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Mercredi
2 novembre 2022

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 November 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 novembre 2022

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the minister.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I move that, pursuant to standing order 50 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 28, An Act to resolve labour disputes involving school board employees represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees;

That when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called the same day; and

That when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours shall be allotted to debate with 50 minutes for members of His Majesty's government, 50 minutes for members of His Majesty's loyal opposition, and 20 minutes for the independent members as a group; and

That at the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That no deferral of the second or third reading votes on the bill shall be permitted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Housing, Mr. Parsa, has moved government notice of motion number 7. Further debate?

MPP Jamie West: This has been a topic of debate all through the week. The Conservative government wants to frame this specifically as protecting children, but what they want to do is streamline the process before parents have an opportunity to understand that they're being used as pawns and pitted against these workers, who care about the children who are in the classrooms.

I want to share a letter that was sent to me yesterday. It says:

"Good morning Jamie,

"I sent the following letter to my member of Parliament for my area, but I am not confident that my voice will sway her to support CUPE members. I appreciate so much what

you said this morning in Parliament. Thank you for being a voice for us. If my letter in any way can help, please feel free to share. Your words gave me some hope in that we are not completely alone in our fight for respect and a living wage."

The letter to the ag minister says:

"I am a library technician at Sacred Heart High School, Walkerton, Ontario. I have worked in the education system for over 25 years. I have at least 12 more years before retirement. I have never felt more devalued by a Premier, Minister of Education or provincial parliamentary representatives than I do right now." She says, "I work hard. I love my job. I especially love the students that I care and provide help for. There are so many of us CUPE members that need to work second jobs to make ends meet and provide for our families.

"A strike is a scary thought"—this is important, this part, Speaker. "We miss every second that we are away from our students. They are our kids too. Most of us are invested emotionally, physically, mentally and financially in our jobs and the students that we care for. I am not exaggerating. I spend my own money to add extras for the students. If it brings them joy, I feel joy. I'm not feeling very joyful now but I wore my Halloween costume, gave out candy that I bought and smiled, helped, listened and loved today. Because that's what we do, every day. But an even scarier thought is being threatened, devalued and to have our ability to bargain taken from us. I need you to understand that the more the current government devalues, vilifies and threatens education workers the more stressed, sick and burnt-out we become. It's affecting our work, health and the students.

"I have five years of post-secondary education. A degree and a diploma. I am worthy of a decent wage. I and all CUPE members deserve respect and the chance to have a voice in our bargaining. Mandating us back to work sends a double message. Education workers are valuable and essential but," at the same time, you're telling us, "not worthy of a decent, living wage? Yet another bruise to our already frail sense of worth and value.

"Please, be a voice for us"—this is a plea to the Conservative Party. "Please, be a voice for us; not just for our Huron-Bruce CUPE members but for all education workers of Ontario. We deserve to be heard, treated fairly and respected. Please help us.

"Thank you for your time and consideration." Her full name is here, but I'm just going to use the first name: Trixie.

I was asked to share this because these are members in each of our ridings. I know that on this side of the House—

the NDP, the independent Liberals, the independent Green member—we have been sharing these stories about workers in our ridings, these education support workers struggling to make ends meet, and sharing them with the government. I cannot imagine—if they're reaching out to me and saying, "I don't know if my Conservative member has seen this because I haven't gotten a reply," then I'm sure they're sharing it with the Conservative members.

0910

These are primarily women, the majority of the workforce. These are mothers with children—and I've shared the story several times—telling me that they have to go to food banks to feed their children—to food banks. These are mothers telling me, "I can't care for my children and so I had to move back in with my parents and bring my kids with me." I have children, and they're welcome to come live with me at any time, for as long as I live, but I also have children—I know how you would feel like maybe you had failed your family if you weren't able to support them, if you weren't able to stand on your own two feet to take care of your children, if you had to ask for help, if you had to go to a food bank, if you had to move back in with your parents. We're talking about dignity.

The Conservative government wants to frame this as the greedy union members: greedy because they want their children to be cared for; greedy because they don't want to go to food banks, because they want to get groceries at a grocery store; greedy because they want their kids to be able to wear a new Halloween costume—a Halloween costume. It's shameful, Speaker. It's absolutely shameful.

Yesterday, the Premier—it seems every day he adjusts his messaging a little bit, because it doesn't stick properly, and it doesn't stick because, quite frankly, Speaker, what's going on here stinks, and the public is seeing through it. The public sees through this because their kids are in school, and when they're at school, they see these education support workers, they see the cleaners and the janitors, and they see the EAs and the support staff and the DECEs that take care of their kids, their most vulnerable, most precious assets. They see how much they love their children, almost as much as the parents do; how they comfort them when they're stressed out; how they work with them; how they ensure the place is clean. They see this and they know that these workers, Speaker, are struggling to make ends meet—struggling to make ends meet.

There is a rule in comedy that you can't punch down, and that's a rule that should be transferable to the government. This is a rule the Conservative government should learn, about how inappropriate it is to punch down. Yesterday, as you know, we debated Bill 28 pretty much all day, because the government was in a rush to ram this through as quickly as possible. They were excited to take away the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to violate human rights. They even wrote it in the bill at the front: "Can't come after us for doing this."

They wrote the bill at the same time when they were ordering poppies and putting them on their shoulder and

going out to celebrate the soldiers that fought for our human rights and the soldiers that fought for the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, wearing it on their lapel, insulting people who gave their lives, insulting the values that we hold dear.

And not just the soldiers, Speaker, because I come from the labour movement, and I know there are some members on the other side who have been involved with unions, but I don't know what their union education is. But the labour movement gave their lives, too, for the rights that we have. They sacrificed, too.

I'm not being hyperbolic about this. I am telling you that there was a time that if you joined a union, they would hire security thugs and they would beat you to death. Not beat you up; they would beat you to death for standing up for the rights of workers. There was a time that if you were on strike, they would bring in the military, they would bring in Pinkertons, they would bring in hired thugs and they would shoot you for being a Labour member, for being proud of being in a union.

I've said many times, Speaker, that no matter when I'm here—I don't care if they call us into debate at 5 a.m. or midnight or all through the night. Whenever I'm here, I'm smiling because I know I come from the working class. I'm proud to be a union member. And I know that working class voices don't get a lot of noise. They don't get a presence in this building. I know how privileged I am to be here. I've said often that the only reason I'm here is because of the training and opportunities that my union, Local 6500, gave to me, the support they provided.

The other day, I was talking about how the Premier has changed his phrasing again and again. The Premier, prior to the election, was all about workers—"Workers are the best"—and then slowly adjusted. Yesterday during question period, it was suddenly, "Well, we love members. We love the members. We hate the leadership."

Laura Walton spoke yesterday to a massive crowd from a variety of different backgrounds, unionized and not: workers who, quite frankly, Speaker, are—I don't know if I'm allowed to say "pissed off," so withdrawn if I'm not allowed; I apologize. But they were angry for sure—very angry. Laura Walton was speaking to them about the support they were having for CUPE workers, and the Premier was saying, "It's the greedy union leaders that I don't like. The members, I do like." Laura Walton wanted to remind the Premier that CUPE has 55,000 union leaders, that every single member of that union is a leader, because an injury to one is an injury to all.

In terms of labour, Speaker, the way that a labour organization works is grassroots up. It might be hard to understand as a Conservative, because we see the stranglehold that the party has on the members. It's a top-down organization; the people at the top tell you what you have to say and do. But in the labour movement, we vote up. We dictate, as members, as grassroots members.

Interjections.

MPP Jamie West: Yes, absolutely. We have the conversation. We move it forward, and so leadership isn't something that just represents the president or the executive or people on committees. Every single member has

the opportunity to be a leader, and every single member is a leader. You don't get to split. You don't get to divide. I know it's what they want to do.

I know the Conservative Party is hoping that parents will be frustrated: "What will I do? I need child care. I'm struggling to make ends meet, and the policies of the Conservative government haven't made life easier for me. Affordability is through the roof. Minimum wage—and the majority of workers now are on minimum wage because of decades of Liberal and Conservative policies. The minimum wage hasn't kept up with the increases in the cost of living. I desperately need to go to work, because I don't have paid sick days, because the Liberals voted it down again and again and the Conservatives voted it down again and again."

Paid sick days, in the middle of a global pandemic: Who would need that? I don't know. Maybe the two members that had COVID and took a couple days off would understand how important paid sick days were.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, they got paid.

MPP Jamie West: We make a decent wage as MPPs. No one's playing the fiddle for us. We get paid if we show up to work or not, if we're sick. But workers in Ontario—hard-working people who you pretend to stand for—you need to understand that the majority of them don't, and when they don't show up to work, they don't get paid, and when they don't get paid, they can't afford to find a place to live. For a lot of workers, that means they don't feed their children. For a lot of workers, that means that they lose rent on their place.

For a lot of workers, that precarity of employment tips them over the balance. They become one of those people that you pass on the side of the road, who have to pan-handle or are sleeping in tents. They become one of those people that you smugly say should pull themselves up by their bootstraps. There's a lack of awareness.

We were in debate yesterday, Speaker—and just to recognize it, we were talking about people on OW and on ODSP, struggling to make ends meet with an amount of money coming in—OW, less than \$1,000; ODSP, slightly over \$1,000. We were telling stories that rent, if you're lucky, is \$1,000, but in a lot of cities it's a lot higher. And access to technology: One of the members of the Conservative Party held up their phone—and not just any phone, Speaker; I'm pretty sure it was an iPhone 14, the new one. They're sweet-looking, but if you think someone on OW or minimum wage or ODSP is walking around with an iPhone 14, you're misinformed. People are struggling to get by.

I'm going to get back to this CUPE motion, but I want to talk about how this ties in, Speaker, because Bill 28, which was rushed through as quickly as possible and time-allocated as quickly as possible—and in the middle of it we then debated our opposition day motion because we understand the struggle of people who are struggling to make ends meet. When we brought forward that opposition day motion to double OW and ODSP, we were talking on behalf of people who literally are starving and going without.

0920

You know how the day ended? Well, the day ended that day with me going to the Minister of Labour's office, outside the Minister of Labour's office, along with colleagues from my party—the member from Niagara, who's here with us this morning, he was there; many members of my party were there with us—and we joined with workers the way we always do as New Democrats. We're not fair-weather friends. We're there in good times; we're there in bad times.

We joined with them and we heard about the struggles the workers were having. We heard about the solidarity of private sector unions, because private sector unions understand that in the labour movement, an injury to one is an injury to all. We heard about the solidarity and we heard that the Minister of Labour was having a \$1,000-a-plate fundraiser meal. We all have fundraisers, but there's a deep irony when you spend a whole day applauding—the first on his feet to applaud when they were restricting the rights of CUPE members, applauding that this was going to be rushed through and they were going to be forced into legislated poverty. When you go through an opposition day motion from the NDP to double OW and ODSP to take care of literally the most vulnerable people in our province and you vote it down and applaud to vote it down and then rush off to meet with people who can afford \$1,000 a plate, it's shameful—shameful.

Each and every one of us, we knocked on thousands of doors to get elected—we wouldn't be here if we didn't—spoke with people from all different backgrounds and promised them that we would be there for them, that we would be their voice, we would take care of them, we would make Ontario better for them, we'd do everything we could. I see it from my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, doing everything they can, bringing the voice forward.

When someone comes to your office—I'm asking the Conservative side, and I know you can't respond, but I just want you to consider this: When someone comes to your office and says, "I am being evicted because OW is so low I can't pay my rent"; "ODSP is so low I can't pay my rent"; "I'm a CUPE member and my wages haven't kept up with the cost of living. I'm being evicted. I'm going to food banks. What can you do? Can you stand for me, can you speak for me, can you help me take care of my children? I'm coming to you hat in hand. I'm coming to you on my knees, begging for help. You have a majority. You are the Conservative Party. You have to be there to help me. Are you going to help me?"—I don't know how you sleep at night when you don't. I don't know how you think, "What I'm going to do is legislate you into poverty."

