and I appreciate that the government is solidly aiming at animal rights protesters, but anyone could be caught up in that legislation. And people say, "Oh, yeah, but that never happens." I'm sure a few people across the way have watched the movie *Erin Brockovich*. That wasn't about an animal facility, but it was about how, often, government isn't always perfect at doing inspections. We all know those things happen. Again, if this was just me saying this, I'm a farmer—I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a legal expert—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're a lawmaker.

Mr. John Vanthof: —which is scary some days. No, what's scary is that they're lawmakers.

But it's not just me saying this. Many legal experts in this country have pointed to that part of the bill, the retroactive trespassing part of the bill, and said that that would likely fail a constitutional challenge. Similar legislation in other parts of North America has failed constitutional challenges.

The government will say, and the Minister of Agriculture—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I find it a bit disrespectful that I'm getting heckled by my uncle. The Minister of Agriculture is heckling me.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, keep it for Thanksgiving.

Mr. John Vanthof: I already blew that.

He will say, "Well, this bill is going to be challenged anyway." This government gets challenged on a regular basis. That doesn't even make a headline anymore when the Conservative government gets challenged in court. But who could be hurt the most by this challenge if and when—and I would say "when," definitely "when"—it's going to happen? The people that this bill is supposed to protect.

Do you know why, Speaker? Farmers, livestock truckers, processors: They do a fantastic job. They do. Egg Farmers of Ontario: When you go to work on an egg farm, they have a protocol that you have to sign that if you see any animal abuse, you have to report it instantly to the PAWS or to whomever—and they're not the only ones. They do a fantastic job. Now, like any industry, it's not perfect. Legislators aren't perfect. Nobody's perfect; neither is the agriculture sector. But by and large, they do a fantastic job. They have, I'd say, almost completely nothing to hide, and they're very proud of that.

The problem is, if this anti-whistle-blower part of the act is challenged and beaten, an industry with nothing to hide will look like it has something to hide. The government seems perfectly willing to take that risk. They say they're listening to the agricultural community, but I'm not really sure they're telling them some of the collateral damage that might happen. I'm not sure they are, because that one is a big risk.

When I talk to the commodity groups, I say, "How do you message your way out of that one?" Because: "Oh, we're doing everything right, except for that nasty little court case we lost." And there's no need for that.

The first part of the bill, the actual trespassing part of the bill, covers most of what farmers are worried about. The minister and the parliamentary assistants both brought up King Cole Ducks. I was on that tour. We toured King Cole Ducks with the OFA. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture holds a field day every summer, and I had a blast there. I took my daughter, and we toured the whole facility.

I believe the break-in was this month, and I was shocked when I read that. But that break-in would have been covered by the direct trespassing part of the act. You don't need the other part. Now, I'm not saying that there's never a case where the other part might be beneficial, but I think the risk of being challenged in court and having the reputation of the agriculture community ruined by the government's overreach is far, far higher.

One of the things that the government is very good at—and it's a really good strategy. They got everybody to sign on early. Farmers want protection. I agree they need protection. But they got everybody to sign on early, and now they're very reluctant to say, "Yes, we never thought of that," or "We were never told about that."

1700

But what's going to happen is, if it gets challenged and if it gets beaten, then the government could very well say, "Well, farmers asked for it." They can quote all of the

farmers who never even knew that risk. They can quote all of the farm groups, how they wanted it: “The government was just doing what the farmers asked.”

If the government actually is serious about protecting farmers, it should remove that part of the act. It should actually provide funding to train farmers on how to deal with those people who won't be deterred by increased fines—that's very important—and it should remove the anti-whistle-blower part of the act.

I'm just going to back up to how farmers need training. We all use Facebook and Twitter. I tweeted the question that I asked about the funding, and I had quite a few responses. At first, farmers didn't really understand what I was talking about, but I got one really interesting tweet. It said, “I need some training because my reaction would be to take my tractor and turn over their cars.”

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Come on. You didn't hear that.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. I can send you the tweet. It could have been sarcastic, but I can show you the tweet.

In Europe, this has happened. I can show you the coverage from Holland where this has happened, so we know this is possible. We need to make sure that farmers are trained on what reasonable force is, because the people who are going to risk that deterrent are going to be trained to push farmers' buttons. Don't think they aren't. Why hasn't this government put anything in place—anything—on that?

There's one other one I would like to focus on. I'm not going one, two, three, in order of importance, because this one is as important or more important than the other two, and that's consultation with First Nations. I heard in the minister's speech that they had consulted with First Nations. I would like to know at what point. I'm willing to risk that the legislation was written before First Nations were actually consulted.

