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15 septembre 2020

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 15 September 2020

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 15 septembre 2020

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly be amended as follows:

Standing order 7(d) is deleted and the following substituted:

“7(d) Such motion may stipulate that the House shall continue to meet to a specified time not later than midnight.

“Such a motion may apply to one day or to more than one day and, in the latter case, shall specify whether a different specified time applies to different days. The question on such a motion shall be put forthwith and without amendment or debate. If a recorded vote is requested by five members, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.”

Standing order 9(a) is deleted and the following substituted, subject to the proviso noted below:

“9(a) The weekly meeting schedule for the House when it is in session shall be:

Day	Time	Proceeding
Monday	10:15 a.m.	Morning routine: Members' statements Introduction of visitors Question period Deferred votes
	Following morning routine	Recess
	1:00 p.m.	Afternoon routine: Introduction of visitors Reports by committees Introduction of bills Statements by the ministry and responses Motions Petitions

	Following afternoon routine	Orders of the day
	6:00 p.m.	Adjournment
Tuesday	9:00 a.m.	Orders of the day
	10:15 a.m.	Morning routine: Members' statements Introduction of visitors Question period Deferred votes
	Following morning routine	Recess
	3:00 p.m.	Afternoon routine: Introduction of visitors Reports by committees Introduction of bills Statements by the ministry and responses Motions Petitions
	Following afternoon routine	Orders of the day
	6:00 p.m.	Private members' public business
	Following private members' public business	Adjournment
Wednesday	9:00 a.m.	Orders of the day
	10:15 a.m.	Morning routine: Members' statements Introduction of visitors Question period Deferred votes
	Following morning routine	Recess
	3:00 p.m.	Afternoon routine: Introduction of visitors Reports by committees Introduction of bills Statements by the ministry and responses Motions Petitions

	Following afternoon routine	Orders of the day
	6:00 p.m.	Private members' public business
	Following private members' public business	Adjournment
Thursday	9:00 a.m.	Orders of the day
	10:15 a.m.	Morning routine: Members' statements Introduction of visitors Question period Deferred votes
	1:00 p.m.	Afternoon routine: Introduction of visitors Reports by committees Introduction of bills Statements by the ministry and responses Motions Petitions
	Following afternoon routine	Orders of the day
	6:00 p.m.	Private members' public business
	Following private members' public business	Adjournment

Provided that until the end of the spring 2021 meeting period, the following is deemed to be part of the chart in the new standing order 9(a):

Day	Time	Proceeding
Monday	9:00 a.m.	Private members' public business
	Following private members' public business	Orders of the day

Standing Order 10(b) is deleted and the following substituted:

"10(b) At the points each day when the House arrives at a transition from one proceeding to another, as set out in standing order 9(a), the Speaker shall interrupt and call the next proceeding and, if applicable, the matter under consideration at the point of interruption shall be deemed to be adjourned."

Standing order 27 is amended by adding after the first sentence, "This time will be reduced to five minutes for speeches to which less than 10 minutes is allotted."

Standing order 30(i) is deleted and the following substituted:

"30(i) Divisions requested on motions to adjourn the House or the debate, or that the Chair of a Committee of the Whole House report progress and ask for leave to meet again or leave the chair, shall not be deferred."

Standing order 35(g) is amended, for the duration of the 42nd Parliament only, by adding, "In addition to the Speaker's allotment of questions to independent members under this standing order, the Speaker may also allot to independent members the slots for what would otherwise be the fourth and fifth questions allotted to government members."

Standing order 36(a) is amended by deleting the words "on the adjournment of the House" and "at the time of adjournment that day."

Standing order 36(b) is deleted and the following substituted:

"(b) Where notice has been given and reasons filed, as provided in clause (a), following private members' public business on any Tuesday or Wednesday, the Speaker shall call for the matter to be debated for not more than 10 minutes, five minutes to be allotted to the member raising the matter and five minutes to the minister or to his or her parliamentary assistant to reply if he or she so wishes."

Standing order 36(c) is deleted and the following substituted:

"(c) No more than three such matters of which notice has been given and reasons filed shall be debated on any single sessional day. No motion may be moved and no other business may be conducted during the time provided for in this standing order. At the conclusion of such debate or debates the Speaker shall adjourn the House to the next sessional day or, pursuant to standing order 7(d) or 47.1, call orders of the day, as the case may be."

Standing order 36(e) is deleted and the following substituted:

"36(e) When an evening meeting period has been scheduled on a government motion as provided in standing order 7(d), the evening meeting period shall begin following the conclusion of the adjournment proceeding under this standing order."

Standing order 36(f) is deleted.

Standing order 37 is deleted and the following substituted:

"37. Any divisions deferred under standing orders 10(c), 30(h) or 101(d) shall be disposed of consecutively during the proceeding 'deferred votes' and the bells shall be rung for five minutes prior to each division."

Standing order 38(a) is deleted and the following substituted:

"38(a) The report of a standing or select committee on any bill shall be taken into consideration immediately and the Speaker shall put the question on the motion for the adoption of the report forthwith, which question shall be decided without amendment."

“(a.1) If 12 members stand in their places when the Speaker puts the question on the motion for adoption of a report on a government bill, 30 minutes shall be allotted to an immediate report-stage debate on the motion. The time for the debate shall be allotted equally among the recognized parties, after first allotting six minutes to the independent member(s) of the House, if any. Only one report-stage debate may be requested on any single sessional day.

0910

“(a.2) If a recorded vote is requested on the motion for the adoption of the report on any bill, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.”

Standing order 44 is deleted.

The following new standing order is added:

“47.1(a) A minister of the crown, following consultation with the House leaders of the recognized parties, may place a substantive motion on the Orders and Notices paper identifying an issue to be debated in a take-note debate.

“(b) The motion in clause (a) shall set out the day and time for the take-note debate.

“(c) The debate indicated in the notice shall be taken up

“(i) upon the commencement of orders of the day in the afternoon of the designated day; or

“(ii) at the ordinary hour of adjournment on a Monday; or

“(iii) following private members’ public business on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, whichever the notice in clause (a) specifies.

“(d) A take-note debate shall not be designated to be taken up during afternoon orders of the day on a day on which notice of an opposition day has already been given.

“(e) Notwithstanding standing order 26(a), no member may speak for longer than 10 minutes.

“(f) The Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and declare the debate concluded,

“(i) At 6 p.m. for a debate that takes place pursuant to clause (c)(i), or

“(ii) After no more than four hours for a debate that takes place pursuant to clauses (c)(ii) or (iii).

“(g) No motion may be moved during a take-note debate.

“(h) When a take-note debate is designated to be taken up at the ordinary hour of adjournment on a Tuesday or Wednesday, the adjournment proceedings under standing order 36 shall not apply.”

Standing order 49(d) is amended by adding at the end “nor shall such a motion be made more than once during a single speech, within the meaning of standing order 26(d)”.

Standing order 51 is amended by deleting the words “Except as provided by standing order 10(c), the vote on a motion for closure shall not be deferred” from the end.

Standing order 61(c) is deleted and the following substituted:

“(c) Private members’ public business will not take place on the day the budget is presented.”

Standing orders 74(b) and (c) are deleted.

Standing order 84(c) is deleted and the following substituted:

“(c) Without unanimous consent, no government bill shall be considered during orders of the day during an evening meeting of the House if that same bill has been considered on both the morning and afternoon meetings of the House on that same sessional day.”

Standing order 92 is deleted and the following substituted:

“92. The Clerk of the House shall publish five calendar days’ notice of the date on which any private bill is to be considered by the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.”

Standing order 101(a) is amended by deleting the first paragraph and substituting the following:

“101(a) One item of private members’ public business shall be considered at the times as set out in standing order 9(a), and the time provided for each shall be allotted as follows:”

Standing order 101(d) is deleted and the following substituted:

“101(d) The Speaker shall cause any recorded division required upon any item of private members’ public business to be deferred to the proceeding ‘deferred votes’.”

Temporary standing order 116(e) adopted on December 4, 2019 is deleted.

Standing order 116(e) is deleted and the following substituted:

“(e) A temporary substitution in the membership of a standing or select committee may be made provided a notification thereof, signed by the member acting as the whip of a recognized party, is filed with the Clerk of the Committee either before or within 30 minutes of a committee meeting being called to order. In the case of independent members, the notification must be signed by the independent permanent member and the independent substituting member.

“(f) If a committee meeting is divided into morning and afternoon segments on the same sitting day, clause (e) applies to each segment individually.”

Standing order 117 is amended by deleting the words “post in the Legislative Building” and substituting “publish”.

Standing order 128 is amended by deleting the word “session” and substituting “Parliament”.

Standing order 138(d) is amended by deleting the words “post on all notice boards” and substituting “publish”; and

That the Clerk is authorized to re-number the standing orders and to make such other consequential, editorial or other minor changes as may be required to ensure a consistent form of expression throughout the standing orders; and

That the terms of this motion shall come into force at 12:01 a.m. on the Friday of the week following the week in which this motion is adopted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 88. Mr. Calandra.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I will be splitting my time with the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville and the member for Burlington.

I do appreciate the opportunity to speak on this and to continue down the path of what I believe is updating the rules of the Legislative Assembly to allow for a greater amount of debate and to return the emphasis to where it rightfully belongs: into the hands of the members of the Legislative Assembly.

We have been doing a number of changes to the standing orders of the assembly over the last year. I know this is the second very robust series of changes that the assembly will be considering in less than a year, and I want to thank all of my colleagues for their help and participation in the consultations that I have been able to receive, some positive and some negative, from both sides of the House, which have helped us get to what I think is another step on the evolutionary path, as I said earlier on, of making this chamber work better for members of the assembly.

Mr. Speaker, as you will recall—and I think it’s worth repeating as just a reminder—we did make a series of changes last year to the standing orders that I think by and large have been very well-received from all members of the House. I want to highlight one, because I just want to do it off the top. One of the changes that we made last year was made to allow a better flow of how debate happens in this place. Prior to the change that we made together last year, an item that was debated in the morning could not be debated in the afternoon. It made for what I believe—and I think many of my colleagues would agree with me—was a choppy form of debate. We changed the standing order, and if I’m not mistaken, this was a hold-off—before we changed the standing order, it was a holdback from when this House used to sit in the afternoon and, I guess, would begin sitting at 1:30 p.m. and would sit well into the evening. When the House began sitting in the morning, the standing order at the time wasn’t updated. The last change we did updated that so that we could debate things in the morning and in the afternoon.

An amendment from the member of the Green Party—and I think it was an amendment that this House unilaterally approved—after debate on the standing order changes was voted on, if I’m not mistaken, the member of the Green Party rose and offered an amendment to the standing orders just to clarify that the government could not pass a bill on the same day. So it could not call a bill in the morning and in the afternoon and at night. We agreed to that change. I think that was unanimously agreed upon by all members of the House.

But, inadvertently, we discovered in July when a motion was put forward to have evening sittings of the legislation, it appeared that it did allow for a loophole that would have allowed the government to call a motion in the morning and afternoon, and when the House didn’t adjourn for a break—I guess it’s tradition in this Legislature that between the afternoon and any evening sitting, there is typically a break—the motion was drafted in such a way

that there would be no break, that proceedings would continue. That allowed the government, in essence, for the month of July, to pass a bill in one day. That was obviously not in the spirit of what we had all agreed upon unanimously in this House. This motion today, the standing orders today will fix that by codifying it in the standing orders that the government is not able to bring reconsideration of a bill in the morning, afternoon, and at night regardless of how a motion is drafted by the government or members. I think that is a very, very important part of it, and it shows how we were able to work together.

0920

I just want to go over it because I do have some time, Mr. Speaker. I want to go over, as I said earlier, a refresher of some of the things that we did last year. I hope the members will agree that much of what we did was, as I said and I will keep repeating, to give members of this assembly more say, more opportunity to debate, and to allow for more vigorous debate on issues that we disagree on, or on things that we agree on.

We had really wonderful debate yesterday in this chamber. The member for Mississauga East–Cooksville brought a private member’s bill forward that we brought into the chamber during government orders. Whilst we all agreed on that bill, there are a lot of bills that we don’t agree on. Congratulations to the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville for having his private member’s bill passed yesterday with the unanimous support of all members. It really was a good day, Mr. Speaker, for everybody to debate on that bill.

As I said, the changes that we made are to help members have a better say. One of the things that we did in this place was—and I’ll go over them in order—we changed how members’ statements are delivered in this House. Prior to the last set of changes, members’ statements would happen at 1 o’clock in the afternoon, and typically 1 o’clock is when people are at committee, other things are going on, or it would be in the afternoon routine, so 1 o’clock or 3 o’clock. We believed, and this Legislature ultimately approved, that members’ statements would be switched to just before question period.

The rationale for that, Mr. Speaker, at the time, and I still think is a valid one, is that typically when we’re not in a COVID-related world, the galleries are full of people from across the province, from our communities and from our hometowns. And when members are up raising on important points and they give members’ statements, they want to speak not only to the people who are in the gallery, but I think it shows respect for all parliamentarians when they’re doing their members’ statements that the House is full. It is preparing for question period. I believe, and I hope members will agree with me, that it has elevated the prominence of members’ statements. Often a member’s statement can lead into question period and the vigorous debate that happens during question period. Again, as I said, I hope all members will agree that that was and continues to be an important change.

Of course, we added the royal anthem to the singing of the national anthem.

We allowed for and explicitly permitted the use of laptops, tablets and smart phones in a non-disruptive manner in the chamber. I know that might seem like a little thing since we were all doing it, for the most part, but the standing orders had not been updated to specifically allow members to do that.

We also changed the way in which members were introducing visitors. That's an important and unique feature of this Legislature, as far as I know, that members do rise for a period of time to introduce people from their ridings who are here watching question period or in the afternoon routine. But I think all colleagues would agree that while it was supposed to be five minutes, it was going a little bit long. It was sometimes going 10, 15 or 20 minutes. So we went back to the prescribed—what was really already in the standing orders. We codified it so that members, including myself, would be forced to follow the rules on how that was done.

We also eliminated the need for a minister to verbally refer a question to a colleague during question period, as is the practice in all Legislatures. I always felt that that was just a time-killing mechanism, frankly. I think colleagues will agree. Virtually every question would come in and on this side of the House, you could rise slowly and then refer the question to somebody else. That person would then eventually get up and answer the question. That was tradition in this place for a very long time. It was not done in the federal Parliament, it's not done in any other Legislature, so we eliminated that.

Now, the consequence of eliminating that, Mr. Speaker, was that question period went quicker and we are getting through more questions than we ever have before in this place. At the same time, we are able to get question period done and still get to deferred votes when they happen, so we're gaining time. We're getting our colleagues out of here a touch earlier so that we can get into deferred votes, and we've added more questions to question period.

We also eliminated the requirement for written authorization of a parliamentary assistant to answer questions. Again, that was a kind of unique feature of this House, that the Premier of the day had to authorize a parliamentary assistant to answer questions on behalf of a minister. We eliminated that. That will eventually lead to parliamentary assistants, as has been the case in the past, being able to answer questions on behalf of their ministers in the absence of a minister. I think that that adds a level of accountability that otherwise would not be there, Mr. Speaker, and I think it provides a needed reassurance to the members opposite in the opposition that their questions will be answered by the appropriate minister or the representative parliamentary assistant to that minister.

Small things like allowing electronic distribution of background materials to reports and sessional papers tabled in the Legislature, which is obvious: That's something that had been done and is codified.

We provided time for a reply to an opposition day motion for independent members. Again, that's something that is important. This House has more independent members than is—in my experience, anyway—typical in a

Legislature. The large cadre of independent members requires us to treat them with respect. This House has done that, I would argue. We codified it in the last standing order changes, and we are doing that additionally in this latest update.

The other thing that we did, Mr. Speaker, in the last session was that we allowed for co-sponsoring of private members' public bills by up to four members, including members belonging to the same party. That, Mr. Speaker, is something that actually is quite important in helping people, I believe, to develop relationships across the floor and for members to be able to work together. We've seen a lot of instances where members—and perhaps even the Speaker; I know he has—have benefited from working across the floor and across the aisle. It doesn't always happen, but when ideas come and this House can work together to push for something that is important to all of us or that might be unique in a certain number of ridings, that amendment allowed us to do that not only with members across the aisle, but with members within our own party. It really helps address regional issues or other issues that are of importance to members, and again, I believe it elevates the importance of private members' business.

We didn't talk about committee substitutions, but we're codifying that in this.

One of the biggest enhancements that we made after the last standing order changes, Mr. Speaker, and the one that I enjoy the most, frankly, has been the elimination of what we used to call the two-minute hits. I'm not sure what the opposition would call them, but it was the reply to a speech. It would be a two-minute response back and forth. We eliminated that and went to a question-and-answer period where the person who was providing a speech had to defend their speech in questions from their colleagues and members of the opposition. That modification alone has been one of the ones, I think, that has certainly been the most exciting for me to see in this assembly. I believe the quality of debate, because of that change, has certainly improved. It also gives a tremendous amount of leeway, or more leeway, to the Speaker to ensure that the debate is on topic and that the questions and answers are on topic.

0930

I would also argue it gives the Speakers more ability to control the type of debate that we're getting in the House, because the Speaker has the ability to recognize members. Members stand and the Speaker can recognize them or not recognize them based on how things are going in the House. I know that on occasion—and I plead guilty to it as well—if members opposite say things that get me particularly upset, trying to stand in a question and answer, a Speaker might not recognize me because of the fact that I was not behaving in a fashion that the Speaker enjoyed at the time. So I think it gives the Speaker more opportunity to control that type of debate, but more importantly, it gives members the opportunity to debate back and forth, which was certainly missing in this place. As far as I know, now that I've spoken with many of my colleagues on both sides of the House, that is the one change that most

colleagues would agree with me has been the most well-received.

I want to get to some of the changes that we're introducing. A lot of the changes that we're introducing today, as I said, continue on in this vein of what I believe is enhancing how this place works, making it better for members and making the chamber more effective than it was in the past.

Now, as times change, obviously the standing orders of the House need to change to reflect that. One of the things that we're doing right off the top, which for now is going to be a temporary measure until June of next year, is the addition of a private member's bill every Monday morning so that we can deal with four private members' bills in a week.

I think this is something that is very important. As I mentioned in debate yesterday, it was with appreciation that the members opposite allowed the House to move in a quick fashion over the last number of months, but a commitment was made that we would do everything in our power to try to catch up so that private members' business could be dealt with in an effective fashion. The addition of a fourth PMB, which is every Monday morning, I think will get us well down that path of catching up by next June.

As I said yesterday in debate on this, PMB, private members' business, is very, very important. It's one of the most important things that we do in this House, because it really becomes the voice of the member for their community or for something that they're very, very passionate about in this chamber, as we saw yesterday, with the member for Mississauga East-Cooksville. I know today, if I'm not mistaken, applications close for the poet laureate position for Parliament, I believe. That was a bill that was championed by the Speaker in many Parliaments and was passed last December—again, if I'm wrong, Mr. Speaker, but I do believe they close today, applications for that—and something that will forever change how this Parliament looks: the addition of a poet laureate.

I know we also passed a private member's bill from the member for Whitby, in co-operation with the leader of the Green Party, reflecting on how electric vehicles and charging stations would be operated going forward, another important piece of legislation. The member for Eglinton-Lawrence passed an important bill on defibrillators. I know that in the very near future, the House will be giving consideration to three additional private members' bills, one of which will be from the member for Mississauga Centre, one from the member for Parkdale-High Park and another from the member for York South-Weston—all very, very important bills for a various number of reasons. All had to be delayed because of COVID, but we are going to catch up.

Not to prejudge how it goes, but I think it will give us an opportunity—by the time we see this next June, I am hoping that we could table some additional standing order changes that might make that slot a permanent thing. But my colleagues and I can work on that once we catch up.

Also on this series of reforms, there are changes to how private members' business is handled. Not only are we

adding a Monday private members' slot, but we are shifting the consideration of private members' business to Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 6 o'clock to 6:45. Why is that important? It's important to me because—and again, if colleagues disagree, I guess we'll hear that in debate. Speaking with a lot of my colleagues about this, I found the Thursday time, with three private members' bills happening on one day at a time when many members are also trying to get back to their communities, for obvious reasons—I know for a lot of the northern members, it's a heck of a lot of travel, but I've always felt that that diminished how private members' bills were handled in this place.

By putting the focus on one bill a day, I believe it offers a number of things. It offers us, yes, the opportunity to focus on that bill. It offers the member who is introducing the bill the unique opportunity not to be competing with other colleagues in promoting his or her bill.

By shifting the time to when we're doing it—again, when we're in a post-COVID, back-to-normal in this chamber—it allows members to have individuals from the communities that they may represent or the people who are impacted by their bill in the House, in the Legislature, following what could hopefully be the successful approval of a PMB by the people in this chamber. I believe that it truly elevates the prominence of private members' business.

Also, what I think it does—because we're allowing votes on PMBs to be deferred. We'll hear during debate, and this is my opportunity, so I'll give my own opinion. I found it very disappointing—it's not individual; all caucuses combined share this, I would suggest. I believe that PMBs, private members' bills, should be voted on by all members in this House. You might not agree with it; you might not want to have a vote; you might want to abstain. But if you've taken the work and taken the time as a private member to consult with people in your community, to build support amongst your colleagues in your own party or perhaps colleagues on the opposition benches, whether a good bill or a bad bill, whatever your judgment is, it is my belief that this entire House should have the opportunity to vote. The old system did not always offer or afford us that opportunity because quite often it would—it certainly disadvantaged many of our northern members who had to get flights and get out of this place in order to get back to their communities in time to be here on a Thursday evening for votes.

But again, by allowing us to shift when the vote for a private member's bill happens, which will be deferred votes after question period, you're voting on one bill, on a unique bill which a member has taken time to work on, when the member has done a lot of work on the bill. I think this is a much better way, and if members disagree with me, I look forward to the debate on that. But I think this really elevates the prominence of private members' business in this House.

Look, we can say it on both sides: Sometimes when you're in government, if I'm being fair, you worry that the opposition will bring a bill that might wedge you into

making a decision that you might otherwise not want to make, and the same goes for the government members with respect to private members' bills that we might bring forward. But I do believe that is the essence of what we do. It's about making decisions in this place and being accountable for the decisions that you make. As I said, good or bad, your vote should be noted.

With that, too, I should also say, as a bit of a segue, I want to assure all members of this chamber that the moment we can return back to the pre-COVID normal in this place—which is voting inside this chamber, galleries open and this building open to the people of the province of Ontario—we will move back as soon as we possibly can and it's safe. And that goes for committee hearings on Zoom. This is not the new norm for the province of Ontario. This is a temporary measure that we're taking. But we want this Legislature to go back to the way it was, and we'll take some of the better parts of what we learned and move forward.

I don't want to take too much time on PMBs, but I do think it's just something that's very important. It's something that I found was diminished by how the rules had changed in this place over time. I certainly hope that members will support me on those changes and will support us on those changes.

0940

I also wanted to talk briefly about the take-note debate. That is something that we don't have here which the standing orders will be putting in place. The take-note debate is something new that we are proposing. In certain circumstances, there may become an issue that is of such importance that members want to have the opportunity to speak to it. It can either be in a partisan fashion or a non-partisan fashion. Whatever the case may be, it becomes of such importance that the government and members may feel that we should have an opportunity to speak to it.

Recently—I think just yesterday—the member for York Centre talked and gave a member's statement on 9/11, and so the example just comes to mind, Speaker. But with 9/11, there are so many different things that we can talk about. I think if you talk about community service and what we saw from people across this country in the post-9/11 time, communities opening up their homes, whether it was in Newfoundland or in other parts of the country where planes had landed, people opening up their homes, a take-note debate gives this Legislature the time to express their opinions—up to four hours—on a subject that is of vital importance to the province at that time, in a fashion that we do not currently have.

I think it's a long overdue addition to the standing orders, and I certainly hope that it will be well received by all members of the Legislature. Again, it's something where, under the rules, ministers of the crown, in consultation with the House leaders of all recognized parties and, of course, any of the independents, can bring forward a matter of importance for debate, and there can be up to four hours of debate on what we call the take-note debate. I think that is a very important addition.

The other item I wanted to talk about was, again, creating more opportunity for debate. Let me hit head-on

what I believe will be the part that bothers the opposition the most. In these packages of reforms, Mr. Speaker, you will see that we are also eliminating what is called the reasoned amendment. We are proposing to eliminate that process.

I know that yesterday, the opposition House leader expressed his opinion on that. In a press release from the opposition House leader through the NDP caucus, the headline was that the Premier gives himself the power to ram bills through overnight. The quote from the opposition House leader is that the Premier—he uses his name—“has made another move to grab power under the cover of the global pandemic. Ford and his government are eliminating reasoned amendments, giving themselves the power”—this is an important part and I hope that we'll hear from the opposition House leader on this—“to ram through their bills practically overnight, with no consultation, no public input, no time for media or the public to read them, and no notice given to the people those bills could hurt.” That is the press release that came out from the opposition House leader.

