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Assembly
of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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Thursday
19 July 2018

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42^e législature

Jeudi
19 juillet 2018

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 19 July 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 19 juillet 2018

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on July 18, 2018, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It's my understanding that when this item was last called, the member for Markham–Unionville had the floor, and we're now doing questions and comments related to his presentation. Is that correct? Yes? Okay.

Questions and comments? The member for Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This entire throne speech debate has actually been interesting as we're winding down to the last parts of the debate. It was obviously a good opportunity for members who just recently were elected to give their inaugural speeches in the House. I have to comment that there are a lot of really interesting people in this place who come with a lifetime of experience and come from experiences that I think lend themselves well to helping to reflect what Ontario is all about in this Legislature. Everything from what we see when it comes to where people came from—we heard some very touching stories in regard to people who came here, literally, without a suitcase, \$50 in their back pocket, ended up in our country, came here as asylum seekers, and lookit, they're members of provincial Parliament today. I think that speaks to the greatness of our nation and the greatness of our province.

I think we should reflect on that because there's a debate in this province on the part of some—I'm not necessarily disparaging anybody in this House—but there's a debate in this House that somehow asylum seekers are a terrible thing and a scourge to our economy and our nation, as we see, especially in the United States when it comes to that type of debate. But I think those members who stood in this House and talked about where they came from and the fact that their parents did what had to be done when they got here and worked hard, raised their families, sent their kids to school—those people became young adults who eventually ran for office and are now decision-makers in this Legislature.

That, I think, just speaks volumes to the reality of what this nation is all about.

This nation is about everybody coming here, never forgetting where they come from, and living the experience of who they are and where they came from. I'm Gilles Bisson. Je suis un Canadien français and I'm proud of that, as other people are proud of where they come from. I think that's what truly makes this province and this city a great place to live.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from—hold on—Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, I've learned to always defer to your judgment and wisdom. However, I must correct the record: King–Vaughan is the name of the constituency, proudly.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, to the honourable member across: I certainly accept the premise that we, as parliamentarians, are strengthened by the diversity of thought, of heritage, of faith, of orientation, of people of different experiences coming to this Legislature with the singular purpose to advance public policy for the people of Ontario.

In that vein, it is the exact reason why we brought forth the speech from the throne that focuses on creating an opportunity society in Ontario. After 15 years of great difficulty imposed by government, imposed on the people of Ontario, we obviously have a mission to unleash the economic potential in every single person and in every single region of this province. That starts with getting our economy on track and reducing taxes for those who work hard and seek to achieve their full potential.

We're moving forward three initiatives that will ultimately put more money back in the pockets of people and put the students and the next generation of this province first.

We are introducing legislation to finally end the strike at York University after more than 100 days. I say that as a matter of contrast, because there is a singular political party in this Legislature that is putting students first. It is the Progressive Conservative Party under the leadership of our Premier.

We're also reducing the cost of hydro by 12%. We are taking immediate action. We've recalled this Legislature with the purpose to reduce the cost for working families—

Interjection.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I know that the honourable member, notwithstanding his heckling, agrees that we must

reduce hydro rates in Ontario, after 300% by the former Liberal government.

We're taking action to reduce gasoline prices under the very strong leadership of the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, who happens to be my seatmate. He is taking action to reduce costs so that we can reduce gasoline prices for consumers and for small businesses in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member from King–Vaughan for that.

Further questions and comments? The member from the Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. You don't have any problem with that riding, do you? I thank you for that.

It was an honour and a privilege to listen to the speeches that were made. I know that we're coming to the 12 hours, where debates will end.

I was pleased to see how many of my colleagues here in the House took the opportunity of their inaugural speech to say a few words in French. This is very much appreciated. French is a recognized language in this Legislative Assembly. Many of us have brought forward the fact that the speech from the throne did not have a single word in French. I think we've all learned from that.

The French-language commissioner, an officer of the assembly—all of you should give him a call and get familiar with what the officers of the assembly do. He can explain to you why it was important, and that you have to have French in the speech from the throne. That was a mistake, a mistake that was noticed throughout our province and will probably have some consequences, as complaints have been made that are now being investigated by the French-language commissioner.

The same thing with acknowledging that we are on the territory of First Nations—this is something that we should all learn. When you start a speech, acknowledge. It is part of truth and reconciliation. It's part of reconciliations to admit that we are on territories from First Nations. Once you get into the habit of doing it, it becomes quite easy. It is noticed and it is appreciated when it's there. But it is also noticed when it is not there.

So I appreciated—many of you did your inaugural speeches. Congratulations. Welcome and let's all move together.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: During the speech from the throne—the last speaker was actually the new member, the newly elected member, from Markham–Thornhill, who took over—

Interjection: Markham–Unionville.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Markham–Unionville? Sorry. I get mixed up.

He was a trustee before. I met him in York region at an event just about a year ago and I was really impressed with his drive. Right away, we became Facebook friends

and I started following him. He really worked hard to get here and I really want to thank him for joining the ranks of the PC caucus. We are a much-expanded caucus, we're a very vibrant caucus, and I'm really enjoying getting to know some of the new members.

0910

I like to remind myself, especially when we hear things about the speech from the throne, that we are a Commonwealth country. One of the women politicians that I greatly admire—no big surprise, I think—is Margaret Thatcher. She was called the Iron Lady. She said that the ship isn't turning, that she was staying steady on the course. Well, if we think of Ontario as a ship, it's time to turn this ship around. We need to be the driving force of the country economically.

Obviously, we accept people from all over the world into our political system and into our economic system. I think it's really reflected here in the Legislature, and certainly in the PC caucus, how many people have been coming from all over the world to one of the best provinces and one of the best countries.

We can do better, and I think that's what we're all here to do. Because we know, for all our constituents and for all the residents of Ontario, that we can do better. We've come here in the summer—we weren't supposed to be sitting—but we're here to get the ship turned around, to get legislation passed, to get things better, certainly for the students at York University. A lot of them were celebrating this week. A lot of them live in my riding of Thornhill. So we're happy, and we're looking for many, many more celebrations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now we will turn back to the member from Markham–Unionville for final comments.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you for the comments from our fellow members from Timmins, King–Vaughan, Nickel Belt and Thornhill.

I arrived here 18 years ago from Hong Kong, as I mentioned yesterday. Canada and Ontario allowed me to pursue my goals and dreams. I was elected as a school board trustee in 2014, and as the member of provincial Parliament for Markham–Unionville on June 7 of this year.

I stand here today as an example that all Canadians have the same and equal opportunity, and can achieve anything that they set their minds to. I am so humbled and so honoured to be a part of this “promise made, promise kept” government. When I stand at the door of my constituents, they are so delighted that we are going to put more money back into their pockets.

It is my honour to be here today to stand for my constituents and all people from Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 42(a), there have been 12 hours of debate on the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne. I am now, therefore, required to put the question.

On July 16, 2018, Mr. Downey moved, seconded by Ms. Ghamari, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

“To the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

“We, Her Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.”

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

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote will be required. It will be deferred until after question period today.

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: No further business, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): No further business. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 0915 to 1030.

MEMBERS’ EXPENDITURES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today, laid upon the table, we have the individual members’ expenditures for the fiscal year 2017-18.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’m very pleased to introduce guests in the Speaker’s gallery who are with us today. Would the members please join me in welcoming Norm Sterling—he served as MPP for 34 years; his wife, Joan Sterling; Peter and Betsy Partington—Peter served for many years in this House as well—and their friends Steve and Sally Haliburton.

Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It’s a delight to have Norm and Joan Sterling in the assembly today.

I’d also like to recognize that my long-suffering husband, Joe Varner, has arrived here from Ottawa. My husband ran for our party in 2003, in Ottawa Centre, a very tough riding for the Conservatives. And he’s joined by Colleen McCleery, who just recently ran for our party in that riding as well.

Welcome.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I’d like to welcome Claudette Porter and her son Michael Porter to the Legislature, good friends from Nova Scotia—really, one of my best friends. Welcome to Queen’s Park, Claudette.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Today I’d like to introduce Ben Hendry, the president of PEGO. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Today I’d like to welcome and introduce a young volunteer from my riding of Davenport. Her name is Ana Kraljevic. She is also a recent graduate of St. Mary Catholic Academy, where she was awarded the Lieutenant Governor’s award for volunteerism. Welcome, Ana.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Today it’s my pleasure to introduce leaders from the Ontario policing community: Bruce Chapman from the Police Association of Ontario and Rob Jamieson from the Ontario Provincial Police Association.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to welcome to Queen’s Park our returning page Eric’s grandfather Bob Churchill, who is a board member of the Learning Enrichment Foundation; and also Eric’s father, Dirk Albishausen. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I’m pleased to introduce guests from my riding of Mississauga—Malton: Mr. Rajinder Saini, president and CEO of Parvasi Media Group; Mr. Avinash Pandey, chief operating officer, ABP News Network, India—one of the biggest networks; Mr. Abhishek Kaul, international business head; Mr. Jagwinder Patial, executive editor; Mr. Madan Gopal Dhingra; and Mr. Ashwani Aggarwal.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I’d like to welcome Jed Sears and his father today. Jed Sears was recently awarded the principals’ award, and he graduated from King Edward public school.

Thank you so much for coming, Jed.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I’d like to introduce page Adam Omarali’s family: Zenobia Omarali, James Velos, Phirosa Omarali, and Mina Shukla.

Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I, like many of you also, have a long-suffering spouse. I’d like to introduce Ted Hoyle. Thank you for everything that you’ve done for me—he’s in the House. And also my remarkable first, eldest child, Madeline Wilson: Thank you very much for all that you’ve done for me.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would like to take a few moments now to address the House on the issue of the participation of independent members in the debates of this House on government bills and substantive motions, and their participation in members’ statements.

Standing order 22(d) states as follows: “Subject to the standing orders and any other order of the House, nothing prevents the Speaker or Chair of the Committee of the Whole House from recognizing an independent member to speak.”

When presented with a request from an independent member to speak in a regular debate which they are not otherwise excluded by standing order from participating in, it falls to the Speaker to determine whether and to what extent the independent member may participate.

Generally speaking, the Speaker will want to accommodate such requests, but only to the extent that an independent member's ability to participate in the House is no more generous over time than that of any other member of the assembly.

Historically and numerically speaking, having an independent member in the House is a relative rarity and, when it has occurred, it has generally been for relatively short periods of time. The present situation is not customary and there is scant precedent to assist me in guiding my decision on this matter.

In the current Parliament, there is one Green Party independent member, who has no party colleagues in the House, and there are seven independent members who are affiliated with the Liberal Party, although it is not, for procedural purposes, a recognized party under the standing orders. Since the outset of this Parliament, the group of seven Liberal members has been presenting itself to me as a cohesive group, seeking to coordinate its parliamentary work as a caucus to the degree that it will be possible for them.

Both the Green and Liberal Party independents have given me requests, in writing, seeking the opportunity to participate in the two items of business that have been or are expected to be subject to debate during this summer sitting, namely, the throne speech debate and Bill 2.