Some who are listening to my remarks will say, “Really? What do First Nations have to do with farming?” Well, I'll give you an example. Northern Ontario: The previous Liberal government—and this government is also looking at expanding agriculture, perhaps on crown land. Well, you know what? Crown land in northern Ontario turned from forest to agriculture could impact First Nations. A livestock zone there could impact First Nations.

Once again, is that me? If that was just me saying it—I'm not First Nation. I have no right to speak for First Nations, so I would actually like to read a letter from a First Nation in my riding, Taykwa Tagamou Nation, from February 19. This is a letter cc'd to me and written to the minister:

“Dear Minister Hardeman,

“Re: Bill 156, Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2019

“I am writing today to express concern regarding Bill 156, Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2019. In its current form, Bill 156 and the introduction of ‘animal protection zones’ conflict with First

Nations' treaty, Aboriginal and inherent rights. Additionally, the provisions for the use of force are a safety concern for First Nations people in Ontario.

“First Nations do not appear to be involved in the establishment of ‘animal protection zones’, even though these zones may be situated on First Nations traditional territories. Increasing fines and the requirement of written consent for the use of land places a burden on First Nations and does not honour the treaties.

“The legislation of the use of force and the elimination of liability for injuries incurred on the property are troubling. There have been numerous instances of First Nations people being harmed, even killed, by farmers. There must be a way to assist farmers while ensuring the health and safety of First Nations people.

“I ask that you, Minister Hardeman, proactively take steps to guarantee that First Nations safety, treaty, Aboriginal and inherent rights are respected.

“Sincerely,

“Chief Bruce Archibald.”

So it's not me saying this, Speaker. And this is a very reasonable stance. In his letter, Chief Archibald wants to protect the rights of farmers, but he also wants to protect the rights of First Nations people.

It would be interesting to see at what point the government actually consulted First Nations. We had quite a debate here. I had a bit of a discussion with the House leader on where this bill should travel. It's interesting that we didn't go to northern Ontario, where this is an issue, because northern Ontario is where there is going to be a lot of agriculture in the future, and that is going to impact First Nations territories. Do you know what? This government, if they want to be successful in a few other projects, is going to have to respect First Nations, and this would be a good way to start.

Again, there has to be a clause in this legislation that protects the right—what, non-derogation?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Non-derogation.

Mr. John Vanthof: —a non-derogation clause that protects the constitutional rights of First Nations, because this is an issue. If you create an animal protection zone on former crown land in northern Ontario—I'm sure there are examples across the province, but I know my riding and I know northern Ontario, and there are large tracts of land that people want to use for agriculture that are now used by First Nations. This is a very legitimate issue.

I'd just like to recap what this bill needs to actually meet the objectives of what farmers think it's going to do and what it needs to protect the general public and needs to protect the rights of the general public.

It needs a funding program to actually train farmers on what is and what isn't reasonable force. That is to protect not only the farm families but to protect everyone. In a perfect world, there should actually be some pretty good funding programs to help police deal with these issues so police could get to farms quicker and we wouldn't have to talk about citizen's arrests in bills. For this bill to lay out citizen's arrests is a recipe for disaster. In a debate, one of the other members, a Conservative member, said, “Well,

this is already laid out in section 23 of the Criminal Code, so we're not creating"—well, if it's already laid out in section 23 of the Criminal Code, how to do a citizen's arrest, then why are you giving a vivid description in this bill—other than the fact that you're looking at trying to give farmers tools that they don't actually have and they shouldn't actually use?

The minister told me, "Well, I tell farmers to go into the house and call the police." That's what this bill should say. That's not what it says. It says to call the police after you do the citizen's arrest. Well, do you know what? All kinds of bad things could happen. So that's one that I don't think they're taking seriously. No, they aren't taking it seriously. They think we're wrong on this. I'm not willing—we are not willing—to take the risk on that.

1710

The second one that is paramount is the part of the bill that can be seen as anti-whistle-blower. I don't know if that court challenge is going to win or lose. But if that court challenge happens and if that court challenge loses, it won't be the Conservative government's reputation that's in the toilet—it's already there; it will be the reputation of farmers, who are already doing a fantastic job. They work incredibly hard to build that reputation, to maintain that reputation, and why this government is willing to risk that is beyond me.

The third issue is the issue I've just described about a non-derogation clause for First Nations rights on agricultural land. To the government's credit, I saw the minister nod when other people were talking about the same issue. This is a very, very serious one. This isn't one where you just dot an "I" and cross a "t". You need a non-derogation clause, which we will provide.