I anxiously await his explanation on how this could actually happen. I have certainly consulted with experts and I have consulted with former House leaders to try and rack my brain on how these amendments that we are proposing could see the government ram through a bill overnight without consultation, without the media being aware, and I have found no way that the government could possibly do that. In fact, we've actually tightened it up, if anything, by eliminating the ability and codifying the ability that a bill could be debated in the morning and afternoon but not in the evening—two of three potential sessions. I do anxiously await the opposition House leader's explanation as to how that could happen.

I wanted to speak a little bit further about why we're eliminating the reasoned amendment. For those who don't know, a reasoned amendment is something that is an opportunity for the opposition after the government has introduced a bill. They can offer a reasoned amendment, which for all intents and purposes delays debate in this chamber on the bill for two days. It unilaterally delays debate. What we're proposing is that we would be eliminating that, but the bill would still have to be published before it could be debated. So for all intents and purposes, the bill could not be debated on the same day. It would have to be debated at earliest the next day or until it is published in the Orders and Notices paper. True, we could debate things by one day sooner.

But what is the reasoned amendment? The vast majority of reasoned amendments obviously come from opposition members. It might surprise you, Mr. Speaker, to know that—where are we at in reasoned amendments? In the 42nd Parliament, there has been an over 400% increase in the use of reasoned amendments; in the 41st Parliament, the Parliament preceding this one, there were six reasoned amendments; in the 40th Parliament, there were no reasoned amendments; the 39th Parliament, seven; and in the 38th Parliament, one reasoned amendment. So 2003 to 2007, one; 2007 to 2011, seven; 2011 to 2014, there were

none; 2014 to 2018, there were six; and in the 42nd Parliament, the NDP have offered 17 reasoned amendments, in this Parliament alone—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It speaks to your legislation.

Hon. Paul Calandra:—the Liberals, five; the Greens, two; and Mr. Hillier, two. I think that's an over 420% increase in the use of reasoned amendments.

Now, the member opposite is going to say, as he shouted out, that it speaks to the legislation, which really, then, highlights two things. What we've been saying all along is that the Liberals and the NDP really are friends in very many ways. I know they get really upset when we talk about how in previous Parliaments they supported them ad nauseam and they kept them in power for far longer than they had to, especially during minorities. Now, here we have certain proof of that, that they would do everything in their power to make sure that the Liberals stayed in power, because over, what, 20, 25 years, they offered more reasoned amendments in two years than they did—let's put that into context: We're two years into this Parliament, and there has been a 420% increase in the use of reasoned amendments over only two years.

Again, I look forward to the member opposite explaining or highlighting how the statements in the press release are accurate. I don't believe them to be, but I'm sure he's going to give the House his appraisal of how the government could ram things through without oversight, without anybody knowing and do it overnight. That's just not the case.

So we've eliminated the reasoned amendment. Can bills still be amended? Absolutely, bills can obviously still be amended. Bills can be amended at committee. One of the things that this allows us to do is begin debate on issues much quicker than we would have otherwise. This is something that we talked about through the last standing order changes. It's almost like the boy crying wolf over there, constantly. We heard, from the last standing order changes, that the world was going to fall apart, that the government would ram things through in one day—same argument then. It actually didn't happen. We saw the rates of time allocation fall dramatically after the last round of standing order changes. We are getting to closure far more often on almost all of the bills that we are doing. We have seen debate collapse on some bills. We are getting to record levels of private members' bills being considered in this House. I think what we've seen is actually some very, very good changes that have given all members the opportunity to participate.

0950

By eliminating the reasoned amendment, Mr. Speaker, a bill will go to committee, and if there are positive amendments that come out of committee, we'll have those passed at committee and brought back to the House. But here's the difference, Mr. Speaker: What we're also allowing in this is for a debate at the report stage on committee. It's not something that has been done here before.

Members will know that when a committee Chair gets up to report a bill back to this House, five members can stand and that triggers the bill. That's the limit of the

amount of debate that comes post a bill reporting back from committee. Under the changes that we are proposing, if 12 members were to stand at that point that would trigger an automatic debate of up to 30 minutes, split up amongst the recognized parties, on that report back from the committee, on what members heard at committee.

Mr. Speaker, as I was mentioning, in consultation with colleagues on my side and on that side, it is another opportunity for members on both sides of the House to highlight some of the positive things. But if there are things that the members opposite or members on this side were not happy about with respect to how committees progressed or a viewpoint that they didn't feel came out appropriately or if they wanted to highlight a minority opinion or a dissenting opinion to a bill, they can highlight that for the first time in this assembly. It is codified in the standing orders, Mr. Speaker, and it is a 30-minute debate on that.

I think that alone is a very, very significant change which helps in not only modernizing this place, but in giving members on both sides of the House an opportunity to participate in debate in a way that they would not have otherwise been able to do. And not only are we doing it for the government members, for the official opposition, but we understand that in this House there is a large cadre of independent members. We're codifying it in there so that the independent members also have the opportunity to have that say.

What we're doing by eliminating the reasoned amendment is—are we giving ourselves the opportunity to have an extra day of debate? Absolutely we are, Mr. Speaker. Many of the reasoned amendments, and I started highlighting them in the last session, are all the same. It's cut and pasted to the bill. It adds the new bill number and just says, "The bill should not go forward," and, "Send back for consultations." They're not substantive amendments.

Other Legislatures, perhaps, in making these amendments, have more substantive ones, but that has not been the case here, and it is something that I think will certainly lead to, again, more debate, not less debate, in this chamber. Allowing for debate at the report stage, I think, is a feature that all members will certainly come to appreciate.

In recognition of the large, independent caucus or independent members here, the government has decided unilaterally to provide two of its allotment of question period questions to the independent members, Mr. Speaker. I think that just is a reflection of the need to give every opportunity for the opposition to hold the government accountable for the decisions that it makes. Especially in light of the fact that for many months with COVID—from March through to late June—this House moved in, really, an unprecedented fashion, Mr. Speaker. This is a reflection of the fact that the House moved in a fashion that it would not have otherwise done.

As the Premier said to me on countless occasions—when we headed into this, last March, the Premier said a number of things. He said, "First and foremost, on the private members' business, if we're limiting that because

of a pandemic, then you find a way to catch up,”—this does that. The Premier also said, quite clearly, that, “Yes, while we’re in government, we’ve got to move quickly. They’ve got a job to do, let them do their job, find a way to let them do their job, even in a pandemic.” And, as I’ve said on a number of occasions, the opposition has always done that even when moving at that speed. By providing two additional questions, it allows two more opportunities to hold members accountable.

Another change that we’re making, and I did this in consultation with the independents—another little hiccup from the last standing order changes. I mentioned earlier, in the debate back and forth after a 20-minute speech, you’d have 10 minutes of questions and answers. Inadvertently, I allowed the independent members, who would speak maybe for a minute or two minutes, to also have 10 minutes of questions and answers, which put, I think, the timing out of whack, so we’ve modified that so a speech of under 10 minutes—and that’s for all members—will have a five-minute question-and-answer period. I think that’s just fairer for all of the people in the House.

Again, much of this is workflow. I just think that the Legislature works better when we have the opportunity to have proper debate on things and when the House can focus on things that are important to it. By giving ourselves more time to debate, I’m uncertain—and I look forward to consideration from all members—how members on either side of the House will be able to argue that giving ourselves more time to debate important bills somehow runs counter to democracy.

That’s really what we’ve done: We’ve given ourselves more time to debate issues of importance, we’ve given more time for the opposition to express dissenting opinions, we’ve given more time for the consideration of private members’ business, we are closing the small loophole that existed in the transition from the afternoon session into an evening session to ensure that it was considered a unique session when in consideration of a bill and we’re enhancing the role of independent members. Part of that, and that we heard from the independent members, is allowing them to make substitutions on committees. It obviously makes sense, when there are 12 independent members, if they can organize their affairs amongst themselves that they should be able to do that. It was a temporary provision that we did last December, but we’re making it a permanent change in these standing orders.

As I said, I’m splitting my time with two other members, so I’ll just try to summarize. I do look forward to hearing some of the comments from colleagues on all sides of the House on this.

Just to reiterate, what this does—and I’m very proud of the fact that we have been able, not only in the last iteration of changes but in these changes, to put the focus where it belongs: on private members’ business. Elevating the private members’ business and elevating the role of all of the members to work uniquely and to work together by allowing members to co-sponsor bills together in their own party and across the aisle, up to four people. I think it

allows us an unprecedented ability to collaborate where necessary or where it is important to do so.

By eliminating an unnecessary delay of a reasoned amendment, which has increased, as I said, by over 420%, it allows the government to move to debate on a bill faster, yes, but not before a bill has been published into the Orders and Notices paper. Members will still have the opportunity to read a bill before it is debated in this House.

By making the changes to the report stage, we’re adding—as I said earlier on, when we did questions and answers back and forth, that almost went seamlessly. I was surprised at how well that went. After having gone the two-minute statement for so long, members really picked up on that very quickly, and I think immediately the quality of debate improved at that point. I think the report-stage debate will also be a very unique feature that will allow us to really highlight things.

What’s most unique about this, as I said, is that when 12 members stand there will be a debate on a report back. What that allows is the members who are on committee, the members who’ve heard the most about a bill, the members who are most knowledgeable or most passionate about something to get in this place at report stage and have a say before we go into third reading, Mr. Speaker. I’m quite confident that all members will embrace that change. When taken in totality with the changes that we introduced last December, again, I am hoping that we will receive unanimous support from all members on both sides of the House for this particular series of changes.

1000

I have to admit, Mr. Speaker, I was surprised when I did see the press release from the opposition House leader yesterday. The headline does speak for itself, really, so I’m anxious to get progress on this, “The Premier gives himself the power to ram bills through overnight.” It just does such a disservice, a headline like that. But having said that, hopefully the member opposite will explain his rationale for such an aggressive press release. But it does a disservice to this place, when the government tries to make changes, which by and large have been looked at unilaterally. I know the member for Lanark praised them as being—in the last iteration, I think he said that it was the first time he saw standing order changes where the government wasn’t self-serving and trying to benefit itself. I think people will find that these changes are a continuation of that, Mr. Speaker.

I hope all members would agree that under this Premier, there has been an elevated importance of the role that members of Parliament play since Premier Ford came into office. In just a very, very short period of time—and I’m quite proud of this, Mr. Speaker—and over the next couple of weeks, we will have considered and dealt with private members’ business at a rate that I’m uncertain that this House has ever seen before. Much of it is done in a way that all colleagues on both sides of the House can agree on bills that we can agree upon and are very important to the people of the province. I think that’s something that we should be proud of. It’s something that we should celebrate, and that’s why these standing orders are so

important, so that we can put the prominence on those bills so that members can have their say and members can highlight things of importance to them.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I think I will yield the floor. I anxiously await a reply from the opposition House leader. But with that, I'll yield the floor to my colleague from Mississauga East–Cooksville.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): At the beginning of his remarks, the government House leader did say that he would be sharing his time, so I turn now to the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to our House leader for this morning's debate.

Mr. Speaker, one of the many great changes that I've found in these standing order changes—and I actually did thank the House leader—is the use of electronic devices. For me, that was the one of the best changes. When I came into this Legislature back in 2018, during orientation, I asked the individuals, “Can I use my electronic device when speaking?” Coming from a technology background, I was informed, “No, you cannot,” and I felt like, “Wow, in this day and age today we cannot use our electronic devices.” Because sometimes, Mr. Speaker, when you are speaking and you want to back up your speech with some notes, or real-time backing that you want to present with your speech—just like one of my colleagues yesterday when he was speaking. He was giving real-time examples on my private member's bill. I think this change that was brought forward was—in my opinion, I really enjoy it. When we talk about the environment, I think the less paper we are going to use, the better it is for the environment as well. It shows how environmentally friendly our government is. I really, really enjoy this change.

But also, this new change that we are bringing forward, as mentioned by our House leader, is allowing our independent members to ask two more questions and hold us accountable. This is a real change. That we are giving up two of our questions and allowing the independent members to ask them shows that we want to be held accountable. It's a great way of us giving our side of the story and positioning ourselves in front of the public.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am actually going to bring an amendment to this standing order. See, I wish I could be reading this with my electronic device rather than on paper, but I move that the motion be amended by adding the following in the table depicting the Thursday meeting schedule of the House in standing order 9(a):

A row in the “Time” column between “10:15 a.m.” and “1:00 p.m.” containing the words “Following morning routine”; and

A row in the “Proceeding” column between “Morning routine” and “Afternoon routine” containing the word “Break”.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Rasheed has moved an amendment that the motion be amended by adding the following in the table depicting the Thursday meeting schedule of the House in standing order 9(a): a row in the “Time” column between “10:15 a.m.” and “1:00 p.m.” containing the words “Following morning

routine”; and a row in the “Proceeding” column between “Morning routine” and “Afternoon routine” containing the word “Break”.

Back to Mr. Rasheed, the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I'm really excited with these new standing order changes. As a whip—the deputy whip and the chief whip are sitting here—sometimes, it makes our lives much easier when we are looking at votes as well. And also, my colleagues on the opposition side—I think they're going to enjoy this and these positive changes coming forward.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask my colleague from Burlington to continue and take over this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): When he began his remarks, the government House leader did say that he would be sharing his time with the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville and the member from Burlington. We go now to the member from Burlington.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Speaker, I have an amendment to the amendment. I move that the amendment be amended by deleting the word “Break” and substituting the word “Recess”.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Ms. McKenna has moved an amendment to the amendment that the amendment be amended by deleting the word “Break” and substituting the word “Recess”.

I turn back to the member from Burlington.

Ms. Jane McKenna: That's it. Thank you.

1010

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to say, I'm not exactly excited about speaking to this particular motion in regard to yet another change to the standing orders. It is pretty clear, when you look at what has happened over successive years and what has especially gone on since this administration has come to Queen's Park, that the standing orders, more and more, are being shaped in a way that the government can move its business through with little scrutiny by all members of this House. Not just the opposition, but even some of its own members, because, as you well know, every government, including this one, has had members who disagreed with what the government was doing and voiced that in their debates and also voiced that in their votes.

When a government does what this government is doing to yet restrict even more the ability for individual members of the House on either side to be able to hold the government to account and to give greater scrutiny, I think that's just a direction that we shouldn't be taking. I think, in the end, what we want to have happen here is to understand, first of all, that a government who was elected by a majority has the right to decide what business is going to come to the House, and, in the end, they must be able to pass their legislation. I think we all understand that. It's the way the British parliamentary system works. But the beauty of the British parliamentary system is that it was

designed in such a way that allows the government to be able to get its business through the House, but provides for proper scrutiny by way of the work that we do in this House and the work that we do in our committees. Unfortunately, much of that has been weakened over the years, and especially under this administration, by way of practice and by way of changes to standing orders.

When I first got here some 30 years ago, it was very normal, especially for a controversial bill, to be ordered to committee and then to have public hearings that travelled through Ontario. So if the government, be it NDP, Liberal or Conservative, had a bill that was substantive and that there was some concern about, the bill would travel around Ontario, and that was a very normal thing to happen. They would travel, on average, at least a couple of weeks. There was one swing through the north and maybe two swings through southern Ontario in order to give communities in those areas an opportunity to have people come forward and give their thinking as to what was good with the bill and what was bad with the bill. This government has very little regard to allow the public to have their say in their legislative process. I think that's rather unfortunate, because this Legislature is about the people of Ontario. If we're not prepared, because the government won't allow committees to travel and to do the work that they used to do, I think what it does is it reflects on the government's insecurity of its own legislation. I think it's as simple as that. So that's the first part.

The second part is, much of what the government proposes inside these particular rule changes that they brought before us now are all about maximizing how much time they have to debate legislation in order to speed up the process of passing legislation. Again, nobody argues that the government has the right to be able to pass their legislation. My argument—and the argument of many in this Legislature—is there have to be checks and balances. For example, getting rid of the reasoned amendment provisions within our current standing orders I think is problematic, because what you're going to have happen is, the government introduces a bill, let's say, on Monday, and we could be debating it the very next morning at 9 o'clock, which means that we'll be in a situation where there will be little time to be able to examine the bill, to consult with stakeholders and do the work that we need to do on both sides of the House when it comes to scrutinizing the bill.

Unfortunately, the government has not allowed us, by way of doing their own two amendments—which they have the right to do, I'm not arguing; that was their right to do that. But we were going to propose that if the provincial government, in this case, was trying to follow the lead of what they do in Ottawa, there should have been a 48-hour provision after the introduction of a bill. In Ottawa, once you've introduced a bill, you have to give 48-hours' notice to the assembly as to the name of the bill and what it's all about. I think that's only a reasonable thing.

Speaker, I see you're about to get up, so I'll sit down at this point.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I am sorry to interrupt, but we're at that period of the morning where it is time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The return to school and the need for smaller class sizes that allow for safe physical distancing is the number one concern I've heard from parents, students and education workers. While education workers and boards scramble to get everything in place for in-person and virtual learning, the Ford government has taken a back seat and watched the chaos around them—chaos that they created.

Yesterday, a constituent said that when his son woke up for virtual first-period class, he still hadn't been provided a schedule or told what class he was about to participate in. Why is that? Teachers from OSSTF in Windsor say it's because very few teachers have been assigned to virtual classes yet. It's chaotic for education workers, who have no idea how to prepare, and for the students, who have no idea what to expect.

Students with disabilities are being left behind without individualized lesson plans or accessible formats that meet their specific needs.

COVID cases are going up, and if the government doesn't act quickly to reduce class sizes, our kids are going to get sick or lose another school year. Ontarians are looking for reassurance and for action. While the Ford government sits on \$6.7 billion in unused COVID relief money, families are struggling. To my constituents, it is clear that this Conservative government is focused—

Interjections.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: —on setting the stage for private schools, not investing in our public education system.

On behalf of the people in Windsor West, I again ask the government to invest the funding and resources needed to ensure schools run smoothly and safely for our kids and education workers.

And I ask the members on the other side to actually listen to what I'm saying rather than having loud side conversations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Members on both sides of the House, when we agreed to do statements at this time, it was understood that we would give our undivided attention to those who had the floor and were recognized to speak. So, please, listen to what is being said.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to rise today and speak about another important investment by the Ontario government in Sarnia–Lambton. Yesterday, the Minister of

Health announced new investments of \$175 million this year to address critical upgrades, repairs and maintenance in 129 hospitals across this province. I'm extremely pleased to share that as a part of that announcement by the Minister of Health, Sarnia–Lambton's Bluewater Health will receive \$2,446,000 through the Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund, otherwise known as HIRF, for critical infrastructure projects at both the Sarnia campus and Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital in Petrolia. This important investment is in addition to nearly \$1.8 million in health infrastructure renewal funding that Bluewater Health received in 2019.

I'm very proud that our government is acting on its plan to build a connected and sustainable health care system centered around the needs of patients. Renewing and modernizing hospital infrastructure is one more example of how the Ford government is working toward ensuring the residents of Sarnia–Lambton have the health care services they depend on today and in the future.

Mr. Speaker, this is a terrific investment by the province, and great news for everyone in Sarnia–Lambton.

ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Joel Harden: August 6, 2020, was an awful day for people with disabilities in Ontario. Why? Because the Premier of this province made excuses for cancelling a \$100-a-month benefit during COVID for people on the Ontario Disability Support Program. He said, "If they're healthy," get a job. And he went further: He said those on ODSP and CERB at the same time were "a few hundred dollars" a month ahead.

Fact check: A tiny minority of people on the ODSP collect the CERB because they are too disabled to have full-time paid employment.

But, Speaker, what was the Premier of this province actually saying? That disabled immunocompromised people should go find paid employment during a pandemic? That they should risk their lives for billionaire owners like Loblaws? Was that truly the point the Premier was attempting to make? Speaker, people with disabilities in this province live in poverty, and it's because of legislation this House puts into place. They deserve so much better.

Poverty is expensive for the province of Ontario. Studies tell us it costs as much as \$33 billion a year, and it's humiliating.

Speaker, on a personal note, I said something and did something that I apologized to the Premier for last December. But it's time for him to apologize to people with disabilities in this province for what he said, and to restore the \$100 a month they urgently need. Premier, I await your reply.

1020

WHITBY SPORTS HALL OF FAME

Mr. Lorne Coe: I believe that there is a place in this chamber to recognize those Ontario residents who have

accomplished great things. Regretfully, the COVID pandemic has forced the cancellation of many events and celebrations across Ontario.

Over the years, the Whitby Sports Hall of Fame has honoured many homegrown athletes and sports stars. But after 22 years, the Whitby Sports Hall of Fame has delayed its dinner honouring new inductees until 2021.

This dinner has been an opportunity to celebrate and recognize the achievements of our talented and hard-working athletes. Speaker, we've seen so many great athletes from Whitby represent our community, our province and our country at the highest levels, and this dinner has been an opportunity for their parents, neighbours, childhood coaches and friends to honour their outstanding athletic accomplishments.

I'm pleased this morning to congratulate Gil Nieuwendyk, Shawn Williams and Carolyn Mountjoy for their now soon-to-be induction into the Whitby Sports Hall of Fame and Whitby history.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mr. Faisal Hassan: For weeks, parents, educators and public health experts have raised concerns with the government plans for a safe return to school reopening. Concerns over crowded classrooms, poor ventilation in schools—and especially in particular the many aging schools that are in our community of York South–Weston—how children are to be safely transported, how safe hygiene can be maintained and the lack of child care availability for working parents were just some of the issues I heard about during our town hall meeting on September 3.

Mr. Speaker, smaller class sizes in schools with proper ventilation and access to cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment is the only way to have hope of our schools being safe.

Special-needs children have unique needs, and they have been left behind during the past few months of remote learning.

We need a responsible plan that does not jeopardize the efforts we have made the last several months, coping during this pandemic. I believe all Ontarians deserve health care they can count on, high-quality senior care and public schools that give all of our children a great start.

COVID has been very stressful for economic, social and health reasons. The safety of our children to continue their education in the securest of conditions should always be a top priority.

WOLF LAKE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today to ask the government to reject a proposed mining exploration permit that would damage Wolf Lake, the largest old growth red pine forest in the world.

I love Wolf Lake. I love the ancient forests; I love the blue water. As a matter of fact, I took my daughter there this summer on our annual daddy-daughter canoe trip.

Only 1.2% of old growth red pine forests remain, making them critically endangered. This is what makes Wolf Lake such a special place and an irreplaceable ecological gem. That is why former Premier Mike Harris promised to make it a provincial park. But existing mining claims prevented him from doing it, and the Liberal government dealt a blow to Wolf Lake in 2012 when they renewed the leases on those mining claims. Friends of Temagami were heartbroken last fall when the Ford government allowed unconditional mining exploration permits in Wolf Lake. Now there is another application for a mining permit.

Speaker, I support mining. We need mining. But enough is enough. Wolf Lake is an irreplaceable ecological gem, and sometimes you just have to say no to protect the places we love. Now is one of those times.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm honoured to rise today to acknowledge the recent measures to support and encourage women to enter the skilled trades, and initiatives from members in my riding that are contributing to the advancement of gender equality.

Our province will be confronting a challenge where there will be more skilled trade jobs than people to fill them. A significant group that will be essential to reverse this trend is women. The recently announced funding to the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario is encouraging, and will be used to support women in the skilled trades.

It is a privilege, also, that the district council of LIUNA is based in my riding of Oakville. This union, whose members are building our infrastructure, has been instrumental at supporting women who are joining the trades. LIUNA has implemented the Women in Trades program with private sector partners, such as Aecon. I want to thank LIUNA for their leadership in breaking barriers in the skilled trades.

I would also like to bring attention to an event in Oakville next week that will be occurring on September 23. I will be participating in the premiere of the Hollywood movie *Misbehaviour*, which is the story of Oakville resident Jennifer Hosten and will be taking place at the local movie theatre, Film.Ca. Notably, some of the proceeds raised from the ticket sales will be going to Plan Canada's *Because I Am A Girl* campaign, which is an admirable organization that supports gender equality in Canada and internationally. Their fundamental objective of gender equality is one that I fully stand behind, and I'm excited for this event on September 23.

NOISE POLLUTION

Ms. Suze Morrison: Residents in my riding of Toronto Centre are pleading with this government to reverse their suspension of local noise bylaws. From 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day, construction has continued unabated on developments right next door to where people live. The

persistent noise is making it impossible for nearby residents to get a good night's sleep.

Speaker, my constituents are exhausted. I have heard from residents with medical conditions who are suffering from headaches because of the persistent and prolonged noise. I've also heard from people who have to work from home because of COVID-19 and are struggling to keep it all together with constant noise disruptions in the background of their Zoom meetings and phone calls.

People in my community are already being asked to take on the monumental task of juggling work and child care from home in a global pandemic, and the constant noise is making an already difficult situation simply unbearable. People in my community are burnt out. They're angry that this government would take advantage of an emergency measure to give their developer friends an 18-month extension on construction hours.