The Liberal group asked to be given a global amount of 50 minutes for them to allot among themselves for the throne speech debate. I have acceded to this request, in the belief that 50 minutes for the seven members was a reasonable amount of time, given that the debate is 720 minutes in duration. On this formula, the Green independent member was allotted seven minutes, which he used.

I now have to decide how to exercise my discretion in permitting the independent members to participate during the other proceedings such as second reading debates on government bills, which historically have represented the lion's share of overall debate time, and debates on government substantive motions. I believe that making a definitive, proactive decision will be of most benefit to the House, because it will provide clarity and predictability for both the independent members and the rest of the House on an ongoing basis, rather than being done on a case-by-case basis. To do this, I have had to make certain assumptions.

In the case of second reading debates on government bills and debates on substantive government motions, I feel it is reasonable to calculate that the total amount of open debate time available for all members to participate will typically be at least 6.5 hours, or 390 minutes, since that is the point at which the government is able to make use of the procedural tool available to it, under standing order 47, to allocate time to remaining stages of the proceedings.

Among 123 eligible members, 390 minutes represents approximately three minutes each. I am therefore prepared to permit a single one of the seven Liberal independent members to speak for up to 20 minutes during

the debate on second reading of any government bill or any substantive government motion. This 20-minute slot has to be used before speaking times reduce to 10 minutes under standing order 24(c); otherwise, only 10 minutes is permitted, as for everyone else.

I will permit the Green independent member to speak for up to three minutes during the debate on second reading of any government bill, or on a substantive government motion; however, I will let that member forgo participation in any single debate and save that unused time in a virtual "time bank" to accumulate to larger amounts of time, available to be used in debates in which he wants to make a more substantial contribution. However, the member may not speak for more than 20 minutes in any debate and, as with the Liberal independents, for not more than 10 minutes after standing order 24(c) has come into effect.

1040

Under this admittedly mathematically blunt approach, independent members will have a reasonable opportunity to meaningfully participate in a way that will be more predictable for the House to anticipate and for the Chair to facilitate, and to a degree that is proportional to their overall representation in the House.

I will leave it to the presiding officer in the chair at the time to decide when to add these independent speaking slots into the normal rotation, albeit with as much relevant consultation among, and notice to, the players as is reasonably possible.

Dealing now with members' statements, standing order 31(c) states:

"The Speaker has the discretion to permit an independent member to make a statement for no longer than one and one-half minutes. In exercising his or her discretion, the Speaker shall have regard to the opportunities that members of recognized parties have to make such statements. An independent member shall notify the Speaker of his or her intention to make a statement."

For the duration of this summer sitting, I will permit one independent member, in turn each day, to make a member's statement. When the House resumes sitting in the fall sessional period, I will be exercising my discretion with respect to members' statements under standing order 31(c) by following a repeating cycle that allows one members' statement per day for eight consecutive days to be given in turn by each of the independent members if they advise me of their wish to do so, followed by a gap of one sitting week, during which only members of recognized parties may make a members' statement.

While the standing orders give me the discretion to arrange the participation of independent members in the way I've described, the House of course is master of its own proceedings, and I would welcome any recommendations the House might have in this regard if it feels that a different scheme to provide for participation by the independent members would suit it better.

I thank the members for your attention. Thank you very much.

Time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my first question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The Conservatives are refusing to say why they slammed the brakes on the new police oversight rules. Yesterday, we asked the minister whether he will allow even more carding to take place instead of doing the right thing and stamping out carding once and for all. In response, he stigmatized an entire community. He used awful stereotypes to describe that community and he made comments that were deeply offensive to many people.

Will the minister apologize to racialized Ontarians for his racist remarks?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: First off, nobody, not one person on this side of the House, is going to be silenced from speaking out on behalf of or fighting for the families—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please stop the clock. Restart.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Mr. Speaker, the families that are at risk because of gang and gun violence will be looked after and will be listened to.

People are dying every single week. The NDP continues to insult and undermine our men and women in uniform, and they continue to do everything they can to block action to give our police more resources to improve enforcement to protect those communities.

If we do nothing, the number of victims will continue to grow. The NDP want to do nothing because, to them, it's not about public safety; it's about public opinion.

We're the only party in this House prepared to do something about it. We're going to get those resources to our police—

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This has nothing to do with policing resources; this has to do with an unacceptable remark made by a minister of the crown in this House. We will challenge him on those remarks and challenge this government on their attitudes when it comes to racialized communities. It is unacceptable for the minister to refuse to answer questions day after day about why they slammed the brakes on the special investigations unit act. It is unacceptable for the minister to stigmatize an entire community using racist stereotypes, and it is unacceptable for the minister to care so little about the discriminatory, unconstitutional and ongoing use of carding in our communities.

How can this minister honestly want to allow more carding on our streets when he should be stamping it out for good?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: We have been clear from day one. We are going to make sure we are giving our front-line officers the tools they need to do their job. We are committed to fixing Bill 175 and treating our front-line officers with respect. This includes a full and thorough review of the legislation governing police services and police oversight. This will be done by consulting experts, police services and the public.

It's been stated and it's been restated. This is our position.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: All week, this minister has demonstrated an appalling lack of knowledge on the most pressing issues in his portfolio and a lack of respect for the people that he serves. He has failed to answer simple questions about his own decisions. He has offended the people that he works for—the people of Ontario—with racist remarks, and he actually has the ridiculous idea that carding works.

How can this minister think that Ontario needs more carding and more arbitrary police street checks when the people have been saying the exact opposite for many, many years?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: We have been clear with respect to giving police officers the tools they need to do their work. The police have tools in their hands. And specifically on carding: Carding is not something that we have endorsed.

I'm not a police officer, but I will listen to our front-line officers and ensure that they have the resources they need to do their jobs. I'll make sure we're working with communities, listening to the communities to ensure that we're building trust between our police and the communities that they're in.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Deputy Premier. But I just have to say that you don't build trust with racist slurs.

This government is dragging Ontario backwards—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government is dragging Ontario backwards. Scrapping the updated sexual health curriculum and imposing the outdated 1998 curriculum hurts all of our students. It denies kids the crucial information that they need to learn about consent, it's silent on cyber safety and it fails to ensure that queer youth are fully supported in our schools.

Why is this Deputy Premier, the member for Newmarket–Aurora, putting kids at risk to appease the Premier's radical social conservative friends?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you, again, for the question on the sex ed curriculum.

What we want to do is listen to parents and protect students. We were very clear about that through the course of the election. We heard from parents that they

were concerned about the curriculum that was brought forward by the previous Liberal government. They were concerned about the age that children were being taught about certain subjects. We want to conduct a full public consultation with parents to make sure that we understand what parents are comfortable with—with having their children learning in schools—and to make sure that we update it to deal with all of the issues that they need to learn about.

But it is important to note that we are moving forward, that we will continue in the fall with the 2014 curriculum and that we are starting those consultations in the fall so we can get a new curriculum in place as soon as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Just to be clear for those Ontarians here in the gallery and folks at home: There is no 2014 curriculum. It is the 1998 curriculum, straight up, and this government needs to be honest about that.

1050

The current education minister, in 2015, said this: “Our education critic was very forthcoming in saying the Minister of Education has done a lot of consulting around this.” “A lot of consulting.” That was the minister before the Premier cut his backroom deal with Tanya Granic Allen and Charles McVety. Now she’s ripping up that work and imposing a curriculum on students that ignores consent and LGBTQ communities and families.

Why is this Deputy Premier okay with the Premier making backroom deals with radical, far-right extremists that will only hurt Ontario’s kids?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say to the leader of the official opposition that the people that Premier Ford is listening to, and that members of our government are listening to, are the people of Ontario who elected us, 76 members, here.

We all heard the same thing. We’ve heard from parents that they were not given an adequate opportunity to be consulted. Four thousand parents got a link to the survey by the previous government; 1,638 responses were received—0.001% of the elementary school population. That is not a full consultation. We are going to do a thorough, comprehensive, end-to-end consultation that takes into account the views of parents and protects our students in our schools.

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I guess the voices of queer youth and LGBTQ families are not very important to this government.

At the start of this week, Speaker, the Minister of Education said that she would allow consent to remain in the curriculum this September. Then she put out a statement reversing that comment and saying that the whole curriculum is being scrapped. Someone told the minister to get in line and backtrack fast.

The people of Ontario deserve to know who’s really in the driver’s seat here—whether it’s Charles McVety,

Tanya Granic Allen or any other radical extremist who’s owed favours by our Premier. Who is making the decision, behind closed doors, to deny our kids the information that they need?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say to the leader of the official opposition that we’ve been very clear from the beginning. Premier Ford has been very clear from the beginning. That’s what he talked about during the election campaign: that we are going to take a look, listen to parents and develop a new sex ed curriculum that is inclusive of everyone. We want to make sure that everyone gets included in the discussion. That’s why we are going to take the time, beginning this fall—we’re not wasting any time with it—to have that full consultation with all parents, all students, to make sure that we take into account the needs of all of the students in our schools.

MINISTER’S COMMENTS

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Yesterday I asked whether this government would work to stamp out carding. The question was not answered. The disturbing response instead painted an alarming picture of Jane and Finch as a community in which people have to wear bulletproof vests because it “previously had bullet-ridden people killed in the middle of the night.”

This comment was completely unacceptable. Jane and Finch is a community where families go on walks to Topcliff Park, a community where friends hang out at the Oakdale Community Centre, and Jane and Finch is certainly a community where kids attend Firgrove Public School. Now, these stories have to be told. The Conservative government cannot go around, and should not get away with, spewing racist stereotypes.

My question is—

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

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: The purpose of my visit to that particular area was because of concerns in the area. I’m very well aware of the area and the multicultural nature of that particular community. But let me be clear about something: The reason I wore a bulletproof vest was because the police of 31 division advised me to wear it.

The Toronto police commented yesterday that a vest is standard procedure on any ride-alongs. The real insult here is not that I wore the vest; it’s the fact that I needed a vest in the first place. It was that little eight-year-old girl that I was concerned about, wondering how she could have a safe community, because it’s not something that, at eight years old, anyone should be worried about. The status quo is falling apart and I think we all know that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Please start the clock.

Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: The NDP are fully aware—my leader, myself and everyone here all agree—that there is

a problem out there and something has to be done. We understand that. Carding is not the way to go, Mr. Speaker. The two girls shot in Scarborough was appalling and that's something that we want to stop as well, but as I mentioned before, carding is not the way to go.

Now, yesterday during the late show, the member from Brampton South, Prabmeet Sarkaria, was adamantly in support of carding. Just a few years ago, Mr. Sarkaria, who was then Ontario vice-president—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would advise the member that when you're talking about another MPP, you mention them by their riding name and not by their personal name.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: The member from Brampton South, who was then the Ontario vice-president of the World Sikh Organization of Canada said, "Canada has an international reputation as a champion of human rights. Many young people in Ontario, including Sikhs, have been negatively impacted by carding"—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Time's up. Response?

Hon. Michael Tibollo: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to state it and I'm going to be very clear. The Premier was very clear about this. We are not bringing back carding.

Interjections.

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

Next question.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: As this is my first time rising in this House, I'd like to take a second and thank my family, friends and all my constituents in Brampton West for their trust in me as their representative.

Congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, on your new role. It is well deserved.