Those three things need to be put in that bill. If the government is serious about the biosecurity issue—and protecting farm families is a serious issue. That's why we voted for this on second reading. We wanted to have the moral authority to be part of the debate for third reading. These are the three issues that have to be brought to the table so that farmers and their families and First Nations and the people who are opposed to everything that animal agriculture stands for are safe.

In the end, we need safe food, safe farmers and safe people, and this bill doesn't guarantee, the way it is—it could be amended, and we will provide the amendments. We hope, after the committee process is through, that the government actually puts forward a bill that we can support.

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

Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 75 relating to allocation of time on Bill 156, An Act to protect Ontario's farms and farm animals from trespassers and other forms of interference and to prevent contamination of Ontario's food supply. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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 10-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): This just in: breaking news. The CBC—I mean, the Legislative—

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: It's 680 News.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): —680 News.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Well, I have two. Let me go with this one.

"Pursuant to standing order 30(h), I respectfully request that the vote on government notice of motion number 75 regarding the allocation of time on Bill 156, An Act to protect Ontario's farms and farm animals from trespassers and other forms of interference and to prevent contamination of Ontario's food supply, be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, March 11, 2020."

This note says, "To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on government notice of motion 75 be deferred."

So I have two. I guess it's going to be deferred.

Vote deferred.

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

DEFIBRILLATOR REGISTRATION
AND PUBLIC ACCESS ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020 SUR L'ACCÈS PUBLIC
AUX DÉFIBRILLATEURS
ET LEUR ENREGISTREMENT

Mrs. Martin moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act respecting registration of and access to defibrillators / Projet de loi 141, Loi sur l'accès aux défibrillateurs et leur enregistrement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I now recognize the member to speak to the motion she's just moved. The member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, Speaker. I am very pleased to rise today for third reading of my first private member's bill, Bill 141, Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act.

The last time I rose in this House to open debate on this bill, it was November and we were just starting second reading. I said at the time I was hoping to send this bill to committee so we could have an in-depth review of the ideas I had put forward in Bill 141, as well as some of the ideas put forward by my colleagues from across the aisle—the member from Ottawa South in Bill 158 and the member from Nickel Belt in Bill 140, I believe—in their own private members' bills.

I want to thank both of them and, really, all of my colleagues who were on the Standing Committee on Social Policy, and the committee team as well, the Clerk etc., for all of their help and support, because we took the bill to hearings in Sudbury and as well had them here. I want to thank everybody on the committee for their insightful

questions and contributions as our committee reviewed, studied and amended Bill 141 over the past few months.

During the committee's deliberations, we heard from several stakeholders about the importance of moving forward with this legislation. In fact, I don't think a single person spoke against the legislation. I'm so glad that we are moving forward today with the next step in the legislative process, because as I said when I first introduced this bill, I was convinced that it would make an important difference in the lives of Ontario's residents. It will literally save lives, and it's great to be able to make a contribution toward something that will make that kind of a difference. I think that's why we all come here.

Speaker, in the province of Ontario, we know that there are 7,000 cases of sudden cardiac arrest each year. In the city of Toronto alone, there are 500 or more per year that occur in a public place. Overall, 85% of cardiac arrests happen outside of hospitals. The only effective treatment is a life-saving shock from a defibrillator, administered along with cardiopulmonary resuscitation, CPR. But for a defibrillator to be effective, it has to be used. I think one of our witnesses in Sudbury said that. Ms. Paule Corneil: I think she said that, and I think that's a very good point. It won't save a life if it's not used.

It also has to be located in a place where it's accessible. It has to be accessible at a moment's notice, not locked behind a security desk, in a cupboard in the office lunchroom or some other place where nobody knows where to find it quickly. Really, time is of the essence. Every minute lost without medical intervention if a person has a sudden cardiac arrest means a 10% lower chance of survival. The cardiac arrest time drops every minute by 10%.

In typical cases when a sudden cardiac arrest occurs, 911 will be called—or in some areas where they don't have that, I guess they're reaching out to their medical professionals in another way; but then the paramedics, hopefully, will arrive on the scene. Unfortunately, despite their best efforts, it sometimes takes paramedics five to 10 minutes or more—certainly in rural ridings, it can take, I think someone told us, up to 73 minutes for an ambulance to arrive on the scene. In Toronto, even, it's often close to 10 minutes, and the wait can get even longer in other areas, as I've said.