This is your opportunity. We're aligned on a few things, and one of them is that the Liberal Party did a terrible job the 15 years previously, and this is an opportunity for the Conservative Party to fix those mistakes, to repair that. OW and ODSP are disgustingly low because, for 15 years, the Liberal government didn't care.

The CUPE members, their wages were frozen over a 10-year period—0% wage increases. Inflation generally,

you can guess, is between 2.5%, 3%—a lot higher recently, but, generally, it floats somewhere around there. The cost of living increases. So when you freeze wages for four years in a row—let's say it's just 2%—that's a 2%, a 4%, a 6%, an 8% cut. The rest of those years, the raises only accounted for between 0.5% and 2%. There was only one year it was 2%. It's a very, very tiny percentage of an increase—tiny. So their wages have fallen backwards and fallen backwards, to the point where they can't buy food—food.

Now, you hear a lot about the American dream, and I think in Canada we have a similar thing. Most of us would love to win the lottery and live in a mansion and have all of our wildest financial dreams accomplished, but I think that most of us—all of us, I would say—would agree that we would like to be able to afford a place to live. We would like to put food on the table, raise our kids, save for a house one day, maybe let our kids go on a school trip. Maybe you have to do some fundraising to help with that and go door to door with your kids—but have that opportunity for a better future. Nobody in the province working full-time should have to go to food banks. Nobody in this province working full-time should have to worry about feeding their children. Nobody in the province working full-time should be worried that they cannot afford rent. What you're doing with this bill is, you are legislating these CUPE workers into poverty, these women trying to take care of their children.

Speaker, I'm going to share some time with my colleague the member from Niagara Falls

The letter I started off with from Trixie caught my eye in the corner here. I want you to hang onto the image of someone having to move back in with their parents because they can't make ends meet because of the wages legislated by the province; having to go to a food bank because of the wages legislated by the Conservative government; having their human rights taken away because of the bill tabled and rushed through by the Conservative government; having their constitutional rights restricted because of a bill rushed through by the Conservative government, a bill that's more than a quarter-of-an-inch thick. They didn't come out with this on a whim. Instead of negotiating, they were thinking, "How do we punish these workers even more? How do we legislate them into a lifetime of poverty?"

This caught my eye in the corner, from the letter I started off with. It says, "I have five years of post-secondary education. A degree and a diploma. I am worthy of a decent wage." Speaker, on this side of the House, as New Democrats, we agree with that. I can't imagine why the Conservative Party cannot agree with this, why they're excited to do this.

I want to finish with one thought, Speaker. The Conservative Party thinks that if they're quick and if they're fast, they'll catch parents off guard, and parents will be frustrated if there's a strike on Friday. But parents have been phoning me and telling me, "We see through this. We see right through this," and those that don't today are going to see through it by tomorrow and the next day, and

if they're phoning me, my hand to God, they're phoning you as the Conservative Party and telling you too.

You have the power to negotiate this and move this through. You can negotiate this. It isn't an either/or. It isn't CUPE digging in their heels, because if someone came to me and said, "You're going to keep bringing your kids to food banks. You're going to keep living in deep, deep poverty. You're going to keep living so precariously that you may become homeless, and we're going to force you," then I would stand up and fight back. How can you see it any other way? How can you look your kids in the face and say, "I didn't do everything I could to ensure you had food on the table"?

These are not greedy union members. These are poor union members, and there's nothing the Conservative government loves more than stepping on the necks of poor workers. It's shameful of you.

I'm going to hand my time over to the member for Niagara.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member for Niagara.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much. I'd like to thank the labour critic for doing an incredible job for his half-hour—of getting notice late, like we always do, that they're going to bring in and try to rush this through. I'm going to have a message to the Conservatives, very quickly—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: This proposed act, Bill 28, has two main features to it: It's about fairness and balance. There is much talk about rights, and we believe in the rights of all citizens. We all must live together. We are on a journey in our short lives here together, and we have to respect each other. Students and children have rights to an in-person education. Parents have the right to expect that their children will have the best learning and educational environment possible, and they have the right to stability and the right to be able to rely upon all aspects of the education system.

0930

And yes, our wonderful, dedicated CUPE employees have the right to a fair wage and the right to a safe workplace and the right to respect, but no rights are absolute. And when we speak of the charter, the very first section of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms indicates that the rights in this charter are guaranteed—

Interjections.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: You know, Speaker, there's a lot of catcalling over there. I ask them to respectfully listen to this, because I've said many times, and I say it again: Read Bill 28 very carefully and read the charter very carefully and read the history of how the charter came to be.

The very first section of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is really about this very fact: that as citizens, we cannot trample on each other's rights. We must live together in harmony. That means no one can trump

somebody else's, and there are competing interests often at stake. So section 1 of the charter begins with this: that the rights in this charter are guaranteed "subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law that can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society." That must be read in the context of the rights enumerated that follow and in the fact that under section 52, that the charter, including section 1 and the rights listed therein, and including section 33, is the supreme law of Canada—that part of what the charter permits is both judicial review and a conversation between our courts and the legislative branches of government, the Parliament of Canada, the legislatures of the provinces. All are part of the conversation.

Section 33 is really a conversation clause. It's about balance. When it comes to a conversation about defining the rights in the charter, the rights of all citizens, even when those rights clash with each other, when it comes to that conversation, as professor Peter Hogg wrote in his constitutional law text, which is a leading authority on constitutional law—I was honoured to be one of his students at the Osgoode Hall Law School from 1984 to 1987, and he just passed away at the age of 80 last year. He wrote that courts are not always correct when it comes to their rulings on matters of charter rights.

Our Supreme Court of Canada in 1929 in the Persons Case legally reasoned its way to the determination that women are not persons for purposes of Senate appointments under the Constitution Act of 1867. Back in 1929, thankfully, there was still a right of appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, a committee of the House of Lords. That route was abolished in 1949, but 20 years earlier, in 1929, there was a right of appeal, and mercifully, thankfully, the JCPC overturned the Supreme Court of Canada on that ridiculous ruling. The Supreme Court of Canada, with respect, in that ruling, was spectacularly wrong, was on the wrong side of history, and yet somehow legally reasoned its way, wrongly, to the determination that women were not persons for purposes of Senate appointments. So the courts are not always correct, as the late professor Peter Hogg indicated.

So we need a conversation about rights. We need to have a conversation that is civil and respectful and understands the unique nature of our Canadian Constitution. That conversation means that the elected representatives of the people in this House and in every other Legislature in the Dominion of Canada and in the Parliament of Canada can enter the conversation before or after a court has started the conversation. Our part of the conversation is the bills we propose, debate and enact into law and the conversation before the courts or the cases that come before it leading to decisions. That's an ongoing conversation. It's a vital aspect of a free and democratic society—the independent judiciary, not elected by the people but appointed by the executive council and the elected representatives of our Parliaments. When we have that conversation about defining and limiting and balancing competing rights under the charter, then we have true free and democratic conversation.

So section 33, in my respectful submission, although it is itemized as override and has repeatedly been called the "notwithstanding" clause, simply because that's one word in section 33, is part of the supreme law of Canada, is part of the charter. We would not have the charter without it. It's part of the fact that there's a conversation that can and must go on with a bill like this that does reference the charter, in section 13—and because it's about balance. It's about saying we need to somehow balance the right of freedom of association, as defined by the Supreme Court of Canada in its 2015 decision—balance that interpretation by a court with the right of students and children to be in class and not to face disruptions, for parents to be able to rely on a stable education system where their children can learn in the best possible undisturbed environment. That's what this is about.

As we speak here, negotiations can be ongoing. There is no strike yet. There is no reason why another type of conversation can't occur. As we know from the history of the negotiations, this government actually bid against itself in the face of an unmoving position from the union leadership.

This government was open and is open to continued discussion, just as we should have a discussion in this House—a conversation about balancing rights, because we do not live in a vacuum. We cannot say, "My rights trump yours." We cannot say that collective bargaining and the right to freedom of association always trump the rights of students to not be disrupted in their educational experience. That's the kind of society we live in. We live together. We must live in harmony. We must converse civilly.

I'm very delighted that the catcalling has stopped, because that means my friends on the other side are listening. We can learn from each other. I happen to believe that if we always speak of balance and fairness and trying to get along in a civilized way, we can achieve a just society. That's what Bill 28 is trying to do. But when we misunderstand the nature of how our nation is governed, when we use phrases and labels that do not accurately describe what our Constitution is all about, then we mislead each other, and then we stop listening to each other. We can always learn from each other, and we can learn from history.

A little bit of history: In 1982, we did achieve patriation of Canada's Constitution. It was the original British North America Act of 1867 that created the Dominion of Canada and the four original provinces and our federal system of government. It was renamed, in 1982, the Constitution Act of 1867; rightly so, because the British North America Act was an act of the UK Parliament. Until 1982, we had to go to the Imperial Parliament just to make simple amendments. When employment insurance and jurisdiction over it—or then we called it unemployment insurance, in 1940, in the final, dying years of the Great Depression. When it was established as a matter for federal jurisdiction, that took a constitutional amendment to the old BNA Act, and we had to go cap in hand to the UK Parliament to do that, even as we were sending our young people off to a war in Europe. We were a nation by then, and yet we still were

dealing with a colonial, outdated approach to governing ourselves.

In 1982, we achieved patriation, which means the provinces and the federal government could decide for themselves how to amend our Constitution, and we got a Charter of Rights, with section 1 telling us that all rights are not absolute—we must live together in harmony and balance competing rights; we can't have it all for ourselves—and a conversation clause in section 33 that said not just the courts but the elected assemblies, the elected Parliaments, can be part of the conversation about defining rights, how they will work in practice and even, yes, balancing or limiting the rights so that we can live together, because if only one group has all the rights and another group does not, then we have chaos and disharmony.

0940

That's why Bill 28 is about harmony. It's about fairness. It's about balance. It's attempting, in one respect, to implement a fair wage increase, fair benefits, and at the same time to make sure there is no disruption. So the bill reflects listening and conversations with the union leadership, saying, "You are asking for this. We were offering this. Now we're offering more, and we're going to implement that as part of the bill, because we believe, on behalf of the people of Ontario, that it's fair." And at the same time, we respectfully are implementing this bill to say we cannot trample on the rights of students and parents by allowing strike action that would disrupt education.

This bill comes on the heels of an attempt at not having to bring in such an act, but the point of leadership, the point of governance, is that when we face a roadblock, when we face a crisis, when we face that moment where a decision is required, leadership is required. So we all gathered here yesterday at 5 a.m. to begin the conversation, the debate, and I realized as I sat among all of the members of this House yesterday that parliamentary democracy is alive and well. Yes, there are strong disagreements about the merits of this bill, and I greatly appreciate being able to be heard on my characterization of the bill in the context of the Constitution, the charter and that need to balance rights.

There are ways to implement good policy. We are first and foremost a Parliament, but yes, we must vote. We must divide. There are times when this House is unanimous, and in this instance, from what I am hearing on the other side, we will not be unanimous, but in the end the majority of the members of this House will decide.

And dissent is welcome. Dissent is part of democracy. It's part of the conversation. And we believe—the members on the government side—that the time for decisive action has come, but in doing that, one can be decisive and yet implement a bill such as this, or propose to implement a bill such as this, that is based on being harmonious, being balanced, being fair.

Note, Speaker, that this bill does not attempt to legislate an agreement based on earlier offers but rather its improved offer. I happen to be a lawyer and mediator and negotiator, as well as a trial lawyer in my former life

before I was a parliamentarian, and I know the meaning of the phrase "bidding against oneself," but sometimes, for a greater good, representing one's side, that's what one does in negotiations: One says, "I'm very disappointed that the opposite side did not move from its position. I'm very disappointed that they are saying, 'Well, we're leaving. We're taking our last offer and going home and not moving.'" Sometimes the right call is, "I'm sorry to hear that, but we're actually going to make our next offer anyway. We're going to bid against ourselves."

That's what our government, in good faith, did, and yet still we have no movement from the CUPE leadership. So this government is trying to be fair, and this government, in proposing this bill, has proposed that agreement where it bid against itself, not out of weakness but out of respect, as a sign that we do wish to be balanced, we do wish to do everything that we can, within the limits of government fiscal limitations.