My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition and her caucus spent the day making petty, partisan, political attacks about the minister. They accused the minister of being racist because he told a story about participating in a ride-along with 31 division.

Now, we know this is a party that doesn't support police officers. But, Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us more about the NDP's shameless reaction?

Hon. Michael Tibollo: First of all, I'd like to welcome and congratulate the member from—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the minister to sit down. So, of course, question period has to raise issues that refer to the government's policy. I don't believe that question met that standard.

I think we can give the member a chance to rephrase the question, if he chooses to do so.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: What's your policy on carding? Back to the minister.

Hon. Michael Tibollo: Thank you very much for the question, and once again welcome and congratulations.

We have been clear from the very beginning with respect to where we stand, wanting to have safe communities and to ensure that police have the proper tools to do their jobs. But I would like to make a statement with respect to wearing a police vest and make it very, very clear that this is a standard that happens throughout the province of Ontario.

I'd like to point out for the record that the member, for example, from Niagara Falls wore a bulletproof vest on July 29 with the Niagara regional police. The member for Durham, who spent 12 hours on April 20 of this year with Durham regional police, wore a vest. I was also surprised by the member from Toronto—St. Paul's, who, on April 14, 2015, tweeted, "Bulletproof vest. Yes!!!yes!!! Yes!!! Safety and security first. We should all have 1 under" our beds.

1100

Interjections.

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

Next question. The member from Brampton Centre.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since this is my first time rising, I'd like to congratulate all members on their election, and especially you, on this magnificent post.

My question is to the Acting Premier. My community of Brampton has been suffering under increased violence, as much of the GTA has been. These events are not new but are evidence of a major urban community growing faster than its needs are being met. And while the violence continues, it is clear that racialized, often young Bramptonians have been routinely carded.

Yesterday the Acting Premier said this government would no longer use carding, while the Minister of Community Safety said—

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Also just said five seconds ago.

Ms. Sara Singh: Excuse me. I'm not done. Let me finish the question. Thank you.

While he doesn't like the term "carding," street checks are a tool used by police.

My question to the Acting Premier: Who is right?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you for the question. I believe it has already been answered. Both the minister and I have indicated that carding is not going to come back into play. But we do support our police. We do support the need to give them all the tools they need in order to combat violence, increasing gang violence, in communities like yours, mine, everywhere else in Ontario. We want to make sure that they have the tools that are going to be effective, that will allow them to do their job.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Sara Singh: Acting Premier, while we understand that there are many ways to address the problem and police are one aspect of addressing many of the root

causes of violence in our communities, the violence in my community did not just happen overnight.

We are not against the police. We are here to have constructive dialogue about—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Take your seat for a second.

I would ask the government members to please come to order and allow the member to place her question. I have to be able to hear her.

I return to the member for Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: As I was saying, the violence in my community did not just happen overnight. There is evidence of a growing community here that is in great need of services and supports for young people.

We have over 700,000 people and growing and yet only one hospital, thereby not enough services for our young people to access—for example, mental health services—when needed. Brampton needs more schools and anti-violence intervention programs in our schools. We need better and more affordable housing options.

What our young people don't need is to be further stigmatized and criminalized. The people experiencing violence—

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'm not sure what question I'm supposed to answer here. It's about young people. It's about schools. It's about hospitals. Could you be a bit more specific? Because it's unclear to me what the response is that you're looking for.

REFUGEES

Mr. Parm Gill: My question today is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services with responsibility for immigration.

I know that Premier Ford and the minister have stood up strongly to protect Ontario taxpayers from the federal Liberals' inaction on illegal border crossers. It has put massive strain on the social safety net meant to help vulnerable Ontarians. The results of the federal failed policy are a strained temporary shelter system from Ottawa to Toronto, a strained welfare system, a strained legal aid system.

I also note that the government's efforts by Prime Minister Trudeau have had a massive strain on our social safety net and caused a federal cabinet shuffle. I draw your attention to the appointment of Bill Blair as minister responsible for border security and organized crime.

My question is about the shift in strategy by Trudeau. Has the Prime Minister acknowledged through his appointment that organized crime is involved in the broken border and tens of thousands of illegal border—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I congratulate the member for his election to this place, as well as his distinguished

service in the federal Parliament, where he has experience with this issue.

I note that Ontario is a welcoming place. Each year we receive about 40% of all immigrants to Canada. And we are very proud that in 1974, you not only chose Canada but Ontario to settle in this country.

The member also recognized that the federal government has sole jurisdiction of border management and Canada's refugee and asylum programs. I simply asked the federal government to do a couple of things. One is to pay its bills. They owe Ontario \$175 million, \$90 million of which is from our social assistance program.

I was heartened to see that the federal government understands that there is a border crisis in the appointment of Bill Blair yesterday. I had the opportunity to speak to Mr. Blair on the weekend, and I know that he is going to take our concerns very seriously. I think it's a significant win for the province of Ontario that not only have they appointed a minister responsible for border control, but that they are starting to talk to our municipalities about paying their bills. We're just going to keep doing that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Parm Gill: I thank the minister for her answer.

With this failure by the federal government to take action, the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario are now on the hook for massive costs, millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister tell us the cost to the Ontario taxpayers for this wrong-headed open-border policy by the federal Liberal government and tell this House whether there is any hope that the Trudeau Liberals will ever pay their bills?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Trudeau says budgets balance themselves, and we haven't seen that, so they're not very good at the math curriculum over in the federal Liberal Party. I think Kathleen Wynne may have taught them how to do that math.

Let me be perfectly clear: The cost that we've incurred in the province of Ontario as a result of this federal program is \$3 million that we've already given to the Red Cross. Right now we have 800 dormitory beds that we have given to these asylum seekers in making sure that there is a place for them to stay, but we need that space back as of August 9 because we do have students coming back into the classroom.

We do have some costs that have been incurred. I want to reiterate this—it's very serious. The city of Toronto has upwards of \$74 million in shelter costs above and beyond their normal capacity. The city of Ottawa is over and above their normal capacity by about \$11 million. In addition to that, my own department, which is responsible for social assistance, requires about \$90 million to make us whole.

I can assure you, this side of the House, the Progressive Conservative caucus, will stand up to the Trudeau government—

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Restart the clock. I recognize the member for Spadina–Fort York.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Chris Glover: Speaker, as it's the first time I rise in the House, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Speaker, and I would like to thank the people of Spadina–Fort York for the trust they've put in me. Thank you.

My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Over the past five years, I have investigated gun violence through research and community consultations. Time and again, community members have unwaveringly shared that the solution to the root causes of gun violence in our communities requires addressing issues like poverty, access to housing, access to education, and mental health. The solution to gun violence is not bulletproof vests. Rather, addressing the roots of gun violence requires community-based and community-informed solutions.

So my question is: Will this government listen to the voices of our communities, who call for addressing the deeper social issues that lead to the increasing level of gun violence in Toronto?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for the question.

Public safety is our primary concern, and we're committed to examining current community funding programs and their effectiveness in reducing gun violence and gang-related activity in Ontario. We remain committed to working with our policing partners to provide resources and tools that will ensure community safety across the entire province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Glover: Up to this point, the response has been about the police. The Conservatives' response to gun violence, which has involved only the police in Ontario, does more harm than good.

While the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services believes that bulletproof vests will address the root causes of gun violence, community members are calling for real long-term solutions. Band-aid solutions simply do not cut it. Even Mayor John Tory has recognized this and has expanded funding to community programs. So my question is: What initiatives will the Conservative government create to address the roots of violence?

1110

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you again for the question.

Mr. Speaker, public safety is our primary concern, especially the protection of innocent children. With the rise in gun violence on our streets, it's clear that the status quo is failing, and we're the only party in this House prepared to do something about it.

I'm committed to working with our police officers and services, our communities and everyone in this province to find solutions that will keep our communities safe and protect Ontarians from being the victims of senseless violence.

CLIMATE CHANGE

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ma question est pour la vice-première ministre. The elimination of cap-and-trade will have significant impacts on many people, because one of the key aspects of cap-and-trade was to re-distribute money from polluters to initiatives that reduce gas emissions and save energy.

Several very important programs were funded by the revenues of cap-and-trade, among them the Social Housing Apartment Improvement Program and the Social Housing Apartment Retrofit Program, which allowed social housing in different municipalities to get money to retrofit their buildings to save energy costs, improve tenants' comfort and reduce their emissions. I know that in Ottawa, it made a big difference for social housing to be able to replace windows and improve ventilation and heating efficiency.

I want to know what is going to happen to these programs. What is the plan and can it be shared with Ontarians?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for the question.

We were very clear during the election campaign that we were going to scrap the cap-and-trade program and not introduce a carbon tax. That is one of the reasons why people elected us.

This is going to result in saving the average family \$285 a year. It is going to help us as we move towards reducing gas prices and so on and reducing prices for Ontario families. We promised that. We know that it's hard for families to pay their bills these days, to be able to pay their hydro bills and to feed their families.

What we are going to do, though, is that although we've scrapped cap-and-trade and we've scrapped the funding that came from that, we are going to look at those programs where funding will continue to be necessary and we will continue to fund it, but it won't be through cap-and-trade and it won't be through that program.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: The elimination of cap-and-trade has also had other consequences. I'd like to just name a few.

In a recent article by Goodmans LLP, which is a reputable business law firm for more than 30 years, it says the following: "The cancellation by Premier-designate Ford of the Ontario cap-and-trade program did not comply with the withdrawal procedure under Ontario's" Western Climate Initiative "agreement with Quebec and California, which specifies that a 'party that intends to withdraw'" must "'give 12 months' notice...."

It goes on to say, “The province of Ontario’s abrupt withdrawal resulted in the immediate cessation of the trading of allowances with Ontario entities.” The article continues that the cancellation will set back the Ontario clean-tech industry.

So there are reputational risks to the province of Ontario to behave in such a cavalier way and not to respect this international agreement. This is particularly worrisome in the context of a period of international trade uncertainty.

My question is: Did the government of Ontario do an economic analysis of the cost of this abrupt cancellation of cap-and-trade?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We have considered all of the arguments, but we are listening to the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario cannot bear the cost of this cap-and-trade program, nor of a carbon tax. We have listened to them. We got elected on a promise. Promise made, promise kept.

Interjections.

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

Next question.

PLAN D’ACTION DU GOUVERNEMENT

M. Jeremy Roberts: Ma question s’adresse à la procureure générale et ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Dans ma circonscription d’Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean, je représente l’une des régions avec le plus de Franco-Ontariens de toute la province. Mes électeurs sont extrêmement fiers de leurs racines, qui remontent à plus de 400 ans, et célèbrent le fait d’être membres d’une communauté de plus de 600 000 personnes.

L’honorable procureure générale peut-elle informer les Franco-Ontariens de ma circonscription d’Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean et de toute la province de ce que leur gouvernement fera exactement pour eux au cours des quatre prochaines années?

L’hon. Caroline Mulroney: J’aimerais remercier le député de sa question et le féliciter pour son élection à titre de représentant de la circonscription d’Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean.