In the interest of the health and the quality of life of the people in my community, I'm calling on this Conservative government to immediately roll back the extension on construction hours and restore reasonable noise limits in our neighbourhoods.

CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Jane McKenna: Today, six children in Canada will be diagnosed with cancer. And while childhood cancers account for less than 1% of all cancers diagnosed, it takes a significant toll on families.

September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Across Ontario, people are building support, raising funds and creating awareness of childhood cancers. The Maggie Project, sponsored by South Dorchester residents Dave and Maureen Jenkins, honours their daughter, Maggie, who died at 12, and helps keep her memory alive while promoting research, cures and treatments. The gold ribbon is the international symbol of childhood cancer awareness. Dave and Maureen have once again sent gold ribbon pins for us to wear in the Legislature.

All month long, Childhood Cancer Canada and the Coast to Coast Against Cancer Foundation are lighting up 37 landmarks across the country, including the CN Tower, Niagara Falls and, Minister Yurek's favourite, Jumbo the Elephant in St. Thomas.

Here in Burlington, Halton Regional Police officers Tamara and Jeff Sandy created Chase's Gift, a charitable organization inspired by the support they received during their son Chase's battle with cancer.

Speaker, a child with cancer needs the help of five blood donors to support their care. That's why Canadian Blood Services is also encouraging Ontarians to donate blood this month in honour of children affected by childhood cancer. Together, we can support these children and their families on their journey.

JUDITH ANNE CAMPBELL

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It's with a heavy heart that I rise today. On August 13, 2020, Judith Anne Campbell came

to the end of her road, paved with passion, generosity, and a solid commitment to giving back to her beloved community of Stittsville.

1030

Judith Campbell was the president of Stittsville Legion Branch 618. I first met her years ago when I began campaigning, and as soon as I met her, I was in immediate awe of this short, spunky, tough and very formidable woman. As president of the Stittsville Legion, she made sure that the Legion was well-involved in the community and, in fact, the Stittsville Legion is a community staple.

Carleton has 10 Remembrance Day ceremonies, staggered over a three-week period, but every year for Remembrance Day, I would always end it in Stittsville. It would always be a chilly day and the ceremony was outdoors—last year, it was actually snowing—but about 300 or 400 of us would gather there, without fail, to honour our veterans and our Legion. Afterwards, we would all go back to the Stittsville Legion for some amazing home-cooked clam chowder and chili. I would always spend that time catching up and chatting with Judy as we warmed our fingers with hot bowls of chili.

My deepest condolences to the family, friends and loved ones of Judith Anne Campbell, as well as Stittsville Legion Branch 618. Remembrance Day won't be the same without her this year, but I know that Barb and the rest of the Legion will do Judy proud.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It's maybe a bit late, but I'm going to remind the members that when we're in members' statements, I would ask you to keep your private conversations as quiet as possible, so that we can hear the member who has the floor.

NATHAN GREENE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I know that some members have already noticed the new mace stands which sit on the table. They were installed to be ready for yesterday's resumption of sittings. Members will be interested to know that they were created and carved by the assembly's very own skilled master carpenter, Nathan Greene. Nathan is here with us today and he's joined by two colleagues from the Precinct Properties branch, Jelena Bajcetic and Rick Boon.

Nathan used mahogany for the stands and repeated the theme of the raised ornamental leaves on the mace itself by carving them into the wood on both stands. The mace is now much more prominently displayed, but it's also much more securely perched at the end of the table.

Nathan previously added his work to the chamber by creating the spheres at the top of the finials held by the two lions which are above me. Those spheres existed originally going back to 1893, as photographs will prove, but they disappeared at some point in our history, and Nathan recreated and installed them to properly restore these symbols of courage, loyalty and justice.

Nathan's work can be seen in many other parts of the building, but since this room is our intimate daily workplace, I wanted to ensure this special addition was properly

acknowledged. We are fortunate indeed to have someone so skilled at fine carpentry among the talented Legislative Assembly staff. Once again, thank you very much, Nathan.

Applause.

NEW BRUNSWICK ELECTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Attorney General has informed me he wishes to raise a point of order.

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to extend congratulations to all those in New Brunswick who put their name on a ballot, and in particular Premier Higgs and my friend Andrea Anderson-Mason, the attorney general, who won with a sizable majority. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Premier. Two months ago, on July 15, the Minister of Health stood in this House and said, "I want to assure the leader of the official opposition that there is a detailed contingency plan in place for a second wave."

Can the Premier tell us when we will see the detailed contingency plan which supposedly has been ready for months?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I can certainly assure the leader of the official opposition and everyone else in Ontario that the health, well-being and safety of Ontarians is our top priority, and always has been. To be clear, we will say that the latest increase in numbers has raised some concern. However, we are ready to deal with them.

First of all, based on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, we have decided to cease the opening of any further businesses or any other organizations for the next 28 days, or two incubation periods, in order to be able to reassess and take a pause to avoid having to return to a broad-scale closure, which nobody wants to see. If we have to, we will, but we don't want to.

What I would say is that wave 2 of COVID is going to be more complicated than dealing with wave 1, first of all because we have flu season also approaching. We know that also results in increased hospitalizations. We also have an increase in numbers of people coming from long-term-care homes back into hospitals to make sure that we can follow up on the infection, prevention and control measures that we need to follow to continue their safety. We also have an increasing number of people who are requiring surgeries and procedures that were postponed from wave 1 who are dealing with capacity issues, but I'll respond further to the member's question in my supplemental answer.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm pleased that the minister actually acknowledged long-term care, because the second wave is specifically concerning when it comes to seniors in long-term care.

A new outbreak is under way, as folks might know, in the for-profit Extencicare West End Villa in Ottawa, where once again the private operators are telling families that they are facing staffing challenges as the number of infections in that home continue to rise. It's my understanding that that number now sits at 29 seniors in that home with COVID-19.

Back in July, the government released a long-awaited study on the dire situation in staffing in long-term-care homes. What has this government done to implement any of the recommendations that the report has put forward, especially now that the second wave is hitting our long-term-care homes?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We do have a comprehensive fall preparedness plan, which will be released very shortly; it certainly does address the issue of health human resources. We know that there are issues that need to be dealt with there, but it is a plan that is going to build on some of the successes that we've already seen. We know that we have developed a robust testing strategy, for example, which has allowed us to achieve over 25,000 tests, roughly, per day. We're increasing that for the fall. We have had over three million Ontarians tested to date, and we're going to continue to increase that number.

We have also seen 148 dedicated assessment centres be created. We are going to build on that as well, because we know there are areas where there are some wait times that are over the times that we would like to see, because we want everyone to get tested who needs to be tested.

But ultimately, at the end of the day, the most important thing that we can do is for all Ontarians, all 14.5 million of us, to continue to follow public health measures, to continue to make sure that people follow physical distancing, that they wear masks where that's not possible, that they follow hand hygiene, and if they're not feeling well, please don't go to work. This is vitally important for all of us in the province, and our plan is going to continue to build on that. All of the other health measures that we have in place, we're going to continue to emphasize them over the fall.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, anybody who says the word "success" in the same sentence as "long-term care" has not got a check on reality in terms of what happened here in our province. It was a failure, a failure from the get-go.

The government has a blueprint for change in hand, apparently, but despite the Premier's promises of an iron ring around long-term care and that the lessons were learned, they have not been learned. Change has still not come to the long-term-care sector, and once again, overburdened, underpaid staff in long-term-care homes are scrambling to deal with new outbreaks.

The Champlain Region Family Council Network recently wrote the province asking, "Where is Ontario's plan? Have long-term-care staff been recruited and trained to supplement the already overburdened and underpaid staff in Ontario homes?" I'd say that's a pretty darned good question, Speaker.

We saw the nightmare that happened over the first couple of months of COVID-19. We watched family members beside themselves, in tears, horrified by what was happening in long-term care. It took the Canadian Armed Forces to turn back that curtain and show Ontarians the failure of this government and previous governments when it comes to long-term care.

Now the second wave is here and the question is, where is the plan for long-term care? With the second wave coming, is there an actual plan? Can they answer the questions of this family network?

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Long-Term Care to reply.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the very important work of our staff and our front-line workers in long-term care under a very challenging circumstance that has never been seen in this world.

I would also be remiss if I did not acknowledge all of the homes in Ontario that have done very well. We need to acknowledge their success. We need to acknowledge where we have challenges and where we need to do better. We must not diminish the efforts of all the people who are working so hard on the front lines, looking after our loved ones every single day.

We have challenges and we are adjusting them in an integrated way through the Ministry of Long-Term Care, the Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario and the Ottawa Public Health unit. I can say we're in regular contact to make sure that we're offering absolutely every piece of support that we can for our homes, including N95s, the valuation of—

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

The next question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier, but I have to say, it's the efforts of the government that were failing people in long-term care, not the efforts of the front-line workers. The efforts of this government failed the people in long-term care and their family members.

But it's not just in long-term care where the Conservatives are ignoring expert advice that could protect us in a second wave. Yesterday, health experts with the Hospital for Sick Children released findings of their study into classroom COVID safety. What they found is alarming. It is alarming, but it is not unexpected at all—or it shouldn't be. Among other findings, the experts conclude that it is "not possible" to maintain a two-metre distance between

students and accommodate more than 12 to 15 students in a typical classroom, even with the desks around the walls.

Can the Premier explain why the government's back-to-school plan allows more than 15 students in a classroom, knowing that this is not a safe way to go when experts are telling us it's not possible to follow social distancing guidelines with more than 15 students in a classroom?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I am pleased to confirm that in every single school board in the province of Ontario, classroom sizes have been reduced—in every single school board without exception, every school without exception. We're seeing school boards work very hard to go well below the provincial average.

Mr. Speaker, we're providing \$200 million to hire over 2,000 new educators in a one-time expenditure to respond to this unprecedented challenge of COVID-19. In the Toronto District School Board, for example, in those higher-risk communities, they are capped at 15 from kindergarten to grade 3. Between grades 4 and 8, they are capped at 20—well below the average—to ensure distancing, to ensure a stronger routine of hand hygiene and, yes, to ensure that masking is in place. We're the only province to do so within the classroom.

What SickKids calls for is a comprehensive suite of actions, a multitude of actions to prevent the risk. That is what we've adopted. We will continue to follow the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this government actually told the school boards to try to find the money in their contingency funds to get school classes down to a smaller size. That is completely irresponsible. They didn't want to fund it. They don't believe in funding public services. They'd rather give their friends tax breaks.

What I'm saying is that we have a similar problem now, not just in the classrooms but on school buses. We all know that. In Ottawa this morning, six more school bus routes were cancelled on top of the 38 school bus routes that were cancelled yesterday.

This is a failure to protect our kids, and that failure ended up with 200 kids and families having to self-isolate after health experts feared that COVID-19 exposure was happening on school buses. That's 200 families who have now had to scramble to figure out what to do: take time off work, socially isolate, make other arrangements. It's completely unacceptable.

The number is only going to grow as outbreaks continue to spread like wildfire across our province. How does this government expect families to believe they have a plan for the second wave when their current plan is actually unravelling before our eyes and exposing students, parents and education workers to the virus?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It is this Progressive Conservative government that has allocated \$4.3 billion to combat

COVID-19 and increase health expenditures. It's this government that put \$1.3 billion, invested to ensure we can respond to keep our schools safe.

In the context of social services, we are investing more to ensure that all families, all students remain safe as we respond to this unprecedented challenge.

In the context of busing, it's a billion dollars, on an annual basis, that we're putting in place, but in addition, to respond to this challenge, \$40 million to increase cleaning, assigned seating of every bus in the province of Ontario, PPE for all staff, training for all bus drivers, and the driver retention program, \$40 million to incent them to participate and to stay in as workers—we've provided that extension, Speaker—and \$25 million for route protection.

In each and every area, we lead this nation because we are fully committed to the protection of all staff and all students in Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I think what it is that the education minister just admitted is that their plan is failing. Their plan is failing, because kids are getting sick and families are having to isolate. That's what's happening in reality.

For months now, we've been telling this government—for months—that without schools and without child care, the everyday Ontarians who actually drive our province forward can't get to work, and our entire economy, the entire economic recovery is going to actually be at risk because they have not done the right thing.

The Premier keeps insisting that no expense is going to be spared or that no expense has been spared. But students and their parents see crowded classrooms every day, cancelled bus routes and case counts that keep climbing. Why does the Premier have his head in the sand waiting for a second wave to hit instead of taking the action that he knows would help Ontarians, the action that he knows could stop the spread of COVID-19 in our schools, in our work places and buses and everywhere else around the province?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The Minister of Health only days ago put a four-week pause in this province to ensure that the children of this province come first. It's the Minister of Health who confirmed that a plan is forthcoming in the context of the second wave. It is this government that put \$50 million to respond to influenza, and other issues that will arise within our schools—\$1.3 billion.

To the Leader of the Opposition, we are spending twice the rate of what the New Democrats are in British Columbia by any measurement. We are fully committed to the safety of our—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: And in this province, as one of the members opposite wants to know more about what we're doing and what the other provinces are not, we are the only province to have invested this level of funding in cleaning; the only province to have the most comprehensive masking protocol, insisting in classrooms from grade

4 and up; the only province dedicating more funding to student mental health; the only province in the federation with a testing capacity for asymptomatic students in high school; and yes, we're the only province that financed and mandated health and safety training for every single educator and every single supply teacher. We will do whatever it takes to keep kids safe.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. The situation at Health Sciences North in Sudbury is getting more dire by the day. The hospital is presently operating at 104% capacity. Last week, they had to cancel every single elective surgery due to overcrowding. The government says that they have a plan to clear the surgical backlog, but what is clear is that they either do not have a plan or the plan is not working.

Will the Premier commit today to providing additional, adequate funding to relieve the strain on Health Sciences North and help the people who are sick and in pain get the surgery that they desperately need?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the question. We certainly understand that there are capacity issues in many hospitals across Ontario, with Health Sciences North being one that's experiencing particular capacity problems. It is a part of our fall preparedness plan that we want to make sure that hospitals are going to be able to expand their capacity, particularly for critical care beds and for vented beds. We have made an investment in a significant increase in the number of ventilators that are going to be available. We want to make sure that every hospital is going to be able to meet these challenges, that they have the supplies, that they have the space that they need. That will be a significant part of our fall plan, which is going to be released very shortly.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: With no help and no plan in sight from the government, the situation at Health Sciences North is only going to get worse. August and September are usually the quiet months at the hospital, but fall and flu season are coming up quickly, and a second wave of COVID would make things worse, if not disastrous.

The Premier and this minister cannot leave our hospital to cobble together a plan on their own. Our community, our health care system needs our hospital to be functional, and they need it to be able to withstand the surge in illness coming in a couple of months.

1050

Will the Premier and the minister provide the Sudbury health care system and Health Sciences North with the funding needed to end the overcrowding, catch up on the cancelled surgeries due to COVID and withstand the increase in the fall surge?

Hon. Christine Elliott: As I indicated earlier in a previous question, the response to wave 2 is going to be more difficult and challenging than the response to wave 1 for the very reasons that you've outlined. We have

thousands of surgeries and procedures that were postponed during wave 1 to create that capacity in our hospital system. We don't want people to have to wait any longer for those surgeries. We know that they need them, whether they're orthopedic surgeries, cancer surgeries, cataract surgeries or cardiac surgeries—whatever else that they need. We want that to continue. We know we need to create extra capacity in our hospital system.

We also know that flu season is coming forward. We're preparing for a very, very significant response to flu season to try and keep people out of hospitals. We also know that we have some people who have come back into hospital from long-term care because we need to create that capacity in the long-term-care homes to have that infection prevention and control.

We know that there are a lot of hospitals that are waiting for that response. We are addressing that in our fall preparedness plan to allow hospitals to have that additional financial ability to create that capacity. That will be detailed in our fall plan, which is going to be coming forward and released very soon so that—

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

Next question.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is to the Minister of Education. Many people in my riding have spoken to me about the importance of access to child care spaces. I've been holding regular meetings with various child care operators in my riding where we discuss our common goals in providing the very best child care for families in Peterborough–Kawartha.

I would like to recognize some of the incredible leaders in child care, especially over the last few months with the closure of the centres and then the subsequent reopenings. A special and heartfelt thank you to Ann Cathcart-Andrews, Teresa Burke, Kathy Hamilton, Tanya Lunn-Duggan, Moira Vance and Ashley Collins.

I know that across the province, child care centres and home care operators are doing a fantastic job. Can the Minister of Education please tell this Legislature what our government is doing to support these incredible people and child care across the province?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Peterborough–Kawartha for his incredible leadership for the next generation, for affordable child care in his community and across our province.

Speaker, I want to recognize our ECEs and staff within our child care centres who have gone above and beyond from the beginning of this pandemic, when our government opened child care for emergency workers to support our front-line women and men who served heroically then and continue to do so in this pandemic.

We systematically expanded cohorts, doing it methodically, listening to evidence and listening to the Chief Medical Officer of Health, who permitted us to expand those cohorts, enabling more parents, more moms and

dads, to have reliable and safe and accurate child care in every region of the province. We also ensured child care remained affordable by denying operators from charging parents during that period for services not rendered. We took a consumer protection lens and a safety lens, and we are doing what we can to make sure that child care operators remain sustainable for decades to come.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Speaker, through you, I would like to thank the minister for that fantastic answer. It's heartening to know that our government is taking child care so seriously.

Speaker, COVID-19 has brought challenges that no one could have imagined before the pandemic, including the temporary closure of a majority of child care centres across the province. But we, as a province, and the sector persevered. Centres are now operating with enhanced safety measures to protect staff, kids and families.

Can the minister please tell this Legislature why reopening child care centres is so important, and expand on some of the safety measures our government has put in place?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, we know how integral child care is to enabling parents, moms and dads, in this province to return to the labour market. We also recognize that they want to return to work with confidence that their child can be safe.

At the very beginning of this pandemic, we signalled and provided financial support and operating support to help backstop our operators, who faced unprecedented challenges of closure and rising costs. That's why we provided them with more operating dollars. It's why we provided them with training and PPE for all of their staff. In addition, as of September 1, to align with the changes and the reopening of our schools, we have expanded cohorts within our child care very safely while maintaining a strict health and safety protocol to keep the staff and likewise our kids safe.

We will continue to be there for our child care sector. We just announced with the federal government, with Minister Ahmed Hussen, an additional \$234 million in restart funding to ensure that our child care operators are sustainable and that our parents have access to affordable child care in every region in Ontario.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. The economic crisis created by COVID-19 has led to women's labour force participation falling to its lowest since 1990. Why? Because shutdowns and layoffs have had a larger impact on sectors that traditionally employ women. These businesses led by women tend to be newer, smaller and less well-financed than those owned by men, and many women have been slower to return to the workforce as they grapple with the double burden of working and caregiving. For example, employment among women with toddlers and school-aged children fell by 7%

between February and May. The pandemic has been hardest on racialized, Indigenous women, single parents, low-income women, newcomers and women with disabilities. It is unacceptable to leave whole sectors of our society behind.

Is this government willing to acknowledge and address this she-cession?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister for Children and Women's Issues.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question.

We recognize that women have been disproportionately affected by this pandemic—women in the hospitality and tourism industry, women in the retail industry. With the opportunity to hold round table consultations in my own riding, I heard first-hand from women entrepreneurs such as Sarah Kitchen, who owns a hair salon; Ashley, who owns our local fitness club that I belong to; and also Nicole, who owns the Studio Eleven retail clothing outlet in Orillia. I commend these women for the amazing work that they have been doing during this pandemic, the creativity they have taken to put their businesses online, to offer delivery to households. That creativity is so important.

We know that women have been disproportionately affected, and we will continue to work amongst all sectors to hear first-hand from women business owners what we can be doing to support them through the pandemic.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Speaker, women don't need a round table. They don't need more consultation. They need affordable, accessible child care.

The COVID-19 crisis has turned the clock back 30 years on women's economic rights—30 years. The Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey has shown us the data of the she-cession. The Canadian and Ontario chambers of commerce have produced reports on next steps. Without immediate policy action, economists predict that Ontario will head into a prolonged recession. We need to be proactive now to prevent bigger issues down the road. There will be no economic recovery in the province of Ontario without a she-covery, and we should all know this.

So to the government: Where is the plan to increase women's participation in the workforce in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for your supplementary question.

We know that women are overrepresented in precarious work and low-income positions such as retail, hospitality and tourism. But we also know that women are underrepresented in positions such as skilled trades, where only 4.5% of workers are women; in the STEM sector, where only 23% are women. These are high-paying, good jobs that lead to long-term security. That's why this government is investing \$37 million to support 15,000 workers moving into the skilled trades. We know there's an opportunity here to put women into these jobs, where we know, right now, there are thousands of jobs that are

left open. These are good-paying jobs, and this government is working with the private sector to move women and give them the opportunity to work in the skilled trades and to get this economy moving and to support the infrastructure that is happening in this province.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} Lucille Collard: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. Last week, I held a forum with experts and residents across Ontario and from my riding of Ottawa–Vanier on their concerns for our long-term-care system. We heard from leading experts in long-term-care reform and from workers who have seen the effect of COVID-19 on the ground in these homes.

1100

One piece of feedback was clear across the board: The system needs fundamental changes to ensure that long-term-care homes are safe, secure and supportive places for residents. From training and employing more nurse practitioners and PSWs in homes, to revising building standards, there are many ways that we can improve the system to better equip long-term-care homes for the realities they face.

After a lifetime of hard work, our seniors deserve to be cared for safely and with dignity. How has the ministry committed to fixing systemic issues in long-term care to better protect our province's seniors?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you very much for that question, and thank you so much for raising this issue. It is an issue that all of us in society have an obligation to address.

Our government is fully committed to our seniors and to our long-term-care-system reform. That's why a new ministry was created in the summer of 2019—to address the capacity issues that had languished for so many years, to address the staffing issues. We started right away, as soon as we became a ministry, to do that.

We are continuing not only to deal with the COVID-19 fallout, but to modernize long-term care. So we're doing this in parallel, and it is a daunting, challenging task. Looking at how we have the expert panel on staffing to inform a comprehensive staffing strategy, a modernized funding model to address the capacity issues, the integration with our hospitals so that we have a higher level of medical expertise for the complexity of our most frail and most vulnerable people—this is ongoing. I am committed. Our government is committed.

Thank you for caring.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Again, to the Minister of Long-Term Care: I understand that the ministry has a lot of responsibilities that they need to meet. But as Ontario experiences an uptick in daily COVID-19 cases, we are already beginning to see a resurgence of COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term-care homes. In Ottawa alone, there are currently 11 long-term-care homes that are battling outbreaks again.

Having seen the devastating effects of the first wave in our province's homes, it is critical that we use every available moment to improve long-term care, to protect the safety of our province's seniors in the wake of a likely second wave. What is the minister doing to prepare long-term-care homes to safely weather a second wave of COVID-19?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you once again.

I want to make sure that everyone understands that in long-term care an outbreak means one person who has tested positive. That could be a staff member who is self-isolating at home. There could be absolutely no cases in the home itself. That is the case right now with the outbreaks we have in Ontario. The majority have no cases in the home, or one resident case.

There are a couple of homes that are struggling, and that is exactly where our attention is focused—to improve the IPAC, to make sure the staffing is stable, to provide support for the home, whether it's through the \$240 million that has gone out the door to address the surge capacity staffing; making sure that there are additional measures for infection control; integrating with our expertise across the medical system; working with our Ontario public health units; making sure our medical officers of health are in contact with us so that we know exactly what's happening in those homes; and getting them the support that they need. This is ongoing, and we'll continue to do that.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norman Miller: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines and Minister of Indigenous Affairs. We know that Ontario is a leading global jurisdiction in mineral exploration and production. Over my years as an MPP, I have had the pleasure of visiting a number of mines and seeing the impact they have on local economies.

Ontario's mining sector supports 71,000 jobs in mine production and processing, mineral exploration and mining supplies and services.

Can the minister share with this House the significance of last week's groundbreaking announcement at the new Côté gold mine in Gogama to the local and provincial economy?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I'd be pleased to.

I want to thank the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for his incredible work, not just in his constituency, but with our plans for northern Ontario moving forward in an economic COVID-19 recovery.

Mr. Speaker, let's just throw out a couple of numbers. On a beautiful day in Gogama, blue sky, seven million ounces of high-grade gold in the ground beneath us—together with the folks from Gogama, Flying Post First Nation, Mattagami First Nation and others—realizing an incredible opportunity. Over the course of this lifetime, we're looking at \$5 billion in wages for local workers, \$10 billion to the province of Ontario's gross domestic product. And that's in the first 18 years; there's an incredible opportunity for this to go more than 30 years.

And 1,000 construction jobs, Mr. Speaker: 1,000 people got the call this week and next. They got the job to help to build that mine, and 450 people will work long-term at that site. We're so proud of Côté Gold and the local communities for their work on this project.