With taxpayer money, there is no money growing on trees. There is no bottomless pit, right? We hear about a surplus, but we have a massive debt that was tripled under the Liberals, doubled under the NDP. When we speak of children and rights, what kinds of debt and deficits will we leave to our children and grandchildren if we spend unwisely? They have a right not to be burdened with debt.

Again, there are rights for many of our fellow citizens involved in this debate, and rights that are being respected by this bill. Balancing competing interests is what leadership is about. That is what this government bill proposes to do. That is what Premier Ford is leading us toward: respect, harmony, fairness, balance.

I urge this House to support Bill 28 and swiftly pass it into law.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Obviously, I think it's very clear that I'm rising today in opposition to this time-allocation motion, this ramming-through of something that is completely undemocratic, completely unprincipled. The simple fact that this bill has to start off negating the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; the fact that it is operating notwithstanding sections 2, 7 and 15 of the highest law of our land, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; the fact that a lawyer would even stand to support this is shocking. And that it would operate despite the Human Rights Code—I can't believe we're even here discussing this heavy-handed, draconian legislation.

We had breakfast this morning here in this great House with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, and many members from the official opposition were there. However, I don't believe—and I think we waited for quite some time for any government members, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Colleges and Universities—

Mr. Wayne Gates: The Minister of Labour.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The Minister of Labour—they never showed.

Even more shockingly, the Liberal Party showed up. It's not too long for us to remember Bill 115. In fact, there

are many people in the official opposition who woke up to what was happening in our province as a result of the Liberals' Bill 115, which stripped education workers of their rights under the charter.

That was a very costly, lengthy legal battle, which the Liberal government at the time knew they would lose. But they were able to do it because they figured, "Well, we'll save a little bit of money now and kick the can down the road." That's what this government is doing with Bill 28: They are probably well aware that the Supreme Court is not going to stand for this, but really, it's not their problem. They're foisting this upon future generations. They're pushing that debt down the road.

Around the time of Bill 115—and I should preface, as well, Speaker, that my background is in education—the Premier at the time, Dalton McGuinty, actually came to visit my school. I was working in a library at the time as a teacher-librarian. Interestingly, I had tried to go into the school—it was over the summertime—because, like when the Minister of Education goes to schools, teachers are told to hide in their classrooms, to not come out. They're not even allowed to go to their cars when he's coming to make an announcement, because he doesn't want to speak to educators; he doesn't want to speak to students.

At that time, as I said, Premier McGuinty visited my library, and he was making an education announcement, because he liked to position himself—he liked to pretend that the Liberal Party supported education despite all of the cuts and underfunding and all of the attacks. He had behind him a bookcase, and from that bookcase they had certain titles removed. I think that speaks to that party's character and quality, and their ethos, perhaps. They removed Gordon Korman books, for heaven's sake, Speaker—Gordon Korman, a very famous Canadian author. Books titled—and I kept a record of these—*Schooled*; *Swindle*; *Chasing the Falconers*; *Framed*; *Hunting the Hunter*; the entire *On the Run* series. It really spoke to me at that time. I thought, why would they be so afraid of Canadian titles and a Canadian author? But they were afraid that they were going to be seen that way.

0950

I would posit that this government is afraid of how they're going to be seen, because I'm well aware that members on the government benches are receiving just as many emails from outraged parents who are upset about the cuts and the underfunding and the mistreatment of people in our education system.

I hope this government will understand—I hope I can explain this in ways that they can understand—that education workers' working conditions are students' learning conditions. Education workers' working conditions are students' learning conditions. When you attack educators, when you attack education workers, that all falls upon students.

I've had the opportunity to work with many, many gifted education workers over my career. I see them giving their all, each and every day, making sure that when a young person comes to them, no matter what is going on, they're giving them their full attention. But what you're

doing right now is demeaning them. You're making them question whether this profession is for them.

Quite frankly, Speaker, I can't blame them for feeling that way. I can't blame them for feeling like they've been kicked in the teeth by this government. We hear over and over again from this government that front-line workers are heroes—which they are—and yet we see legislation which would keep them earning minimum wages. Many will earn less than \$20 an hour, and this government is okay with that. This government is okay with attacking the people who give their best each and every single day for our young people so that they grow up and have their best and brightest future.

It should also be mentioned that education workers are a largely female-dominated profession, so this is effectively an attack on women. When we consider Bill 28, as well as Bill 124, these are attacks on women.

What's also shocking is that this government, who would position themselves as being prudent fiscal managers, are wasting money on this, which will be a costly legal battle. We saw the Liberals with Bill 115, which they lost, which cost hundreds of millions of dollars, and yet this government, if they just look at the math—it's no wonder. I would like this government to take the EQAO test, because I don't think they would do well on it either. Quite frankly, if you took the money you've spent on these education coupons that parents never needed, never asked for and never wanted and you paid that to our education workers, you would have a cost savings. Invest in education. It is not a cost—absolutely ridiculous.

So this time allocation motion: They're just trying to hide things under cover of night. In fact, we're probably going to end up with a midnight sitting tonight because, quite frankly, this government wants to escape scrutiny. They don't want people to pay attention. They don't want people to notice what they're doing.

I've had so many parents reach out in my riding who are concerned about this bribe that they've been given by this government: \$200 for a student or \$250 for a student with disabilities—as if that \$50 is somehow going to make everything okay.

I want to quote a couple of people from CBC London in my riding. Robyn Michaud is a member of Western University's faculty of education, and she's also a parent, Speaker. She argues that the funding should be put towards hiring and supporting educational assistants, EAs, and other education support workers. I'd like to quote Robyn: "You can't have a government at the table saying we have no money to give to education workers, then provide all these random payments to parents.... [The provincial government] is not paying them a livable wage, you're not going to retain the best staff and there's going to be a massive education crisis."

I'd also like to quote Trang Bui, who is a parent who has two children in school. Trang says, "Wouldn't it just be a better decision to take that money and hire EAs? That way, this so-called catch-up plan could be a plan that helps teachers support our students and not put the burden back on parents."

This is classic bait and switch. They're telling parents that they support them, but they don't support their students in schools. It's absolutely ridiculous that education workers have faced over a decade of wage cuts under the previous Liberal government and this government now. The fact that there's anyone working in our education system who earns less than \$20 an hour is absolutely disgraceful.

As I offer my comments here, it's funny how many Conservative members are squirming and how many are averting their gazes, how many are looking at their phones with their faces buried because they know all of their constituents are reaching out to them in support of education workers, yet they are denying the fact that people are not happy about this. People want students to be supported in schools.

I think as well that we need to make sure that we are investing in education. I'd like to come back to my comments about education workers being demeaned and degraded and treated poorly by the prior Liberal government and this government now. We've heard in this chamber that almost half of education workers are forced to use food banks, that they're unable to fully support their families—pardon me, a quarter of them are using food banks and that half of them have to not only work a full-time job within the school system but have to take an additional job.

This time allocation motion is clear evidence that this government is unable to bargain, they're unable to negotiate, and it's clear evidence that they do not stand for students. As we've had so many students visiting this chamber, I think we should ask them if they think that their educational assistants, their administrative staff, the folks who clean our schools, the dietary aides—I think we should ask them if they think that they should be paid a livable wage, or if they think it's okay that the people who look after them and provide them with their best education should be living in poverty.

Within our education system, one of the reasons I became involved—as I said, my background is in education—was because I saw so many students with special needs and mental health needs falling through the cracks. We had a Liberal government that talked a good game. Premier McGuinty talked about inclusion and how students should all be included—and we absolutely agree on this side of the House that students with special needs and with mental health needs, they belong with their peers—but what they did was that they shoved students into classes without supports. That is not inclusion; that is abandonment.

When it comes to the allocation of educational assistants for students with special needs, it is an absolute nightmare. Learning support teachers have to go appeal to the board and they have to tell the best story. It's the learning support teachers who tell the best story to the board who receive the most educational assistant lines within the elementary panel. They have to go in and they have to tell the board, "The roof is on fire. We have this many needs, oh, my gosh." Well, what about those schools who are

already completely overwhelmed and completely taxed? What if they don't tell a good story to the board? What if they don't receive the funding for educational assistants that they require? Because, quite frequently, that happens.

Students are not funded based upon their individual need; instead, we have this system where the government wants to not abide by their responsibility and not provide each student with what they need, because our funding formula is flawed.

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Students are funded the exact same, in a cookie-cutter fashion, and then school boards are provided with a purse with the hopes that they will spend that on the student. But there are two problems here, Speaker: Number one, that problem is that there's no guarantee that that purse of money will be spent on the student who needs it; and number two, even if it is spent on that student who need needs it, there's no guarantee it will be spent in an appropriate way—massive flaws. We need to return to a funding model where students are funded based on their need.

In our education system as well, we see that there are supports for students who are at the top of the class and there are meagre supports for students who are struggling. But we also need to consider, what about the students in the middle? What about the students who just need a little bit of extra support? Those of us in the education system, who have spent some time and understand the system, recognize that it wasn't too long ago that educational assistants used to be able to provide literacy groups for students in the middle, that little bit of extra reading support, numeracy support so those students who might not necessarily put their hands up in class but might need that little bit of a push would get that assistance, and you cannot underestimate how much value that had. But now we have a system where it has been cut and underfunded so deeply there is no chance that those education workers will get the chance to meet with those students, because they're, quite frankly, running back and forth between classrooms like their hair is on fire.

We see classes that will frequently have students who should not be in the same room, but they're put together so that they can share an EA, because this government is too cheap to pay what these educational assistants are worth and what students are worth by not putting enough caring adults into schools. It's ridiculous.

I will also remember as an educator that we would often hear "code yellow" over the PA system, and that was a code for educators. That code yellow: "Lock your doors. There's something in the hallway, and the students are in danger." So we would lock the doors. We would tell the students who might be desperate to use the washroom, "Sorry; you can't go anywhere."

Speaker, what you would hear coming from the hallway would be an absolute nightmare. I'll never forget a student being dragged from the school, kicking and screaming and swearing. And it wasn't that student's fault; let's be clear here. That student had needs that were not being met, and they were not receiving the funding that they deserve and

require. But because of that, education for every single student was impacted. How can you tell a bunch of eight-year-olds, “Never mind all that cursing and swearing, which is horrible and awful to hear. Go back to learning. Pay attention, concentrate, smile. Everything is okay”?

What this government also fails to recognize is the amount of violence that education workers are subject to in the workplace. Some have to attend and look after students who abuse them. Many of them have to wear Kevlar body suits; they have to wear armour. That is on this government. You are not providing the funding to make sure that not only students are safe but education workers are safe.

Education has been cut to the bone. This time allocation legislation to push through this undemocratic, terrible piece of legislation is something that we should all oppose.

I urge this government: Listen to the front lines. Listen to students. Do not ram through this legislation. Pay education workers what they're worth. Make sure that you're providing those caring adults who are in our schools—that you're treating them with the respect that they deserve. And do you know what happens? That will filter through into the best learning environment for our students, and we'll all benefit, because one day they will be looking after us. I shudder to think what this will do to them when they know that they have a government that is attacking those caring people in their schools.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Graham McGregor: It's important for me to be here to speak to, really, a pivotal piece of legislation. It's not that long ago—certainly, I think it's a bit of a shorter time period than some of my colleagues—that my class time was being disrupted.

When we think about the terrible two years that so many kids in our province have gone through with the COVID-19 pandemic, where one day they'd be learning online and the other day they might be in school and the other day they might not be learning at all—that uncertainty and that instability caused by the global pandemic—I think the idea that kids should enjoy a full, uninterrupted year at school is not such a crazy idea. I think that's an idea that all members in this House should support. So I'll be supporting this motion, and I hope the members do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's a pleasure to rise today.

I want to start by talking to the education workers who are here today, and the teachers. I want to say, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for what you do every day. We showed today, when you were gathering here, trying to lobby this Conservative government to talk about the importance of education in the province of Ontario—and they refused to meet with them, all day. They didn't come to the breakfast—“Hey, this is what's going on”—to talk to educational workers, and that was wrong.