Ce gouvernement est un gouvernement pour la population de l’Ontario, pour tous les Ontariens et les Ontariennes. Le discours du trône a mis en lumière un bon nombre des engagements que notre gouvernement entend respecter au cours de son mandat pour le bénéfice de tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes. Ce sont des choses qui ont un impact positif pour tous partout dans la province, des rives des Grand Lacs à la baie d’Hudson au nord et à Ottawa et Cornwall à l’est.

Notre gouvernement réduira les factures d’électricité, réduira le prix de l’essence, offrira un allègement fiscal aux entreprises et aux familles, abandonnera le système de plafonnement et d’échange et s’opposera au système fédéral de tarification du carbone. On ramènera des emplois à l’Ontario, et nous allons guérir notre système de santé en difficulté.

Notre gouvernement travaille d’arrache-pied pour assurer la prospérité des Ontariens—

Le Président (L’hon. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup. Supplementary?

M. Jeremy Roberts: Monsieur le Président, par votre entremise, j’aimerais remercier l’honorable procureure générale et la féliciter pour son élection par les électeurs de York-Simcoe. Je sais que l’honorable procureure générale représentera l’identité des Franco-Ontariens au plus haut degré et sera attentive aux affaires concernant les francophones de cette province.

Monsieur le Président, l’honorable procureure générale pourrait-elle faire part à la Chambre de certaines choses que le gouvernement fera pour représenter les Franco-Ontariennes et les Franco-Ontariens?

L’hon. Caroline Mulroney: En tant qu’Ontarienne et Canadienne qui parle les deux langues officielles, c’est un honneur pour moi de servir comme ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones.

Notre gouvernement est pleinement engagé à servir la population francophone et à veiller à ce que les voix des Franco-Ontariens soient entendues. Notre gouvernement reconnaît l’apport culturel de la population francophone et est déterminé à appuyer le mandat important de l’Office des affaires francophones. Nous sommes engagés à faire en sorte que les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes aient accès aux soutiens et aux services gouvernementaux dont ils ont besoin dans une langue qu’ils connaissent et avec laquelle ils se sentent à l’aise.

J’ai eu l’occasion de rencontrer un certain nombre de mes collègues ministres pour discuter des diverses façons de travailler ensemble pour faire avancer le mandat de l’Office des affaires francophones. Hier, l’office a reçu également le rapport du commissaire aux services en français, M. François Boileau, et je suis en train de l’examiner, afin—

Le Président (L’hon. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup. Next question?

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is for the Minister of Education.

I’d like to tell everyone about a very special student from my riding, Principal’s Award winner Jed Sears. Jed attends King Edward public school, where the repair backlog is \$8.9 million. In his own words: “King Edward has washrooms that are closed because they can’t afford to fix the bathrooms. There are stalls that have no toilet paper or ... soap for days. King Edward ... has problems with mice.”

Jed also says the thermometer in his classroom reaches occasionally over 30 degrees. He says his classmates have had to miss school days, and he has found that his learning and his test performance have been dramatically impacted by the extreme heat.

When will students like Jed get answers from his government about their plan to fix Ontario’s schools?

1120

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: To Jed and all of his classmates, I say that I appreciate their frustrations because over the last 15 years, the previous Liberal government has allowed schools across this province to crumble and actually deteriorate in front of students' eyes, and it's unacceptable.

I have to also share with you, and clarify, that the GGRF slush fund, if you will, would not do anything towards the renovations and the fixes that Jed was describing in his message to the member opposite.

To Jed and all the students across Ontario: We're working very hard with our ministry officials, as well as our school boards, to make sure that we can bring forward renovations in a timely and cost-effective manner.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Jessica Bell: To the Minister of Education again: In a hurried response to public outrage over the \$100-million cut to school funding, the Minister of Education says the government will fix and address the issues facing our crumbling schools. The people of Ontario have made it clear: The issue is repair funding. If this government expects teachers and parents to trust them, then earn it.

When will the minister confirm that this government will provide the \$100 million for repair funding to replace the amount they gutted from schools last week?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: The people of Ontario were very clear that they wanted our government, the PC government of Ontario under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford, to fix the issue at hand, and that was the previous government having their hand in their pocket every time they turned around—much like the GGRF slush fund.

Again, the reality check is here, Speaker, that the slush fund would not have done anything for the renovation that the member opposite described. I'm very, very happy to share with her and everyone across this province that I'm working with ministry officials, as well as our local school boards, to identify the priorities, and we will move forward in addressing the renovations in a timely manner.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING AND ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Ms. Christina Mitas: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance, but as it is my first time rising, I would like to congratulate you on your new role, thank the people of Scarborough Centre for electing me and congratulate the minister on his new post. The people of Ontario are very lucky to have you.

I'm pleased to see our Premier, Doug Ford, and our government following through on our commitment to restore trust and accountability to the province's books through the establishment of the commission of inquiry. Despite the innuendo and fearmongering projected by the members opposite, the fact of the matter is that there are clearly defined terms of reference for this commission.

This will ensure that taxpayers can trust that they will get a true picture of the state of our province's finances as they were left by the previous Liberal government.

We truly do owe a debt of gratitude towards people like our Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer who helped reveal the Liberals' finances and inaccurate financial reporting. Minister, can you tell us how—

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

Response: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Scarborough Centre for your first question in the Legislature.

I agree that the opposition seems to have taken a "let's throw it against the wall and see what sticks" approach. Of course, that's how they ended up with a \$7-billion glitch in their alleged platform.

Here's what will stick with our government: respect for the taxpayer and restoring trust and accountability with our finances. This is a government for the people.

No one is a bigger supporter of the work of the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer than this government. The commission of inquiry has, as part of its mandate, the ability to reach out to the auditor and the FAO as it does its work and formulates its report. It's the first step towards returning Ontario back to financial health—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Time.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Christina Mitas: Back to the minister: Again, I must agree that it was very disconcerting to hear the innuendo and personal attacks from the members opposite yesterday surrounding the commission of inquiry. It's clear that former BC Premier Gordon Campbell, who will chair the commission, and Michael Horgan and Dr. Al Rosen, who are renowned experts in their fields, will provide Ontario taxpayers with the expertise needed to conduct this type of review.

It is reassuring, however, to hear that we are asking the commission to hit the ground running and issue a report in time for it to be considered as part of Ontario's public accounts and in time for our fall economic statement.

Minister, can you please tell the House how the commission of inquiry will have access to the resources it needs to fulfill its mandate?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, to the member: Despite what the opposition is asserting, the commission of inquiry will have the right tools and the right resources to get Ontario taxpayers the answers they deserve about our finances.

The commission has the latitude to reach out to the Auditor General, and she is ready to collaborate. I'm going to repeat the words of the Auditor General that she sent yesterday: "The Office of the Auditor General appreciates the government's intent, as part of the financial commission of inquiry, to address the accounting practices we have previously expressed concerns about. Our office will work co-operatively with the commission."

The opposition can spin all the theories and cast all the aspersions they want. We, on this side of the House, will continue to do the hard work needed to restore trust.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Restart the clock.
Next question.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Joel Harden: Mr. Speaker, this is my first occasion rising with you in the chair, so I want to congratulate you on your election.

My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, a fellow Ottawa resident. The 2018 Ontario budget included a commitment to increase support for Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program recipients by 3% annually, starting this fall. One of my constituents asked me to confirm that these increases were planned to go ahead. When we checked with the ministry through my office, no one had the answer.

Will the minister confirm that Ontario Works and ODSP recipients will receive the increases in support that they're counting on?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much to the member from Ottawa Centre. I want to convey my heartfelt congratulations to him for his election to this place. I'm looking forward to working with him as a fellow Ottawa member, along with some of the Liberal members and, of course, our Ottawa team from our nation's capital. I appreciated the opportunity to have a discussion with you earlier in the week and to encourage you actually to ask a question on this.

As you are well aware, I've got five ministries coming into one. I've been spending the last number of weeks doing briefings and working hard to make sure that that happens. But I want to reiterate that our social assistance programs are an important part of the safety net designed to assist our most vulnerable, and I take that to heart and I take that very seriously. I'm still being briefed, as I mentioned, on all aspects of my portfolio, but this is a very important one and I want to make sure that the people, particularly the most vulnerable, in our province and in our city are looked after.

I will answer more in the supplemental.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Joel Harden: Minister, thank you for that response to the question.

As someone who lived in my formative years in a family that survived on social assistance with a single mom, I just want to remind—through you, Speaker—the House that we need to make sure that what matters in this province are the most marginalized and vulnerable people.

When the government goes over the ledger of this province line by line, I want them to remember the people we met in our election campaign suffering on

meagre incomes, who have been held back for far too long. We need to invest in those who need a decent shot at a decent life, and I hope to hear that commitment from this government.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks again to the member opposite. I do appreciate it.

I must say I agree with him. For far too long, people have been held down by the previous Liberal government, where life became so expensive and unaffordable, particularly with heating and eating and the price of gas.

With that said, I will say that when I was getting my briefings, I was dismayed to learn that more and more people are staying on Ontario Works for longer. Let's face it, true income security in this province will be a job, and we will continue to make sure that people are getting the supports they need in order to work and keep more money that they have. Our focus will be bringing prosperity and more jobs to Ontario, but I take the member opposite's point.

We want to make sure that Ontario is open for business, more people are working in this province and life is more affordable when they drive their car, when they buy their house or when they send their kid off to university. That's what our focus is going to be—but I can assure you of one thing: Ontario's back.

Interjections.

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

Next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: As this is my first time rising, I would like to take a moment and thank my family, friends and all of my constituents of Mississauga East–Cooksville for their trust in me.

1130

Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday, the minister rose in this House to advise us of the meeting he had with the federal Minister of Environment. He reported to this House that he had stood up for Ontario taxpayers, telling the federal minister what so many of us have heard loud and clear from our constituents: Ontario cannot afford a carbon tax.

Following that meeting, Minister McKenna stated: "We are the federal government, and we need to work with everyone," which sounded rather encouraging. My question to the minister is, does the Minister of the Environment really believe that—

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

Minister of the Environment?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, and again, welcome to the House. I know you'll serve your constituents well.

I was rather disheartened, Mr. Speaker, by our meeting yesterday. I was very clear with my federal counterpart that this government was elected to eliminate the former Liberal government's cap-and-trade program and that we would not accept a replacement federal Liberal carbon tax. In return, she was very clear that the only

version of a climate plan that she would accept was one that taxes the people. This is something that we do not agree with.

In her statement that Minister McKenna put out following the meeting, she said: “Climate change doesn’t stop with a change in government.” Well, Mr. Speaker, we agree. Climate change doesn’t stop, but the taxes do. Our government will not support a Liberal carbon tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Back to the minister: Speaker, I thank the Minister of the Environment for his answer. However, judging by his response and that of the federal minister, it doesn’t really sound like she is, as she said, truly willing to “work with everyone.”

My question to the Minister of the Environment: Will he commit to fighting for our province, so that more people can afford to live, work and raise their families right here in Ontario?

Hon. Rod Phillips: I appreciate the question from the member. That’s the question Ontarians are asking: Who will fight for Ontarians when it comes to protecting their wallets and their environment?