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

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to the minister for that answer and for leading the development of this project which will bring prosperity and employ so many in northern Ontario.

Can the minister please share the specific ways we've been able to accelerate this and several other mining projects in Ontario in the past two years?

Hon. Greg Rickford: It's true that about 18 months ago, this project had a high prospect of being shelved. Bugged down in red tape and legislation from the previous government, this mining site, like other mining sites across northern Ontario, wasn't going anywhere.

Unfortunately, what this project had in common with the Sugar Zone—the Premier and I visited it. How sweet it was to see that line go live, and as well to see the Newmont Goldcorp's Borden mine completely electrified. What they had in common, Mr. Speaker, was a frustration of a decade and a half of red tape, bogging down and not letting these projects go forward. I think it's pretty safe to say that this government in the past couple of years has done more to move mining operations to critical milestones, get people to work in communities across northern Ontario—despite the fact that the NDP and the Liberals consistently voted for legislation to stall or—

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question is to the Acting Premier. Parents in my community are so worried about the Conservatives' bargain basement education plan that over 10,000 students got pulled from the classroom by their parents. So many families changed their minds that the school board had to delay the start of school. But who could blame them, Mr. Speaker? Case counts are going up, but we still don't have access to enough testing.

The government isn't doing a thing to keep families safe. The Conservatives' failure to plan now means that thousands of families are scrambling to rearrange work schedules and child care arrangements so they can send their children to school online. What does the Premier have to say to the thousands of families in my riding of Brampton North and in Peel region who have been hurt by this government's decision to save money on the backs of our kids and teachers?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, under our government's leadership and under the Premier's leadership, we have unlocked for Peel District School Board alone \$64 million in additional funding to hire more educators, to

space out these classrooms, to ensure air ventilation HVAC capacity is improved and to hire more custodians and cleaning staff. That is just a matter of fact provided by, yes, reserve funding and federal funding and, of course, the province stepping up significantly to respond to this unprecedented challenge.

In Peel District School Board, where I met with the associate medical officer, where I met with the head of public health nurses in that health region, we're hiring, more than doubling the capacity of public health nurses: 64 more nurses hired in that region, delivering critical supports for families in Brampton, Caledon, Mississauga and all regions of Peel.

We are absolutely committed to those families. We are committed to expanding testing, to putting a four-week pause on any future expansions. We have set aside \$50 million to deal with influenza. We have demonstrated in word and deed that we will be there for our kids.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Brampton is being called an epicentre for the virus. As case counts in our community continue to rise and the likelihood of a second wave gets closer, it's not just the parents in Peel who are going to be pulling their kids out of school. Just yesterday, the Toronto District School Board announced that they had to delay the start of online classes after their numbers of kids opting out of the classroom also jumped.

Premier, parents, students, teachers and schools in Brampton and across this province are all paying the price because the Conservatives failed to do the right thing: hire more teachers, cap classroom sizes at 15 kids and invest in the safe schools that everyday families are begging for. Mr. Speaker, why doesn't the government think that these schools' families are worth investing in? Why won't this Premier do everything he can to keep Ontarians safe?

1110

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The safe reopening plan that has been brought forth for the schools of the people of Ontario has been fully supported and endorsed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health of this province, the senior-most authority who has ably guided our province through the worst of this pandemic. What he has said is—likewise, what many other institutions, including SickKids, have made clear—you need to have a multitude of actions and preventative actions to mitigate the spread within our classes. That is the basis for hiring 2,000 more educators; \$200 million to achieve that in every board. We're seeing that in Peel, and likewise in Toronto.

The member opposite asked about the Toronto District School Board and set it out as an example. In those communities at risk, there is an absolute cap imposed, at 15, between kindergarten and grade 3—let me just re-emphasize that—and between grades 4 and 8, an absolute cap of 20, and 15 in high school. We are absolutely delivering funding to ensure we maximize safety, and we're doing everything possible to keep kids safe.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the Minister of Education. Preliminary results from the COVID-19 classroom simulation study run by SickKids Hospital could not be clearer. They found that, “it was not possible to maintain a two-metre distance between students and accommodate more than 12 to 15 students in the class,” even when desks were put against the four walls. Back on June 19, the minister actually agreed. During a COVID-19 press conference, he told Ontarians that classroom sizes would be “no more than 15 students.”

Speaker, through you to the minister, what has changed?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Let me just repeat what Dr. Williams, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, responded when that question was raised:

“We were only doing about less than 10,000 tests a day. Our per cent of positivity was then well over 4% to 5%. So we were looking at that. We saw it in the migration of everybody coming back from March break. We became aware of that. In fact, even though we were told originally that there was no evidence of infection on the eastern seaboard, there actually was, undetected, and so there was a great concern about the amount of spread. Our numbers rapidly moved, as you noted in the numbers you said. We were going up by over 100% almost every other day, to three to four days, from 20 to 60, to 150, and then, the week after, you noted, we were around the corner of 350, and we were right up to 600 fairly soon after.”

Clearly, there have been changes in the risk profile. We have ensured boards have \$1.3 billion of funding. We're giving them resources to hire educators, hire custodians and ensure all kids remain safe in this province.

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: Last week, I met with a bunch of parents from Don Mills Middle School, and they were worried because their grade 7/8 classes were at 36. Thankfully, an extra teacher—which the minister keeps talking about all this money. They got an extra teacher, and the classroom sizes have fallen to just below 30.

The government's plan is flawed. The minister has said that we have the best science backing our plan. Well, the Hospital for Sick Children is at the forefront of child health sciences.

Speaker, through you to the minister, in light of the preliminary results of this study, will the government re-examine their plan, take expert advice and reduce class sizes? Twenty-nine students, even with your allocated funding, is way too high.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I think we have demonstrated, by setting aside an additional \$50 million to respond to influenza and the second wave, we are clearly underscoring our commitment to continue to scale up, invest more and do everything humanly possible, including a \$360-million allocation, as of January 2021, of further

funding to do what the member opposite called for, something that we agree with.

The reason why boards in this province are hiring over 2,000 educators is because we provided a significant infusion, a one-time investment of \$1.3 billion, supported by the feds and, of course, board resources. We have put investments in place for hiring of new educators, for more distancing, for more custodial staff, for expanding testing—in every area, we lead in the nation—and we'll continue to demonstrate to parents, as this risk and as this challenge continues in our province, we'll invest more and do whatever it takes to keep our kids safe.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim McDonell: My question is to the Solicitor General. Last month, the Solicitor General made an exciting announcement when it comes to the province's correctional system in eastern Ontario. The announcement included a new jail to be built in Kemptville, next to my riding, as well as rebuilding the Brockville Jail and improving the St. Lawrence Valley treatment centre in eastern Ontario. These are significant projects, and I know that they will make an impact on the ongoing issues facing the correctional system, but it's important that the part of the design and construction of such large infrastructure projects, input and consultation from all community partners and stakeholders be given consideration.

To that end, can the Solicitor General explain what consultations will go into these projects and how the feedback can be incorporated into these projects?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for the question. It was a real pleasure for me to be able to join my colleagues Minister Fullerton, Minister Clark, the member from Carleton and the member from Ottawa West–Nepean.

Interjection.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You've got to keep listening.

I was pleased to join many local leaders in eastern Ontario to announce our corrections strategy, and the member is absolutely right: Input from our partners is so incredibly important for the success of these projects, and he knows that very well as a former mayor himself. That includes municipal leadership, our front-line correctional officers and justice sector partners, and the wider community across eastern Ontario. As our partners at OPSEU Corrections Division indicated, this investment will go a long way to ensuring professional service delivery across eastern Ontario.

As these projects move through the design process, we will be hosting engagement sessions that are critically important to make sure that we get this infrastructure right.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker, and, through you, thank you to the Solicitor General for the response. I'm sure that members in my community are looking forward to engaging in the consultation process as these projects move from concept to reality. However, the

physical buildings, while important, are only one aspect that goes into addressing the issues faced in the correctional system.

I understand the Solicitor General announced an increase in staffing within the correctional facilities that would support the front-line correctional officers and keep those within provincial corrections safe.

Can the Solicitor General provide an update on this announcement and explain how it ties into the infrastructure projects in eastern Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Absolutely right. The facilities are critical, but, frankly, so are the staff resources, which is why I was so pleased when Premier Ford and I had the opportunity to announce \$500 million for the hiring of 500 additional corrections staff. These are the people who are going to provide the services that keep our communities safe, and it's a major investment in infrastructure as well as staff resources. It will also help to modernize outdated facilities to support programming within our institutions.

Our investment in people and infrastructure, combined with our critical investments across the eastern region, will help create a better, safer environment for staff and all those in Ontario's corrections systems.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is for the Premier. School starts today for many students in Beaches–East York. Parents and teachers have been reaching out to me over social media, email, the phone—every way they possibly can. They're anxious, stressed, panicking. One mom wrote, "I am a mother terrified for her kids. I haven't slept properly in months."

A teacher shared that in her school every grade has kids over the cap. The kindergarten classes are set to have 30 students in them; in another school, the grade 7 class has 27 kids; in yet another, it is 34—bigger than before the pandemic.

Teachers have shown me pictures of the desks in their classes. There's barely room for an adult to walk between them. Parents know that SickKids and other health experts insist that physical distancing is impossible with more than 12 or 15 students.

The Premier doesn't appear to be listening to health experts or parents. Who is he listening to, and why isn't the government ensuring that all classes, without exception, are capped at 15?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We have full confidence in the Chief Medical Officer of Health of this province, who has given his endorsement for our plan. The reason why he has done so is because we have followed the advice of the medical community, including at SickKids, which has called for layers of prevention: multiple actions to prevent the spread. That is precisely what we've done in our plan.

We've introduced an expansion of the hiring of custodians—over 1,300—to make sure that our schools are constantly cleaned on a more active and regular basis. We

have improved air ventilation in our oldest schools: \$1.4 billion annually allocated, and an additional \$50 million for HVAC systems. We have ensured cohorting and the staggering of classes. We've ensured that buses and schools start at different times, mitigating the spread of those cohorts. We have the smallest direct and indirect number of students that could interact, amongst the major provinces: BC is at 120, and Ontario is actually at 100. We've put \$1.3 billion of investment.

In all schools boards, we're seeing classroom size come down. I know there's more work to do that our boards are undertaking in real time once those numbers are known. We have faith in our boards, we have faith in our students.

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: One mom wrote to me that she recently learned that her son's grade 8 class "will have 29 students and could have more by the time classes resume. This is totally unacceptable." She would love the Premier to spend a week in her child's poorly ventilated classroom where kids will be unable to socially distance by even one metre.

Parents know that the government's funding formula forces schools to collapse classes as kids leave for remote learning, which means that packed classrooms sit right next to empty ones. One mom is apoplectic that her kid's grade 7 class is 25% bigger than it was before the pandemic. As one mother said, "I cannot tell you how stressful and traumatizing this is for families."

Speaker, why hasn't the Premier fixed the funding formula that keeps classes dangerously high when health professionals are saying they need to be capped at 15?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We have allocated over \$1.3 billion in net new one-time investments to respond to COVID-19 to maintain our schools. In the Toronto District School Board, in communities the member represents and communities that have a higher risk of transmission, working with the local public health officer, including local public health, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, as well as the COVID-19 command team, will identify those high-risk communities.

There are absolute caps imposed, including 15 from kindergarten to grade 3, 20 from grade 4 to 8 and, as the member opposite knows, in high school it is capped at 15 students in all designated boards: in Peel, in York, in Durham and likewise in Toronto. We have done everything we can to mitigate the spread in their schools, but we recognize, as the Minister of Health has said, that we have to reduce community transmission risk in order to protect our schools. We recognize the relationship between the two, which is why we're calling on all parents, all families, all citizens to continue to do their part to help us flatten the curve in this province, Speaker.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mrs. Robin Martin: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. During the pandemic, many people in Ontario have experienced job

loss or significant reduction in their work, and I certainly hear from my constituents in Eglinton–Lawrence that COVID-19 has impacted them greatly. Although jobs are coming back and every new and returning job represents good news for a worker and their family, there is still a high level of unemployment. Can the minister explain what our government is doing to help Ontario economically recover from COVID-19?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for that very, very important question this morning.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: As we have seen throughout the pandemic, our government remains committed to supporting the people, the workers and the businesses right across the province. Just one example of this commitment is when I joined the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade at ABC Technologies in Etobicoke to announce \$9.3 million for 11 GTA-based training projects. I'm proud to say that this strategic investment will help thousands of people prepare for auto and advanced manufacturing careers.

The training projects range from hands-on learning opportunities for students in co-op or internship settings, to short-duration, high-quality college courses that help laid-off workers learn to operate high-tech machines or gain credentials for good jobs in the automotive or advanced manufacturing sector.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, Minister. It's great to hear that Ontario is helping young people and workers to receive the skills and training that they need to join our modern workforce and contribute to the recovery of the province.

We need to make Ontario open for business again. There will continue to be a great demand for workers in these skilled trades which are challenging, exciting and often very well-paid careers. Could the minister please explain to the House what specific skills this funding will help to train people in?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I thank the member again for this question this morning. I'm proud to say that 2,300 students, apprentices and laid-off workers will benefit from this \$9.3-million strategic investment. As the member stated, automotive and advanced manufacturing are critical and crucial to getting Ontario's economy back on track. There are jobs available in these sectors today. We are helping people upgrade their skills so they can access them. We are creating a talent pipeline that satisfies employers' needs.

Mr. Speaker, our government has worked closely with labour and employers to help bridge the skills gap. We want everyone in Ontario to get a good job and thrive.

HOME CARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. This pandemic has blown the lid off the crisis in the long-term-

care system. There's also a crisis in the home care system, too, and people aren't getting the help they need.

I want to tell you about Joe, who's 84 and a long-time St. Davids Lions volunteer. His wife, Margaret, is 78 and has advanced dementia and needs home care. Joe has been her sole caregiver for three years and wants to continue to care for her at home, because he loves her dearly, but he can't because he needs to recover from his own major surgery. Because of the lack of funding in home care from the government, Margaret is going to have to leave her home. The last thing Margaret and Joe want is for her to leave her home. He wants to take care of her. Why can't the seniors in this province access the care they need to stay in their own homes?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: As a matter of fact, we're certainly aware of that issue. That is one of the reasons why we are bringing forward the transformation of our health care system: to allow people to be more connected with health care every step along their health care journey.

We know there are issues related to people being discharged from hospital, for example, who need home care when they get home. Often, by the time they get home, they don't know who is providing the home care or for what duration, and they have multiple caregivers coming and going. That cannot continue. That is not patient-centred care. That's not good-quality care.

That is why we're doing the transformation, to bring forward the local Ontario health teams to help connect that care for people, so that if they leave the hospital and they have to have home care, they will know, before they leave the hospital, who will be providing the care, what care will be provided and for what duration. That is good-quality care, and that is what we are moving towards in Ontario.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Back to the Premier. Let's be clear: It's because of this Conservative government's underfunding of home care that this family has to make a tough decision to move Margaret out of her home and into long-term care, where we've had close to 2,000 deaths with COVID-19. Unfortunately, there's a wait-list of up to three years for a bed in certain homes in our community. Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable. Seniors in our communities should get the care they need, when and where they need it, whether that's at home, in a long-term-care facility or in a retirement home.

This situation is the definition of a crisis. Why does the Premier do nothing, while Margaret can't get sufficient home care and may have to wait for three years to get a bed in long-term care?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I can certainly agree with you—speaking through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member—that seniors deserve to get the care they need, when they need it and where they need it. That's why we're making this transformation. That's why we're connecting people to the health care system, whether they're in hospital, whether they're in home care or whether they're in long-term care. That is the whole point of the transformation that we're bringing forward. We want people to get that care.

The one issue I cannot agree with you on—again, through you, Mr. Speaker—is the investments. We have made significant investments in home and community care, significant investments in long-term care and significant investments in hospital care. These are bearing the foundation for the future. That is why we're doing the transformation and we are making those investments, so that all seniors across the province, regardless of where they live in the province, will have access to that care that they need. That is the goal of this government, and that's what we're providing for.

BROADBAND ACCESS

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. During the COVID-19 pandemic, inquiries from my constituents about their poor and unreliable broadband service have been pouring into my office. Evidently, too many people in our province lack reliable Internet, cellular access or don't have any connectivity at all.

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I was excited to see our government step up and make a commitment of \$315 million to projects that will improve connectivity for people and businesses alike, and I'm excited about the new opportunities the \$150-million funding program called ICON could bring. Yet, Minister, we often hear you say that you know this funding isn't enough and that there is more work to do, especially more support from the federal government. Would you please tell us exactly what it will take to close the digital divide?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Thank you to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for her advocacy for her constituents, especially on this issue. Let me begin by explaining that broadband is a federally regulated sector. Its agency, the CRTC, is responsible for establishing country-wide standards and rates for Internet and cellular connectivity.

As the Premier said yesterday, it's estimated that it will cost between \$10 billion and \$15 billion to get Ontario up to speed. That's why we are calling on the federal government to do its part and properly fund broadband.

The federal Minister of Rural Economic Development has promised the sector a nearly \$1.7-billion funding program under the Universal Broadband Fund, and yet not a cent has flowed to our province. Frankly, Ontario can't wait. The digital divide is widening. We know our government has an important part to play, but we need other partners, especially the federal government, to lend their investment and expertise.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Back to the minister: I received an email from Kim in Waterdown with concerns about reliable broadband. It reads:

"I am sure you have received many emails in regard to this issue. I live in Waterdown, ON. And I have horrible Internet.

"For example I was trying to download your website, it took eight minutes. My download speed is 0.54 Mbps

(megabits/second) and 0.01 Mbps (megabits/second) upload speed and we pay \$179 dollars a month for this.

"I have not been able to work from home and because of that I may not be able to go back to work till possibly December. It's very frustrating not being able to have this service when a lot of people rely on it."

Minister, when might people like Kim in Waterdown be able to have reliable high-speed Internet connectivity?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Thank you to the member for sharing Kim's comments with me. I want to say to Kim, I understand where you're coming from. I live in a rural area and I have the same difficulties.

To echo the Premier's recent comments, no infrastructure project is more important to the people of Ontario than broadband. That is why we have a plan. In June, I unveiled our newest \$150-million funding program called Improving Connectivity for Ontario, or ICON. We launched the application, which closed on August 21 this year. This is just one of the steps we're taking to deliver broadband to more people across Ontario.

While I'm proud that our government has stepped up and delivered \$315 million in funding, it is simply not enough to bring everyone in Ontario up to speed. We can't do it alone; that's why we're calling on the federal government to give Ontario its fair share in broadband funding, and I hope that in a year or so, Kim will have better broadband.

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Acting Premier. For months, essential workers across Ontario waited for this government to slowly deliver the pandemic pay it promised. In Hamilton, we still hear from essential workers who haven't received a penny. Workers at Victoria Manor, Cathmar Manor and Rosslyn Retirement Residence bravely cared for seniors, even while facing some of the worst COVID-19 outbreaks in the province and while working under notoriously bad owners and management.

These front-line workers are heroes who work tirelessly to ensure that seniors get the care they need. Yet still, this government allows them to keep their licences to operate. I say, bad business. Why haven't these front-line workers in our community received their pandemic pay, and why has the Premier let these workers down?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The President of the Treasury Board to reply.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you. It's great to see all our colleagues back in the House and everyone safe.

Mr. Speaker, through you, thank you to the member opposite for that question. I agree with her completely. The support of our front-line workers through the pandemic pay was an absolutely essential tool throughout this pandemic. We partnered with the federal government to deliver over \$1.5 billion to over 375,000 people, over 2,000 employers—the largest program in all of Canada—and virtually everyone has been paid.

We will continue to support those front-line workers who have worked hard throughout this pandemic to make sure all Ontarians are safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period for this morning.

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

The House recessed from 1136 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MAGNA CARTA DAY ACT (IN MEMORY OF JULIA MUNRO, MPP), 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LE JOUR DE LA GRANDE CHARTE (À LA MÉMOIRE DE JULIA MUNRO, DÉPUTÉE PROVINCIALE)

Ms. McKenna moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 201, An Act to proclaim Magna Carta Day / Projet de loi 201, Loi proclamant le Jour de la Grande Charte.

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 Burlington care to explain her bill?

Ms. Jane McKenna: Yes. Thank you so much, Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce the Magna Carta Day Act (In Memory of Julia Munro, MPP), 2020. This bill would proclaim June 15 as Magna Carta Day. The Magna Carta has been described as the greatest constitutional document of all time, the foundation of our rules and democratic institutions.

On February 28, 2017, the late MPP Julia Munro introduced her last piece of legislation, Bill 97, the Magna Carta Day Act. The bill passed first and second reading with all-party support.

By introducing this bill, we are paying tribute to our former colleague Julia Munro, the longest-serving female member of the Ontario Legislature.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Hon. Ross Romano: Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to rise in the House today to talk about the incredible work that is happening in the post-secondary education and research sectors in Ontario as a result of the tremendous commitment and expertise of those who work at our colleges, universities, private career colleges, Indigenous institutes, research institutions, academic hospitals, to the benefit of our students, our researchers, our employers and our economy. Due to the actions of our government in listening to and working with our institutions, the

continued delivery of our world-class post-secondary education has persevered through these very challenging times.

In response to the global pandemic, governments, post-secondary institutions and research organizations around the world have had to rapidly adapt. Here in Ontario we have more than stepped up to respond to the impacts of COVID-19. Since we first learned of the outbreak, our ministry has been working closely with all of our post-secondary institutions to give these institutions the types of information that they needed to keep students, staff and faculty safe, while continuing to provide a world-class education.

As institutions moved to shut down in-person instruction and rapidly transitioned thousands of courses online, our government helped students to complete their studies and supported emergency remote teaching. We partnered with eCampusOntario to make digital learning supports available to institutions so that students could securely demonstrate their knowledge through online examinations and assessments.

Our government also responded immediately to help institutions in the wake of COVID-19 by providing \$25 million in emergency funding relief to our colleges, universities and Indigenous institutes across all of the province in response to the crisis that we were all facing. To support OSAP borrowers, we introduced a six-month, interest-free moratorium on OSAP loan repayments.

And to leverage the world-class expertise of Ontario researchers in our colleges, our universities, our research institutes and our academic hospitals across this province, our ministry invested \$20 million in COVID-19-related research. Over the spring and summer, we announced 35 projects working on preventing, detecting and managing COVID-19 through the Ontario COVID-19 Rapid Research Fund. Again, just last week, the Ontario government announced an additional \$2.9 million in research funding for an additional eight research projects.

From the very beginning, we connected with our sector partners, kept the lines of communication open and shared as much information as we could. Engagement with our research and our post-secondary sector partners is absolutely critical to me as the minister and is absolutely critical to our government. It is only through meaningful conversations, asking questions and listening—actually listening—to better understand perspectives, the challenges and the opportunities first-hand that we can ensure we make the right and the best decisions available.

That is why we got started early on our consultations with students, with researchers, with college, university, Indigenous institute and private career college presidents and members of faculty and staff. We immediately worked with these groups so that we could find solutions.

We worked closely with our post-secondary education partners, and we were guided by the advice of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and we worked along with the medical officer of health and the Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee. Our ministry provided guidance to our institutions for a gradual and a safe return

to campuses this past summer, beginning with priority in-person education.

The initial, partial reopening was for academically stranded students, with a focus on priority programs and essential front-line, high labour-market demand areas such as nursing, engineering, PSWs and numerous other areas, such as the trades and child care. This pilot project enabled an estimated 15,000 students across Ontario to be able to continue with their studies and, for many of them, to be able to graduate and enter the workforce in places where we needed them most during the pandemic, right along those front-line roles that help support the recovery of our province.

The approach that was taken during this first phase has helped institutions prepare for the fall term by developing best practices and having proper health and safety protocols in place. Since the beginning of COVID-19, the government has partnered with our post-secondary institutions to help establish safe practices for teaching and learning. The Ontario government, in consultation with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, has been working with the post-secondary sector to help ensure the health and safety of students, faculty and staff as institutions reopen for the fall term. This includes COVID-19 testing for students who are in quarantine as a result of travel outside of Canada immediately before classes start.

The province is also helping the post-secondary sector meet federal requirements for international students, including ensuring that quarantine and outbreak management plans are in place. Our goal is to ensure that all students have the opportunity to attend post-secondary education this fall through online learning, in-person learning or some type of hybrid model or hybrid mixture of both.

I know that by working together, we will get there—and, Mr. Speaker, we are getting there. Hundreds of thousands of post-secondary students are back at school right now. They're starting or they're continuing exciting learning opportunities that are going to launch them into great future careers, to become part of our talented workforce that our province needs to thrive.

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While the immediate impacts of the pandemic have been significant, there is an opportunity here for Ontario to use the response to COVID-19 to help us shape new, bold, innovative visions for post-secondary education in Ontario. To that end, the ministry embarked on an ambitious and intensive series of consultations and discussions with our sector partners over the summer on key aspects of how we can forge the future and prosperity of post-secondary education in Ontario.