I want to welcome Patty Coates from the OFL, who represents 1.2 million workers in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Conservatives, you can clap about that too, by the way. She represents 1.2 million workers. You guys have a bill that said “working for workers,” yet you don't even clap for the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, which represents 1.2 million. You're looking at your papers. It's wrong—and it's wrong, what you're doing.

That lawyer there—I apologize; the member who spoke earlier—said he has been to the bargaining table, so he should know that when you're bargaining, everything comes together in the last few days. I've bargained 150 collective agreements. And do you know what? I had one three-day strike out of those—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I'll remind the member to speak through the Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Through the Speaker—I apologize. I have to be warned about that quite regularly, quite frankly.

The reality is, you know that when you go to the bargaining table, it's all done in the last few days. You also know, or you should know and your members should know, because I've told you enough, that 98% of all labour disputes are resolved without a work stoppage—I don't know if the Speaker knows that, but, Speaker, that's the true story in the province of Ontario—and I believe that we'd have 100% if we didn't have scabs in the province of Ontario, instead of legislating them. I really believe that, because people want to get a collective agreement.

What you're doing here, rushing this bill through, having us meet at 5 in the morning—which, by the way, I don't mind; I worked steady midnights for 20 years, so I can come at midnight or 1 in the morning or 5 in the morning. It doesn't matter to me when you decide to attack workers. I'm going to stand up and I'm going to fight for workers till the day I die. What you're doing here is disgusting—to some of the lowest-paid education workers in the province of Ontario, who have an average salary of \$39,000. Do you know that some days they're going to work—the kids just love to see their educational workers. They see them every day. And those kids and those parents do not want those education workers, when they get paid on Friday, to get their pay stub and then have to go to a food bank to provide for their family. That's wrong, in the richest province in Canada. What are you guys doing over there? They defend this. I know my phone is ringing off the hook back in Niagara Falls, from my constituents from the Falls and Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake, from parents who are saying it's wrong: “Tell this government not to do this.” I'm telling you, I'm standing up and I'll stand up every day to tell you. A worker is a worker is a worker in the province of Ontario, and you should be treating them with respect and dignity. And how do you do that? You do it at the bargaining table.

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I went to a rally last night. I don't know how many people were there—maybe a couple of thousand. The leaders were there. Yesterday, what did you guys call them? You attacked the leadership of the union movement. The president was very clear, because what you guys

probably don't know—because I don't know how many of you have ever been to a union—is that that union leader was voted in by the membership. They were voted in to represent them and be their face. But the other 55,000 workers, the brothers and sisters that are there, they're leaders. They're leaders in their schools, they're leaders in their community. They respect their union. You can't tell me you respect unions. You can't tell me you're working for workers. You can't do it, when you bring this stuff forward.

You had no intention, quite frankly, of getting a collective agreement. When the PCs said this morning there was no movement, that's not accurate. There was movement all along. You just didn't like what the movement was, so you decided, "Do you know what? We're going to bring in legislation. We're going to attack workers. We're going to continue to attack workers." Because these very teachers that are up here and over here and filling it are next. If we don't stand up and take this government on today, the labour movement is going to be in trouble, and you're waking up a giant.

I've never seen so many people at a labour rally on such short notice as I saw last night. Speaker after speaker, union leader after union leader was saying—Madam Speaker, I know you're interested in this, and I'll talk directly to you. They were saying very clearly—there were skilled-trades workers there, there were teachers there, there were auto workers there, SEIU was there and health care workers were there. The labour movement is coming together to say to you, "You are not going to attack us anymore. Enough is enough in the province of Ontario." You guys can rush everything you want through, but you're going to pay a price for this. Make no mistake about it.

I want to compliment the courage of CUPE members, who are being very clear: "Get back to the bargaining table. We want to negotiate a fair and just collective agreement, like every worker in the province does." Like I said, I've bargained a lot of collective agreements. Not one of the members I represented ever said, "Gatesy, can you take us out on strike?" What they said to me was, "I expect you to bargain a fair and just collective agreement." Whatever company it was, whether it was General Motors or was a little manufacturing place at Iafate, it was, "Get in there and bargain us an agreement. I don't want to go on strike."

And today, nobody wants a strike. They want a fair, just collective agreement, when their food prices—we're being gouged with our food prices. We're being gouged with our gas prices. Did the government bring in a bill to stop the gouging of workers in the province of Ontario, union and non-union? You did nothing, nothing at all, to it, and you continue to make record profits, because all you care about is the corporations.

I am saying to these teachers who are here and I'm saying to health care workers: They attacked you under Bill 124. That was the start of it—Bill 115 actually was the start of it.

With Bill 124, you attacked workers, whether it was health care workers, education workers or corrections

officers. You took their rights away from them—their collective agreement was negotiated—and said, "We're not going to honour seniority. We're not going to honour your vacation time. We're not going to honour your schedule." And you can do whatever you want to us under Bill 124—

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I know, you want me to sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the member from Niagara.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): It is time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GROW FOR CHANGE URBAN FARM

Ms. Natalie Pierre: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to deliver my member's statement.

Recently I visited Burlington's Grow for Change Urban Farm. Launched in 2020 by Bunchberry Connections, along with combined contributions from the Molinaro Group, Nurture Growth, Garden NV, private donations and a dedicated team of volunteers, the urban farm grew and donated over a thousand pounds of food to the local Burlington Food Bank in 2022.

Located on a vacant lot in downtown Burlington, the urban farm started out as a two-year pilot project and has now been extended for a third year. The farm teaches the wider community about growing and harvesting food. It promotes relaxation, education and biodiversity in the centre of our community. Connecting people to nature, the farm intentionally promotes and provides evidence-based positive mental health programs, workshops and volunteer opportunities.

With access to the right resources, people become empowered by their own abilities and gain the confidence to fulfill their potential. The urban farm is a place in the city to escape, to promote food diversity and to tackle food insecurity.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Jessica Bell: Education workers make our public schools great. They clean our yards. They maintain our buildings. They supervise our kids at lunch time. They clean our classrooms. They help our youngest kids and our kids with disabilities. We know them by their first names. They are part of our school community.

Education workers earn an average of \$39,000 a year. Many work two jobs to make ends meet. Some have to go to food banks because their pay doesn't go far enough, especially in this inflationary crisis we have. Many are leaving the profession.

I want our kids in class. Everyone wants our kids in class. No one wants a strike. That is why our schools need to receive the funding that they need so our kids can get an

excellent education. That is why this government needs to stop violating the charter-protected rights of all workers, stop this bullying behaviour and get back to the negotiating table. That's why this government needs to use the surplus that they have in their budget to negotiate a fair contract with workers, because that is the right thing to do for our kids, it's the right thing to do for workers, and it's the right thing to do for the people of Ontario.

SHOW YOUR 4-H COLOURS DAY

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise in the House today in recognition of Show Your 4-H Colours Day. I am proud to be sporting my 4-H green, and appreciate all of my colleagues who've joined me today to support an organization that has shaped numerous lives across Ontario.

Today we celebrate all the incredible things 4-H youth have done and are doing in their communities, and how the experience they gain through this program enables them to be responsible, caring and contributing young leaders.

For more than 100 years, 4-H programs across Ontario have shaped future leaders and great citizens, and this is why they have been one of the most well-respected youth-serving organizations in Canada.

I want to recognize and appreciate the tireless efforts of 4-H leaders, who work to provide valuable, learn-to-do-by-doing experience for members of all ages. 4-H Ontario plays such an important role in leadership development in our province. So, to 4-H organizers and volunteers, please keep up the fantastic work you do to enable young people to pledge their head, heart, hands and health to better living.

I wish everyone a very happy Show Your 4-H Colours Day. I'm a proud 4-H member too.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'm going to recap the actions of this Conservative government in the last 48 hours in this Legislature:

On Monday, the government pre-emptively tabled back-to-work legislation for education workers, using the "notwithstanding" clause yet again to trample over the constitutional rights of workers.

Then the government announced, at the very last minute, that the debate on back-to-work legislation would begin the next day at 5 a.m.—just like that. The same afternoon, we were all scheduled to debate the new government bill on post-secondary institutions, but they simply decided, with no notice, to adjourn the House—just like that.

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The following day a debate and vote on a motion to double social assistance rates that was scheduled for 3 p.m. had changed to 1 p.m., sending stakeholders who had planned to be in the House to participate scrambling and

rescheduling their day on very short notice—just like that. Let people figure it out.

This government creates so much unnecessary chaos and disruption—the same disruptive pattern we see in our education system, in our health care system, in all public services, in everything that this government is meant to take care of.

Speaker, I am worried. I'm worried that this government is running unchecked, with no regard for the Constitution, no respect for rights, with no compassion and with no basic operational competency. They're making decisions with no consideration that their decisions have repercussions on people's lives. They act like they're some billionaire who thinks they can do what they feel like.

DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: November is Diabetes Awareness Month. Given that it is Diabetes Awareness Month, it is important that we continue to raise awareness and continue to make life better for those impacted by diabetes.

Diabetes is a medical condition that affects 11.7 million Canadians across the country. Diabetes is a disease in which one's body does not produce, provide or properly use the insulin which causes blood glucose levels to be too high.

Sir Frederick Banting, a Canadian who, alongside Charles Best, discovered insulin—which marked a crucial step towards improving the life for those impacted with diabetes. We've come a long way with the progress of new medical management and technology that assists with blood glucose monitoring. However, more work can still be done to improve the lives of people living with diabetes. That is why it is crucial that we continue to raise awareness and work towards finding a cure.

MICHELLE DOUGLAS

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm proud to rise to share my member's statement today, especially as the MPP for Canada's largest 2SLGBTQ community.

I want to acknowledge that, a week ago, Canada marked the 30th anniversary of a landmark LGBTQ human rights case, led by Michelle Douglas, a young military officer who took on the Department of National Defence and won.

In 1992, Michelle Douglas and NDP MP Svend Robinson worked together to put together an end to the LGBT Purge, a shameful, 40-year period in our nation's history. That purge lasted till the 1990s. LGBT members of the Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP and federal public service were systematically discriminated against, harassed and oftentimes fired as a matter of sanctioned practice. The careers and self-esteem of a generation of young people were destroyed; an estimated 9,000 victims were denied benefits, severance, pensions and opportunities for promotion if they managed to keep their jobs.

This horrifying period in Canadian history also resulted in suicide, HIV, fear, depression, PTSD, addictions, disownment, criminalization, rejection, isolation, erasure and many other painful, enduring experiences.

It was an honour to be invited to sit at the head table with Michelle and her family at the 30th anniversary gala this weekend.

It is now my honour to invite all members of the Ontario Legislature to join me in publicly acknowledging and applauding Michelle Douglas for her herstory-making role in making Canada a more inclusive and just country.

ÉLECTIONS MUNICIPALES ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: Comme plusieurs de mes collègues l'ont fait, j'aimerais débiter par féliciter les élus municipaux de ma circonscription de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Certains ont été élus par acclamation; certains ont été réélus et demeurent en poste; et d'autres sont des nouveaux venus. Je tiens à tous les féliciter pour leur dévouement envers nos citoyens, et je leur souhaite un bon succès en politique municipale.

Félicitations aussi à tous ceux qui ont eu le courage de mettre leur candidature lors des dernières élections.

J'aimerais aussi profiter de l'occasion pour remercier mes collègues députés qui m'ont nommé en tant que directeur de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie le 4 octobre dernier. Suite à cette nomination, j'ai obtenu le rôle de chargé de mission Amérique. Ce rôle me permettra de faire la promotion de la langue française auprès des parlementaires de toute l'Amérique.

J'étais à Barcelone au Parlement de la Catalogne la semaine dernière pour participer à la 34^e Assemblée régionale Europe de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. Accompagné de parlementaires de plusieurs pays d'Europe et du chargé de mission Afrique, nous avons pris part à plusieurs sessions et discussions au sujet de la liberté d'expression et autres—des sujets qui ne semblent pas être une priorité pour nous, les Ontariens, mais qui peuvent être un grand défi pour les citoyens de certains pays.