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Trudeau carbon tax is no more palatable than the former Liberal government’s cap-and-trade program. A carbon tax is a carbon tax. I know the Premier understands this, which is why he’s working hard to build a team with his provincial counterparts to build a coalition to let the Prime Minister know this.

As was reported today, the Premier has joined with Premier Scott Moe of Saskatchewan and announced that our government will do whatever is necessary to get the message through to Ottawa that Ontario, Saskatchewan and a growing number of provinces will not support the Trudeau carbon tax.

Interjections.

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

The member for Nickel Belt.

LABOUR DISPUTE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président. Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Primary care providers at the Owen Sound family health organization and the Port Arthur Health Centre in Thunder Bay have been on strike for weeks. In two different communities, in two different family health clinics, patients lost access to their primary care providers because these workers cannot continue to put up with the toxic working conditions that undermine their ability to provide good care: low pay, precarious contracts, favouritism, bullying and extremely high turnover.

Minister, on behalf of the patients of Owen Sound and Thunder Bay: How can they count on quality care when their primary health care providers face these working conditions?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member for the question.

Patient care and safety, of course, are a primary concern for all of us. I am aware of the situation in both Thunder Bay and Owen Sound. I think it’s reflective of the situation that has grown up over 15 years of Liberal neglect and mismanagement, but we are going to try and fix that.

Having said that, this particular situation in these two locations is a private discussion between the operators of the clinics and the support staff. I am very hopeful that they will be able to reach a decision soon. I’m very confident in the bargaining process that they’ve entered into. We are following it closely, but it is a private matter between those two organizations.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: At the Port Arthur Health Centre in Thunder Bay, there are lifelong employees. We’re talking of somebody who’s worked there for 30 years and makes less than \$15 an hour. In Owen Sound, the talks have broken off because the owners want to lay off their nurses. These are health care professionals. They shouldn’t have to be on strike to protect public health care, to stop nursing cuts, and to demand respect and dignity on the job.

What will this government do to help these front-line health care workers and to ensure that people, not profit, come first in our health care system?

Hon. Christine Elliott: As the member will know, the ministry is not a party to these negotiations. This is a private matter between the clinics and their employees. We know that there is great dispute resolution that happens in Ontario. We are hopeful that they will be able to come to a conclusion very soon. We cannot interfere in that process. It is not appropriate for us to do that. We are monitoring the situation because patient care and safety are of course of paramount concern to us.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING AND ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Mrs. Nina Tangri: My question is to the President of the Treasury Board. Mr. Speaker, many people across the province, including members of this House, have questions about the state of Ontario’s finances, in particular about the deficit and the many different opinions about the size of that number. After hearing about the dispute between the previous government and the Auditor General, people aren’t sure who to trust. Would the President of the Treasury Board please update the House on steps the government is taking to ensure the people of Ontario not only have a true picture of the province’s finances, but also a clear understanding of this urgent and complex issue?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, thank you for the question.

We have heard a lot from the party opposite this week about the Auditor General and the important work she and her team do. We could not agree more. This Auditor

General performed a valuable public service and uncovered one of the largest financial disagreements in Canadian history. Let me be clear: It is because we hold the Auditor General in such high regard that we are opening up the province's books.

We ran on a promise to restore public trust. The people of Ontario deserve answers. A comprehensive line-by-line audit of government spending will fulfill that commitment. The era of obfuscation is over. The era of accountability is back.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary question.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Back to the President of the Treasury Board: It is reassuring to hear that the government is taking swift action to build a strong relationship with an independent officer of the Legislature, and to restore public trust. Would the President of the Treasury Board expand on how the government will work with the Auditor General during the line-by-line audit process?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: What a terrific question, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

This government is well aware that Ontario has the highest subnational debt of any jurisdiction in the world. It took 15 years for the previous government to create this mess, and it will not be solved overnight. A critical component of our plan will be to work closely with the Office of the Auditor General. We look forward to continued co-operation.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to read the statement from the Office of the Auditor General yesterday confirming that they appreciate “the government’s intent, as part of the financial commission of inquiry, to address the accounting practices we have previously expressed concerns about.”

Interjections.

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

The minister can conclude.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Speaker, we will not tire and we will not stop until we have uncovered all the waste, all the excess and all the mismanagement of the previous—

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

Next question: the member for Niagara Falls.

1140

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Wayne Gates: Speaker, you had to find me there. I saw that.

My question is to the Acting Premier. Last month, the Premier went to Pickering to outline his transit vision for the area. He didn’t talk about expanding GO rail service; he didn’t talk about improving local bus services. No, he promised the people of Pickering a brand new subway. The people of Pickering definitely want better transit, but they did not ask the Premier to spend billions to dig a

tunnel under the Rouge River and run a subway beneath the GO train.

The people of Pickering didn’t ask for this subway. Will the Premier tell us which of his lobbyist friends did?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to congratulate the member from Niagara Falls on his re-election as well.

Transit is an absolute priority for Doug Ford and the PC Party here in Ontario. If we can’t move people and goods, our economy will not flourish. It is an absolute necessity to ensure that we have an operational, efficient and effective transit system throughout the GTA and beyond. Doug Ford has made commitments that we will absolutely ensure, going into the future, that this will be a first-class transit system serving the people of Ontario.

There are many, many areas that are seeking transit. We are currently reviewing and we’ve said we’re sitting down with Metrolinx and the other partners to ensure that transit in Ontario will be first class—

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

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Back to the Acting Premier: The last government was all too happy to spend public dollars on multi-billion dollar mega-projects to benefit their friends and themselves. The voters sent that government packing, but this Premier is picking up right where the last Premier left off.

The Premier’s subway scheme won’t make transit more reliable or affordable for the thousands of Pickering residents who already take the GO train to downtown Toronto every single day.

So my question is, which lobbyist or Tory insider is the Premier pandering to?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I thank the member for the question. I say to the member that the commitment to transit is one that we didn’t arrive at cavalierly; we arrived at it because the people all across this area and the GTA have said, “We need to move better, we need to get around the city, and we need to get in from other areas around the city.”

Doug Ford will be remembered as the Premier who brought transit to Ontario because—

Interjections.

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

Hon. John Yakabuski: We’re not going to sit idly by while others sit idly by in their cars, idling on the streets in gridlock. The unproductivity of gridlock is something that he has absolutely said we will not tolerate as—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Will the member please take his seat?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Next question?

TAXATION

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Yesterday, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks met with his federal counterpart to defend the interests of this province. Today, our Premier met with the Premier of Saskatchewan to build a national consensus to oppose higher taxes on working people. Together these leaders are standing up for Ontario families, for taxpayers and for small businesses in every region of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is leadership. This is leadership for the economy, leadership for taxpayers and leadership for the people of this province.

I have a difficult question for my seatmate this morning: Can the Minister of the Environment continue to stand up with every fibre in him to oppose this regressive, job-killing carbon tax?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the member from King–Vaughan for his tough but fair question. The answer, of course, is yes. Not only will I stand up and our Premier stand up, this party will stand up for taxpayers. We will ensure not only the repeal of the regressive former Liberal government's cap-and-trade carbon tax program, but we will ensure and we will do everything we can, the Premier and every member of this government, to stop a Liberal carbon tax.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Don Valley East on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I just want to take a moment to introduce one of my number one volunteers, Sasha Pessos—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to remind the members that when they rise to speak, they have to be in their actual seats.

DEFERRED VOTES

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne.

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

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I hate to interrupt this discussion, but it's time for you to take your seats. Is everyone in their own seat? That's important.

On July 16, 2018, Mr. Downey moved, seconded by Ms. Ghamari, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

“To the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

“We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.”

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Jones, Sylvia	Piccini, David
Baber, Roman	Karahalios, Belinda	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Ke, Vincent	Rickford, Greg
Bailey, Robert	Khanjin, Andrea	Roberts, Jeremy
Barrett, Toby	Kramp, Daryl	Romano, Ross
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Lecce, Stephen	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	MacLeod, Lisa	Sandhu, Amarjot
Calandra, Paul	Martin, Robin	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Martow, Gila	Simard, Amanda
Cho, Stan	McDonell, Jim	Skelly, Donna
Coe, Lorne	McKenna, Jane	Smith, Dave
Crawford, Stephen	McNaughton, Monte	Smith, Todd
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Miller, Norman	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	Mitas, Christina	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Elliott, Christine	Nicholls, Rick	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fee, Amy	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Park, Lindsey	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Parsa, Michael	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Pettapiece, Randy	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Mike	Phillips, Rod	Yurek, Jeff

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

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy
Arthur, Ian	Gretzky, Lisa	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Harden, Joel	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Hassan, Faisal	Singh, Gurratan
Berns-McGown, Rima	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Sara
Bisson, Gilles	Hunter, Mitzi	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Karpoche, Bhutla	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Taylor, Monique
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Mamakwa, Sol	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	West, Jamie
Fraser, John	Miller, Paul	Yarde, Kevin
French, Jennifer K.	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	
Gates, Wayne	Morrison, Suze	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 66; the nays are 43.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Be it resolved that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

“To the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

“We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now

assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.”

It being almost noon, this House stands in recess until 1 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I would like to pay my tributes to the former federal MP from Oakville and the former provincial member from Halton Centre, Mr. Terence Young.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We're very pleased to welcome Mr. Terence Young, the member for Halton Centre in the 36th Parliament. Once again, welcome.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I would like to introduce my intern student, Julie Baron. She's a second-year University of Toronto political science and criminology student, and she's in the gallery with us today.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to introduce my husband, Tyler, who came up to watch my swearing-in but also to watch me in the chair this afternoon.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANAL DAYS

Mr. Jeff Burch: I am honoured to rise in the House today to deliver my first member's statement, and I would like to take a moment to say congratulations to the Speaker on his election.

It's a privilege to be here to represent the people of Niagara Centre, formerly Welland riding, who have entrusted their faith in me to advocate for them here at Queen's Park. I am humbled by the opportunity to carry on the NDP legacy in Welland, Port Colborne, Thorold and south St. Catharines, following in the very large footsteps of Mel Swart, Peter Kormos and Cindy Forster. With hard work, dedication and the mentorship of my colleagues and predecessors, I trust their faith will not be misplaced.

I'm very happy, Mr. Speaker, to introduce in this Legislature one of Ontario's favourite festivals, Canal Days in Port Colborne. Canal Days is a marine heritage festival hosted by the Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum, celebrating their 40th anniversary this year. Every year, Canal Days has become more popular, and it is now a four-day event hosting over 400,000 visitors, with vendors, buskers, food merchants, live entertainment and one of the best fireworks displays in Ontario. Come sail on the Empire Sandy, one of the many tall ships gathered at the mouth of the Welland Canal, and experience Ontario's largest outdoor classic car and international kite show.

Mr. Speaker, we invite everyone to the beautiful lakeside city of Port Colborne this August 3 to 6 for this incredible holiday weekend.

ROBERT "BOB" NIXON

Mr. Will Bouma: I would like to pay tribute today to Brantford–Brant's very own Bob Nixon. Robert Fletcher Nixon was born on July 17, 1928. On Tuesday of this past week, he turned 90 years old. Mr. Nixon is the former leader of the Ontario Liberal Party and former member of provincial Parliament serving the people of Brant–Haldimand. Bob is the son of former Premier of Ontario Harry Nixon.