We have talked about so many key areas with incredible potential, including the acceleration of digital learning, short-duration credentials for key skill areas—otherwise referred to as “micro-credentials.” I've referred to micro-credentials in this fashion, where we have an opportunity for new markets, for our post-secondary institutions to be able to look to students who have already graduated, lifelong learners, to continually drive the

education message and the continuous improvement message.

We have been working on micro-credential programs that will be stackable and trackable to ensure that students can get the absolute best education available to them, and ensure that these programs will connect with other like programs across their education continuum. We're enhancing data capabilities, as well as intellectual property and commercialization initiatives.

The summer consultations, which have all been taking place online, in Zoom meetings, over the course of the last several months, are still ongoing. We have not concluded, but we are right at the tail end. In total, we have held over 50 consultations with the sector by this point. That includes all of our colleges, universities, student groups, staff, faculty, Indigenous institutes, francophone stakeholders, research institutes, businesses, digital learning organizations, as well as private career colleges. We left no stone unturned.

I want to thank each and every participant who had a virtual seat at those tables. The commitment, the time, the insight and the expertise that you all provided is impossible to overstate. I thank everyone in our incredible sector who participated. The value you have brought is immense.

Among the many things I took away from these discussions is that we have so many strengths to build on. We already have a highly respected, world-renowned post-secondary sector in this province, but we can do more. Ontario's post-secondary education sector is well positioned to be an international leader in digital learning. I'll say that again: We are positioned to be an international leader in digital learning.

But to surpass other jurisdictions, we must develop a digital learning strategy that elevates our sector and provides new and modern ways to prepare students for their careers. Along with this, we need a greater focus on micro-credentials, to bring greater flexibility and responsiveness to students' and employers' needs. Advances in digital learning and micro-credentials will allow our institutions to extend our reach to new markets of learners around the world. With ongoing support, the sector has the capacity to meet increased global demand for post-secondary education and lifelong learning in flexible formats.

There's also a tremendous opportunity to enhance our support for research collaborations and strengthen the commercialization outcomes for Ontario's research through building better awareness and tools for intellectual property rights. We need the benefits of the research and the innovation that originate in Ontario to stay in Ontario, so we can create jobs and build our own economy.

Another key area that we are looking at is with respect to international student education. International students have a tremendous positive social and economic impact on their host communities and are an important revenue source for post-secondary institutions. When we think of the economic impact in a community—there's a stat I used to like citing; back in 2014, I came across this. Every

student who comes into a community spends \$37,500 in a year in that community. These are the tremendous benefits that students coming into our communities provide.

We continue to connect with and listen to our post-secondary education partners as we look to the future and how we can continue to build on the strengths of our world-class post-secondary education system. I've said time and time again that our post-secondary education system and our research institutions are among the very, very, very best in the entire world—and Mr. Speaker, that is three verys. We're that great. Our post-secondary sector is a key source of research, innovation and commercialization, making it one of the leading contributors to Ontario's productivity and economic growth, and local colleges and universities are key sources of employment in their communities. Post-secondary education is critical to Ontario's economic recovery. We have a very exciting future ahead of us as we map out how we move forward, acting on what we learned and forging a bold future for post-secondary education in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close by shining a spotlight in this House on some of the examples of how the talented people who work within our post-secondary sector have responded throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. The work, collectively as well as by individuals, has been nothing short of incredible as faculty and instructors have put the needs of students first, doing their very best to continue providing the world-class education that our province is known for.

Across the sector, the response, the action and the adaptability have been extraordinary. Our colleges and universities, our private career colleges, our Indigenous institutes, our research institutions—every part of our world-renowned sector has risen to the challenges presented and has demonstrated amazing Ontario spirit throughout the process, and this goes right back to the start of the outbreak. Starting in April, Humber College partnered with GlobalMedic to help fight food insecurity, using the college cafeteria to divide food to be distributed by food banks. In an impressive show of partnership in the north, Laurentian University started using 3D printers to create headbands for face shields, working with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, Cambrian College, Collège Boréal, Science North, Lively District and Lo-Ellen Park secondary schools and Ionic Mechatronics.

Interjection.

Hon. Ross Romano: Absolutely.

Volunteers from Ryerson's school of fashion sewed thousands of face masks for use at St. Michael's Hospital and Michael Garron Hospital, and students at the University of Ottawa delivered groceries and prescriptions to seniors and the immunocompromised in the community. Institutes like the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research quickly pivoted their focus and mobilized their resources and lab capacity to support testing and share much-needed PPE supplies. These are amazing displays of Ontario spirit.

More recently, in July, the University of Toronto Scarborough campus and Centennial College worked with the

city of Toronto to support small foodservice businesses in the community during COVID-19 by creating an innovative summer program, bringing community leaders together to champion Scarborough's food scene. And a volunteer group of students at Western University set up a grocery-shop-and-delivery service for Londoners who had self-quarantined or who were at high risk of contracting COVID-19.

As I continued to see these stories and hear about the commitment and the engagement of so many unsung heroes across our post-secondary institutions, I felt compelled to recognize them and to help shine that light on the great work that was being done. That is why I launched the Minister of Colleges and Universities' Awards of Excellence and encouraged people to nominate the faculty, instructors and leaders who are doing this exceptional work at this very difficult time and making things better for students, their communities and for the rest of our great province of Ontario. I wanted this award to showcase the incredible work that was being done by our professors and instructors at our post-secondary institutes, particularly in recognition of their efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are post-secondary instructors who suddenly faced new realities to deliver their courses and connect with their students in a completely new way and who have been an inspiration through their leadership, innovation and compassion—above all, those whose commitment to their work, their students and their communities demonstrate true Ontario spirit.

The response to our call for nominations, which started in early August, was incredible. Within a few weeks, we had nearly 200 submissions from students and faculty. There have been some notable themes: Instructors and professors are being celebrated for their leadership in adapting to the new realities of online learning and the ways that they have been turning their skills and resources towards manufacturing PPE for front-line workers. As unsung heroes, many have quietly volunteered their time and their skills to help fight COVID-19 on campus and in their local communities, across the country and around the globe—from professors who took the time to connect with their students to support their mental health needs throughout the crisis, to instructors being chosen by the United Nations to lead task forces on how to combat future outbreaks.

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One winner of an award of excellence, Jianhong Wu, is a professor at York University who has been leading a national COVID-19 math modelling team to help assess current transmission risks and to help project possible future outbreaks. Another award winner is Dr. Andy Alubaidy, a professor at Sheridan College who created a custom-built virtual lab using gaming technology to simulate hands-on learning experiences for his students during COVID-19. One more everyday hero I'd like to acknowledge is Dr. Jennifer Laffier, a professor at the Ontario Tech University, who has won an award of excellence for freely volunteering her time and 25 years of experience in psychotherapy to support her students, colleagues and community during COVID-19.

Ontario's post-secondary educators are amazing, and I cannot brag enough about them.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government of Ontario, I would like to thank all of our faculty for their incredible resiliency, their innovation and their leadership. And I would commend all parts of Ontario's post-secondary sector for the strong work that they have done at this extraordinary time and their commitment to continuing to build on this sector's excellence for the benefit of students, employers and the economy. I know that working together there are even greater things that we will achieve.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's an honour to rise in the House today, on behalf of the NDP caucus and our critic MPP Chris Glover, to respond to the minister's statement on post-secondary students returning to learning. Before I begin, I do want to thank OUSA, the Wilfrid Laurier Student Union, WUSA and Conestoga Students Inc., for graciously sharing student voices with me.

My riding is home to two universities, Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo, as well as a campus on Conestoga. The member from Kitchener Centre, MPP Lindo, and I work very closely, and she was the director of diversity at Wilfrid Laurier. She was challenging the status quo then, and she continues to do so each and every day. I learn from her. It is a privilege to serve the good people of Kitchener-Waterloo together.

I also want to acknowledge the work that our critic Chris Glover from Spadina-Fort York has done, particularly on outreach and on equity during this challenging time.

My team in Waterloo has heard from students, and I want to bring their voices to the Legislature today. Despite what the minister has said, students feel overwhelmed and anxious due to the challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and have had to make some very difficult choices about their futures. In fact, many have had to alter those plans primarily because of finances. That's what students told us.

For the students in the province of Ontario, their number one concern is affordability of education. Tuition costs continue to rise, while the government has cut OSAP in the past, and the effects of the pandemic have hindered students' ability to obtain summer employment. In fact, locally, Wilfrid Laurier and the University of Waterloo conducted a student survey, and 65% of survey respondents indicated that they had lost their summer job or were unable to find a job due to the impacts of COVID-19.

Students rely on these jobs to fund their school years. Without a job, 54% of students reported that they would struggle to pay their rent. And that leads me to the issue of housing. In a normal year in Waterloo and, I'm sure, across the province, students struggle to find suitable and affordable housing. For years, my office has dealt with landlords taking advantage of students, often acting illegally to try to make a few extra bucks. I've brought this issue to the floor of the Legislature in the past.

Because student housing is so difficult to come by, students secure places months in advance. When COVID-

19 changed their school year plans, many students were left on the hook with leases for rentals that they would never use due to classes going online. Many students were left in a financial bind: no summer job, but a commitment to a lease.

And how could the government address this issue? They could have frozen residential rent increases. They could have upgraded the OSAP payments. And they could have opened a special stream of the Landlord and Tenant Board to deal with student concerns. Rent and post-secondary education are both provincial files. The provincial government should have been there to support students through this challenging time.

Changes to learning: This is top of mind for students across the province. The learning environment has changed. The local university did a survey of 350 students who did not have access to broadband and online services. Students at Conestoga also have concerns about the accessibility of online resources. Every year, we have mayors from each municipality in the region come to the Legislature and talk to us about the importance of broadband. This is a long-standing issue. This is the time to invest, to make sure that every student in this province has access to this new learning environment, and that includes online.

Both of my children attend Conestoga College. One is apprenticing as an electrician. Apprentices have severe concerns about the hands-on component of that classroom learning environment. We need those apprentices to graduate so that we can get them into the workforce and build Ontario up.

Finally, mental health: Now, more than ever, students require timely, accessible and affordable mental health supports. Conestoga students are recommending that "to ensure students have the necessary support and resources, post-secondary institutions should be mandated to supply a sufficient level of mental health supports and resources." We fully support this, and we do feel that this is an area where the government could stand up.

All of us, I know, are very concerned about the outbreak at Western University. After weeks of low daily case counts, the London-area health unit reported nine cases. The students are being monitored by the health unit and are isolating and in good health right now. The issue is testing on campus. We have to make sure that these assessment centres are not overwhelmed. Chris Mackie, the medical officer of health, has essentially put out a call for greater testing resources.

Let's keep everybody safe on our campuses, but we need students to have equitable access to education in order for this province to be all that it can be.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Like many parents, I had countless questions and concerns before sending my children back to school this month. I have one in elementary, one in secondary school and another one in university. It took a very long time for us to figure out what the reality was going to be. The reality is that at the last moment, my university-level child had to adapt to this reality.

I've heard from many other students in my riding. The general word is that the OSAP cuts have hurt badly pre-COVID-19, and what we're doing right now to help them is not catching up with what they need in order to pursue their studies. The delay to pay loans is not a measure that is sufficient to address the economic predicament that they find themselves in because there were no summer jobs available to them.

In conclusion, I just want to say that there shouldn't be a price to accessing education; there should not be a price to not having the money to pay for education.

I think it's time to put our differences aside and focus on what matters most: ensuring that our students and our families are safe, while ensuring access to education.

I want to thank the teachers, the principals, the trustees, the public health officials for working hard to keep everyone safe. Thank you to the students for doing their part in trying to follow the measures—and despite all of that, I want to wish them all a safe and successful new school year.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm pleased to rise to respond to the minister's statement.

I want to begin by saying how honoured I am to represent a university community. Usually, at this time of year, Guelph is abuzz with students returning to the University of Guelph, as well as Conestoga College. The University of Guelph is a pillar of our community. I know that anyone who represents a university community recognizes how important those universities and colleges are to supporting businesses in our community, to recognizing the way in which universities like the University of Guelph drive research and innovation and support so many community causes and, in Guelph's case, improve life.

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I also want to say that my heart goes out to students across this province. From having your classes abruptly cancelled in the spring and moving online, to knowing that many of you are not going to be able to return to campus or return to a normal campus life—those students have reached out to my office to say they are struggling. So many students were unable to find employment this summer to earn the money they need to pay for their education and living expenses. Those students are asking this government—and I'm going to ask this government on behalf of those students—to reverse the cuts to OSAP. The \$650-million cut to OSAP was one of the biggest cuts in the previous year's budget, and it's directly affecting the ability of students to be able to afford education and have access to higher education.

Students are also thankful for the moratorium on OSAP payments and would ask the government to extend that moratorium at least until September 2022, because it's clear this pandemic is not going to be over for a while, and those students are going to need support.

I want to acknowledge university faculty instructors and administrators at our universities and colleges who pivoted so quickly to providing online learning. But I also want to recognize that I've heard from so many students that they would like to see a tuition cut, because they don't

feel like the online learning experience is as full an experience.

I also recognize that because for years—it predates this government—university and college budgets have been going down and down and down, universities are also experiencing the added costs of providing online learning while trying to support students through COVID-19. We need this provincial government to step up and support our colleges and universities, recognizing that.

I want to close by saying that we have to address mental health on our campuses, Speaker.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the Family Council Network 4 Advocacy for sending these petitions in, and Frank Durham of London for signing it.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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 (MNRF), hunters and trappers to properly manage animal populations and Ontario's ecosystem;

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

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

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

I will assign my signature to the petition and submit it to the Clerk.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Kathy Kohls, who mailed me those petitions. They come mainly from Sudbury and Nickel Belt, but I also received some from all over Ontario. They read as follows:

“Pandemic Pay.

“Whereas the pandemic pay eligibility needs to be expanded as well as made retroactive to the beginning of the state of emergency” declaration; and

“Whereas Premier Ford stated repeatedly that the workers on the front line have his full support but this is hard to believe given that so many of us do not qualify; and

“Whereas the list of eligible workers and workplaces should be expanded; and

“Whereas all front-line workers should be properly compensated;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To call on the Ford government to expand the \$4-an-hour pandemic pay to include all front-line health care workers that have put the needs of their community first and make the pay retroactive to the day the state of emergency was declared, so that their sacrifice and hard work to keep us safe is recognized.”

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

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mrs. Robin Martin: I have a petition here 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 Canada’s rich culinary culture is worthy of celebration; 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 fully support this and will sign hereto.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition here, and I’d like to thank Avis Ireland of Pickering and many other folks from across Ajax and Pickering.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Orchard Villa long-term-care home has the highest amount of deaths among seniors in Ontario during the COVID-19 pandemic;

“Whereas we believe the lack of staff, personal protective equipment and lack of staff training at the home during the government-mandated lockdown directly led to the high number of deaths among seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic;

“Whereas COVID-19-negative residents were not isolated from positive residents;

“Whereas the neglect and abuse towards residents at Orchard Villa LTCH directly resulted in their deaths;

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

“We, the families of Orchard Villa long-term care and the Orchard Villa Retirement Community and the public at large, demand a public inquiry, independent of the government of Ontario, into the practices, events and history of Orchard Villa long-term care, Orchard Villa Retirement Home and its owners, Southbridge Care Homes Inc. for the period of March 14, 2020, up to and including the end of the mandated lockdown, and the five years preceding March 14, 2020.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition and affix my signature.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Mrs. Robin Martin: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians have been working relentlessly to adhere to physical distancing guidelines, limiting themselves to necessary travel and protecting their loved ones; and

“Whereas our health care professionals” have been “working long hours in our long-term-care homes, doctors’ offices, community care, and hospitals; and

“Whereas other essential workers such as grocery store clerks, farmers, meat and produce processors and transport workers keep our shelves stocked and food on the table; and

“Whereas the province has made significant progress in the fight against COVID-19 with decreasing infection and hospitalization rates, domestic production of personal protective equipment, and crucial financial investments in health and social services;

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

“That the government continues its methodical, cautious approach to reopen the economy so that people can get back to work, businesses can recover and people can regain a hopeful optimism for the future of this great province.”

I'll affix my signature hereto.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to thank Pierce Family Vision in Waterloo for delivering these petitions to me. It reads as follows:

“Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas optometrists now subsidize the delivery of OHIP-covered eye care” to the tune of “\$173 million a year; and

“Whereas COVID-19 forced optometrists to close their doors, resulting in a 75%-plus drop in revenue; and

“Whereas optometrists will see patient volumes reduced between 40% and 60%, resulting in more than two million comprehensive eye exams being wiped out over the next 12 months; and

“Whereas communities across Ontario are in danger of losing access to optometric care;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately establish a timetable and a process for renewed negotiations concerning optometry fees.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Beverley Carriere from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions. They read as follows:

“MS Specialized Clinic in Sudbury....

“Whereas northeastern Ontario has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis (MS) in Ontario; and

“Whereas specialized MS clinics provide essential health care services to those living with multiple sclerosis, their caregiver and their family; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is recognized as a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Immediately set up a specialized MS clinic in the Sudbury area that is staffed by a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of multiple sclerosis, a physiotherapist and a social worker at a minimum.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier Gérard Chartrand de Hanmer pour me faire envoyer ces pétitions.

« Respectez la communauté francophone.

« Considérant que l'énoncé économique » de l'« automne » dernier « du gouvernement a annoncé l'élimination du Commissariat aux services en français et l'annulation des plans pour l'Université de l'Ontario français; et

« Considérant que ces décisions constituent une trahison de la responsabilité de l'Ontario envers notre communauté francophone;

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de demander au gouvernement de ramener « le bureau du commissaire aux services en français, ainsi que son financement et ses pouvoirs, et de maintenir l'engagement original de l'Ontario pour le financement de l'Université de l'Ontario français. »

J'appuie cette pétition, je vais la signer et l'envoyer à la table des greffiers.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I stand for the petition of the framework for reopening for the recovery of the economy.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians have been working relentlessly to adhere to physical distancing guidelines, limiting themselves to necessary travel and protecting their loved ones; and

“Whereas our health care professionals are working long hours in our long-term-care homes, doctors' offices, community care, and hospitals; and

“Whereas other essential workers such as grocery store clerks, farmers, meat and produce processors and transport workers keep our shelves stocked and food on the table; and

“Whereas the province has made significant progress in the fight against COVID-19 with decreasing infection and hospitalization rates, domestic production of personal protective equipment, and crucial financial investments in health and social services;

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

“That the government continues its methodical, cautious approach to reopen the economy so that people can get back to work, businesses can recover and people can regain a hopeful optimism for the future of this great province.”

I support this, and I sign my name to it.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that came from Lucie Girard from Hanmer in my riding, and it reads as follows:

“Time to Care:

“Whereas the quality of care for the 78,000 residents of” long-term-care “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” long-term care “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” long-term-care “homes ... have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels, and the most reputable studies on this topic recommend 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

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

“Amend the” Long-Term Care “Homes Act for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity levels and case mix.”

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

ANTI-VAPING INITIATIVES
FOR YOUTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the people of Etobicoke for sending me this petition:

“Protect Kids from Vaping.

“Whereas very little is known about the long-term effects of vaping on youth; and

“Whereas aggressive marketing of vaping products by the tobacco industry is causing more and more kids to become addicted to nicotine through the use of e-cigarettes; and

“Whereas the hard lessons learned about the health impact of smoking, should not be repeated with vaping, and the precautionary principle must be applied to protect youth from vaping; and

“Whereas many health agencies and Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada fully endorse the concrete proposals aimed at reducing youth vaping included in” my private member’s bill;

They “call on the Ford government to immediately pass ... Vaping is Not for Kids Act, in order to protect the health of Ontario’s youth.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The time for petitions has expired.

I recognize the member for Timmins, perhaps on a point of order?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I was just getting up to debate.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I was just getting up in debate.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 15, 2020, on the amendments to the amendment to the motion regarding amendments to the standing orders.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Now we’ll turn to the member for Timmins, who was up prematurely and threw the Speaker off his game and will pay for it later in the day, I’m sure.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don’t blame you, Mr. Speaker; you should make me pay for that. Anyway—and all due respect.

I want to, first of all, say at the beginning of this debate that anybody who thinks that when a government brings standing order changes to the House it’s somehow to the benefit of all members of the House—being backbenchers on the government side or members of the official opposition or independents—is sorely mistaken. There are never standing order changes that are made that come from the government side that have the interests of members at heart. It always has the interests of the government at heart, and that’s what these standing order changes are all about, and that’s what the previous standing orders changes have been all about. It’s all about how the government moves its agenda forward in a more timely fashion with less—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, look at this. The Minister of Energy agrees that it’s a good idea for the government not to be obstructed by a thing called democracy. Imagine if democracy got in the way of a good debate. Imagine if democracy got in the way of members doing their job, representing the constituents either as a government member or as an opposition member.

As I said earlier this morning, Mr. Speaker, there are members on the government side in this Parliament, as in previous Parliaments, who have not always agreed with the government policy. They’ve gotten up in the House and they have had their say, and they’ve actually gotten up in the House and they had their vote. In fact, we have a couple of independent Conservatives who are sitting there today because they didn’t agree with the government policy.

1550

So when the Minister of Energy stands and says that it’s a great thing that they get their agenda, he forgets a little thing called democracy. There is something that we fought for, for years and years—first, across the world, in Europe and China, and here and in other places—where people are striving to find ways so that people can be part of the democratic process.

Yes, I understand, and I agree that when a government is elected and they have a majority, they have a right to set the agenda by way of what comes on the order paper. And yes, they must always have their way. I don’t argue that for two seconds. But the beauty of the parliamentary system is that we allow a process to ensue in this House

and in our committees that allows the public to be heard by way of their being able to depute at committee, if it's done properly, and for them to have their voices heard through members of the government or members of the opposition who either agree or disagree with what the government is proposing.

So when a government brings standing order changes to the House, it is never about the rights of members. It's never about more participation for individual members or parliamentary groups inside the House. It's always about, "How can I advance my agenda?" And that's really what this is all about. So I just want to start out under that particular sort of understanding. The government may profess that this is all about: "Oh, I want members to have more say. I want to have more debate. I believe in all of these things." But the reality is, that's not what it's all about. Our debate today, and possibly into tomorrow, is going to lay that out, with myself and other members from the NDP caucus—I don't know what the independents are doing, but I figure they'll do whatever they've got to do. So that was my first comment.

The other thing is that we need to understand, in the British parliamentary system, that we have given rights to both sides of the House. The government, as I said earlier, has the right to propose and to have the responsibility of running the government through the executive, and yes, they've got to get their way, because they're a majority. But the parliamentary system said, "Yes, but you have to give members in both the opposition and the government the ability to do their job, to hold the government to account."

I want to look back at important milestones in the British parliamentary system. There was a guy by the name of Winston Churchill. We might have heard of him before. He was oppositional in many ways, both in government and in opposition. When he was, in the 1930s, on the outs with the then-Conservative Party, which he had gone back to, because, as you know, he was elected as a Conservative, he became a Liberal, then he became a Conservative again, which is an interesting debate—Liberals and Tories, same old story—but we're not going to go there. The point is, while he was a government member, Winston Churchill was the one who was sounding the alarm about what was happening in Nazi Germany and what Britain had to do in order to prepare itself for a war that they knew was coming. The strength of the parliamentary system is that Mr. Churchill got a voice. Not only did he have a voice, being able to raise these matters within the public media; he also got to raise them in the House and move motions and do other things that allowed him to make the point. So, from the 1930s on, when Winston Churchill was ringing the alarm bells about what was coming in regard to Adolf Hitler—thank God there was a British parliamentary system that allowed people like Winston Churchill the ability to do their jobs.

I'm not equating these standing order changes to what happened in the Second World War. I'm not going to be dramatic about it. But I want to make the point that the parliamentary system—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, you might think it's funny, but it's history, and if you don't learn from your own history, you will never advance as a society. The point that I'm making is that Winston Churchill was able to sound the alarm bells and do what had to be done. That eventually led to him being the Prime Minister of Britain and shepherding that nation through the hardest and darkest times that they went through, because we all know after the start of the war in September 1939, it was not easy for Britain. It wasn't easy for France or any other country in Europe that was going up against Adolf Hitler. They were in a position where they could have easily lost that war, but Mr. Churchill was able to do what he had to do as a result of the system that produced him as a parliamentarian in Great Britain.

The other interesting part about him—I've said this before; the Speaker and I have a certain affinity for Mr. Churchill and a few others—is that when the war was on, Mr. Churchill understood that the House of Commons, as in our Legislature today, had to have a role in shaping the policy of the government in its response to Hitler, and so they had full debates in the House. Yes, they were in camera, because you couldn't be having a discussion about war strategy openly, where Hitler could get the transcript and decide what he was going to do. He brought in camera discussions where every member of the House, be it a Conservative, be it a Labour member or any other party at the time, was able to contribute to what they thought had to be done.