Avec l'aide de ces partenaires, nous continuerons à faire la promotion de la francophonie auprès des parlementaires à travers le monde. Merci.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Bobbi Ann Brady: As I told members of this chamber yesterday, I have the unique position of being able to see legislation before this House from an independent lens. I can be genuine in my approach, and I have nothing to protect or defend but those interests of my constituents.

I'm a bit cranky with what's going on here. Who here actually cares about our education workers? Who here

actually cares about our students? We have one side of this House who cares about getting even with unions and is, again, threatening the “notwithstanding” clause, and we have another side that encourages political action.

I will give credit to my colleague from Guelph, who, yesterday, encouraged this House to work together, and I was heartened to hear that negotiations had picked up again.

I do find it convenient that there has been all sorts of talk in the past few days about the need to have our students in school. Many of the ministers opposite will know that throughout the pandemic, I was the person coming to them very concerned about the mental health of our young people, and my concerns, at that time, fell on deaf ears.

A word of warning to our education workers: If you decide to walk off the job and the lives of students are severely impacted, you will be blamed, and your union will wear the wrath of Ontario parents. At the same time, the union will have given this government exactly what they wished for. Merry Christmas.

To this government, to CUPE: Stop using some of the province's lowest-paid workers and stop using our kids as political pawns.

Speaker, it's time every person in this chamber comes together to tone down the rhetoric, to get the job done. In my maiden speech, I asked members of this House to do politics differently. Today would be a good day to start.

PORCHLIGHT COUNSELLING AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Jess Dixon: I'm standing today to celebrate the rebranding of a wonderful organization from Cambridge. It used to have the very geographically long name of the Family Counselling Centre of Cambridge and North Dumfries, which didn't exactly roll off the tongue. This is a group that started in 1940 in Cambridge, in response to the economic problems and grief that families were suffering as a result of World War II. It began with knitting socks and making meals, and then it expanded, becoming the geographically long name in the 1960s.

During my campaign, I had the pleasure of meeting their director, Cameron Dearlove. Our first meeting was supposed to be half an hour, and I was there for about two hours. He's an absolutely wonderful man who does incredible work in the community.

One of the exciting things this group does is, they work with recovery supportive housing, which, as a crown, I really enjoyed, as their entire concept is that those struggling with addictions do not succeed unless they are in supportive housing. They have the honour of, in the past four years, having had 99 people go through their 30-bed program, with 70 of those remaining in stable housing today.

They're rebranded now as Porchlight counselling services, with the idea being that when you come home from a long journey, seeing that someone has left the porch

light on for you shows that you are home and that somebody cares.

I want to congratulate them for the work they do.

WOODGREEN COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mr. David Smith: I rise today to recognize the important contributions of WoodGreen Community Services to my constituency of Scarborough Centre. Today in the gallery, we have about 13 members here from the organization, and I want to recognize them for the work they have been doing.

1030

WoodGreen, who serve close to 40,000 people each year, is one of Toronto's largest social services agencies and is the largest non-municipal affordable housing provider. WoodGreen has over 75 programs and services that tackle the social determinants of health and help vulnerable populations get out of poverty and homelessness and into education, employment and sustainable housing.

These services include helping people to find safe and affordable housing, supporting seniors to live independently, assisting internationally trained professionals entering the Toronto job market, delivering programs for children and youth, and assisting newcomers with settling into Canadian life. They also focus on workforce development and creating opportunities for employment and financial empowerment, which are key components of the social determinants of health.

For example, WoodGreen's financial empowerment services help thousands of struggling Ontario households stabilize and rebuild their financial health. They offer one-on-one counselling, free tax clinics, budgeting workshops, debt management and other resources to support community members. These financial counselling and support services can create a pathway for different populations, including Ontario Works recipients, to better understand the financial process of transitioning from social assistance to employment.

I want to thank them very much for the work they have done over the years.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I would like to welcome the team from Western University, here today for their Queen's Park advocacy day. I'd like to introduce Dr. Alan Shepard, the president and vice-chancellor; Grace Parraga, professor and graduate chair in the department of medical biophysics; Sophie Helpard, director of government relations; Florentine Strzelczyk, the provost and vice-president, academic; Keith Gibbons, chair of the board of governors; Peter White, executive director of government relations and strategic partnerships; John Doerksen, vice-provost, students; Opiyo Oloya, associate vice-president, equity, diversity and inclusion; Althea Blackburn-Evans, chief communications officer; and Sara Ridout, coordinator of government relations.

I would like to welcome everyone to the reception tonight, which will be taking place at Mercatto on College from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to welcome back my good friend Patty Coates, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, and Michelle Teixeira, president of the OSSTF local here in Toronto, and all her members who are with her.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature, in the members' gallery today, representatives of the Canadian Automobile Association, who are here today for their advocacy day. Welcome to Queen's Park, and I look forward to meeting with you this afternoon.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to welcome OSSTF members Christine Musson, Christina Wagner, Andrea Loken, Wendy Bonnell, Erin Leonard, Colin Matthew, vice-president of OSSTF Martha Hradowy, with a special shout-out to the two district 9 members from Windsor, Christine and Christina. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I, too, would like to welcome members of OSSTF who are here today to meet with us all: Karen Littlewood, president; Paul Caccamo, vice-president; Martha Hradowy, vice-president; Hayssam Hulays, executive officer; Malini Leahy, executive officer; Colin Matthew, executive officer; Paul Kossta, our legislative observer; and Richardo Harvey, organizer.

I'd also like to welcome, from AEFO, Anne Lavoie, general manager and secretary-treasurer, and Emile Maheu, executive, government and community relations, to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'd like to welcome an incredible public servant with the Ministry of Long-Term Care, Sarah Sackrulle, and her wonderful daughter, Katherine Koetsier, who came to take your daughter to work day today. Again, thank you for coming and visiting us here in the chamber.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to welcome Graham Hill, who's my CFO on my campaign, and Anne Liebau, who is one of the best midwives in the province of Ontario, to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Graham McGregor: We have two special guests here today: my community office manager, Nikki, and her daughter Elisa, who is here for Take Our Kids to Work Day. Welcome to the chamber.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, I'd like to welcome members of the Ontario Dental Association, particularly Dr. Maneesh Jain from Guelph, who's here today.

I'd also like to welcome Karen Littlewood and all OSSTF members, especially those from Guelph. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: Mr. Speaker, today is Take Our Kids to Work Day. I am joined by my daughter, Noor Rasheed, and her friend, Layla Khattab. I'm trying to find where Noor is, and her friend—I don't know—but welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, it is indeed Take Our Kids to Work Day. My kids are off at university so they couldn't come today, but I was really proud to bring Keegan Munk-

Philips with me today, a grade 9 student at Western Tech, who is one of my star volunteers. Welcome, Keegan.

I'd also like to acknowledge all the extraordinary OSSTF members that are here today, each one of them an extraordinary leader in our province.

Ms. Stephanie Bowman: I'd like to add my welcome to OSSTF members, as well as the contingent from Western University, my alma mater.

I'd also like to welcome a special guest from Don Valley West, TDSB school trustee for ward 11, Rachel Chernos-Lin, who has also brought her daughter and two friends for Take Our Kids to Work Day: Aliyah Sandler, Kinsey Faucher and Pippa Lin. Again, I think they're still trying to find seats as well, but they're delighted to be here.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Today, I'd like to welcome to our members' gallery Kory Preston and Caitlin Laskowski from Chicken Farmers of Ontario. Have a great day.

MPP Jill Andrew: I'd like to welcome Karen Littlewood, OSSTF president, and all the fantastic members here. A special shout-out to district 12.

I'd also like to welcome Scleroderma Canada here and thank Dr. Levy for her work, and shout out my amazing LA, Nancy Robb, who's been running around the building here at Queen's Park all day today.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd like to welcome Dr. Don Friedlander from the Ontario Dental Association to the Legislature. He's from the great riding of Carleton and a good friend of mine. Welcome.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to welcome U of T students Andrew Yang, George Kong and Ziyuan Guan.

I also want to extend a welcome to Patty Coates from the OFL, and all of the members of the OSSTF who are here today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today my local representative of the OSSTF, Christian Sell.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Today, I'd like to welcome Toby Ley and Shannon Smith from OSSTF/FEESO. Welcome to the chamber of the House today.

Mrs. Robin Martin: As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, it gives me great pleasure to welcome the Ontario Dental Association in that capacity and, of course, the Scleroderma Society of Ontario, who had their breakfast today at Queen's Park as well. From the scleroderma society, we have Silvia Petrozza, Suneet Campbell, Mark DiRosa, Jeanne Monteir, Lisa Skinner, Maureen Worrion-Sauvé, Jennifer Botelho, Joanne Jones, Wendy Vujacic, Erin Stanhope and John Malcolmson; and also, from my riding, Dr. Deborah Levy. Scleroderma: Hard to say, harder disease.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to introduce two great groups of people, the wonderful people from Western University in my riding: Dr. Alan Shepard, Grace Parraga, Florentine Strzelczyk, Keith Gibbons, Peter White, Althea Blackburn-Evans, John Doerksen, Opiyo Oloya, Sophie Helpard and Sara Ridout. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Brian Riddell: I'd like to introduce, from the great riding of Cambridge, Ontario, the parents of page Vanessa Bal: Dr. Sharon Bal; and a former page captain, Julian Bal. Thank you for coming today.

1040

Mr. Joel Harden: There's a lot of great Ottawa folks in the building today. I want to shout out Sue Rab and Richard Brown, from OSSTF Local 25.

We often, in this House, stand on our feet when former members of this House come, but I want to shout out Julian Ovens, who's with us today in the members' gallery, who served at least three federal ministers as chief of staff. His daughter, Gabrielle Ovens, is part of our page crew this week. Julian, it's really great to see you today. Gabrielle, thanks for your work for this House. Thank you for your work for the country.

Ms. Jess Dixon: I want to welcome Cassandra Beach, the mother of our amazing page Mae, who is doing bring your mom to work day today, instead. Thank you.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank all of the OPSEU health professionals who came to Queen's Park today. It's a long list; bear with me: Megan North, Ashley Palmer, Betty Palmieri, Nicole Parro, Rohan Quest, Gayatri Samaroo, Kristyn Silver, Chrisy Tremblay, Joel Usher, Christa Walker, Elizabeth Watts, Rob Ziegler, Noemi Khondo, Kelsea Mahabir, Laurie Nancekivell—who is their vice-president—Brenda Allan, Adrian Balojin, Sandra Blancher, Carole Breeze, Keri-Ann Brunson, Melissa Coenraad, Samantha Green, Daniel Hahn, Coleen Houlder, Gail Kelly, Sara Labelle—in charge of health care—Elizabeth Leasa, Steven McCaw, Jordan McTavish and Angela Muraca. Forgive the French accent. They are all nice people.

Mr. Adil Shamji: I have many friends in the audience in the chamber today. I wish to acknowledge the Ontario Dental Association, the OPSEU health professionals division, Western University, the Scleroderma Society of Ontario and OSSTF. Thank you, and welcome to you all.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I'd like to acknowledge Dr. Charles Frank from the Ontario Dental Association, from my hometown of Tecumseh, who is here today.

Ms. Doly Begum: I'd like to welcome OSSTF local members: Seth Bernstein, Vincent Bisasor, Chris Chandler, Derik Chica, Ricardo Harvey, Danica Izzard, Mark Kissel, Paulina Monlouis, Michael Platt and Michelle Teixeira and all the other OSSTF members, as well as all the other guests here who are joining us today.

MPP Jamie West: I want to welcome OSSTF as well. In particular, from Sudbury, across from me here, I see our D3 professional student services personnel president, Dan Watson, and district 3 president, Eric Laberge. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I would like to welcome Carlos Santander, Matthew Roy and Gordon Robitaille, who have come here from Thunder Bay. Gordon had to do an extra hour to get here from Nipigon. Welcome.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: On behalf of the official opposition, I'd like to welcome all the amazing members of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation,

including president Karen Littlewood. Thanks for all the hard work that you do for our students, and thanks for coming here today to share your stories with us.