During public hearings in Sudbury, there was a witness—I think it was Ms. Paule Corneil as well—who was from Temiskaming Shores. She spoke about living in a district where the area covered is 13,000 square kilometres and it's served by, I think she said, five ambulances. The ambulance response times in the community vary, as I said, between 45 seconds, if you're very lucky, or 73 minutes—a very long time. The reality is that it is often too late to help someone or ensure a good outcome by the time the paramedics arrive. That's true in the urban settings, but it's also true in rural settings, where you can wait a very long time for paramedics to get there.

1720

But it doesn't matter—10% of your survival rate every minute. So the idea is you need to have the defibrillator available as soon as possible, and certainly within 10

minutes. The survival rate is about 10%. But if a defibrillator is available nearby, if it's accessible, and if a 911 dispatcher can direct a caller to send a bystander to obtain a defibrillator and use it, then we can make a difference.

Unfortunately, automated external defibrillators, or AEDs, as they're called, are seldom used—in about 3% of the cases, to be exact—not only because there not enough of them, but often, because bystanders do not know where they are, cannot find them, or they're not easily accessible. Now, we're lucky that most defibrillator owners in the province of Ontario already understand this issue, and many defibrillators are installed and prominently displayed in public locations, with clear signage and easy instructions to be followed in the case of an emergency.

Certainly, we heard from many witnesses at committee who talked about the importance of where they're located, the hours the building is open, and whether it can be outside in the elements. Apparently, you can have them in a box, which is heated or ventilated. I think there's a group called SaveStation that talked about that. Those can be accessible year-round, all day and all night, 24 hours a day, because they are outside. That is one innovation that is offered to make them more accessible, but you have to know where they are.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry to interrupt the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I've counted: There are eight different conversations going on around the chamber, and I'm having difficulty hearing the member. I think we should pay her respect and listen to what she has to say. If you want to continue your conversations, please take them outside. Thank you.

Back to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, Speaker. I'm sure everybody is just really excited about this bill, like I am.

Now, some of these defibrillators are kept behind a security desk, as I said, or in a management office or elsewhere under lock and key. Many defibrillator owners who do this really think they're doing the right thing, ensuring that the defibrillator is safe and not vandalized or damaged.

To drive the point home to my fellow members in this House, how many of us can honestly name the locations of all of the defibrillators even here in this Legislative Building? They are around, of course, if you're looking for them, but many of us never have. There's one on the wall in the basement hallway, one on the first floor next to the gift shop and one just outside the doors of the chamber here, under the portrait of Robert Baldwin.

Now, we're all lucky enough that if the worst were to happen, the Legislative Protective Service would respond quickly, and they would certainly know where the defibrillators are located. But outside these walls, that's not always the case. One of the best ways we can fix that problem is to connect our 911 dispatchers, or other ambulance dispatchers, with a registry that would allow them to guide members of the public to the closest accessible defibrillator in the event of a sudden cardiac arrest.

Although there are an estimated 20,000 or more defibrillators in the greater Toronto area alone, only about 1,500 of them are currently registered within the existing provincial registry of publicly funded defibrillators or with local paramedic services. Bill 141 puts in place a framework to do that, based largely on the legislative framework used in the province of Manitoba, which I looked to as a model when first preparing this legislation. This is important, Speaker, because the fact is that many of these defibrillators are already out there—as I said, an estimated 20,000 in the Toronto area alone, and even more across the province.

During my own consultations on this bill, I spoke with equipment vendors and with business owners that have installed defibrillators on their own premises. Many of them had some initial concerns about the use or implementation of a registry, particularly about exposure to potential fines for a lack of registration of their defibrillator or lack of maintenance of their defibrillator. But one thing that we all agreed on is that business owners do not purchase defibrillators because they make nice decorations on their walls; they purchase them because they want to save lives. They want them to be used if there is an emergency.

So we took steps at committee to address some of those concerns. We adjusted the enforcement mechanism to ensure that the penalties will be proportionate to the offence. All the stakeholders I spoke with ended up being broadly supportive of a registry with information available to ambulance dispatchers, to be used in the event of an emergency.

We picked up some valuable feedback from committee about what types of data the registry should or should not contain, which I believe will greatly inform the development of regulations, should this bill become law, because we ultimately want to promote the installation and use of defibrillators across the province. For that reason, this bill also sets out very clear signage requirements and ensures defibrillators are installed in accessible locations so that they can be quickly accessed in the event of an emergency.

It's also true that there are some places in this province that probably should have defibrillators installed that don't currently have them. We heard as much from witnesses at committee. Some suggested specific types of locations to install them, while others suggested more systemic ways of figuring out where they should be installed and what the location should be. We want to make sure that's an option. So the legislation sets up a framework and gives the minister the authority to designate the type of public premises where the owner of a facility would be required to install an automated external defibrillator. I don't want to make any assumptions on the decisions the government, current or future, would make with respect to that authority, but I do think that it's an important tool to have, particularly for areas or locations where sudden cardiac arrests are known to occur.