He was first elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in the 1962 by-election following his father's death. The younger Nixon was elected leader of the Ontario Liberal Party in 1967 and led them through three provincial elections, the first two where the Liberals retained their standing as the second-largest party and the official opposition in the Legislature.

Nixon resigned as party leader in 1976 and was succeeded by Stuart Smith after a leadership convention. Mr. Nixon remained a prominent member of the Liberal caucus after standing down from the party leadership, including two stints as interim opposition leader, and served as provincial Treasurer and Deputy Premier in the government of David Peterson from 1985 to 1990.

After leaving politics, he took a term as the official agent for Ontario in the United Kingdom and then served as the chair of Atomic Energy of Canada.

Truly, Bob is a great Ontarian and a great Canadian. But I don't say all this, Mr. Speaker, to give honour to a family that held the same seat from 1919 to 1991 or to list Bob's accomplishments. Rather, since he has become a patient in my practice, Bob has become a friend and mentor.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: During the election, I had the pleasure of meeting one of my constituents in Kitchener Centre, who had me make her a promise: She asked me if I would work alongside my colleagues to change the culture of the discourse that's happening right here in the House. She was upset about the fighting, the anger and the animosity. So I would like to use this moment to honour that.

I'm going to do that, though, by being very clear about the kinds of things that have been happening right here in the last few days that I've been here. One of those things is, actually, racism.

The way that racism operates under normal circumstances—people usually think that the issue is that it's an individual who is racist. But based on my experiences, it's not that; it's about systems. It's about laws and decisions and regulations that we make that perpetuate a myth of neutrality when they're actually harming particular people—particular people more than others.

The reason that the NDP stands up against carding is because carding has been found to harm Black, brown and Indigenous people more than others. As a consequence, it is our job, it is our duty to our residents, to

stand straight, to stand firm and to stand tall and say no. There are other ways that we can make use of the police. I think that we have to do that as part of our challenge.

CANADIAN OPEN GOLF TOURNAMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my congratulations to you. I know you weren't in the House when I gave my inaugural speech on Monday, so my congratulations.

Next Thursday, July 26, will mark the start of four rounds of play of golf for the 109th Canadian Open tournament. Once again, the Glen Abbey golf course has the pleasure of hosting the Canadian Open in Oakville. The Open is a rallying point for Canadian golf and an opportunity for Canada's top golf talent to challenge the world's best.

Glen Abbey is so much more than just a golf course. The course was designed by the world-famous golfer Jack Nicklaus in his first solo design. History has been made there: One of Tiger Woods's best shots of all time occurred on the 18th hole of Glen Abbey in the Canadian Open in 2000. It was a 216-yard shot out of a bunker over a pond that clinched the Canadian Open for Woods that year. The course is also home to the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame and the head office for Golf Canada.

The Canadian Open is one of Canada's greatest sporting events, and the tournament attracts tourists from all around the world. The Open is the third-oldest tournament on the PGA tour and was recently named the most fan-friendly by the PGA tour.

Oakville is truly fortunate to host this world-class Open, and I hope that everybody here has the opportunity to visit Oakville and visit this great event. Children and youth under the age of 17 have complimentary admission.

As the member from Oakville, my humble suggestion to the PGA players is that they do remember to bring a second pair of pants in case they get a hole in one.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Yesterday I asked the Conservative government about their plans for Ontario's automotive sector. I asked why they had not once mentioned the auto sector in their election plan or in their throne speech.

My constituents don't understand why the Conservatives want to cancel the Jobs and Prosperity Fund, which contributed millions in necessary investments to Windsor's auto sector, supporting jobs and our local economy.

Over 200 business owners, local representatives and industry executives met in Windsor yesterday to discuss the tariffs that President Trump is threatening to impose on our auto sector, tariffs that undoubtedly would

decimate our economy and the livelihood of the people in Windsor.

Despite this looming threat, just four days ago the Conservatives fired Ontario's trade representative in Washington. What that says to me and my constituents is that this Conservative government is not prioritizing our economy and our workers. My constituents are rightly concerned that this government won't fight for them in the way they need them to during this uncertain time.

We need to continue to hold the Conservative government's feet to the fire and let them know loudly and clearly that we need them to do so much better. We need them to fight fiercely for our jobs, and we need them to develop a comprehensive auto strategy to guarantee the future prosperity of the industry. Windsorites and Ontarians deserve nothing less from their government.

1310

GUILD FESTIVAL THEATRE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to rise in this House and invite everyone to the Guild Festival Theatre. Guild Park is a special place in my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood, a park atop the Scarborough Bluffs where nature, art, culture, heritage and the rich history of Scarborough are on full display.

The Guild Festival Theatre has enhanced this experience through their modern take on classical theatre production since 2011. I attended the opening night show of Shaw's *Pygmalion*, along with many members of the community. All three levels of government were present, demonstrating the importance of art and culture to Scarborough. The Guild Festival Theatre is the only one of its kind in Canada. It is a point where nature and culture meet and where past and present come together.

The Guild Festival Theatre has become a pathway for vocational and educational opportunities for young artists. This would not be possible without the strong vision of the founders of the Guild of All Arts, Rosa and Spencer Clark—of course, we know our former Premier Bill Davis visited Guild Park and was hosted by the Clarks—as well as the ongoing hard work and dedication of the volunteers and those who serve on the board: Janet Heise, Jeannette Lambermont-Morey, John Mason, Friends of Guild Park and Gardens; the artistic director, Jamie Robinson; and, of course, the rest of the Guild Festival Theatre team.

It's time to re-establish the Guild for a new age. I encourage the province to recognize the historic significance of Guild Park. Please visit the performance of *Pygmalion*. It runs until August 12, and I know you'll enjoy it.

CITY OF MARKHAM

Mrs. Gila Martow: Last week, it was kind of monumental. We had a meeting with the mayor of Markham, Mayor Frank Scarpitti.

For four years, I was the lonely PC member in York region, and I was joined by the members from Richmond Hill, Markham–Stouffville, Markham–Unionville and Markham–Thornhill, because we all either border Markham or we represent parts of Markham. Of course, all the members now of York region for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario are PC members, so I'm going to have a lot of company. Hopefully, we're going to make the rounds and meet some of the other mayors as well.

We spoke about issues of importance, key issues to the region and to the city of Markham, specifically getting the Yonge subway further north, increased freight train traffic coming through the region; and of specific importance—and what I wanted to share with all of you here today—is that Markham is a really strong economic player in Ontario.

In fact, I just wanted to share with you, in terms of Canada's high-tech capital—we have that high-tech corridor from Kitchener-Waterloo, GTA and Markham. Markham has 1,500 tech firms, with 37,000 tech employees, whereas the GTA has 11,700 tech firms—I think that's 14,000; it's hard to read this—with 286,000 employees. Kitchener-Waterloo has 500 tech firms and 23,300 employees.

So, you see that Markham is a really strong economic player in Ontario. I'm looking forward to representing their interests here at the Legislature.

JANE AND FINCH COMMUNITY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Humber River–Black Creek.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I congratulate you and all members on your election to this prestigious House. I would also like to thank my family, friends, team and the great people of Humber River–Black Creek. It is an honour and a dream to represent my lifelong home.

Within Humber River–Black Creek is the Jane and Finch community, where I grew up. It is a place where over a hundred languages are spoken and the hospitality of people is second to none. It's a place of active young people, eager students and caring teachers, thriving businesses and brilliant entrepreneurs. We are a community of hard-working parents, educated professionals, inspired artists, amazing athletes, active seniors and passionate activists. We have beautiful naturalized areas and parks, and annual events and festivals where families gather and children play.

Yesterday, however, it was with great disappointment that a government minister named my community only to describe it as a place of crime, as he dodged a question from my esteemed colleague MPP Kevin Yarde, who was calling for an end to the discriminatory practice of police carding. Unfortunately, this stigmatization is nothing new to Jane and Finch, but it is especially hurtful and callous to hear it in this House. Words spoken here carry great weight and, as such, must be weighed carefully.

Rather than apologize, the Conservative minister sent a representative here last night to read a mean-spirited and insensitive statement. Jane and Finch and Humber River–Black Creek deserve better than this.

FRANK EDWARD GRAHAM

Ms. Jill Dunlop: It's a privilege to stand before the House today to pay tribute to a local World War II hero, Mr. Frank Edward Graham. Mr. Graham passed away July 13, just shy of 96 years old. He had so many wonderful accomplishments, it's difficult to mention them all in a minute and a half.

Mr. Graham served in the 1st Canadian Survey Corps, Royal Canadian Artillery Regiment. He enlisted, because it was the right thing to do, in 1941. He saw action 1942 through 1945 in Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

He was wounded in the early spring of 1945 and was sent to England to recover and eventually home to Toronto, finally residing in Midland, Ontario. He became “Mr. Veteran Markelo,” after having travelled to Holland with many Canadian veterans at the invitation of the Queen and the Dutch Parliament to help celebrate the 45th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands in 1990.

In 2010, it was announced that it would be the last invitation to veterans to celebrate Holland's liberation. Mr. Graham expressed his concern about keeping the memories of war alive so that children wouldn't forget. Gert-Jan Oplaat, chair of the Welcome Again Veterans committee, took it to heart and the following year came to Canada to celebrate Mr. Graham's birthday and announce that his group was organizing the Frank Graham Cycle Liberation Tour, a 10-day bicycle trip from Juno Beach to Markelo for Dutch and Canadian students.

There were two more tours in 2015 and 2017. Last year, the Dutch government announced the Frank Graham tulip, the colour of a poppy. He will be sadly missed by his wife and family, our community and the Branch 80 Legion family, even the BS table.

HATE CRIMES

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I was prepared to discuss the activities and great achievements that my constituents are working towards today. However, I must speak about the horrific and tragic event that occurred in a Mississauga community centre parking lot on Sunday, July 15, where a husband was viciously beaten and his wife, Diana, was also assaulted in front of their two young children. A friend, Fuat Yucel, who tried to intervene was also attacked.

Yesterday, I visited the family at St. Michael's Hospital, where Mr. Muhammed Abu Marzouk had just regained consciousness and is bravely fighting for recovery. With great courage, his wife and children remain strong.

Thanks to the work of Peel police and first responders for addressing this incident urgently and professionally. Also, thanks to the witnesses, the two alleged attackers were apprehended and this horrific incident is now being investigated as a hate crime.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I speak on behalf of all parliamentarians when I say that hate will not be accepted in this society and that we must continue to work collectively in order to eradicate hate and intolerance in all forms within our beautiful province and country.

PETITIONS

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario is situated on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples, many who have been on this land for at least 12,000 years;

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

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

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“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act to:

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

“—reinstate the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation;

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

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

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

I fully endorse this petition and will be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Bavan.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION HALLS

Ms. Jill Dunlop: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the poppy is a traditional symbol of courage under fire and valour for Canadian veterans; and

“Whereas the current government campaigned on removing property taxes for Legion halls; and

“Whereas members of the New Democratic Party during the campaign were found to have made disparaging comments about both the use of the poppy and Canada’s veterans;

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

“That the government follow through on all efforts to support Legion halls as important parts of Ontario communities.”