J'aimerais aussi dire un mot de bienvenue aux représentants de l'AEFO. Merci pour votre travail important, aussi.

Ms. Doly Begum: I would also like to welcome Dr. Stephen Abrams—I don't see him, but I believe he is here—from the Ontario Dental Association. He's been an excellent advocate for dental care across the province.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd also like to welcome the great individuals from OSSTF/FEESO: Sarah Adams, Jonathan Lam, Julie Montes, Chere Schneider, Monica Zacharias and Dan Staples, as well as all the other great front-line education workers. Thank you for the engaging breakfast this morning. I hope your meetings with the government go well.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That may have been the longest five minutes in the history of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, but I want to thank the members for their indulgence to allow the members to introduce their guests.

QUESTION PERIOD

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, to the Premier: Over the last few days, many Ontarians have written to New Democrat MPPs to share stories of the role that education workers play in supporting kids in our schools. The common thread in all of them is that, despite the best efforts of this government to starve our education system of resources, the quality of kids' education is being protected because of the hard work of education workers and teachers.

At the end of the day, it's our kids who are going to pay the price if this Premier and his minister don't get back to the bargaining table. Will the government commit to scrapping Bill 28 and bargaining in good faith today?

Interjections.

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

To reply, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: That's exactly why we want to keep them in class. We'll do whatever it takes to keep students in class, where they belong. We want parents to know that we're doing everything we can to make sure their child doesn't miss a single day of class. We're at the table with a fair and reasonable offer—as a matter of fact, very fair; the best in the country—and yet, the union refuses to withdraw the strike notice.

Mr. Speaker, we don't want to be here. No one wants to be here and have to do this. We have heard from countless parents, endless parents. As a matter of fact, there has never been an issue in four and a half years that I have had more emails about, saying, "Make sure my kids

stay in the class," every single day. We know how difficult the pandemic has been on our children, but we need CUPE to withdraw the strike threat. I'm not going to tolerate students being out of the classroom for even one day. The NDP and the Liberals—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The supplementary question, the member for Toronto Centre.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you for the applause, and thank you, Speaker.

To the Premier—my question is for you. Jennie, a local parent, told my office—and I'm going to share her story: "I am one of those parents whose child relies on ... absolutely incredible education workers." They have "to be toileted, supervised during meals (to prevent choking), to safely walk" down the stairs and up the stairs, "have medications administered" and yes, the child still has to learn.

Speaker, this government gave 88% of their PC MPPs a \$16,600 raise this June. My question to the Premier: Will this government be willing to actually give education workers a raise that they deserve and match it to inflation?

Hon. Doug Ford: Let me be very clear: We will always support our front-line workers, plain and simple. And I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, the fact is, CUPE continues to threaten to shut down the classrooms. They refuse to back down from a strike.

Our offer maintains the most generous—I'm going to repeat that—the most generous pension and benefit plan in the entire country, including 131 paid sick days, unheard of anywhere. We are seeing school boards confirm that the doors will be closed if CUPE goes on strike. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, we won't let that happen. Nothing matters more right now than ensuring the students remain in the classroom.

We're investing over \$26.6 billion in public education, the single largest investment in Ontario history, Mr. Speaker. Education funding for this—

Interjections.

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

The supplementary question.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Talking points are cheap, Premier. When it comes to education workers, they can't eat; that's why they're at the food banks, that's why they're holding down second jobs.

I'm going to share another story with you, Premier—and through the Speaker. Carrie, another teacher, tells my office: "One of our ECEs held a girl in her lap until her grandpa came" because she was throwing up "in a garbage can. The ECE refused to leave" this little girl, because she was scared and nervous.

Carrie then tells me, "I watched our other ECE march down the kinders to the library because they had to evacuate the classroom while their education assistant was controlling a friend who was having a moment," or episode. "All the littles had adorable beautiful smiles" on their faces as they passed the teacher's window and gave her a wave. "They didn't know anything was wrong" in

their classroom, despite the fact that there was. A caretaker then marched down the hallway with a bucket in hand to clean up the mess on the floor because four students got sick that same day. All of that happened within a 24-hour period.

1050

Speaker, will this government show a fraction of the emotional intelligence that we see education workers exercise every single day and return to the bargaining table and give them a fair deal?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, how about the students? How about the mental, emotional and even physical well-being of two million students and therefore the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Davenport will come to order. The member for Toronto—St. Paul’s will come to order. The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order.

The Premier has the floor.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, parents and kids have had enough. We’ve heard it. I’ve never seen anything like it. There is only one party in this Legislature that is standing up for the students and the parents, and that’s the PC Party.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition can’t have it both ways. Either they support shutting down schools or they stand with this government and will support keeping kids in classrooms. It’s either strikes or students, and we’re with the students.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: The government’s use of the “notwithstanding” clause to ban workers from collective bargaining is wrong. It’s something the Prime Minister and I seem to agree on, and I don’t agree with him on almost anything.

Here’s what the Prime Minister had to say—your good buddy: “The suspension of people’s rights is something you should only do in the most exceptional circumstances, and I really hope that all politicians call out the overuse of the ‘notwithstanding’ clause to suspend people’s rights and freedoms.”

The Premier is fond of standing shoulder to shoulder with the Prime Minister. I’ve seen the photos. So will the Premier change tack today, join the Prime Minister—his good friend—and condemn the use of the “notwithstanding” clause?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Let me remind the member opposite that children in this province should have rights too, and they should be in school in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have been clear—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I can’t hear the minister. The Minister of Education has the floor—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, we have been clear. We find children should be in school. They have been through two incredibly difficult years. They have been through the most difficulty in modern history.

We have an obligation to ensure stability. We asked the union to bring forth a proposal that withdraws a strike on Friday. We gave them multiple opportunities to do so, and yesterday night, at 10 p.m., hearing from the mediator and through the mediator—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Davenport, come to order.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: —they’re going to proceed with a strike that no one wants and no one should accept—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Sudbury, come to order.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, the Premier made it clear: We shouldn’t be here. We obviously would prefer a negotiated settlement, but so long as a strike is on the table, the government will move forward with legislation that protects stability—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock, please.

So once again, if you repeatedly ignore the request of the Speaker to come to order, I will move to warnings, and we know what happens after that if you ignore that, okay?

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, this government is damaging the education system that our children depend on. They are bullying the educators and the workers that we depend on to educate these children. They are engaged in a flagrant attack on working people, and unions are taking notice, even the ones that have been friendly with this government.

LIUNA was first out of the gate in endorsing Ford last election, but had harsh words for this government. International vice-president Joe Mancinelli: “On behalf of LIUNA, we call on Minister” Lecce “to revoke anti-union legislation and restore the collective bargaining rights of CUPE members and act in good faith to reach an agreement that prioritizes both keeping students in school and the rights and respect of all workers.”

So to the Premier: Will he listen to his friends at LIUNA and rip up Bill 28?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, we want CUPE to respect the interests of children and parents who want to see their kids in school. They should not be out of class on Friday—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Davenport is warned.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The union was given an opportunity to rescind this needless strike. They alone put themselves on a footing for a strike on Sunday, when they announced a five-day notice to strike, impacting two million children. We believe that is unacceptable and

incompatible with the priorities of parents, who believe stability is critical at a time of learning disruption and the pandemic. We have an obligation to ensure they stay in class.

Mr. Speaker, so long as the union regrettably proceeds with this unacceptable strike, the government will have no choice but to proceed with legislation to avert a strike and keep these kids in the classroom, where they belong.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–St. Paul’s, come to order.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, when will the Premier and his ministers stop lying about the damage they’re doing to the education system—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The member will withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I will not withdraw. I am telling the truth. They’re lying.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member will take his seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

I will ask the member once again to withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My remarks were accurate and true. The Premier and his ministers are lying.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You will be named. Mr. Tabuns, you are named. You must leave the chamber for the day.

Mr. Tabuns was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Sudbury is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Sudbury, if you don’t stop yelling, you will be named.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. West, you are named. You must leave the chamber for the day.

MPP West was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Davenport will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Davenport, you will be named if you persist.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Stiles, you are named. You must leave the chamber for the day.

Ms. Stiles was escorted from the chamber.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–St. Paul’s will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–St. Paul’s is warned. If you continue, you will be named.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Andrew, you are named. You must leave the chamber for the day.

MPP Andrew was escorted from the chamber.

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

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier.

While this government is actively stripping away the collective bargaining rights from workers, we’ve been listening to education workers in my community of Niagara Falls, in Fort Erie and in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

In Niagara, we spoke to Carrie, a school secretary who has been a loyal worker for nearly 20 years. She still makes under \$39,000 a year, and she has a second job just to make ends meet. She even considered getting a third job because of the increased cost of food, gas and housing.

1100

Does this Premier think that education workers should have to work two extra jobs in order to avoid using food banks?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We have been clear: We believe children should be in the classroom. They have to be in school every day, after two years of disruption and the strikes that preceded it just a few years ago.

We brought forth a reasonable, fair offer to the union: 10% over four years, maintaining benefits and pensions and sick leave, which most people in this economy do not have. Even with that said, we told the union, “Rescind this strike on Friday that impacts every single—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Waterloo, come to order.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: —student in the province.” They announced this strike on Sunday, even before the government introduced the legislation on Monday.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo is warned.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It was their intention all along and it is regrettable. We should not be here. We should have had a voluntary agreement, given the fair offer we proposed. But they have made it clear they will strike.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for St. Catharines, come to order.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The government obviously has no other option but to move forward with legislation that protects the in-person learning our children deserve in this province.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Back to the Premier—but before I ask my next question, maybe, out of respect for our veterans, the Minister of Education should put a poppy on. Everybody else in the House has one on.

While their charter rights are ignored by this government, and they hold back \$2.1 billion in spending, we continue to hear from education workers that are struggling. Our office spoke this week to Jennifer, an educational assistant with over 20 years on the job. She's never seen it so bad. Schools do not have the EA supply staff they need. Staff are facing rising violence in our schools. They can't hold on to staff due to low wages. There are serious health and safety concerns.

Does the Premier think that trampling on the Charter of Rights and refusing to invest in our education system is going to fix the crisis we have in our schools? Premier, answer the question.

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We believe kids should be in the classroom. We brought forth a reasonable proposal for children. Yet again, the members opposite have not spoken about the impacts on kids that this strike, driven by the union, announced by themselves alone on Sunday, will have on their constituents—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Member for Ottawa Centre, come to order.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: —and the millions of kids in this province.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo is warned.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: That is really sad, that they have not raised any concerns—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Niagara Falls, come to order.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: —about the impacts on children's learning.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor West, come to order. The member for Parkdale–High Park, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo will be named if she persists.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Fife, you are named. You must leave the chamber for the day.

Ms. Fife was escorted from the chamber.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Niagara Falls, if you persist, you will be named.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Gates, you are named. You must leave the chamber for the day.

Mr. Gates was escorted from the chamber.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Parkdale–High Park, come to order. If you persist, you will be named.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Karpoche, you are named and you must leave the chamber for the day.

Ms. Karpoche was escorted from the chamber.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor West is warned, and if you persist, you will be named.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mrs. Gretzky, you are named. You must leave the chamber for the day.

Mrs. Gretzky was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Thunder Bay–Superior North must come to order.

Member for Ottawa Centre, come to order. If you persist, you will be named.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Harden, you are named. You must leave the chamber for the day.

Mr. Harden was escorted from the chamber.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Vaugeois, you are named. You must leave the chamber for the day.

MPP Vaugeois was escorted from the chamber.

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

TEACHERS

Mr. Nolan Quinn: The government of Ontario has a responsibility to parents and students. This is a sacred trust. That responsibility includes the guarantee of top-quality education for our children and placing the most qualified teachers in front of our students.

We've heard many times about the need for students to remain in class and what students will learn in these classes. However, the individuals teaching these classes matter just as much as a subject's content. From principals and vice-principals to math, art, music and science teachers, and the many more types of educators we have in this province, we need the most qualified individuals at the front of the classroom.

Speaker, to the Minister of Education: What has our government done to ensure the right educator is in front of our children?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member for this question and his interest as a parent and as a leader in this House, standing up for quality education in the classroom.