Of course, in any conversation about sudden cardiac arrest, we always talk about education. For the benefit of all of the members of the House and for anyone watching at home, I just want to take a few minutes in my remarks

to talk about a concept I learned about at committee, which is called the chain of survival. I'd never heard of it, but I think it's very useful and I hope it will be useful to you as well.

The chain of survival refers to the chain of events that must occur in rapid succession to maximize the chances of survival if you have a sudden cardiac arrest. The metaphor is a simple way to educate the public about the vital role the chain of survival has in helping sudden cardiac arrest victims. It suggests that each link in this chain is critical and interdependent, and the chain of survival is only as strong as the weakest link, and you can't have a link missing altogether. Bystanders can help save lives by addressing the first four links in the chain of survival—so bystanders get four out of the five. The links in the chain of survival are the following:

One: Recognize that a sudden cardiac arrest has occurred. If a person is unresponsive and not breathing normally, call 911. So the first part: Call 911.

1730

The second: When you're calling 911 to get help, emergency will talk to you and give you instructions.

The third part is to start CPR. Starting CPR will triple the chances of survival. You have to push hard enough, deep enough, into the chest, and fast: 100 to 120 pumps per minute. If anyone has ever tried it, as I have a couple of times, it's harder than you think. You have to push.

Fourth: You have to use an AED. This is the part that the bill addresses, because often, people skip that part in the chain of survival. You have to use an automated external defibrillator to restart the heart. The machine will tell you exactly what to do, and it won't let you use the defibrillator if it will hurt the person. It will say, "Not ready," and it will only tell you to go when you should go, so you don't need to worry about hurting the person. That's the fourth part: Use the AED.

The fifth part is that emergency medical professionals, paramedics, will come and provide advanced life support.

Six: The person will go to the hospital, and hospital professionals will continue integrated post-cardiac-arrest care, including therapeutic hypothermia sometimes.

Again, the steps are call 911; do CPR; use an AED; get the paramedics there; and get the patient to the hospital.

But there are many steps in there that are done by the bystander. This is why it's so critical, and if you don't have the AED as part of it, your chances of saving that person go down quite quickly. But it's very simple, just as simple as I've explained the chain of survival now.

Just a few days ago, Heart and Stroke Foundation had their annual Heart at the Park lobby day. I was at their reception in the dining room, where they were offering drop-in CPR training.

I also recall that Cardiac Arrest Response and Education, or CARE, came to Queen's Park in December to teach members how to perform CPR and use the AED. If you haven't had the opportunity to try this, I really strongly suggest that you do. It's great practice, and it will help you overcome any hesitancy you have. You could save a life.

As was demonstrated to us at committee hearings, it's just that simple to administer a defibrillator. The machine guides you, as I said. You turn it on, you apply the pads, and it will advise whether a shock should be delivered or not, and it will tell you when to do it.

It's especially important to remember that you can't harm people using it. If a defibrillator does not recognize a rhythm, it will not allow you to shock the person. If it does detect one, it truly is the only effective treatment, and time is of the essence.

Many people don't know this, but the province of Ontario has protection from civil liability for those who own, operate or administer a defibrillator in an emergency. This is all contained within the Chase McEachern Act, which was passed into law by this Legislature in 2007.

I just want to conclude my remarks today by expressing gratitude to a few people. First of all, my friend Roberta Scott, a retired paramedic in Toronto—

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Awesome lady.

Mrs. Robin Martin: —an awesome lady, who first brought this issue to my attention when I said, “I wonder what I'll do for my first private member's bill,” and she said, “I have an idea.”

I also want to recognize the assistance and encouragement of Cardiac Arrest Response and Education, or CARE, and in particular, Dr. Paul Dorian and Dr. Katherine Allan from St. Michael's Hospital; Peel regional paramedic Paul Snobelen, who makes this whole endeavour his entire life's focus; as well as Tiffany Jenkins, Dr. Mali Worme, and Dr. Mia Bertic.

I want to recognize the invaluable assistance and encouragement provided by Heart and Stroke Foundation, specifically Liz Scanlon and Orli Joseph, as well as Chris Tambakis and Avril Goffredo; and, of course, Will Jones, who had a sudden cardiac arrest himself as a teenager and who joined us when this bill came up for second reading. They've all done a great deal to educate myself and other MPPs about this issue, and we're working together to make this happen.