And did Mr. Churchill take all of that information and act on every recommendation? Absolutely not—of course not, and I wouldn't expect the government to do that either—but he took enough of it that allowed a certain coalition of people coming together on ideas that created what was necessary for Britain to fight successfully the Germans and to beat Adolf Hitler at what he was doing from 1939 to 1945.

I only say that in the context of these types of debates. When we weaken the power of the Legislature and weaken the power of individual members, what we're doing is that we're weakening our democracy. We are in a situation, as I said earlier, where the government is again making standing order changes, and they're making the argument, "Oh, this is all good stuff. We don't understand why the opposition is opposed. It's all going to be really good stuff in the end." If it was all that good, the government wouldn't have introduced it, because it's never about anything but the government advancing its own agenda.

So let's go through some of what the government is doing—no particular order, but I want to start with one of the issues that the government House leader himself pointed out as being one of the more contentious changes in these standing orders, and that is the use of reasoned amendments. The government House leader says, "Oh, it has been abused. Terrible. The opposition filed whatever number of reasoned amendments in the last two years of this Parliament, it's more than ever before, and that's proof therefore that somehow or other, there needs to be a change to the standing orders."

Imagine if we had gone to Winston Churchill and said, “You don’t have a voice. You can’t come in this House and talk about the things you talked about to prepare this country for war.” Again, I don’t want to equate the two as being equal, because they’re not, but I make the point that an opposition has a responsibility to do its job and use whatever tools it has in order to be able to hold the government to account. It could possibly be that the reason there are so many more reasoned amendments today than there were before is because there has been a diminishment of the ability of the opposition to be able to hold the government to account.

We have far less tools here than we had when I first got here 30 years ago; 30 years ago, a member could stand in this House and hold the floor for as long as he or she wanted to talk, and that in itself was a tool that was used very effectively by individual members to be able to effect change. I remember Mr. Bradley, who some of you might know. He was one of the longest-serving members in this House, I think, after Bob Nixon—

Hon. Todd Smith: Even longer than you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, longer than me for sure. After Bob Nixon, I think he might have been the second-longest-serving member.

I remember that when we were government and I was a government member sitting right over there on the front bench as a parliamentary assistant—I was never a minister; I was a PA. I remember him getting up and holding up the government on the debate on something, because he was trying to make a point about a particular issue. I remember at the time, as a government member, saying, “Oh, what’s he doing? He doesn’t have the right to do that.” Well, he had an absolute right to do that. What he had effectively done by holding up the debate was to force the House leaders to come together and to find a compromise on the issue of the day. Did the government get everything that it wanted? Absolutely not. But neither did the opposition, and that was the point of the standing orders.

1600

The standing orders were written in a way that they provided balance. The government gets to propose, the government gets to pass its legislation in the end, but they at times have to compromise in order to be able to pass that legislation, because if doesn’t pass the test of this House, do you think that it passes the test of Ontario? The government will say, “Oh, well, we got”—whatever you got in the last election, 44% or 48%— “and therefore, we can do what we want.” You didn’t get over 50%; there are a lot of people in Ontario who didn’t vote for you, just as there are a lot of people in Ontario who didn’t vote for me, and in all of our ridings, there are a lot of people who didn’t vote for us, but we need to represent them as well.

So, in the end, when the rules were as they were, we had a greater ability to be able to hold the government to account, and the government had to adjust.

I’ve said this story before and I’m not going to get into detail on it, but when we were in government, we had done the sustainable forestry development act, an act that has

stood till today. It’s a piece of legislation that no government has tried to gut entirely. There have been modifications, but no government has gotten rid of it because it actually works. It provides that forest companies who are given a licence to cut timber in Ontario have a forest management plan that takes into account local communities, First Nations, cottagers, the environment etc., and that there’s a process of making sure that those trees are regrown, replanted, whatever, so that we don’t decimate our forests. If you go to northern Ontario and you look at a cut, 10 years after the cut has happened, you wouldn’t even know there was a cut. My good friend the Minister of Energy would know, coming from the forest area, as I do, that it is a testament to what this Legislature can do.

Let me tell you a story. One of the things that strengthened that legislation was a lone member on the Conservative side, which was then the third party—Chris Hodgson, who was then the member from somewhere in central Ontario, who is now at the mining association. He took offence to a particular section in that bill that he wanted to see changed. So he used the powers that he had, in committee and in the House, to effect pressure on the then NDP government to make changes to that legislation. As a result, we were in a spot. I was one of the PAs who carried that bill, along with Len Wood, who was the MNR person. I was at northern development and mines. So the two of us carried the bill. The minister then, I believe, was Bud Wildman, or it might have been Howard Hampton. But one of them ended up amending the legislation based on his concerns. Now, you say, “What does that have to do with anything?” It means that when the Tories came to power under Mr. Harris, they didn’t gut the legislation, because in the end they supported the legislation because they got the amendments that they wanted.

So when a government comes to this House and changes the rules and says, “Well, I just can do what I want. At the end of the day, I’m the government, and you guys can take a flying leap,” what you’re setting up is, the government that comes after you may very well throw your legislation out.

It seems to me that if we’re going to do work in a Parliament for four years during the mandate of any government, we should have legislation that is able to stand the test of time. Yes, the government at times will have to use its majority to time-allocate legislation if there is no other way of moving it forward, and I understand that. That’s why that tool is given. When I first got here, it wasn’t time allocation; it was calling the question, but it had a higher threshold.

The point is that, as a result of amending that legislation—it amended the legislation in such a way that the Conservatives supported it and support it till today, along with the Liberals, under Mr. McGuinty and Ms. Wynne. So who is the loser in that situation?

Interruption.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It’s not me calling you; I just want you to know. I don’t have your number, so it wasn’t me. I don’t want to get in trouble.

Anyway, I was just saying, it stood the test of time because of the process. So when the government comes here and says, "You're using reasoned amendments in a horrible way that is just holding everything up by two days. It's the end of the world"—well, first of all, if I'm the government and I know that there are reasoned amendments allowed, I will time my legislation through the House in such a way that provides for those two days that the legislation is put on hold as the opposition does its work and the public does its work in understanding the bill. If you haven't done that, well, then you're not managing the House, I would say to the government House leader. Two days to be able to do the research on a bill is something that the government can't plan for? Really?

In the end, it is the responsibility of the government to propose, it's the responsibility of the opposition to oppose and to propose, and then it's up to the government to manage how that happens—and yes, they'll get it in the end.

The government is going to take away the ability of the official opposition and the independents to be able to propose reasoned amendments. That's going to mean they're going to be able to introduce a bill at 3 o'clock on Tuesday and call it Wednesday morning at 9.

Let's go through a couple of bills that happened in the past. I think it was Bill 178—I hope I got the number right—the bill that we dealt with just prior to leaving here, a fairly complex bill, a bit of an omnibus bill. It was fairly complicated, quite frankly. I read through that bill the first day that I saw it, and it took me a while to get my head around it because it was amending a number of acts—the Environmental Assessment Act, acts within agriculture, acts within MNR. It was doing a whole bunch of stuff. It was introduced on a Tuesday at 3. It came back Wednesday morning. Then, you have to do your lead speeches and you have to debate that bill without any proper research and not being able to liaise with the stakeholders who are affected by the legislation. So you end up having a debate on, I guess it would be Wednesday—so an hour on Wednesday morning. You might get two and a half hours on Wednesday afternoon. Then, with these new standing orders, the bill will come back on Tuesday morning, and it will be debated all afternoon on Thursday for four-plus hours. They're going to have enough time in two days to be done with second reading, to be able to time-allocate. It's as simple as that.

Ask me how the public is well-served in that process. This is not about just me as a legislator or you as legislators—because there are Conservative members on the government bench who have concerns about legislation, as there are members on the opposition side. I sat in government. There was legislation that I had difficulty with. In every Parliament, that's a natural thing. Just because you're elected as a block within a particular party doesn't mean to say that you always agree with what the government is doing. So here's this bill that was introduced on Wednesday, and the government can time-allocate it by Monday and skip the committee process by

time allocation motion, and have the darn thing passed by Tuesday. How is that serving the people of Ontario?

Currently, because there's the two-day provision under the ability to be able to file notice of a reasoned amendment, it slows it down by two days. That's not a big deal. Two days for the government is not the end of the world.

As I said earlier, you have an ability as a government to plan your legislative agenda—so cabinet meets prior to the House returning for a fall or a spring session and says, "Here are the five or seven or eight bills that we want to pass that are crucial for us. Let's plot that out on the calendar." It used to be that you would sit down with the opposition and tell the opposition what the bills were, and the opposition would say, "Out of your eight bills, we're fine with these three. We can support them. Yes, we've read them. We're okay. We have some concerns with these five—three of which have minor concerns, two of which have major concerns." The government then says, "Well, we'll give you"—that's how it used to work—"X number of days to debate on this bill, X number of days on the next bill. There will be so much time in committee, as far as being able to travel the bill and hear what the public has to say, and so much time in clause-by-clause." The government would manage the bill through the House in that way. When I first got here, that's how it worked—and it worked, because we passed legislation that still stands today.

The minister of energy and mines would know that one of the great bills that we passed in this Legislature is the mine closure act. Where a mine today opens up somewhere in Ontario, they have to ensure that there is a closure plan that removes all of the mine equipment, that all of the tailings are neutralized etc. once the mine closes.

1610

As an example, in my former riding of Timmins—James Bay, now the riding of my colleague for Mushkegowuk—James Bay, we opened the De Beers mine about 12 or 14 years ago. It had a 10- or 11-year life. It closed. They're now in the process of pulling everything out of the James Bay that was part of that mine. When you go back, when they're all done, you will not see a building on that site. Everything will be regrown. They're going to rehabilitate the site so that if you fly over it in about 10 years after that mine has been taken out, you wouldn't even know it was there.

I live at Kamiskotia Lake. The minister will know where that is, because how much money, Minister, did you spend at Kamiskotia Lake cleaning that particular mine's tailings there that stem back from the 1940s during the war, when we had no mine closure act? The mine of the day was a copper mix kind of mine. They had no tailings confinement and they threw all of the tailings over the side, over the hill. Well, that all got into the groundwater and it got into the Kamiskotia River, both the Little Kamiskotia and the large Kamiskotia, and it was killing all of the aquifer in the area. As a result of residents being concerned, there was a process under the Environmental Assessment Act—which we had passed as a

government—and the mine closure act for that to be addressed.

We have now rehabilitated that area greatly. Is it back to what it was pre-1940-whatever? No, it's not as good as that. But I can tell you, it's a lot better. Our lake would have been gone if it hadn't been for that legislation. And the minister of mines would know that, because he would have had to deal with some of the appropriations necessary for some of the cleanups that have happened in Ontario as a result of mines that were not covered because there was no mine closure act.

Again, there was a bill that was passed through this House which the other opposition parties had problems with, but they ended up supporting it nonetheless, because amendments were made to make it palatable for them. Mr. Harris, Mr. McGuinty and now the Premier of Ontario today have not changed that legislation to date because it stood the test of time, because of the process.

The government says, "Oh, we need to get rid of reasoned amendments because that will allow us to speed the process up." The only thing you're going to do is entrench people on both sides of whatever issue it is. People—the public—will feel that they're not being heard. They're going to feel resentful of the decisions made by the government and they'll apply political pressure to governments that come after to make changes. So what you do today may not stand as a result of the process that you're taking.

Now, we were going to propose an amendment, if we would have had an opportunity to introduce it. I have no problem with what the government did this morning. The government moved two amendments, which they didn't need to, but they did nonetheless. They moved an amendment and a subamendment to their own motion, and they did that for strategic reasons. I get it. I don't have a problem with it. It is their right to do so, so I'm not going to argue that they did it. It's fine.

But if we had had an opportunity, we would have said to the government House leader and the government side, "If you're trying to emulate what they're doing in Ottawa, why not incorporate the 48-hour rule?" In Ottawa, there's a rule that says that if the government is going to table a bill—and I'll just take as an example a bill on the Environmental Assessment Act—the government needs to table the information about what it is that they want to do with the House 48 hours before the bill is brought to the House. That gives the opposition, gives government members and gives other people the ability to be able to say, "Okay, what's this bill all about?" We were going to propose an amendment that says that if the government introduces a bill on Monday, you cannot debate it for 48 hours.

There's a real reason why that 48 hours is so important: because you've got to be able to do your job. The government doesn't come to us as the opposition and say, "Here's the bill that we propose. Here's the language. What do you think?" Maybe you do with the independents. Who knows? Because there's obviously a little bit of a good relationship there going on between the two of them.

If we had that kind of process, maybe this would work. But you don't do that. Even during this pandemic, the government said, "We're going to do everything to work with you and we're going to show you everything we do ahead of time." We would get it essentially at the last minute, so we would be left there with a decision: Do we oppose or support this bill? It was always a way of trying to wedge that if we didn't support it, we would be seen as not being supportive of trying to find safe ways of dealing with the pandemic.

We're no different than you. We're here because we want to do what's right for Ontarians. I don't believe there's a second that any one of you walk into this Legislature and don't want to do what's best for the people you represent. I accept that's what we're all trying to do here.

But in the end, the government doesn't give us these bills in advance. We don't get to look at them and to understand them and to discuss with the government what we like and what we don't like and make any suggestions. You don't have to take the suggestions; you're a majority government. You can pass whatever you want. But it seems to me it's only right—and that's what the British parliamentary system wanted—to have a system that allows for a to and a fro between the opposition and the government so that we're able to build the best product ever. I just say to the government across the way, it's not the way to make things work.

I'll give you an analogy: The government House leader walks onto the car lot and says, "I want to buy a good second-hand truck. I've got a car, but I need a second-hand truck that I can use to deliver stuff, bring things to the dump and go pick up building materials and whatever." And the car dealer says, "Well, you can come onto my lot, but whatever truck you pick, you just get in the door, drive away and make the payment." I don't think the government House leader would buy that truck.

And why should Ontarians buy this legislation? If the government has bills that they're not going to give the public an opportunity to see for at least 48 hours—because this is not just about the opposition seeing a bill for 48 hours; this is about the media getting a hold of it, the media looking at it and their researchers doing due diligence. But more importantly, it's about the public and stakeholders looking at the bill and deciding, "This is what I like. This is what I don't like. I need to call my MPP to say 'I like this part' or 'I don't like that part,' or 'This is the change that I need.'" But the government House leader is asking us to get in the truck and drive off the lot without even kicking the tires. How responsible is that?

We're saying, "Okay, if you want to get rid of the notice provisions, at least have a 48-hour provision that allows everybody to see the bill." Again, this is about the public having its say. You've got to remember that this is the public's House. It doesn't belong to me; it doesn't belong to you. We're just caretakers in this place for four years. The public sends us here to do their work. Let's respect the people who sent us here and allow them the opportunity to see legislation for at least 48 hours before we actually start

debate on a bill, so they have a chance to call the minister, the parliamentary assistant, their local member, the critics or whomever to say, “This is what I like” or “This is what I don’t like.”

Everybody understands if you’re a majority government, in the end, you’re going to pass your legislation, but you’ve got to give people an opportunity to have their say. When we don’t do that, Mr. Speaker, through you, we fail the people of Ontario, the people who we were sent here to represent. So that’s the reasoned amendment provision.

The other thing I want to spend a little bit of time on is, the government is changing the way that we’re going to do private members’ bills. I don’t blame the government House leader; I understand what he’s doing. He’s trying to say, “This is a great thing.” First, because the government decided not to allow members to deal with private members’ bills after the June sitting—in the beginning of June, we broke, as you remember, Mr. Speaker, then we came back for sessions after June, into July and August.

The government decided there would be no opposition days and there would be no private members’ bills. The only two tools that the opposition, independent and backbench government members have to be able to try to push forward the idea of affecting public policy is the use of private members’ bills and the use of opposition days. The government said, “No, no, we’re not going to have any of that in the pandemic, but we want to work with you. We have a great relationship. We’re going to work with you. We love you so much we’re going to hug you,” said the government House leader. “But no, no, you can’t have any of your tools.” It’s like the carpenter goes to the construction site and doesn’t bring his tools. How is the carpenter, he or she, going to be able to do the work that has to be done on the construction site? The government House leader says, “No, no. You can’t.”

1620

Then he comes back now and he proposes a rule change. This is the one, to me, that is quite interesting. He says, “Oh, yes. But now I’ve got a provision that we’re not only going to do three private members’ bills a week, as we normally do, but we’re going to do a fourth, up until spring,” and somehow this is going to fix everything. It’s like, after the horse darted out of the barn and closed the doors, we’re allowing members to expedite, in a quicker way, getting private members’ bills into the House.

Do you think that the government might have been able to benefit by a government member or an opposition member tabling a bill that dealt with the pandemic? We all got the same phone calls—I don’t care if you’re government or opposition—and we all tried to react the same way: “I’m worried about my parent in long-term care.” “I’m worried about my child going to school.” “I’m worried about my business that’s closing down because there’s no traffic coming into the business, even after I reopened.” We all got the same phone calls. But members on both sides of the House never had an ability to say, “Well, let me tell my constituent that I’m going to try to deal with this. I have a private member’s spot coming up in whatever weeks and I’m going to introduce a bill that

showcases this issue so that the government can take notice and possibly bring some of its own legislation to deal with it.”

As we know, Mr. Speaker, the government introduced a number of omnibus bills during the pandemic, and could have quite easily taken an idea from private members’ bills introduced by government members and by opposition members and lifted the idea into a government omnibus bill. That’s been done many times. That’s how most of our private members’ bills get passed into law—not necessarily by just passing the bill, but by the government adopting the idea. Isn’t that a great idea—that the government learns from its own members and members of the opposition and says, “I’ll take what’s good and I’ll try to pass that”? At the end of the day, the government gets credit for it. Very seldom does an individual member get credit for a bill that’s passed by the government in an omnibus bill. People just see that the government did it; they don’t remember that it was an issue and that you may have done it. Now, your stakeholder groups obviously would know, but I don’t think, in the end, that the general public does.

So the government says, “Okay, so we’re going to do this with private members’ bills. There are going to be extra bills.” Now they’re saying that we’re going to have, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights, after 6 o’clock, private members’ bills: one on Tuesday, one on Wednesday and one on Thursday after 6. And if there are late shows, as we have on Tuesdays and Wednesdays—you can have up to three late shows, which means to say that you’ve got 10 minutes: five on the question and five on the answer, so 30 minutes, which means to say the PMB would start at 6:30, which means to say you don’t finish until quarter after 7.

I just want to point out something: This Parliament has more women elected to it than ever before, on both sides of the House, and I think it makes the Legislature a better place. When I got here, there were far less women in this Legislature than there are today. It was an old boys’ club; I’ll be really, really blunt. And there was Lisa MacLeod—she was a Conservative member who had just gotten elected.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You remember this story? When she got elected, she was a new mom. She said, “I just had a baby and I need to have time raising my child,” a little girl. She’s wonderful, by the way; I’ve met her a number of times. She must be about 17 now—a wonderful young woman. She advocated effectively the Dalton McGuinty government to change the standing orders so the House did not sit at night, because back then, we used to sit till midnight every night. She advocated that that was not family friendly, that women don’t run in politics because they’re being asked to give up their responsibilities as mothers raising their children and being legislators. Because the reality is, it’s always mothers—mostly mothers. I don’t have a problem saying it: My wife raised our kids.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, she might be upset, but that's a whole other story.

My wife raised our kids. When I was first elected, at 32 or 33, Julie and Natalie would have been—I think Julie would have been in her early teens, Natalie would have been in her pre-teens, and I was gone, like all of you here, in and out, because the House used to have a very different schedule.

Because of the work that Lisa MacLeod did—and other members, like Shelley Martel, who at that time had two young kids as well; she was trying to be a member in this House—the government got rid of night sittings. And why did we do that? Because we recognized that if we want to attract women in being able to run in this Legislature, we need to have a family-friendly schedule.

So we changed the schedule. We got rid of the night sessions. The only time you could sit, originally, would have been the last two weeks of a session in the spring or the fall. The government has now changed that to 18 days, and now we're going to have, every night on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, that the House will sit to at least 6:45 or quarter after 7, depending if there are late shows.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's dead wrong? Well, you should read your own standing orders. The standing orders say that you're going to have private members' bills at 6 o'clock at night on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. And if there are late shows, it will push that back by 30 minutes.

The point is, for young women or older women who have children, it's an issue. We have people in our caucus, as you have in your caucus, who have got here, have had children, and have responsibilities as parents. We're asking them to stay here longer. We're not trying to balance off what the responsibility of the women is when it comes to the raising of their children.

I think that we need—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think we need to take that into account. We don't want the Legislature taking a step backwards to where women say, "Well, I can't run," or "I'm going to leave because I can't live with this schedule."

The government is going to get up later—and I can see this coming: "Oh, the NDP doesn't want to work until quarter after 7. Oh, my God. Everybody else works to quarter after"—come on, guys. It's a modern society. Daycare closes many times before 6, and people have to make decisions. If you can't provide proper care for your children because you're not in a position to be able to find what you need, it will be an issue. I'm just raising that as one of the issues within the private members' bills.

The other part of this is that the private members' bills being debated now on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights, plus the one we do on Monday morning until spring of this next year, will be debated in the evening when there's no media around. I wonder if that has anything to

do with it. At times, both the government—I'm being fair here—and the opposition will have bills that kind of wedge people, or bills that are somewhat controversial. If a member on either side of the House has one of those bills—I'm not going to say that it's impossible to get media, because that would be a stretch, but it's certainly going to be a lot harder to get the media to cover the actual debate. And when it comes to the vote, you can defer the vote till the next day.

So you'll be in a situation where there's a controversial bill in the House and the government does not want to be seen, or the opposition doesn't want to be seen, as voting against or for a particular bill, for their own political reasons. Everybody is in the stands—whenever we get back to that—and is listening to the debate, and it's going to be, "All those in favour, say 'aye.' All those opposed, say 'nay,'" and if there's a division, the vote happens the next day, and they're gone. To some people, it might not be a big thing, but it is a big thing, because it's us having to stand up and to have the courage of our convictions, and then be counted voting when people are here.

We've all had to do it. Sometimes it's very uncomfortable. I've done it as an opposition member and as a government member. Some of you have done it as opposition members as well, because some of you sat here in opposition before. And certainly you've all done it as government members—where you've had stand and vote for or against a particular bill, especially a private member's bill, that made for an uncomfortable situation.

So I say to the government, yes, you can try to make this out: "This is great. This is an extra private member's bill" etc. That argument is going to work on some. But the reality is, the government has a motive for doing this.

Again, I go back to the point that I made: No government ever introduces rules in this House out of the goodness of their heart. It's never to help backbench government members or the opposition; it is about how they can advance their agenda. The NDP, the Liberals and the Conservatives—it's the same thing.

1630

The other thing I just want to say to the government: Beware what you put into rules in the House, because you're going to have to live with them one day.

Miss Monique Taylor: Aha.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, I'm telling you, I've been there. You have to live with what you pass. One day, you will not be government. Some of you will be lucky and get re-elected and sit on this side of the House. Obviously, a number of you won't because if you lose government, then a number of you will be gone. But whoever's left is going to have to sit on this side of the House and be humbled by what they did. I know, because I did that. I was in government and I voted in favour of time allocation, which I think was the wrong thing to do. At the time, I didn't get it. I was a brand new member. I was just doing what my House leader told me. I had respect for my Premier, my House leader and my colleagues, so I just did what I was told. I didn't understand. I had only been a member here for a

couple of years. Years later, I understood what it meant. What we did there was not right.

Then, the Tories came in and changed the standing orders, the Liberals changed the standing orders, and you guys have changed the standing orders, I think, three times now. I can't remember exactly how many times. Every time you change them, it diminishes the power of individual members, which is the point that I want to go to now.

Every member of this House is elected by the people of their riding to come here and do the job of representing them on issues important to them. Sometimes we agree with our constituents, sometimes we don't, and that's fair. But in the end, we always try to have their voice heard. I've had, as you've had on your side of the House, people who have come to me by phone, by email, by constituency appointment and said, "Here's the position I'd like you to take because I'm mad about whatever." Sometimes we agree with them and sometimes we don't. But on either side of it, that person, he or she, has to feel they're being heard—and not only that they're being heard, but that you're taking them seriously and you're doing some kind of follow-up.

So when you diminish the rules of the House, you're putting individual members on the government side and on the opposition side in a position where you're removing from them an ability to give their constituents a voice. That's what this place is all about. This Legislature is about giving the people of Ontario a voice, and when the government changes the standing orders, you're taking away that voice.