Mr. Speaker, it was over a decade ago that the former Liberal government consented in a union negotiation to a regressive regulation called O. Reg. 274, a regulation that permitted exclusive hiring and promotion in Ontario based on seniority—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You must leave the chamber.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: —a regressive regulation introduced by the former Liberals that hired and promoted educators exclusively based on their union seniority. If this was—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You must leave the chamber.

Supplementary question.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Speaker, it has been two years since the government revoked disastrous regulation 274 that hindered young, innovative and hard-working teachers from moving up in the system. This is a positive reminder of the importance of diversity in our education system.

In the last year, young educators and veteran educators across my riding have expressed their delight in this government's revoking of regulation 274. They are grateful that our government recognized and provided a solution to the previous hiring practices that neither rewarded hard work nor gave the best chance of having the best possible educator in front of our children.

As our province's population grows, our government must focus on the future to ensure we have enough educators in places experiencing that growth. Can the Minister of Education please explain how revoking regulation 274 encourages teacher mobility?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I want to just be very clear in our intent. This is essentially the anniversary of revoking this regressive regulation introduced by the former Liberals that allowed hiring based on union seniority. I believe that is inconsistent with the premise that the best educator should be in front of a child's class. The members opposite who stand up and speak about the so-called interests of kids oppose that measure. They opposed us removing that regulation.

We believe new educators, young educators and those with the qualifications should triumph in hiring, not someone who's simply been in the union the longest. This is about quality. This is about ensuring the best staff member could inspire a child. That's why we removed this regulation, which even the former Liberal Premier agreed went too far. The Ontario Principals' Council said they supported it, parents support it, and the government will continue to do everything possible to enshrine quality in the schools of this province.

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LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Jeff Burch: My question is to the Minister of Education.

My office has been flooded with calls and emails from workers and parents alike outraged that this government seeks to use the "notwithstanding" clause to violate the labour rights of education workers. I heard from Linda in Welland. She has been an administrative clerk for 10

years, and in that time, has seen only a \$2 wage increase. When you factor in inflation over that time, she suffered a 10.7% wage cut. Linda says, "The minister has no concept of the work we do. Come and see what we do in our schools. Spend one day with me."

Can the minister tell Linda why this government continues to forge ahead with legislation that disrespects her work, tramples on her rights and pushes her further into poverty?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to echo the member opposite's sentiment of gratitude to the people who work in our schools. That's why we've hired 7,000 since we came to office. It's why in this proposal we're going to hire 1,800 more. We're going to increase their wages every single year—2.5% every single year, 10 points over four years. We're going to maintain their pension and their benefits and their sick leave program of 131 days. That is a demonstration of commitment to the workers.

We believe children in this province should be in school. That should not be a position which we disagree with. The Premier asked a simple question: Will you vote for a bill that ensures stability for the kids we all represent in this province?

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: That answer is not satisfactory for the 55,000 education workers whose rights he is abusing. Ella Marie from Welland said to my office, "The minister should come work a week in each of our positions to see if it's worth the pay we get, the abuse that EAs endure. Many of the EAs can't make meetings because they're at a second job. If you're a single person trying to find an apartment in Welland, you are looking at anywhere from \$1,600 to \$2,100 a month, plus utilities. I don't even bring in \$2,400 a month. When you're a single-income person, how do you expect someone to live off that?"

Can the minister tell Ella Marie and her colleagues, most of them women, how they are supposed to live on wages that don't cover the bills and an insulting pay increase that plunges them further into poverty, and why is this Premier acting like a dictator and a thug?

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, I stand up for free, collective bargaining and I won't withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): One more chance.

Mr. Burch, you are named. You will leave the chamber for the day.

Mr. Burch was escorted from the chamber.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Member for London North Centre will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for London North Centre is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): If he persists, he will be named.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: People fought and died for our human rights. Shame on all of you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Kernaghan, you are named. You will leave the chamber for the duration of the day.

Mr. Kernaghan was escorted from the chamber.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Anthony Leardi: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

In their final economic outlook, the previous Liberal government announced that “Ontario would shift from goods-producing to service-producing sectors” and “shifting from goods-producing industries, in particular manufacturing, to service-sector industries.” Those are direct quotes. For families in Essex, the message from the Liberals was clear: Get out of manufacturing. My constituents want to know that this government will do things differently.

My question to the minister is this: What is this government doing to help support economic growth and tap the amazing workforce that we have in the county of Essex?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: When we were elected, our government made a commitment to support the province’s regional manufacturing economies, and in 2019 we delivered by launching a \$100-million Regional Development Program.

To date, we’ve attracted \$716 million in investments and 1,300 jobs in southwestern, southeastern and rural Ontario through that program. We were there with the member in Essex recently at MC3 Manufacturing and at another company, Idol Core. These two companies are investing \$11 million in creating 29 well-paying manufacturing jobs with a total investment of \$1 million from the province.

Speaker, this is how we’re supporting economic growth and those skilled workers in communities like Essex, because these companies are showing the world that Ontario is open for business.

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

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I thank the minister for the response. Investments like the ones made at Idol Core and MC3 Manufacturing show investors that Ontario supports businesses and supports creating jobs. That’s why, when he was in Germany and Austria, the minister repeatedly heard from investors that Ontario is viewed as a stable, reliable and supportive business environment.

But businesses also want to know that our government is removing excessive red tape—barriers, obstacles to success. And so my question to the minister is this: What else is this government doing in Essex county and in Ontario to ensure economic growth and opportunities and jobs for my constituents?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, businesses need a skilled workforce, investment support and a place that’s open for their business as well, and Ontario has it all. Our

government continues to lower taxes, lower hydro costs and lower the red-tape burden on businesses.

In fact, costs have been lowered by \$7 billion every year. This is attracting record numbers of investments and entrepreneurs to southwestern Ontario.

In Essex, our automotive program attracted over \$500,000 in investments from Industrial Fastener, B&B Tool and Mould, and Windsor Industrial Services.

And with a further \$631,000 invested in the Small Business Enterprise Centre there, their entrepreneurs have all the tools they need to start and grow their own businesses—and another \$182,500 for their Summer Company. That helps students and young entrepreneurs start their businesses because, Speaker, this is how our government is driving growth in Essex.

CONFLIT DE TRAVAIL

LABOUR DISPUTE

M. Michael Mantha: Ma question s’adresse au premier ministre.

Debbie Premo, une gardienne à la retraite, a appelé mon bureau hier. Son époux, Bill, travaille comme concierge pour le conseil scolaire du district d’Algoma. À plus de 60 ans, Debbie m’a dit que maintenant, à sa retraite, elle envisageait de retourner au travail parce qu’elle n’était pas certaine qu’ils pouvaient garder leur maison avec le seul salaire de son mari en tant que concierge.

Elle me dit : « Mon mari travaille toujours et pourrait prendre sa retraite, mais en raison des salaires, il travaillera toujours, jusqu’à ce qu’il ne puisse plus. »

Tout ce que Debbie et son mari veulent est qu’il puisse prendre sa retraite confortablement après plus de 35 ans de travail.

Pourquoi le premier ministre pense-t-il que Debbie et Bill ne méritent pas une qualité de vie respectable?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the gentleman who served a career of service for our children.

I know that, for many of these workers, they want to be with their kids. That’s why I’m urging the leadership of the union to withdraw this strike that will impact that member, the children in his riding and all of our ridings.

Two million kids will be out of class Friday because the union has decided alone to proceed with a strike that no one wants or should accept. These kids should be in school. They’ve been through the incredible difficulty of pandemic disruptions and strikes that preceded it.

At what point does a government say, “Enough”? These kids deserve to be in school. They have rights too, and we will stand up to ensure stability for every single child in this province, Speaker.

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Voici l’histoire d’une commettante, Stéphanie, une mère célibataire avec deux jeunes enfants, qui a travaillé comme aide-enseignante.

Voici les coûts de besoins de base, par mois, pour survivre—pas de surplus :

- le loyer, 1 200 piastres;
- le chauffage, 230 \$;
- les « groceries », 800 \$;
- le câble et le téléphone, 250 \$;
- l'électricité, 75 \$;
- le paiement de l'auto, 300 \$; et
- l'assurance, 150 \$.

Pour un total de 3 500 \$ par mois. Le salaire : 2 800 \$, un déficit de mille dollars.

Stéphanie a dû faire des choix difficiles pour sa petite famille, pour survivre. Stéphanie a dû quitter son emploi qu'elle aimait, pour lequel Stéphanie avait étudié, d'aide-enseignante.

Alors, ma question est simple : monsieur le Premier Ministre, quand allez-vous arrêter de mentir à la population, aller vous asseoir à la table des négociations et négocier une convention, ce qui est supposé de se faire avec les droits des travailleurs?

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Avec tout le respect que je vous dois, monsieur le Président, je ne retirerai pas mes paroles. Je vais toujours défendre les travailleurs de cette province, puis encore plus—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): If you will not withdraw, you will be named.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Non, je ne veux pas retirer mes paroles.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bourgouin, you are named. You must leave the chamber for the day.

Mr. Bourgouin was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for St. Catharines is warned.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It's wrong; it's shameful.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): If you persist, you will be named.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mrs. Stevens, you are named and you must leave the chamber for the day.

Mrs. Stevens was escorted from the chamber.

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

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Ted Hsu: Ontario has wielded the “notwithstanding” clause only three times in history but all by this government. In 2018, the Conservative government changed Toronto city council districts right in the middle of an election. In 2021, this Conservative government overrode a judge who said that their own witness admitted there was no reason for extending the restriction period for third-party political ads. And now, this Conservative government is cutting inflation-adjusted, real wages for education sector workers struggling with the cost of living. This is a sorry pattern. It's an abuse. Section 33 of our

charter, the “notwithstanding” clause, is being wielded as a sledgehammer to take care of their problems.

To the Premier, through you, Mr. Speaker: Is Bill 28 just the start? Are you planning to trample rights to dispose of other tough issues?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We've been abundantly clear: We would have preferred a voluntary option. It was our government that got a voluntary agreement with every education union just two and a half years ago.

Mr. Speaker, when the union on Sunday announces unilaterally that they will strike on Friday, what are the options before a government other than introducing legislation to avert a strike and deliver stability for children? If the Liberals' and New Democrats' position is to hope for the best with a deal, and if the union does not withdraw a strike, then we're putting kids in a perilous position. Clearly, this union is going to strike; it was their intention all along.

We have an obligation to stand up for children, to keep them in school and to provide some stability for their families, for their working parents and for the kids of this province.

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

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, rights help protect us, especially the least among us, from tyranny and injustice. Using the “notwithstanding” clause in our constitution means cancelling section 2, “fundamental freedoms”; cancelling section 7, “the right to life, liberty and security of the person”; and cancelling section 15, “equality rights,” just so that this Conservative government can head off court challenges and impose its inflation-adjusted, real-wage cut on education workers.

Many of these education workers are the ones most struggling with cost of living, given today's inflation. Will the Premier accept that it's wrong to smash our charter rights instead of using arbitration to settle a wage dispute with the people who keep our schools open, and will he withdraw Bill 28?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, we're calling on the members opposite to stand with this government in urging CUPE to withdraw this needless strike impacting two million children. We have an obligation to speak up for them. This union decided on Sunday, before the government even introduced legislation on Monday, that they're going to strike. The reason why we're here having this debate, as we speak, is because they alone decided to proceed with a strike impacting two million kids—even on the day we increased our offer to 10% over four years, maintaining benefits and pensions and sick leave for these members. We're hiring 1,800 more. We've hired nearly 7,000 to date.

We are committed to investing more in public education—680 million more dollars this year, compared to

last year. What we're also committed to is standing up and keeping kids in the classroom.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Robert Bailey: Through you, Speaker, to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development: The skilled trades are vital for the communities in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton and across Ontario. Right now, we have a shortage of skilled tradespeople across this province. We need their highly valued and specialized skills to continue to build this province—and my community, of course. Every unfilled job in the skilled trades represents unmet economic potential. Our government needs to take further action now to address the skilled trades shortage.