I fully endorse this petition, sign my name, and give it to page Adam.

AIR QUALITY

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

“Whereas Ontario is the most overregulated province in Canada, with over 300,000 unnecessary regulations; and

“Whereas there is absolutely no evidence that the Drive Clean test has delivered on its promise to reduce air pollution in Ontario; and

“Whereas forcing Ontario drivers to waste their time and hard-earned money on the unnecessary Drive Clean test is not about the environment, but was about creating another excuse for the previous Liberal government to unfairly tax the hard-working people of Ontario; and

“Whereas the cost associated with the Drive Clean test unfairly and unnecessarily disadvantages low-income families, especially those who are driving in vehicles older than seven years and cannot afford to purchase newer vehicles; and

“Whereas a similar, costly and unnecessary program in British Columbia was phased out in 2014 by the provincial government due to lack of evidence supporting its existence; and

“Whereas this government is committed to reducing red tape, respecting taxpayer dollars and putting more money back in people’s pockets;

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

“That the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks continue to respect taxpayer dollars by taking immediate action to eliminate the unnecessary, costly and burdensome Drive Clean test in order to help put more money back in the pockets of Ontarians, especially Ontario’s low-income families.”

I fully endorse this petition and will be affixing my signature to it.

ENERGY POLICIES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further petitions? The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. You are looking quite comfortable in that chair. Congratulations to you.

This petition is from the great people of Blind River and Elliot Lake.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas hydro bills in Ontario have become unaffordable for too many people;

“Whereas reducing hydro bills by up to 30% for families and businesses is an ambitious but realistic target;

“Whereas the only way to fix the hydro system is to address the root causes of high prices including privatization, excessive profit margins, oversupply, unfavourable net export practices and more;

“Whereas Ontario families should not have to pay time-of-use premiums, and those living in a rural or northern region should not have to pay higher, punitive delivery charges;

“Whereas changing the financing of private contracts and the global adjustment fails to reduce the long-term cost of hydro for families and businesses, does not fix the system and, in fact, will cost billions of dollars extra in borrowing costs;

“Whereas Hydro One can be returned to public ownership and management without increasing rates;

“Whereas returning Hydro One to public ownership would deliver over \$7 billion back to the province and the people of Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, express our support for reducing hydro bills for businesses and families by up to 30%, eliminating mandatory time-of-use, ending unfair rural delivery costs, and restoring public ownership of Hydro One.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Medha, who will bring it down to the Clerks’ table.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the health and physical education curriculum empowers young people to make informed decisions about relationships and their bodies;

“Whereas gender-based violence, gender inequality, unintended pregnancies, ‘sexting,’ and HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) pose serious risks to the safety and well-being of young people;

“Whereas one in three women and one in six men experience sexual violence in Canada, and a lack of age-appropriate education about sexual health and healthy relationships leaves children and youth vulnerable to exploitation;

“Whereas one in five parents reported their own child being a victim of cyber-bullying; and

“Whereas Doug Ford and the Conservative government is dragging Ontario backward, requiring students to learn an outdated sex ed curriculum that excludes information about consent, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexting, cyber-bullying and safe and healthy relationships;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Education to continue the use of the 2015 health and physical education curriculum in schools and move Ontario forward, not backward.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this and will be giving this petition to page Eric.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION HALLS

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

“Whereas the poppy is a traditional symbol of courage under fire and valour for Canadian veterans; and

“Whereas the current government campaigned on removing property taxes for Legion halls; and

“Whereas members of the New Democratic Party during the campaign were found to have made disparaging comments about both the use of the poppy and Canada’s veterans;

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

“That the government follow through on all efforts to support Legion halls as important parts of Ontario communities.”

I support the petition, have affixed my name and will sign here and give it to page Tamsyn.

PRÉVENTION DU TABAGISME CHEZ LES JEUNES

M. Michael Mantha: Merci, madame la Présidente. Encore, en français ou en anglais, tu es exceptionnelle dans la chaise.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Entendu que, au cours des 10 dernières années en Ontario, 86 % de tous les films montrant des fumeurs étaient accessibles aux jeunes et le fait que l’industrie du tabac se sert du grand écran pour promouvoir l’usage du tabac est bien documenté; et

« Entendu qu’un rapport scientifique rendu public par l’Unité de recherche sur le tabac de l’Ontario, environ 185 000 enfants de l’Ontario commenceront à fumer après avoir vu des personnages fumer dans des films, et que plus que 59 000 fumeurs ainsi recrutés finiront par mourir de maladies liées à l’usage du tabac, lesquelles entraîneront des coûts de soins de santé de l’ordre d’au moins 1,1 milliard de dollars; et

« Entendu que le gouvernement de l’Ontario s’est fixé comme objectif d’atteindre le taux de tabagisme le plus faible au Canada, et que 79 % ... des Ontariens et Ontariennes appuient l’interdiction de l’usage du tabac dans les films classés dans les catégories G, PG, 14A; et

« Entendu que la ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs a le pouvoir de modifier, par l’entremise du Conseil des ministres, les règlements pris en application de la Loi sur le classement des films;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que le gouvernement examine les façons dont on pourrait modifier la Loi sur le classement des films pour réduire l’usage du tabac dans les films classés dans les catégories qui conviennent aux enfants et aux adolescents, et diffusés en Ontario. »

Je suis complètement d'accord avec cette pétition et je la présente à la page Medha pour l'apporter à la table des greffiers.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norman Miller: I have a petition with regard to hospitals and health care in Muskoka. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has been considering the future of the Huntsville District Memorial and South Muskoka Memorial hospitals since 2012; and

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“Whereas accessible health care services are of critical importance to all Ontarians, including those living in rural areas; and

“Whereas patients currently travel significant distances to access acute in-patient care, emergency, diagnostic and surgical services available at these hospitals; and

“Whereas the funding for small and medium-sized hospitals has not kept up with increasing costs including hydro rates and collective bargaining agreements made by the province; and

“Whereas the residents of Muskoka and surrounding areas feel that MAHC has not been listening to them; and

“Whereas the board of MAHC has yet to take the single-site proposal from 2015 off its books;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care commits to maintaining core hospital services at both Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and South Muskoka Memorial Hospital and ensure small and medium-sized hospitals receive enough funding to maintain core services.”

I support this petition, have signed it and will give it to Bavan.

NORMES D'EMPLOI

M. Michael Mantha: Merci encore une fois, madame la Présidente.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

« Considérant que nombre de travailleurs et travailleuses ontariens sont touchés par la croissance des bas salaires et du travail à temps partiel, occasionnel et temporaire; et

« Considérant que trop de travailleurs et travailleuses ne sont pas protégés par les normes minimales actuelles décrites dans les lois de l'emploi et du travail; et

« Considérant que gouvernement de l'Ontario tient une consultation publique afin d'examiner les lois d'emploi et de travail de la province;

« Nous, signataires de cette pétition, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de mettre en place un salaire minimum de 15 \$ l'heure. »

Je suis complètement d'accord avec cette pétition et je la présente à Medha pour l'apporter à la table des greffiers.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION HALLS

Mr. Dave Smith: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the poppy is a traditional symbol of courage under fire and valour for Canadian veterans; and

“Whereas the current government campaigned on removing property taxes for Legion halls; and

“Whereas members of the New Democratic Party during the campaign were found to have made disparaging comments about both the use of the poppy and” our Canadian veterans;

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

“That the government follow through on all efforts to support Legion halls as important parts of Ontario communities.”

I emphatically endorse this petition, and will sign my name to it and give it to page Tamsyn.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION HALLS

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

“Whereas the poppy is a traditional symbol of courage under fire and valour for Canadian veterans; and

“Whereas the current government campaigned on removing property taxes for Legion halls; and

“Whereas members of the New Democratic Party during the campaign were found to have made disparaging comments about both the use of the poppy and Canada’s veterans;

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

“That the government follow through on all efforts to support Legion halls as important parts of Ontario communities.”

I fully endorse this petition and will be affixing my signature to it, and I will be giving it to page Justin.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION HALLS

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the poppy is a traditional symbol of courage under fire and valour for Canadian veterans; and

“Whereas the current government campaigned on removing property taxes for Legion halls; and

“Whereas members of the New Democratic Party during the campaign were found to have made disparaging comments about both the use of the poppy and Canada’s veterans;

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

“That the government follow through on all efforts to support Legion halls as important parts of Ontario communities.”

I fully support this petition. I am fully endorsing this petition and am going to hand it over to Tamsyn.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The time for petitions has expired. Orders of the day.

VISITOR

Mr. Rick Nicholls: A point of order, Madam Speaker, and it's nice to see you in the chair this afternoon.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the Legislature today, sitting in the members' gallery, the 2018 Canadian gospel music award winner, female vocalist of the year and new artist of the year, my daughter Brooke Nicholls Lensink.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

URGENT PRIORITIES ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 PORTANT SUR LES PRIORITÉS URGENTES

Mr. Rickford moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act respecting Hydro One Limited, the termination of the White Pines Wind Project and the labour disputes between York University and Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 3903 / Projet de loi 2, Loi concernant Hydro One Limited, l'annulation du projet de parc éolien White Pines et les conflits de travail entre l'Université York et la section locale 3903 du Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I will now recognize the minister to lead off the debate.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Earlier this week, I had the pleasure of introducing, on behalf of the entire government, the Urgent Priorities Act, 2018. Madam Speaker, our government has made a commitment to the people of Ontario, and we've done so since day one. We explained it in certain detail with real commitments in the speech from the throne last week.

Our commitment is to responsibility and accountability. The people of Ontario expect it. That's what they voted for, and the government must and will deliver it. Public confidence is earned, not once, but again and again and again in every action that we take. Where we can move quickly to show the people of Ontario that their trust is well placed, we're going to do that.

Nowhere has the public's trust been so tested as with our province's electricity system. We've heard it on the doorstep time and time again. We've heard it at town halls. We've read it in every community newspaper. The public's faith in the management of this province's electricity system has fallen and fallen. In recent years,

they have been given little reason to hope that things would change.

Our government has listened, and we're acting swiftly. We can restore the public faith in our electricity system not through one gesture, but through many other actions.

Similarly, we've watched students and parents stand by, forced to watch from the sidelines as the York University strike played out like a bad spectacle before their very eyes and classroom time was missed. When a student and their family make a decision as important as where to attend university, they have the right to expect that their education will not be used as a bargaining chip.

And so today we are here to debate draft legislation that speaks to three early commitments of our government. This act would enact or amend various other acts, and those items are:

—the Hydro One Accountability Act, 2018;

—the White Pines Wind Project Termination Act, 2018; and

—the Back to Class Act (York University), 2018.

If you'll permit me, Madam Speaker, I'd like to speak to them in that order.

Notre gouvernement a été élu sur la promesse de réduire la facture d'électricité des gens de l'Ontario.

Our government was elected on a promise to lower electricity bills for the people of Ontario. This included a promise to address and renew governance at Hydro One. On July 11, we were pleased to accept a proposal from the board of directors of Hydro One that will see the board step down and be replaced by August 15 and that saw the CEO retire effective as of that day.