The bill is about saving lives, ensuring that those Ontarians facing a sudden cardiac arrest, a sudden stoppage of their heart due to abnormal heart rhythm, have the best chance to have a happy and healthy life and a full outcome. Defibrillators will save lives, but only, as I said, when you use them.

I had a couple of quotes, but maybe I don't have time for them. So I'll just say that I hope you will join me, all my colleagues in the House, and make this real difference today. I think we have an opportunity to do something really meaningful and save lives.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to talk today about the third reading of what we call the AED bill, the automated defibrillator bill. “AED” stands for automated external defibrillator.

I would say that this all started about a year ago when the Heart and Stroke Foundation was here at Queen's Park. They started to share with us some of the realities of

a sudden cardiac arrest outside of a hospital. It is very frequent—8,000 of them every year. Right now, your chances of survival are about one in 10. I'm strong in math, Speaker. That means that 7,200 of us don't make it. We have an opportunity with this bill in front of us to change this drastically, to improve the chances of survival of people who have a sudden cardiac arrest outside the hospital—in phenomenal ways.

Bills similar to what we are talking about today have been introduced in other jurisdictions. Many countries in Europe have gone the same path we are taking. We see the improvements in the survival rate of people who have sudden cardiac arrest outside of hospital, and it is phenomenal. Rather than a 10% survival rate, you talk about 45% survival rates, and if you add to this a little bit of education, you could boost that up to 70% survival rates. Those are huge. That means that thousands of people every year would survive, rather than the outcomes we have right now, where only one in 10 survives a cardiac arrest outside of hospital.

Heart and Stroke came and told us the statistics. They told us what we needed to do legislation-wise to change things, and I would say that we all listened.

On November 18, I put forward a bill that would mandate a registry of AEDs. Right now, we have them. But they had shared with us a really sad story where the AED was there. The person sort of knew it was there. But in the trauma of it all, where you see your co-worker collapse, you forget where it is. They dialled 911; 911 had no way of knowing where the AED was located. Once everything settled down, they realized that the AED was on the other side of the wall. There were people there who knew how to use it, but nobody remembered. That's what a registry changes. The person who answers that 911 call will know exactly where they are, and will know how to coach you and guide you so that you can use it. This is what Heart and Stroke talked to us about.

On November 18, I put forward a bill, and the same day the member from—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Eglinton–Lawrence.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —Eglinton–Lawrence put out a bill, and a few weeks later a member from the Liberal caucus put forward a similar bill, so we are here now.

I want to start by thanking the members of the committee who actually took the time to come to Sudbury. It's common that, once a bill is referred to committee, people come to Queen's Park to talk about the bill, but this bill actually travelled. It came to Sudbury. And many people in my riding and many people in the northeast had this opportunity to be heard, to be part of this process. That was something that I'm very thankful about. Many people took this opportunity to come and speak to the members of the committee. They felt listened to, they felt respected; they felt that their story was going to help save lives, which is what this bill is all about—to help save lives.

1740

As was said before, there are five steps when we face a sudden cardiac arrest outside of hospital. If it ever happens to you, the first thing you do is you dial 911. Call for help.

The second thing is that you start CPR. Even if you're not exactly sure how CPR goes, or you haven't practised in a while, there is no downturn to starting. The person has had a cardiac arrest; the person is dead. You cannot do any damage. Start CPR, even if you don't do the breathing and you just do the chest compressions, just so that you keep the heart moving so that once the AED arrives—and the AED is super-easy. It has two buttons. That's it; that's all. You turn the first button that says "on," you turn it on, you put the two patches on, and then you have a "go" button. That's it. If you've done CPR, there will be enough movement left in the heart that the AED will pick that up and be able to shock the heart. This is how you get it to start again. That's the third step. The fourth step is—remember that 911 call? That was to get the EMS, to get the ambulance to come there and transport the person, who is now back alive, breathing, with their heart beating, and bring them to the hospital. The fifth step is really to have a hospital system that is able to handle cardiac failure and cardiac problems.

So, five steps: Dial 911. Start CPR. Use an AED. Get the EMS there so that you can do transport. The fifth step is, leave it to the hospital to do the hospital care. We have been told by many people that this is how it goes. The bill will do some of that.

Like the member before me, I would like to thank Paul Snobelen, who came and did a deputation to us. I had never met him before. He was a super-nice man, had been an EMS provider for a long time, with lots of experience, had used defibrillators and was very generous with his knowledge to us. He made recommendations for changes to the bill. The first one that he asked for is, he said, "This registry should be available to the public, and to the local EMS agency, including the dispatch of that agency, and in a format that makes it easiest for the 911 dispatch operator to indicate to bystanders exactly where the defibrillator is located." The bill as we have it does not have this language included.