What is our government doing in response to the skilled trades shortage in Ontario?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member from Sarnia–Lambton for being such a champion in his community for people in the skilled trades. Our government is on a mission to get more young people into these careers.

Right now, in our province, nearly 400,000 jobs are going unfilled. By 2025, one in five new job openings will be in the skilled trades.

Our skilled trades system was neglected under the previous Liberal government. In fact, that's why today the average age of an apprentice in our province is 29. But we're changing that.

That is why, this fall, we're hosting skilled trades career fairs for the first time in history, to encourage more students in grades 7 to 12 to enter the trades.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier often says, when you have a job in the trades, you have a job for life. We agree.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the minister for that answer. In my riding, I'm proud of the many bright and talented young people who are eager to work.

While our government is making gains to help prepare young people for in-demand careers, there's still more we can do. Many local employers have job vacancies and work opportunities that must be filled.

As part of the skilled trades shortage, there's still a prevailing stereotype that these jobs are only for men.

My question is once again to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development: How is our government showing leadership to increase female participation in the skilled trades?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you again to the member from Sarnia–Lambton for this question. Speaker, our government is committed to helping women enter the trades so that they, too, can find better jobs and earn bigger paycheques, while filling the jobs we desperately need to build a stronger Ontario for all of us.

Our Skills Development Fund is supporting nearly 400 projects that are helping nearly 400,000 people get the training they need to start rewarding careers close to home. One example is our \$3-million investment in the Aecon

Women in Trades program, which is training 350 women for jobs in construction, as welders, boilermakers, insulators and labourers.

We're giving women a hand up to purpose-driven careers in the trades because it's true that we need all hands on deck to build a stronger Ontario.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Premier. I have been hearing from Scarborough Southwest constituents—and constituents across Scarborough, actually—who have, non-stop, for the past two days, called and emailed us with stories. And I can assure this Premier and this government that it was not just education workers or union bosses, as they would like to claim or point fingers at to blame.

1130

In fact, it's parents like Cristina, who is livid with this government's blatant disregard to protect workers and ensure that her child has the quality support that the child needs in the classroom. It's parents like Rachel, who is a parent, a volunteer and an educational assistant. It's parents like Judy, who is a grandma to a kindergarten student and who volunteers at a food bank; she herself has seen education workers who come to those food banks because they do not make enough.

My question is simple: Why is this government and why is this minister ignoring the voices of these parents and so many others across this province?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We are listening to the priorities and voices of parents who demand their children are in school. That is why we are here today, reacting to a union's decision to strike on Friday, a strike which I would hope none of us would support.

The fact is, Speaker, they are proceeding with a strike on Friday, against the interests of two million children, even after the government urged them to withdraw the strike, to bring forth a reasonable offer and to negotiate a deal that we can all live with. But here we are, Speaker, two days before a strike that will impact so many of the kids of this province, many of whom are vulnerable and should be in our schools.

We are bringing forth legislation before this House that will provide stability for parents, realizing that the preference of the government is a voluntary option. When unions continue to discuss a path to a strike, we will move forward on a path to provide stability for kids.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: This government had the worst record in the country and across the world when it came to dealing with COVID in our school system, in education. For 27 weeks our schools were closed. They did not have proper instructions for health care. That's what happened under this ministry and this government, and they have the audacity to talk about bringing back students to classrooms.

Do we have anybody on strike right now? No, we don't. You are pre-emptively introducing legislation that tramples on the rights of workers across this province. And this legislation, make no mistake—everyone knows this, including unions that have supported you. They know this because they're on the side of workers today. You know why? Because this kind of legislation makes a precedent for the future, for all workers.

I stand in solidarity with the teacher who taught for 30 years. I stand with all these parents. I stand with the students who suffered and right now are suffering through so many mental health issues. They need educational workers—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. To reply, the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should stand up and vote for this bill and keep children in the classroom. But we know the NDP and the Liberals, regrettably, will not do that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for University–Rosedale will come to order.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to share a story, Speaker, from Kelly, who said, “I’m writing to you today”—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for University–Rosedale is warned.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: —“to ask you to continue to”—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): If you persist, you'll be named.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Bell, you are named. You must leave the chamber for the day.

Ms. Bell was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Spadina–Fort York will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Spadina–Fort York is warned. If you persist, you will be named.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Glover, you are named. You must leave the chamber for the day.

Mr. Glover was escorted from the chamber.

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

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Good morning. Reports about new homebuyers being victimized by unethical developers have gone on for far too long. Questionable and concerning practices where developers have cancelled contracts only to resell the same property at grossly inflated prices have left new homebuyers scrambling and helpless.

The previous Liberal government refused to act by providing protection and recourse for honest, hard-

working people just looking to buy property. My office has received emails from constituents of Simcoe–Grey who experienced this unscrupulous practice first-hand.

Can the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery please explain how our government better protects new homebuyers against these unethical practices?

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: I thank the member for Simcoe–Grey for the question. Hard-working Ontarians deserve to be treated fairly when making one of the biggest purchases of their lives, a new home. The Premier has said this type of appalling behaviour is unacceptable, and our government has a zero-tolerance approach to it. That's why Minister Steve Clark and I announced that we are doubling the maximum fine for unethical builders who unfairly cancel contracts, and, for the first time ever anywhere in Canada, money from these penalties will go back to the victims.

On this side of the aisle we are taking action to stop this appalling behaviour and getting it done for new homebuyers.

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

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the minister for that response. While I appreciate our government stepping up and protecting honest, hard-working homebuyers, we must ensure that anyone trying to make money by victimizing people is held accountable. It is unfair that individuals and families purchasing property should become victims of dishonest and unethical practices. Our government must take immediate and decisive action to punish unscrupulous developers in the housing market.

Could the minister please explain what measures our government will implement to punish and deter unethical builders and vendors who try to victimize our hard-working citizens?

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: Progressive Conservatives on both sides of this chamber have a zero-tolerance approach that will deter anyone attempting to make extra money off the backs of new homebuyers. We are arming the Home Construction Regulatory Authority with more tools to directly punish the bad actors, as well as empowering the courts to severely punish those who want to rip off Ontarians. This includes a policy that will ensure Ontarians who have been victims of unethical pre construction home cancellations will receive payments from those who tried to rip them off. We know the vast majority of builders and vendors of new homes in Ontario follow the rules and would be unaffected by these changes.

We are making life easier for the many honest Ontarian builders that fulfill their contracts honestly and will no longer have to compete with unethical competition.

LABOUR DISPUTE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

We are joined today by members of OSSTF and OPSEU, including medical lab technologists, teachers, social workers, educational assistants, early childhood

educators and many other essential workers. They are calling for immediate action to respect all of those public workers.

Premier, will you listen to those professionals and other unionized public sector workers and withdraw Bill 28 and go back to the bargaining table with CUPE?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I thank the member opposite for the question. I will agree that these members from education, health and across the enterprise do really important work for our society and for our public services, and I appreciate what they do. We have hired 7,000 more education staff, specifically CUPE educators, in our schools to date. We're going to commit to hiring 1,800 more education workers and 800 more teachers in our schools as part of the proposal before the House.

Mr. Speaker, let us be clear: We didn't want to be here. We would have preferred a voluntary option. We gave the union a path to avert a strike that they themselves put the province on.

1140

In response to their action of striking on Friday, with millions of kids in the crosshairs, we brought forth the bill as a last resort to ensure children remain in school. I would have hoped those members, their leadership and the people of Ontario would understand: We are committed to their work, but we're also committed to keeping kids in school.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Nickel Belt, supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: This government has established a pattern of disrespecting and devaluing public sector workers. We are seeing it in health care, and we are seeing it in education. They seem to have a particular disdain for sectors dominated by women workers. We have seen it with the devastating impact of this government's low-wage policy with Bill 124.

Education workers and health care workers are exhausted, demoralized and leaving their jobs, yet the government continues to deny that people want this government to respect the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They want them to go back with CUPE, get an agreement that nobody likes—you won't like it; CUPE won't like it—but that everybody can live with. Will you withdraw Bill 28 and go back to the negotiations table?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We never left the negotiating table. We always remain willing to meet the unions so long as they withdraw their strike on Friday. I mean, honestly, do you agree that there should be a strike as a backdrop of a negotiation when we're trying to provide stability for kids?

Our simple ask is withdraw the strike, allow kids to be in school and ensure children have the stability they deserve. That's a reasonable request, especially knowing that we are increasing their pay every year over the course of the program. We're hiring 1,800 more. We're preserving benefits and pensions and 131 days of sick leave, which most people in this economy could only dream of.

This is a competitive offer. What we're asking for is for students to come first in this debate. Let's make sure they stay in school on Friday and every day this school year.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. David Smith: My question is to the Minister of Energy. With Russia's unprovoked and illegal attack on Ukrainians and growing international economic instability due to rising inflation rates, the cost of living and energy affordability are significant concerns for many individuals. With winter approaching, people are thinking more about how to heat their homes affordably.

For those in rural, remote and northern communities, our government's natural gas expansion has ensured this option for many. Yesterday, the Liberal member for Kingston and the Islands introduced legislation that proposes limiting natural gas access across the province. Can the minister please share with us what his reaction is to this proposed legislation?

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

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member from Scarborough Centre for the question this morning. I appreciate it, and I can't believe that the opposition Liberals want to strip the options away from people to heat their homes across rural Ontario. On the face of it, it seems that is what the bill that was introduced yesterday does.

Do you know that over 67% of homes, families, in Ontario heat their homes with natural gas, and more communities, not less, want to have natural gas as an option? My parliamentary assistants and I met with many of them at the Ontario municipalities association and the ROMA conferences earlier this year. That's why phase 3 of our natural gas expansion program is so important.

At a time when energy security and affordability are top of mind, not just here in Ontario but around the world, Mr. Speaker, I can't believe that the Liberal Party wants to reduce the options for people to heat their homes across Ontario.

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

Mr. David Smith: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I was also perplexed by what the Liberal member proposed in his legislation. I'm sure many people remember that under the previous Liberal government, news reports circulated about their consideration of phasing out natural gas in Ontario.

Under the watch of former Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne, Ontario's families faced the highest energy rates in North America. Because of their destructive and ideologically driven policy, many individuals had to choose between heating and eating during the Liberal times in government.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister assure my constituents and this Legislature that our government will not support failed Liberal energy policies limiting consumer energy and home heating choice?

Hon. Todd Smith: We're not going to go back to the days of skyrocketing energy prices and threats to ban

furnaces in people's homes. The previous Liberal government did that, Mr. Speaker.

Our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is focused on more customer choice and making life more affordable for the people of Ontario. That's why we've introduced new electricity pricing plans, like the ultra-low overnight rate, Mr. Speaker, and also the "green button" standard, which is actually going to give residents across Ontario more control over their energy bills, potentially saving 18%.

That's why it's sad to see the Liberal Party, which was actually decimated in the 2018 election—and then a repeated decimation in 2022, largely because of their energy policy.

You know, the title of Bill 29—and I can't believe the members of the Liberal Party that have been through this before—is Think Twice Before You Choose Natural Gas. That's the name of the bill, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South will come to order.

Hon. Todd Smith: I want to know: Did the Liberal members opposite think twice before they brought in—

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

SHOW YOUR 4-H COLOURS DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has a point of order.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker. Today, across Canada, people are showing their 4-H colours by wearing green, and I would like to thank everybody in this chamber today for wearing green and supporting 4-H members across Ontario.

DRESS PURPLE DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you very much, Speaker. I also want to show solidarity. I'm wearing purple, and I know many of my colleagues are. I just heard a 13-year-old boy was asked to change his T-shirt because he was doing it in solidarity with workers across the province. Unfortunately, he could not, but to those of you who tried and who are trying to, thank you very much. It comes from here and we are standing in solidarity.

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

The House recessed from 1149 to 1300.

Afternoon meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Valerie Quioc Lim, Wai Lam (William) Wong,

Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough- Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Dixon, Jess (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Dowie, Andrew (PC)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Flack, Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	
Jordan, John (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
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Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
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Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean	
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
McCarthy, Todd J. (PC)	Durham	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-présidente et présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	