Now, I said earlier the government House leader brought forward changes to the standing orders with the eye of somebody who's sat in the federal Parliament. I want to say upfront, of course, if the federal Parliament has something that makes sense that would work better here, I understand why we would want to maybe do the same thing, but why is it he picked and chose what it is that we would do in the standing orders? In the federal House of Commons, we have something called an "emergency debate," so that if any member of the House—and we were going to propose such an amendment, and I want to talk about the person who drafted those after, in a minute. We were proposing an amendment that would have said, "Let's have an emergency debate," as they do in Ottawa. The way that works is, if there is an important issue that is pressing and real and is in the moment, any member or cabinet minister can stand in the House after question period, after filing a document with the Speaker, saying, "Mr. Speaker, I'm asking that you decide that there be an emergency debate on this particular issue," and the Speaker decides, not the government. In other words, what ends up happening in the House is not a decision of the government House leader, whose job it is to protect the government and advance their agenda—and I would do the same, so I'm not bemoaning the fact that the government does that. But the Speaker would decide. In Ottawa, it's been done to great effect.

For example, we're in a pandemic. A member of this House on the government or the opposition side could

stand up under that rule—if we would have been able to table our amendment and if the government would have seen its way towards passing such an amendment. I hope they would bring it themselves. If you don't give us a chance to take the amendment, maybe you can propose it yourself at one point, to give members of the House the ability to ask for an emergency debate.

There's a take-note debate that the government's bringing to the House, which is not a bad idea. I'm not going to argue that a take-note debate is a bad idea, but there's no binding decision at the end of the take-note debate. A member may propose it to the government House leader, and if the government House leader chooses, the take-note debate could take place on an issue that is pressing, such as return-to-school policy or what's not happening in long-term care or what's not happening in the small business sector etc. The government could call that debate, but there's no binding vote at the end of it. It's to take note, as in the title.

The emergency debate is different. First of all, it gives members an ability to put something in the House that may not get in otherwise, because it's up to the Speaker to make the decision. Why is it that the government decided that it was going to take some standing orders from the federal House—like the take-note debate, which is not a bad idea; I'm not going to argue that that was terrible—but didn't take the emergency debate and didn't take the 48-hour rule?

I just want to say, because I'd not be a good friend to my good, long-standing collaboration with Kevin Modeste, who works in our House leader's office—when I asked him to draft these particular amendments, and we finally decided on doing so yesterday, he drafted those two amendments last night, and they came back to the Clerks' table accepted and completely in order, and they're pretty complicated amendments. I think it speaks to the longevity of Mr. Modeste, who has worked in my office—both as whip and as House leader—for many years and is quite knowledgeable on the rules. I think most people here would respect him. He's quite a catch to have on your staff. I went over to the Clerk this morning and said, "The sad part is, Kevin has done all of this work and got it right the first time and didn't need any amendments, and we're never going to get to have these amendments come forward, because the government decided to move an amendment and a subamendment." Again, you can do that; that's your right. I don't argue that you can't do it. Of course, you can do it. That's exactly your right. I just say that it's too bad that the government didn't decide to do something with us when it comes to the emergency debate, because I think that's something that could have gone a long way to assisting.

I've only got about six minutes left, and there are a couple of other things that I wanted to touch on, but it's going to be hard to fit them all in, because there are a number of other changes in these standing orders which are rather interesting. Anyway, I'm going to go back and try to just concentrate on the parts of the motion that I think are the most egregious.

The first problem we have is removing the ability for members of this House to move a reasoned amendment. To ask members of this House, who have never seen the bill before because the government doesn't share it with them, to then debate that bill the next day—if it's introduced on Tuesday, it will come back on Wednesday morning—is hardly the way that legislation should be done. As I said earlier, if you're out there and you're trying to buy a vehicle and you go on the car lot and the car salesperson says, "Oh, you can't kick the tires. You can't look under the hood. Just give me a cheque and drive away," you're going to say, "Well, I'm going to drive away and go to another car lot." Why is the government doing this? What are they afraid of? Are they afraid to share legislation with the opposition and government members? The legislation is going to be public at one point. Why not share it so that we can look at it and make suggestions? You may find that the opposition or government members may have some ideas that will strengthen your legislation, and by strengthening the legislation and getting buy-in on both sides of the House, you could end up with legislation that will stand the test of time. But instead, the government is saying, "My way or the highway," and I think that's rather a sad thing to do.

Do I argue that the government doesn't have the right to do what it's doing right now? Obviously, you have the right to do it, and you're doing it. The standing orders provide for that. But that was not the intent of the standing orders. The standing orders were always meant to try to find a balance between the right of the government to pass its agenda and the responsibility of the opposition and government members to hold the government to account. That's really the strength of our system. If you look at legislation that has been passed across Ontario, across Canada and in other areas where there's a parliamentary system, we have done far better in the parliamentary system, when it comes to developing legislation that has stood the test of time and has served our citizens well, than you have seen in the United States.

The United States system is one that's very different. It's very polarized. What you're doing here is, you're polarizing politics in Ontario. You're polarizing the process of legislation in the House.

1640

I always remember Mr. Bradley back in 1992, when we did the standing order changes. I didn't understand what he was saying at the time. I admit it. He got up in the debate on the standing order changes and said, "Right now, we very seldom have any debate at third reading on any bill. House leaders get together, and they make an arrangement on how the bill is going to go through second, how it's going to go through the committee. It's brought into third reading, it's essentially a minute or two and it's gone—at the most, maybe an hour's debate. But mark my words: From now on, any bill that comes into the House for third reading is going to be held as long as it could, because the opposition has no other tool." And he was right. That's what ended up happening.

If you look at what happens today in third reading debates, we debate those bills far more than we did prior

to the rule changes back in 1992. I admit, they were the wrong thing to do. You can get up and chastise me all you want. I'll take it. It was not the right thing to do.

I say to members of the government who just got here, I know that we're excited that we've been elected. It's an honour for all of us to be in this place, as we all know. You're getting it from the one side from your Premier and your cabinet ministers, and you want to do everything you can to support the government agenda. But sometimes, what the government is proposing is not for your benefit.

Again, I'll say, you're going to have to live with these standing order changes once you leave office. Some of you will be fortunate and will come back and survive another day as a member of the opposition. I went from government, being elected on a sweep, to going to the third party, to going to two terms as a member without status, and becoming, again, third party and, again, third party, and then eventually coming as the official opposition. I've sat on all sides of the House, and you reap what you sow.

Do I argue the government doesn't have the right to do this? Absolutely not. But I do argue what the government is doing is reaching far further than they should to get their agenda through. A government quite easily can plan its legislative agenda and say, "We want to pass X number of bills. We have X number of days. This is what we're proposing," to the opposition. The opposition says to you, "Okay, let's make some trades. A little bit more on this one; a little bit less on that one. Committee hearings on this one; not so much on that one," and you get your agenda. In the end, you get a better bill, and the government is seen as doing something right. So why would the government do what they're doing now? I don't think it serves your purpose. It doesn't serve you well in the long term to pass legislation in the way that you're going to be able to pass legislation when you get this through.

The last thing I would just say—and I made the point before: I think we need to seriously think about what this means for women. I know some people were sort of short of shrieking when I was making the point, but we need to do everything we can as members to try to encourage women, and especially younger women, to be elected to this place and to make this place a better place. If we do not provide them the atmosphere when it comes to a more family-friendly schedule, we're going to have women who are going to say, "No, I can't afford to go there." We all do it—we do candidate searches. You sit down with a candidate, you tell them what the responsibilities are going to be once they're elected. It is a decision that they're going to have to make.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I just want to thank you for this time in debate, and I want to make sure that the government understands I will be voting, along with all New Democrats, against these proposals.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege and an honour to rise and speak today to this motion number 88.

Before I start, I'd like to just summarize some of the standing order changes that we made in 2019:

- modifying the daily order of business to increase the profile of members' statements;
- explicitly permitting the use of laptops, tablets and smart phones in a non-disruptive manner in the chamber;
- prescribing the way in which members may introduce visitors;
- eliminating the need for the minister to verbally refer a question to a colleague;
- eliminating the requirement for written authorization for a parliamentary assistant to answer a question during question period when their minister is absent;
- allowing electronic distribution of background materials for reports and sessional papers;
- providing time for a reply to an opposition day meeting from independent members; and
- allowing the co-sponsoring of private members' public bills by up to four members.

There were a number of other changes, as well—just to bring us up to speed on where we're at today.

Just a little overview on the motion: On September 14, this government tabled a motion proposing a number of changes to the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. These changes serve largely to enhance the prominence of private members' public business, to increase time and opportunity for debate, and to further improve the processes and procedures of the Legislature.

The private members' public business proposals (1) enhance the focus on private members' bills by considering one item per day on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday; (2) temporarily add consideration of a fourth private member's bill each week, on Monday at 9 a.m., until June 2021, to catch up from delays caused by COVID-19—I know a number of people, myself included, have private members' bills that are outstanding—and (3) require all recorded divisions on PMBs to be deferred to the following day, after question period, so that more members can have the opportunity to vote.

I do really support and agree with the changes to private members' public business. I always felt it short-shrifted the people who sponsored it to have them all on a Thursday afternoon, when very few people could make it to downtown Toronto to be here in the chamber to see a bill they were very interested in debated. And then, of course, lots of times, there aren't very many members here to vote on it. I'm sure people took the time to come here and sit in the gallery, and looked and saw maybe a corporal's guard of all parties here to vote. When I was in opposition, I noticed that. So I really approve of this, and I hope that this will work out good.

Some of the reasons we're proposing these changes were that when the Legislature was forced to suspend regular sittings at the onset of COVID-19, approximately 27 PMBs were outstanding which would have been considered in the spring sitting—they were delayed to the fall. The fourth weekly PMB will allow us to make significant progress in catching up to where we should have been by the end of the spring 2020-21 sitting.

We're making the PMB consideration a daily item of business to better incorporate it into the regular flow of

business. Some members, especially from distant ridings, plan to leave the precinct on Thursdays and are not present for consideration of private members' public business. Rather than considering all PMBs as one of the final weekly items of business, it will now be easier for all members to engage as they choose in the process. Stakeholders who may not be able to attend an afternoon session of the Legislature may be able to attend at a 6 p.m. sitting. By causing all recorded divisions to be deferred to the following day, more members of this House will have the opportunity, as they should, to vote on private members' bills directly after question period.

The other question that was raised by the opposition House leader: Will the House have to sit until 7 p.m. every night? Well, it is possible that the House could meet later under the new schedule. In practice, where debate concludes on government business early by unanimous consent, the House can immediately proceed to the early consideration of a private member's business.

Now, adjusting the length of a question and answer for shorter speeches—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh!

Mr. Robert Bailey: Somebody's frightened out of their skin out there.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Stop scaring people, Jennifer.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, I'm an old man. Don't scare me.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I think we're all right. No, we don't need to get the AED; we don't need to get out the defibrillator.

Anyway, we're making debate time more equitable by adjusting the length of questions and answers to five minutes for any speeches shorter than 10 minutes. So what are we changing, Mr. Speaker? In 2019, the House adopted new rules for debate on bills which included a 10-minute question-and-answer period following a member's speech. Under the current rules, a speech of any length is followed by up to 10 minutes of questions and answers. Under the proposed rules, if this motion passes, if a member makes a speech shorter than 10 minutes, then their question-and-answer period will be reduced to five minutes.

Why are we proposing these changes? Because in the inflexibility of the current rule, theoretically, a member could make a very brief speech—say, two minutes—but then receive 10 minutes of questions from other members. This was an unintended consequence of the former changes. This change makes debate more equitable and more practical.

1650

Something else I happened to come across over time in the standing order changes—I think I read it somewhere in the notes—is that over the last 150 years, there have been approximately 15 changes to the standing orders. One of the standing order changes was on June 25, 1992. There were a number of changes on that day. Mr. Cooke—I assume he was the government House leader at the time. I think he was from Windsor; I'm pretty sure he was.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, that's right. The Speaker will know. Maybe it was the seat that you occupy now, sir.

There were four amendments to the standing orders at that time made by the Honourable Mr. Cooke—"Except where otherwise expressly provided by the standing orders, when the Speaker is in the chair, no member shall speak for more than 30 minutes." Knowing some of the members who were in the House back at that time, that was probably a good rule, to shorten up some long speeches.

Then there was number 44—"The government House leader or any minister of the crown may move a motion with notice providing for the allocation of time to any proceeding on a government bill or substantive government motion."

Standing order 51 would be deleted and substituted with: "All notices required by the standing orders of the House or otherwise shall be laid on the table before 5 p.m. and printed on the orders and notices paper for the following day."

Standing order 66 would be deleted and substituted with the following: "No government public bill, other than the supply bill, introduced during the last sessional eight days in June, in the period provided for" could be debated. I won't bother reading it all into the record.

That was by the government of the day, in 1992, which would be the Bob Rae government. I'm sure that those standing orders at that time weren't meant to disrupt the opposition at that time, which would have been—I guess the Liberals and the Conservatives were both in opposition. I think the Conservatives were the third party, if I remember right. I wanted to get it on the record, as the opposition House leader was stating that anytime a government brings in its changes to the standing orders, it can't be good for the opposition. Well, this was the government of the day at that time—the NDP government. I think Mr. Bisson was a member of that government at the time and probably voted for this bill at that time.

Anyway, that's just a little bit of history, to get that on the record.

I think I'm down to take-note debates—creating a provision for take-note debates, which are longer debates on issues of substantial importance, and allowing these debates to take place after the House would normally adjourn so they can happen without impacting other business. I thought of a number of circumstances where one of these take-note debates probably would have made sense: 9/11, for sure; the incident in Ottawa back in November, four or five years ago, when, unfortunately, the constable was killed at the monument. I'm sure there would have been a take-note debate that night on that issue. There have been a lot of issues over the years—World War II, Vietnam. I'm sure there would have been people at that time in the House who would have wanted to speak to those issues under a take-note debate. So I think that that's wise. I think it's a great way to get an issue, either on a province-wide, country-wide—not a parochial debate, something about Sarnia–Lambton or Windsor or Whitby, but something that affects the whole province or

could affect the whole province; maybe some tragedy that took place. I can think of a number of them. So I really approve of this. I think it's a great way for us as members to be able to speak to different issues across the province.

Currently, there is no explicit mechanism for the Legislature to hold what would be considered a debate of significance. Sometimes, where there's a need for recognition of an issue, an agreement for a moment of silence or a set-aside time to debate a motion on a subject, these debates take place within the regular flow of business and are not particularly notable or noticed. They take place during the day, and then we move on to the rest of the business. But it's put on the record.

A take-note debate would last up to four hours in length. It could occur during a regular day, but will usually occur in the evening, after the House would normally adjourn. The debate could be triggered by a minister, upon consultation with the House leaders of all recognized parties, and members would debate in rotation, making speeches of up to 10 minutes in length. There's no vote at the end of a take-note debate; the purpose is simply to take note of an issue of significance.

Mr. Speaker, why are we proposing this change? We have seen many opportunities over the last several years for this tool, most recently with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the House of Commons, take-note debates have been held on such items as the international campaign against terror in 2001, Iraq in 2003, mad cow disease in 2004, Canada's deployment in Afghanistan in 2005. The take-note debate was first introduced in 1994 in Ottawa, at which time the government used this format to consult members on the future of peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia. That would be an issue, I could see, where you'd want to hear from every member in the House and all across the country—and in this case here, from every corner of this province, if there was a major issue. Members should be able to rise and speak and represent their constituents—it's why they're sent here in the first place—so I really support that issue. Take-note debates have been noted to allow members to participate in the development of government policy by making their views known before a government has decided on a course of action. The debate does not include a vote, to allow for a less formal and less partisan discussion—and I think that the more we can do that in this place, the better.

This is the next issue: allowing the deferral of closure votes so the schedule of the House can be more predictable and so more members can have an opportunity to vote. What are we changing? A closure vote is a vote on a bill or a motion calling for the end of debate and for the Speaker to put the question. This is a tool used when a bill has received a significant amount of debate. It is at the discretion of the Speaker whether the bill has been debated long enough before even allowing closure to be considered. Currently, votes on closure must happen immediately when they're requested by a member. Under the proposed changes, these votes, like most others, could be deferred to the following day and be taken up at deferred votes, after question period.

Mr. Speaker, you might ask, why are we proposing this change? Making this change will make the flow of business more predictable and better allow all members the opportunity to vote on all legislative business. Currently, closure votes may happen with little or no warning at any time of day, and members have 30 minutes in order to vote. If these votes were deferred, as most others can be, members can plan other business and commit to other obligations without the fear of missing a vote in which they want to participate and be on the record.

Report-stage debate: This creates more opportunity for debate in this Legislature by adding provisions for a 30-minute report-stage debate when a bill is reported back from committee. What are we changing here? Currently, when a bill is reported back to the House from a committee, it can be voted on but it cannot be debated. We are creating a tool by which any 12 members may stand to request that a debate happen on a bill as it is reported back from committee, prior to a vote on it. This debate can be up to 30 minutes in length, with six minutes allotted to the independent members and the remaining time split equally between the recognized parties. One report-stage debate may happen per day, during the afternoon routine proceedings.

Why are we proposing this change? The report-stage debate will be another opportunity for all members to participate in the legislative process, especially when a bill has been significantly amended at committee or where new information on the subject was gathered by committee members. This is an opportunity to share that information with the House. It is no secret that all parties do not always agree during committee consideration of a bill. I've seen that. I've been around here long enough to be in both opposition and government and see—there's always some disagreement, whether you're in government or in opposition. So this debate is an opportunity to further explore the varying perspectives of members.

I've had the privilege, during the COVID-19 pandemic situation, to sit in on SCOFEA and a number of other committees. The point that was made in a speech here about how you hear a lot of other information that you wouldn't otherwise hear from—and I tell you, one thing that I want to get on the record, too, is that the Zoom committee meetings, I think, are the way of the future, because we had so many people who would never have made it. I remember one lady—I don't remember her name. She was from way up in the north. She said she was seven or eight hours by Ski-Doo or however you get in there. She testified and she had a great story about the hardships she was facing with her business. We would have never heard her story in person if it hadn't been for an electronic Zoom meeting and her being able to testify. She had 10 or 15 minutes and she would never have considered coming all the way down here, and I wouldn't either, for 10 or 15 minutes, but she was able to participate. I hope that as we go forward and when we do come out of this COVID-19—and I know we will—we consider the electronic improvements that we made and consider those for hearings, for committee meetings across this province

to give people opportunities to take part who might not ordinarily have the opportunity.

1700

Number 8: This will also improve the flow of legislative business by eliminating non-substantive reasoned amendments. What are we changing? Currently, the reasoned amendment tool allows a member to lodge an objection to a bill at an early stage before the bill is considered. The procedure allows for up to two days of delay on a bill before it can be considered. We are proposing the elimination of this procedure.

The reasoned amendment was designed to be used to raise substantial concern with a bill at a very early stage before second reading debate begins. Reasoned amendments serve no constructive legislative function. They are never considered by the House and serve only as a delay tactic. We did them lots of times in opposition, I'll admit. I was on the other side long enough. While the opposition may claim they're necessary to ensure members have enough time to read and understand a bill, the historical use of reasoned amendments would suggest this is not the case.

In the current Parliament, reasoned amendments have been used 26 times to delay government legislation. This is an increase of more than 400% since the last Parliament, in which six reasoned amendments were used. More reasoned amendments have been used by the opposition in the last two years than in the previous 20 years by all parties combined. They're all here. I won't bother reading them into the record—I'm getting short of time here—but in the 42nd Parliament, 2018 to the present, the NDP had 17, the Liberals five, the Green Party two and one of the independents, Mr. Hillier, introduced two as well. Back in 2014-18, the NDP were the opposition third party. They had two and—what do you know—the PCs even had four, and that was when we were in opposition. So I'm not saying we're holier than thou. But anyway, this should be a better tool of business. I'm running out of time, so I'm going to have to just skip through here.

What are we changing? Currently during question period, government MPPs can ask approximately six questions to the ministry, and independent members can only ask two. We are allocating, if it passes, two questions normally reserved for government MPPs to the independent members. Why are we changing this, you might ask? Well, question period is the only time of day exclusively reserved for all of our opposition parties to question cabinet and hold the government of the day to account. In the interests of democracy, we are making this change to further enhance question period for members of the opposition. It is worth remembering that Ontario already has the longest question period of any province or the House of Commons. We're also, under housekeeping, closing an unintended loophole which would allow a bill to be debated morning, afternoon and night.

Just before I close—I've only got 45 seconds—I do want to say that I'm very proud of this Legislature, all the members of the Legislature, all the parties, government, opposition and the independent parties. This House has sat

while Ottawa—I won't say a term I like to use back home—has virtually done nothing. So I think that this Legislature should be proud of itself. The members, the leadership of all the parties, we've been here working, as we should be. I think we've been an example, and Ottawa should take notice. If they don't come back, I think shame on them and a pox on all their houses.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll end my speech.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is an honour to rise today as deputy House leader to participate in the debate on government motion 88, amendments to the standing orders. I want to begin by recognizing the official opposition House leader for his masterful summary of what has happened in this Legislature over the years, based on his experience beginning in 1990 and seeing many different versions of standing orders that have been introduced and debated and passed by this Legislature.

As my colleague the member for Timmins pointed out, one of the major changes that is introduced in this package of standing orders amendments—which is the third package of amendments, I might point out, since this government was elected—that is most problematic for us on this side of the House is the elimination of the reasoned amendment. Effectively, what this does is it enables the government to fast-track legislation through this place, even faster than they have already shown their willingness to do. So I'm going to focus much of my time on the subject of reasoned amendments.

As some MPPs may be aware, I was a researcher before I was elected. So one of the first things I did when I saw this package of standing orders changes was to look at the history of reasoned amendments in parliamentary democracy: How are they used? Where are they used? What is the purpose of reasoned amendments? What's the history of reasoned amendments? I actually have found a lot of very interesting and informative information that I'm going to share with the Legislature this afternoon, but I want to begin by quoting from a very useful paper that's called *Identifying Best Practice Within Parliamentary Procedure*. It's a paper that was developed for the Parliament of New South Wales, and it describes the purpose of parliamentary procedures, which are really captured in both the standing orders of any Legislative Assembly and the precedents or the Speaker's interpretations of those standing orders and parliamentary practices.

This paper quotes from the Canadian House of Commons Procedure and Practice, and it mentions Bourinot, who was, of course, a great authority on parliamentary process from the Canadian House of Commons, from 1888 to 1902. Bourinot said:

“The great principles that lie at the basis of English parliamentary law have ... been always kept steadily in view by the Canadian Legislatures; these are: to protect the minority and restrain the improvidence and tyranny of the majority, to secure the transaction of public business in a decent and orderly manner, to enable every member to express his opinions”—in those days, there were no

women in the Legislature—“within those limits necessary to preserve decorum and prevent an unnecessary waste of time, to give full opportunity for the consideration of every measure, and to prevent any legislative action being taken heedlessly and upon sudden impulse.”

The authors of this paper point out that these principles aren't just merely ideals, Speaker, they have a practical application and they are really the essence of what we do in parliamentary systems.

We heard this morning the government House leader talk about reasoned amendments as somehow being frivolous and just an annoyance, an inconvenience for the government in carrying out its agenda. The government House leader implied that the NDP was using reasoned amendments—sorry, the official opposition—in a way that was contrary to effective parliamentary process. And yet when we look at other parliamentary systems, we see the exact opposite. We see that reasoned amendments have been long established in the history of many parliamentary systems across the world.

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I'm going to begin with the House of Commons, the place that the government House leader knows very well. He was elected there before he came to the Ontario Legislature. The House of Commons Procedure and Practice states that a reasoned amendment may be moved during debate on a motion for second reading and “allows a member to state the reasons for his or her opposition to second reading of a bill with a relevant proposal replacing the original question.... It is believed that the first reasoned amendment was introduced in 1882.” So this is something that has a long-established tradition and value in parliamentary debate.

The House of Commons Procedure and Practice goes on to say that while there is no “explicit provision” in standing orders of the House of Commons, rules of procedure “have become established over the years by precedent.... Today, a reasoned amendment generally takes the form of a proposal that the House decline to give a bill second reading, for a specific reason.” The reasons put forward fall into the broad categories. It can affirm a principle that is “adverse to or differing from the principles, policy or provisions of the bill,” or it can express “an opinion as to any circumstances connected with the introduction or consideration of the bill,” or with other initiatives.

So the House of Commons Procedure and Practice sets out some of the conditions for reasoned amendments to be ruled in order by the Speaker, as they typically are. It has to be relevant to the bill being considered; it must not be a direct negation of the principle of the bill; it must not relate to particulars of the bill if that can be accomplished through amendments; and it must not attach a condition to the adoption of the second reading motion.

The Senate of Canada also includes rules around reasoned amendments during senate debates. The reasoned amendment “allows a senator to state the reasons for opposing second (or third) reading of a bill by introducing another relevant proposal that replaces the original

question. In other words, it provides a means to put on the record a statement or explanation as to why a bill should not receive second reading.” I don’t think that there are many people who would say that is inappropriate. That is the whole point of our being here as part of a democratic system.