I singled out Paul, but many other ones told us that in many other jurisdictions, not only do you have a registry that 911 has access to so that when you call 911, they know where you are and they can tell you exactly where to go to pick up the AED, but many other jurisdictions make that information available on your phone, make that information available if you have an app. The app basically comes alive—once you're connected to the 911, you're able to see, but you can also search on this.

The more awareness there is about where they're located, the more those percentages that I told you at the very beginning—right now, we stand at one out of 10. If we want to reach 45%, that's some of the information-sharing that brings us to a 45% or even to a 75% survival rate, using the AED and using the five-step system. This step, unfortunately, is not in the bill.

Another thing he talked about that they would like: When an AED is used on a person suffering an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, the information stored within the rhythm strip—there's a strip—should be available "to the paramedics and the physicians involved in that person's

care. The registrar will allow access to AED data for the purposes of patient care, quality improvement, quality assurance, and to inform future public AED training and regulations."

He actually gave us an example where the person had had a sudden cardiac arrest. So for the person, that was it. The heart stopped. She was dead. They were able to do CPR, use the AED, and once she got to the hospital, she looked so good that they discharged her, because she did not look like she had had a sudden cardiac arrest. The whole thing went so well. Had they had the strip come to the hospital with her, it wouldn't have taken long that they would have seen that this person was in need of follow-up. You don't just have a sudden cardiac arrest and go on with your day and play tennis that night; you should be checked by a physician.

This is a suggestion that was brought to us. I put it into an amendment to the bill. Unfortunately, it was not picked up. But I think there are still opportunities to do those kinds of improvements to the bill through the regulations that will come with it.

As I said at the very beginning, it was really Heart and Stroke, when they were here at Queen's Park, who were the impetus behind all of that. Heart and Stroke goes on to say that they are happy with the bill. They are happy, but again, they have other ideas to make this even better.

One of those ideas, something that we've heard from many, many presenters at committee, is where do you place the AED? Where do you make sure that you have the most chances of saving lives? There are actually maps that exist. Every time there is a 911 call for sudden cardiac arrest, we know where the call generated from. What you do is you take this data, without having names on it or anything, but you can map it and show that you've had cardiac arrest at this baseball field, this arena, this place where we have concerts, this long-term-care home—in all sorts of places—and you put them on a map. Then, you put a map of where are the AEDs that you already have, and then you look at where they are needed.

You will be surprised to see how generous people and businesses are. I can speak for in my riding, Palladino motor, a Honda dealership, has an AED that they bought for the public in Sudbury and that is available. I can tell you, all of the mines in Sudbury have AEDs for their employees, but also for anybody else. Many in the supply sector of mining also have AEDs, just because there are so many people coming through. It is something that saves lives that they have.

But when we finish the bill, those won't be captured within the registry. This is something that I think we should look at: to not just make it public places, but also private places that are willing to make their AED available. We can easily, in the 911, have the hours of operation. For mining, it's 24/7, so it's not too hard. For others, like a Honda dealership, the hours of operation can be available to the 911 dispatch. For many of them, the AED is actually outside of their building. Although they are the ones who bought them, who maintain them, they are outside of the building.

I'll just make a little parenthesis for maintaining. In the bill, the owner of the AED has a responsibility to maintain it. But we could make that easier. Once you register with 911, once you are on the registry so we know where they are, we could easily make it so that the registry will send you a reminder as to when the pads need to be changed and when the batteries need to be checked and that kind of stuff. Here, again, are the kinds of amendments that I had made. Those amendments were voted down. But there are opportunities to put those kinds of changes in the regulations to the bill to make it even easier to save lives.

1750

Again, the Heart and Stroke Foundation said, "Ensure that the registry is not only seamlessly available to 911 dispatchers, but that it is also publicly available in a digital format, such as an app, designed for smart phones." I can tell you that in European countries where they have done this, people use it, and you see the rate of use and the rate of survival increase exponentially.

They also went on to say, "Ensure that 911 communications officers are trained in dispatch-assisted CPR to ensure coaching and support is also available to bystanders." I realize that it would be wonderful if everybody knew CPR. But even if you don't, our dispatchers should all be taught how to coach you over the phone so that you do.

But there are other ways to do this. Other jurisdictions mandate it in school so that before you graduate from high school, you have taken your CPR and you have seen how an AED works. Other jurisdictions do that. Even if it's just like 10 or 15 minutes, but you do this in grade 9 and grade 10 and grade 11, and the students get to see what it looks like, what the pads look like and become familiar with it, it makes a huge difference, because then you have a familiarity and people are not scared of using it.

Let's face it: When we need to use an AED, it's usually in a critical position. Everything is very stressful. You've just seen somebody faint or die in front of you. You are the bystander that is there. A lot of people panic; it's very normal. Dial 911. They will help you; they will coach you.

I would have liked for all of that to be included in the bill; it was not. But again, I think the spirit behind the bill is really to save lives. The fact that the Legislature will vote on this—I'm hoping it will be a yes; I feel pretty good about that—we have set in motion a big step. Now let's make sure that the other little steps that could bring us closer to the 70% survival rate rather than the 44% or 45% are put in place. Things like, in Toronto right now, we have 1,500 registered AEDs, yet close to 15,000 AEDs have been sold but we don't know where they are. Again, I tried to make amendments to the bill so that we include not only public places but private—they wouldn't have to; it would be completely voluntary. But at least, if they wanted to be on the registry, they would be. Right now, the way this bill is written, it will be difficult to do this.

I see that the time is going. I had made a number of other amendments. This is something that will save lives. The bill, as it is now, will increase the survival rate of people who have a sudden cardiac arrest outside of

hospital. Let's build upon what we have learned. Let's build upon what we have heard from the deputants who came to talk to us, to really make sure that the education is there, that other locations but public places—that we do the map so that we see where they are needed, and let the people know that it would be really good to have an AED at this park. You would be surprised by the community groups that could come together and purchase one of those. They are between \$800 and \$2,000. They are expensive, but they are feasible through fundraisers to make them available.

Je suis heureuse d'appuyer le projet de loi. Je crois qu'avec le projet de loi, on va sauver des vies. Je crois que c'est un pas important dans la bonne direction et qu'on a l'opportunité, avec ce premier pas, de faire plusieurs autres petits pas qui vont nous amener à 10 % des gens qui survivent et à aller jusqu'à 45 % ou même 70 % des gens qui survivent.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Looking at the time on the clock, we can either do further debate or the government House leader could call an end to the debate for the day. I turn to the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think we can call an end to the debate for the day. No further business.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): My apologies. I was getting ahead of myself. You would have to move adjournment of the debate, and I know you don't want to do that, so we'll call for further debate and we'll run out the clock up until 6 o'clock.

Further debate? Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak for a few minutes on this bill. Firstly, I congratulate the member for Eglinton–Lawrence for bringing the bill forward and, of course, the members for Nickel Belt and Ottawa South, also, who brought bills forward on this as well.

There are obviously some opportunities when this House—well, the House does good work all of the time, regardless of whether we agree on things or not. I think the House does really good work, but this is obviously one of those occasions when the House does spectacular work in looking at private members' business in a very constructive way.

I think the members for Eglinton–Lawrence and Nickel Belt talked about the fact that this bill travelled to their communities, and I'm told that a number of presentations were made.

Obviously this is something that is very important, not only to all members in this House—but I know, for my part, Mr. Speaker, I became aware of these devices when I was approached by a constituent of mine called Rescue 7. I didn't actually have any real idea of what it was, but the more I learned about this technology and the good work that it did, then I realized how important it was. Not two weeks after I learned about these devices, the

president of my riding association—her husband had a heart attack on the ice, and it was because of a defibrillator that he was able to be brought back to life. It's remarkable that just an individual following instructions was able to do this.

Of course, in my time in Ottawa, this was something that we also focused on. There was a national program of \$10 million to bring these devices into community centres and arenas across Canada. It's something that I'm quite proud of.

I know that as we move forward on the process, I hope that some additional members will have the opportunity to speak on this. I know the member will be working very closely with the members opposite with respect to the regulations that will become part of this bill.

We heard what the member for Nickel Belt was saying. We heard of course from the member for Ottawa South when it came to discussions on the regulations that could be part of this bill. I know the member for Eglinton–Lawrence will be spearheading some of the discussion on that as well, Mr. Speaker.

In conclusion, let me just say—I know we only have a few minutes left, and I can pick up the debate tomorrow—that I guess I'm most proud of the fact not only that the member has brought the bill forward, but here we are, on a Tuesday afternoon in the middle of a legislative session and we're talking about private members' business, Mr. Speaker.

I think that really speaks volumes. To all of the members of the House: When we have good bills, it doesn't matter who brings it forward; this House will find the time to bring those bills forward. Thank you again to the members who—and I see the time is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Well, the sand drifting through the hourglass has—this day of our life has come to an end, the debate on this day of our life. Therefore, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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