So let’s look at some other democratic systems. In the UK: The UK allows reasoned amendments to second or third reading. A reasoned amendment must be within the scope of the bill, it can’t be fatal to the bill—in other words, it can’t just raise a series of objections that could be dealt with by submitting amendments at committee—and it must be more than simply a direct negation of the whole principle of the bill.

The UK states explicitly that a reasoned amendment can be proposed for different reasons, one of which is to make a political point: “MPs or peers, particularly those from opposition parties, may propose amendments with the aim of advertising alternative policies or challenging the government.” It also says that amendments can be brought forward to probe the government’s reasoning: “Some amendments are tabled to encourage the government to better justify its legislation and show it has properly considered its implications.” This is the legislative tool that this government is proposing to eliminate with the standing orders changes that are before us today.

Let’s look at the Parliament of Australia. There, a reasoned amendment “enables a member to place on record any special reasons for not agreeing to the second reading, or alternatively, for agreeing to a bill with qualifications without actually recording direct opposition to it.” Again, it says that amendments must be relevant to the bill, and it sets out other criteria for reasoned amendments to be ruled in order.

In Australia, which we know is a federal country like Canada, the Legislative Assembly of Victoria also allows reasoned amendments. In Victoria, the purpose of a reasoned amendment is to set out the reasons for not agreeing to the principles of a bill. It starts a broader discussion on alternative proposals. Again, what else are we here for other than to consider alternative proposals and good ideas that may strengthen our democracy?

The government of New South Wales in Australia also allows reasoned amendments. It states, “A member who wants to place on record any specific reasons for not agreeing to a second reading of a bill may move a ‘reasoned amendment’....

“The rules for the practice, based on the procedures of the Westminster Parliament, and the content of ‘reasoned amendments’ are as follows:

“(1) The amendment must be relevant, and must not include in its scope other bills then before the House,” etc. etc.

Finally, Speaker, New Zealand: New Zealand is a country that is near and dear to my heart because it has proportional representation, which I have talked about before. But in a document called *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, they actually provide some history to the reasoned amendment. There, in New Zealand, they used

to have some difficulty with government rushing through legislation. This document states that the “New Zealand Parliament was said in 1979 to make the fastest law in the west. Not only was Parliament seen as passing too many laws, but it also was observed that it was passing them too quickly in an ‘end of session rush’ at the behest of the government of the day. This meant that often legislation—both more and less important—was introduced hastily and not considered thoroughly before it was passed. This has been described as a poor process constitutionally.”

In New Zealand, they recently changed the House procedures to improve the effectiveness of the legislative process. And did they eliminate reasoned amendments as a way to improve effectiveness? No. They sought a balance “between giving the government appropriate opportunity to implement its legislative program, on the one hand, and allowing for thorough scrutiny, on the other. In particular, constructive engagement between parties has been encouraged, to focus the time of the House on matters of political and parliamentary importance, while facilitating the passage of bills with wide support to improve the statute book.”

There, in New Zealand, they also allow reasoned amendments on second reading of the bill, and in the case of New Zealand, reasoned amendments must offer an alternative to second reading.

So, Speaker, there is a lot of precedent that is built up around the value of reasoned amendments in parliamentary structures. When we look here in Ontario at how reasoned amendments have been used by the official opposition—and just look within the last year or so. You’ll see how constructive, in fact, reasoned amendments have been and how they have helped to advance democracy rather than, as the government House leader would put it, undermining the government’s agenda.

We saw my colleague the member for Ancaster-Hamilton—I can’t remember her riding. Anyway, she put forward a reasoned amendment on the second reading of the government’s budget bill, Bill 100. That amendment was actually quite critical at the time, in allowing a window for a much more thorough analysis of the bill by MPPs, media and stakeholders, and really identifying some of the major problems with that bill.

We saw just in the last spring and summer session of this Legislature some very critical reasoned amendments that were introduced by the official opposition. My colleague the member for Timmins tabled a reasoned amendment on the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, asking for a report outlining the legal opinions the government had received regarding the revocation of environmental protections that were addressed in the bill. We saw after that amendment was tabled, that the Auditor General released an opinion that the government had failed to meet its obligations under the Environmental Bill of Rights.

1720

Those are two examples, Speaker, of how reasoned amendments have been very important in providing just those couple of days, that 48-hour opportunity to really dig into the contents of a bill.

One has to ask, why does the government feel this need to pass its legislation even more quickly than it currently has? And one wonders, have they not been able to pass legislation in a timely way? Well, we look at their record. We look at what's happened since they were elected back in June 2018. The very first bill that they introduced had just under nine hours of debate. It was passed, third reading, no committee, no opportunity for public input—done, done.

The second bill, Better Local Government Act: We all recall being here in the dead of night debating that bill, which was basically to dismantle democracy in the city of Toronto. That bill had just over seven hours of debate, the very, very minimum number of hours of debate that most parliamentary democracies observe. Just past the seven-hour mark, that bill went straight to third reading, no committee, done, passed and law in Ontario.

We look at a number of other bills that have had less than seven hours of debate before the government time-allocates and moves the bill forward, like the Making Ontario Open for Business Act.

Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act: Now that bill had almost 10 hours of debate, Speaker, and then it had two days of committee hearings, but there were more than 7,000 people who wanted to participate in a discussion about that bill, who wanted to come to committee or participate in the committee process, who had some thoughts about the impact of that bill on health care in Ontario. But the government just rammed that bill right through without providing time for those more-than-7,000 Ontarians to participate.

There are many, many other examples of bills where the debate has been cut off even before the seven-hour mark, and the bills have either skipped committee altogether or had very, very limited time in the committee process, and then they're brought back for third reading without any kind of substantive opportunity for MPPs to do the analysis of the input that was received at the committee.

Every time any one of us in this House rises to participate in debate, we bring a very unique and different perspective. And whether we participate in the debate by tabling a reasoned amendment or by asking questions and commenting during the second or third reading debate or taking the opportunity, like I am now, to rise for 20 minutes and offer some comments on the business that is before us, we all bring a valuable and unique perspective. That has to be enshrined. That has to be protected, and that is what is most troubling about what this government is proposing to do with the standing orders changes.

Unfortunately, I haven't had time to address the other aspects of these changes but I appreciate the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 101(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Gates assumes ballot item number 12 and Ms. Bell assumes ballot item number 37.

Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to contribute to the debate on the changes to the standing orders.

I know for many of you watching this from home, this debate probably seems a bit insignificant, especially given the COVID challenges we're currently facing. I can tell you, as an MPP who came here focused on a policy agenda to build a greener, more caring Ontario, I can sympathize with those sentiments. But in the short time I've been here, I've realized that these standing orders changes are really important, because they govern how this House operates. They determine how effective an MPP can be in representing you, our constituents. Without fair rules, opposition or government backbench MPPs simply can't do their jobs.

Speaker, in order for us to do our jobs, we need time to consult with the people we are elected to represent. Thankfully, I don't have a party whip who tells me how to vote or what to say, but I need time to consult with my constituents, and that is what reasoned amendments provide: two sessional days after the government introduces a bill for me to consult with my constituents.

I hope the government members listen to this for a second. We have a sacred duty. We have a sacred duty as MPPs to be the voice of our constituents. Those constituents need time to talk to us. They need time to tell us what they like and don't like in a bill. That's what these standing orders take away: They take away the time for the people of this province to tell their elected members how they feel about a piece of legislation.

That's why I'm going to be voting against these standing orders, even though I'll have to admit—and I want to put this on the record—that the changes provide independent members like me with two questions every day in question period. I want to thank the House leader for providing that. The government didn't have to do that. It gives us a couple more times every day to hold this government accountable and do our job, but it doesn't take away what they've done by taking reasoned amendments away, which give us the time we need to consult our constituents.

Finally, I just want to say to the government, with the take-note debates, give the opposition some input into those, because I can tell you right now, as we speak, I look at the haze in the sky, and it's caused by climate change-fueled fires 3,000 kilometres away. That's a debate that I want to take note of and have in this House.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I rise to support the proposal for the standing orders amendments to enhance the legislative business. I thank Minister Calandra, our House leader, for bringing this to us, and actually, from what I see, he is triggered by COVID-19. When we have all this need to make the changes, then he goes through everything and comes back with this proposal.

In fact, all of us know how busy COVID-19 has made all of us, and I really appreciate him taking that special effort to go through not just in the past two years of our government, but also before—how many reasoned

amendments we have made and how much it compares to what it is now; what is a better way to make things more efficient and better for us so that we can have more time to debate, more time for question period? I was really impressed when he brought it to us and said that he listened not just to the caucus members here, but also to the members opposite, realizing that there are things—what is the best thing for us so that, as the member from Timmins is saying, we can do what is right for Ontarians?

Actually, we are making the best use of time, making sure that we are efficient in expressing our opinions. There have been times that we have been, because there's a special time that is allotted, trying to drag things along and expressing—I still recall there were times where we mentioned the different names of lakes in order to take up some of the special time. I also remember there were times when maybe somebody from the opposition party raised something that was actually not what we represent and we brought it back to them, but then they still kept up and said the same thing. To me, that is a waste of time.

1730

Let's use our time efficiently. Again, that's back to what we all want to do, which is do the right thing for Ontarians. Let us be to the point.

I really liked it when we had that change with the two-minute hit. Before that, it just took up time for somebody speaking for a long period of time before we could respond. It's almost like everything was very rehearsed, printed on a sheet of paper and we were reading it out. When we have that two-minute hit, it's really debating back and forth, and I think it involves the whole House—to really think about the bill that we are discussing, and I like that format. I think what we're doing now is increasing that and improving that.

Of course, I want to say that reasoned amendments are important. Yes, it was started in 1882. It is important, but as the House leader was saying, there were not many reasoned amendments before, but, right now, over the past two years, we have them a lot more and there is a problem with that. That is what we're trying to overcome—not that we do not accept reasoned amendments.

I'll just point out a few of the other things—there's a long list of things. I really appreciate that he went through each and every thing very carefully to support it, so that we do things efficiently, but I would just highlight a few things that I find are really great amendments, that are good for me.

I like what he proposed about private members' bills. Yes, COVID-19 has already delayed us—not just the caucus members. Actually, I have a private member's bill that was supposed to be much earlier during the COVID-19 time and it got delayed, and now it will be in October. I'm sure there's a lot being delayed, and now we are doing something about it. We responded to it. When everybody mentioned that this was important for us, we got to that, and we are adding that on Mondays as well.

I like when we do only one private member's bill a day. I think that will give us the focus of that private member's bill—and they deserve it. For them to get special time

that's really dear to their heart to express what is important and for us to really listen to it, I think it is only fair. So we will concentrate on just one a day; I really like that.

I may be wrong, but I thought I heard the House leader saying there will be no late shows. I thought he said we will not have late shows and we'll start at 6 to 6:45, so it's not too late. Am I correct?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No. Of course there are late shows. That doesn't change anything.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Oh, okay. Maybe I was wrong, then. Anyway, I like the private member's bills being only one per day.

I also like it when we defer the vote to the next day, after question period, so that more people can really think about that. After we listen to it, we'll think about that thoroughly, and we'll come back and do the voting. Actually, when we do it after question period, we will have more members there to do the voting. That's what I like about that.

Then, we also say that, in fact, we are not cutting time. I was reading some of the information there, that we are adding time for all of us, for the members to put in comments. We are creating more opportunity for debate in the Legislature by adding provisions for a 30-minute report-stage debate when a bill is reported back from committee. We are trying our best to use our time efficiently, for people to come back with the proper comments so that the time is used efficiently—but not dragging on saying something.

There's a lot in this bill, which is why I appreciate so much that we have to go through it very slowly. But the intention—from what I understand from the House leader, he is trying to make us do more efficiently, get more time for us to debate. We can come back and forth and start doing a lot more debate.

All I'm trying to say is, let's work together. The House leader is listening to all members in this House. If you mention something that we know is better, then we change it. In fact, what we have changed last time—we all recall how each and every thing is more effective. There are just so many things, I have to refer back to all the little notes so that I cannot—hold on a second.

Anyway, all I'm saying is, this is a very good bill that I support, and it has a lot of time efficiency, and I would like all of us to consider and support this.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I have to say, this has definitely been an interesting debate this afternoon. As the viewers at home have probably already heard, it's regarding changing the standing orders, which this House is built on. Each and every one of us, within our desks, has a copy of the standing orders, for us to refer to the rules on which the House is based. As we've heard from the member from London West, many of these rules have been built into history since the 1800s and are shared globally.

So now, today, we have before us a motion within our orders and notices paper here that's four pages long. This was tabled yesterday. It is written for us today. And here

we are debating changes to our standing orders. That's where we're sitting here.

As you heard from our members earlier, the greatest concern we have within these changes is removing the reasoned amendments, which is a tool used by the opposition, as we've heard, in many places across the world to allow the opposition time to look at what has been put before us, as well as give the public an opportunity to see what the government has tabled. It also allows the opposition to put forward thoughts or changes that we think would be appropriate.

As we heard from the member opposite, the government is willing to work with every member of the House and wants to hear our opinions and wants to hear our changes, yet they're taking away that process for us to be able to fulfill that. I'm not sure if she quite understands what's been written within this motion—but us working together is something we would love to do. Unfortunately, it's not something we have seen or been able to share with the Ford government since they were elected, and there are many cases to just prove that exactly. For the last several months, we have been sitting in the House while we were sitting through summer sittings and we had no idea of the government agenda.

1740

Now, this is something that has been happening historically—that we have House leader meetings every Thursday. We sit with the government House leaders and the House leaders from the opposition parties and we go over the agenda for the following week to come so that we know what they're bringing forward and our members can have the time to prepare on those bills and to make sure that we have the proper members in the House—because it could fall under a critic portfolio. But this House leader and this government have chosen to stop that process. He stopped it through the entire summer. So it's a good thing that New Democrats always work hard and that we're always prepared to make sure that whatever could come before us—we are prepared to speak to those bills. We will continue to do that. I know that the government is trying to find ways to stick us up and to maybe make us fumble and not be prepared, but that's probably not going to happen, Speaker, because we always make sure that we do our homework and that we are prepared for whatever this government is going to put in front of us.

Now, it's funny; the government House leader has said that our use of the reasoned amendments has been frivolous, that they're just wasting time. And yet I went and did a little bit of a search to see that when the Conservatives were right here on these benches—I recall, because I sat right down at the end there, and I remember that they would be banging on desks, they would be ringing bells, they would do anything to hold up the debate.

When the member Todd Smith—he's the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services now. Anyway, at the beginning of the government, he was the government House leader—and so he had some quotes. This is from September 2018, from Mike Crawley. It says,

“Smith admitted that his party used some of these same tactics to slow down the then-Liberal government when the PCs were the official opposition.”

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Say it's not true.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It can't be true.

Miss Monique Taylor: I know. I was shocked.

When I pulled it all up, I remembered. I was here.

And then our House leader said, “The very little power that we have as an opposition to hold this government to account is to slow things down a ... bit, to give them pause.”

“While the Ford government says the changes will make the Legislature more efficient, Bisson says the public's ability to have a say is being eroded.”

That happened in 2018, so this is something that has consistently been going on here in this Legislature since this government was elected, and every single move has been to stifle the opposition.

I ask the members who are sitting here in this House right now to look up at the ceilings. On this side, we have an eagle. It's almost like class participation: Do you know what the eagle means? The eagle is the opposition always watching over the actions of the government. That eagle sits here and looks at me and every member on this bench every single day. That is my job, and it sits in front of me to remind me that that is my job—to ensure that the government is doing the right thing. And over here on your side, when you look straight up, there's the owl. The owl is the eyes and the ears of the governing party. These are built into our Legislature for a reason.

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: I know the new members over there are probably hearing this for the first time. They're rumbling and grumbling over there because they really don't want us to have a say. They forget that the people of our ridings sent us here to do the same job as them: to represent the people of our ridings and of this province. That is our job, to do so, and if they don't like being questioned on what they put forward in front of us, if they don't like us having an opinion, then I think they're in the wrong job. They should just go find something else to do with their time. They should really pay attention to what the actual job here is, and that is to represent the people of our ridings and the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I know. There's lots of cackling going on over on that side.

I found another one I want to quote again—from the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. It's so exciting; I love it.

In 2018 again: “Parties Debate Standing Orders, as Government Moves to Limit Legislative Stalling Tactics.”

“Government House Leader Todd Smith let out a brief laugh Thursday morning in a scrum with reporters when he was asked how many times the Tories rang the bells—a common stalling tactic—when they were in opposition

and the Liberal government was trying to speed legislation through with time allocation.

“I have no idea,” he said, with the laugh. “It was a number of times, on certain issues, certainly not on everything. If it was something that we felt strongly about, if we didn’t appreciate the way the government was pushing something through, then we took that opportunity.”

Because they had tools—that is what this is built on. We need to have tools to be able to, of course, hold the government up. Of course, we need to hold the government up for a couple of days. We need to make sure that people in this province have an opportunity to see the legislation that is put in front of them. And if they think that it’s good legislation that they’re putting out for the people of the province, they should want people to be able to have an opinion. They should want them to be able to see what they’re doing. They should be proud of it. They should be putting it out there for the public to see and saying, “This is what we’re doing because it’s in your best interest,” and then let the public applaud and do all of the standing ovations for you that you expect.

Instead, you want to rush it through, throw it under the carpet, make sure that nobody has a chance to really look at what’s being put in front of them—never mind time-allocating the debates, pushing it through committee with not even enough public input. That’s the way you function. Is that what you are proud of? Is that what the owl is telling you to do? It’s the way our House was built. This is what democracy is supposed to be in the province of Ontario, and you are eroding it. You are eroding it bit by bit. Standing order by standing order, you are stripping every single tool that we have in our very, very small tool box.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This little.

Miss Monique Taylor: It’s getting smaller every day. The tool box is getting smaller every day, and to just completely delete that is really questionable.

The changes to private members’ public business: We’re going to be sitting Monday morning, when the House typically doesn’t sit until 10:15—changing orders that were changed previously.

I’ve got a whole list of standing order changes from before. I’m still trying to make sure I get them all down.

On Monday, the House typically doesn’t sit until 10:15, to allow people to travel in from their ridings before they settle in for the week. They’re going to put in private members’ bills. We could have done private members’ bills during the summer sittings. We offered to do Thursdays, to do private members’ public business through the summer. We offered several times because we thought it was important to be able to bring our concerns through the pandemic. We’re here; we want to bring our ideas forward and be able to debate those really important local issues from our ridings. The government shut us down. It didn’t fit into their agenda—wasted time. Now they want to move all of it into the night, when there will be no media to watch, when we’ll be past the media deadlines for the day. Again, all of the work that we have done will be put under the desk.

We used to have folks come here. I know they’re not coming now, but we’re going to return back to the day

when people are going to come to our Legislature. Do you think they’re going to come here and sit until 7 o’clock at night, waiting for us to finish private members’ bills? I doubt it. I think it’s really unfortunate.

1750

The only thing I can figure out as to why the government is doing this is to allow themselves more debate time on Thursday afternoons so that, once again, they can push legislation through faster. That’s not what this democratic House was supposed to be built on—it’s a give and take. They talk about, “We’re working together on a regular basis.” There’s no working together. It’s not happening. It’s a fallacy.

Instead of doing all of this standing order debate, instead of spending an entire afternoon yesterday on a private member’s bill, we could be debating things that are really important to people today. We’re in a global pandemic. We have people who are losing their housing. We have businesses that are being locked out because they don’t have a landlord who wants to play with them. Doors are getting locked. The pandemic is entering a second wave, and here we are talking about, “How do we make life better for the government? How do we lock up the tool box so that the opposition can’t speak? How do we continue to do this?”

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: They’re getting edgy, eh, Speaker? They’re feeling it. They don’t like the crunch over there. They hate it when anybody has an opportunity to tell them what they’re doing wrong.

You want to hear my opinions? You say that you want to work together? I want to work on housing strategies. I want to work on strategies that are going to save our small businesses that are being shuttered because the plan that you put through does nothing to help. Do you know how many small business owners I have talked to in my riding who are in tears, saying they don’t know what they’re going to do, because the government put in a plan that helps the landlords and lets the big landlords decide whether they want to play ball or not? Sure, landlords are sitting back, frothing, waiting for that business to get out so they can bump up the rent before the next business gets in there. Good luck. Have you seen the price of rent in Hamilton lately? You can’t even get a bachelor apartment for a thousand bucks. How is that possible?

Talk about the cost of OW and ODSP—how do you expect people to pay rent? God forbid they get evicted—and there are lots of them coming. Where are they going? Let’s build another tent city? Maybe we should talk about that. Let’s talk about the tent cities, because I know they’re in my city. I’m sure it’s happening across the province.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Right in the backyard here.

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes, right in the park.

People can’t afford the rent. These are the types of things we should be talking about—real, tangible efforts to help our communities, not standing orders to help the government.

This is just wrong. Every single part of this is wrong. If you want to be over there, shaking your head and disagreeing, then that’s on you. But I know when I come

from my city and I see people with massive addictions and mental health issues who can't find a rehab for the life of them—why bother detoxing? Sure, let's throw them another methadone or another suboxone or whatever we're going to give them to help their addictions, but let's not really fix the issues. Then, let's continue to put them further in poverty. So we'll build another tent.

It's unbelievable that this is what you find is important to talk about when we have real issues happening in our communities. How many kids—

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: Okay, that's another thing: education. We should be talking about education. In Hamilton, they had to put off all of the virtual schools because in the last few days, we've had over 2,000 students change their minds. Why? Because parents are confident with your education plan? Is that what's happening? The kids can't even get a proper school bus to school, and if they do, they're sitting three deep in each seat. These are the types of things we should be talking about—not how to make your life easier or how to push your bad legislation through faster, how to stifle public input.

You need to really pay attention to what's happening right in front of your eyes with the eagle and the owl. This is your job, right there. That's it. If it all could be summed up in one beautiful little carving, then it's been done.

You sit there and you just suck it up—that because this is happening in the federal House of Commons, then it's right. If you want to talk about bringing things from the federal House of Commons, how about the 48-hour rule? The 48-hour rule—it's standing order 54—requires that notice of bills or motions must be given 48 hours prior to being introduced or tabled in the House. That would mean that people would have an opportunity to see what's there, so you could be proud of the legislation that you're putting forward—not hiding it under the carpet as quick as you could.

We've seen bills you've had to change. You had to go back after Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act. You had to backtrack—that's not the only one—because of public outcry. People were going nuts, and all of a sudden you said, "Oh, no. Back up. Start again." That shouldn't be happening. If you would have taken the time and the proper measures to go through it, you wouldn't have had those issues. If you had listened to some of our reasoned amendments, you might have been able to fix it. But instead, you just want to pop it through.

That's right. I know. Golly gee, it's really too bad. It's really unfortunate. I get it that you have a majority government, but if you want to claim to work with the opposition, maybe you should try it once in a while. Maybe a reasoned amendment, if you actually listen to one, might help you work with others. Playing nice with others in the sandbox might be a great idea for democracy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have about three minutes left for debate. I turn to the member from Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I know we have very limited time, but it's an honour to speak here with the few minutes

remaining and to be back after the summer. It's good to see everybody in good health. That's the most important thing.

With that, I did want, as well, before I start my speech, to touch on the previous member, the member from Hamilton Mountain. You mentioned that if we as a government care about what the opposition has to say, we wouldn't put through these standing order changes. But if you read the standing order changes, you will note that we're actually giving two more questions to the independent members. Now, my only thought on that is, I guess the official opposition is afraid of the independent members, that they might—are they going to be the official opposition in the next election? I don't know why you don't want to give the independent members some more time to be able to speak up.

Question period is the most important time in this chamber. It's the time that people are watching on TV. It's the time people are paying attention. Those members over there had 1.5 to two million votes in this province. Give them a little bit more of a chance to be able to speak for their constituents. You're talking about speaking for constituents; they want to get up and speak a little bit more to theirs. I would certainly hope that you would support some of the changes that we're putting through here, because I think they are going to work to the benefit of the chamber as a whole and the people of Ontario.

Let's remember that this Legislature is not unlike our society as a whole. It's meant to evolve. I think we owe thanks—and I know the member from Timmins mentioned this as well and talked a little bit about the history of the British parliamentary tradition. I think we owe it to the system as a whole—that the system is meant to evolve, like society, and we are evolving the standing orders right now.

Speaking of adjustments, I would like to address some of the changes that we are suggesting here. The first significant change to the standing orders pertains to order 35, regarding independent members during question period. The proposed change for the 42nd Parliament: The House Speaker may allot the independent members the fourth and fifth questions, as I mentioned earlier, that are currently asked by government members. So in total, members on this side can ask six questions. The current procedure is, the Speaker has the discretion to permit an independent member to place a question and one supplementary question during question period. This is an important amendment because it expands the opportunity for members to pose questions that their constituents want to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Our time for debate has expired this afternoon.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you all for being on almost your best behaviour.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
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Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
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Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (IND)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
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Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

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Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
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Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

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