Now, there has been much debate in this Legislature about what this means for the people of Ontario, so I'm going to use this opportunity, through you, colleagues, to reiterate. Under the previous government, Hydro One executive compensation reached unprecedented levels. Mayo Schmidt was given \$6.2 million in 2017. About \$3.5 million of that compensation was in the form of stock-based incentives. In total, he retained the right to about \$8 million in stock-based compensation that was previously granted. We can't change the fact that the CEO has all those stock incentives. However, Madam Speaker, what we are able to do is find a negotiated solution at Hydro One that would help minimize the costs to Ontario ratepayers.

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If the board had terminated the CEO, Mr. Schmidt would have retained all of that stock-based compensation, along with an additional severance payment in excess of \$5 million. In fact, Hydro One advised that Mr. Schmidt's termination could have led to the resignation of other executives, which could have resulted in severance and additional entitlements. This would have been disruptive to Hydro One's operations and could have led to millions of dollars in additional payments.

Our government believes that by engaging constructively with Hydro One's board and Mr. Schmidt, we have delivered on our commitment, our promise to the people of Ontario. We have kept the company stable and we

have found a lower-cost result by avoiding substantial severance payments. Promise made, promise kept.

Now we move, Madam Speaker, to what happens next for Hydro One. How will our ongoing relationship with the company work? Given the critical importance of Hydro One to our province's electricity system, our government will be closely engaging in the leadership transition of Hydro One to ensure that the stability of the system is preserved and, most importantly, that consumers are protected. We will play a key role in appointing the new board and will expect it to act in the public's interest.

The province and Hydro One have a governance agreement. It's generally a strong document, and a good guide for the province's role as the company's largest shareholder. We will implement the actions in the legislation, should it pass, but the governance agreement will continue to be an important guiding tool in our relationship with Hydro One.

But, Madam Speaker, we also need to be certain that our intentions for Hydro One are well understood. We do not want to leave room for interpretation that could see executive compensation grow beyond what is reasonable. That's why our government has prepared legislation that, if passed, will ensure greater transparency and accountability at Hydro One. Everyone benefits when expectations are clear.

This act would require the board to establish, within six months of this requirement coming into force, a new compensation framework for the board, the CEO and other executives, in consultation with the province and the other five largest shareholders. It would also provide the management board of cabinet with the authority to approve the board, CEO and executive compensation framework and any future amendments to it before being put into effect, and to issue directives related to compensation for such persons for a specified period of time.

Public accountability is critical to this proposed legislation. Securities regulations only require a publicly traded company to report on the compensation of its five highest-paid employees. Our legislation goes further. We propose to require Hydro One to publish on its website any proposed changes to its compensation policies for the board, CEO and executives 30 days prior to seeking management board of cabinet approval for such changes. Furthermore, we would require Hydro One to annually publish on its website a record of the total annual compensation of executives, as prescribed by regulation.

Madam Speaker, if Hydro One needs to pay for repairs or system upgrades, or the sort of investments that provide long-term value to its customers, it's reasonable to include that in the costs passed on to ratepayers. What we do not support is the customers having to foot the bill and pay the tab for executive salaries. By this act, we propose to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, to provide that the rates charged by Hydro One Ltd. and its subsidiaries exclude amounts paid for CEO and other executive compensation. This act would also provide the crown and Hydro One with immunity from civil liability.

Now, Hydro One is an important company and a vital part of our province's electricity system. It controls 95% of the transmission wires that cross our great province; it is also the local distributor for over five million customers. It has far more rural and remote customers than any other distributor in the province. These customers are often the most vulnerable, the people struggling the hardest to make ends meet.

To successfully operate a company like Hydro One, you need a great deal of technical and financial knowledge. As important as that knowledge may be, the third side is an understanding and respect for the customer. Providing certainty and direction for the company and reassurance to the public that their interests are protected is a win for all of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I should also add that I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Markham–Stouffville. Thank you.

Le fait d'offrir un degré de certitude dans la direction de l'entreprise et de rassurer le public que ses intérêts sont protégés constitue une victoire pour la population de la province de l'Ontario.

Continuing on the theme of accountability in the energy sector, the second aspect of this act is the White Pines Wind Project Termination Act. Before and during the election, our government has been clear that we would take needed action to reduce electricity bills for Ontarians. This includes taking action against unnecessary renewable energy contracts—contracts for power that we don't need and, in many instances, Ontarians didn't want. This included the White Pines Wind project in Prince Edward county.

This project, comprised of nine industrial wind turbines, has faced considerable local and public opposition in addition to legal challenges, all for good reason. This is an exceptional circumstance. Notice to proceed was received during the election campaign. Before and during the election, our government was clear that it would act to cancel unnecessary contracts. The decision to cancel this contract will not only benefit the people of Prince Edward county but all Ontario electricity ratepayers.

Applause.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Our government understands what choices need to be made to benefit Ontario and the province's hard-working ratepayers. Our government understands what choices need to be made to benefit Ontario and the province's hard-working ratepayers—with emphasis, Madam Speaker. And as promised, that's exactly what we're going to do. I guess I just drew applause and I wanted to say it again.

The fact is, the avoided costs of not purchasing this power over the next 20 years are estimated at \$95 million. And even when we take into account the estimated future costs of replacement power, the Ontario ratepayer still stands to benefit from about \$60 million in avoided system costs. That's a lot of money to a lot of people in this province.

There will be a cost related to this project's termination. This is exactly why this legislation is required. First,

we need to ensure that these costs are not borne by the ratepayer; and second, we need to define what costs the company can claim.

I'm very pleased to say that my ministry has prepared legislation to terminate the White Pines Wind project contract and any regulatory approvals and permits, retroactive to July 10, 2018. We're cancelling this project because we believe in protecting the interests of Ontario ratepayers above all else.

With that said, I am pleased that this legislation would require White Pines Wind Inc. to decommission their project in accordance with any regulations put forth. In addition, White Pines Wind Inc. would be required to maintain the site in a clean and safe condition while ensuring that it remains that way after they leave. The proponent would also be liable to the crown for any costs or liabilities that the crown may incur as a result of a failure to meet any of these obligations.

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Additionally, this legislation proposes that any costs associated with terminating contracts would be borne by the tax base and not by the Ontario electricity ratepayers. This means that terminating the White Pines project would not add one cent to Ontario's electricity bills. This action would ensure that we continue to respect the Ontario ratepayer.

The third and final aspect of this legislation that I want to address now is the Back to Class Act (York University), 2018.

As a guy who spent 13 or 14—some would argue too many—years in university, I can appreciate the need and the desire to be back in the classroom. So I'm pleased to speak on behalf of my colleagues the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to bring this to the Legislature for consideration today.

Many York University students have been out of the classroom for more than 100 days because of the strike by CUPE Local 3903. This is an unfortunate situation where the Legislature has to deal with a clear deadlock between York University and two units of CUPE 3903: unit 1, representing graduate teaching assistants, who conduct tutorials and labs, teach courses, and grade; and unit 3, representing graduate research assistants, who are employed by the university for administrative, clerical or research jobs that generally are not related to their degree.

A third unit, unit 2, represents contract faculty, who teach courses, conduct tutorials and labs, and grade. This unit recently reached an agreement with York University. They're back to work, with all outstanding items going to voluntary interest arbitration. Congratulations to those people.

That said, a clear deadlock affecting units 1 and 3 has come about in this strike despite extensive attempts at mediation.

The negative impacts of the strike on students are significant, and they are numerous. Our priority is to get them back into their classrooms and continue their education. We have heard loud and clear from the people

of Ontario, particularly impacted students and their families, that this strike has gone on too far. We have seen the impact that this had last year on our college students. Despite extensive attempts at mediation in this case, it is now the longest post-secondary strike in Canadian history—wow. We cannot let this continue.

In May, an independent, neutral industrial inquiry commission confirmed that the parties were deadlocked. The commission was conducted by an independent third party, William Kaplan, a highly regarded arbitrator. Mr. Kaplan conducted a thorough review and came up with an inescapable conclusion about the current situation at York University, and I'll quote from his report: "Free collective bargaining has failed. There is no reason to believe that it will succeed in the future through the prolongation of the labour dispute, and every reason to conclude that it will not. It is, accordingly, my primary and most time-sensitive recommendation to the minister that he call upon the parties to enter into consensual interest arbitration: for their own good, and for the good of thousands of students and the university. York University has indicated its willingness to do so. Failing consensual interest arbitration, and assuming the continuation of this dispute, legislative intervention imposing interest arbitration will almost certainly be necessary."

I think that's pretty clear—through you, Madam Speaker, to all of my colleagues in this place—and this from a neutral, independent third party.

It's now mid-July, and the parties remain deadlocked. There is no negotiated solution in sight, and that classroom bell is going to ring in the not-too-distant future. This deadlock will have adverse effects on students, and it has left us with no alternative. So we have introduced this legislation to end the strike and send the issues in dispute to a mediator-arbitrator for resolution.

Madam Speaker, it would be irresponsible of us in this Legislature to allow the labour disruption at York University to continue, and to ignore the many serious, ongoing adverse impacts it has on our students. For these students, the burden of this labour disruption is falling acutely and severely upon them.

This is not like a strike at an ordinary business, where consumers can find the goods and services they need from other suppliers. Here, many of these students have no other choices in terms of post-secondary schooling for this year. They chose York University as the place where they wanted to study, and they have a right to study at that university. Many, perhaps most of them, have already paid their tuition in advance, in full. They are looking to us for assistance.

The continuation of this dispute, and the resulting disruption in education and its corresponding effects, give rise to serious public interest concerns.

For these reasons, we are acting decisively and fairly to restore normal operations at York University. Madam Speaker, as a government, we cannot stand by when, even after extensive attempts at negotiations and mediation, and a strike that has continued for more than 100 days, there remains a clear deadlock between the

parties, endangering the academic year for thousands of students.

If passed, the Back to Class Act (York University), 2018, introduced today, would require an end to the ongoing work stoppage at York University immediately on royal assent. Employees would be required to resume their duties without delay, and York University would be required to resume normal operations.

There would also be a prohibition on any further strike or lockout with respect to this round of collective bargaining. Any action to call, authorize, threaten, counsel, procure, support or encourage a strike or lockout would also be prohibited.

If York University and CUPE 3903 have not executed a collective agreement before the day that the act receives royal assent, all outstanding issues in dispute between them would be referred to a mediator-arbitrator for resolution.

Nothing in the act would prohibit the parties from continuing to bargain, and they would be encouraged to do so. If the parties reached a new collective agreement, the dispute resolution process would be terminated.

The mediator-arbitrator's award would be final and binding on York University, CUPE 3903 and all employees who are in the affected bargaining units.

In the meantime, York's students will be back in class, receiving the excellent post-secondary instruction that that magnificent university has to offer and that our students need to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Post-secondary education serves as a critical public function but, more importantly, a platform which our students, and our employees of the future, can launch from. So, after a lengthy extension or loss of an academic year, this has had significant personal, educational, social and financial implications for their bright hopes for that bright future. As well, there are serious organizational and economic impacts on the broader public and employers. These negative consequences may be long-term in nature, and the repercussions could extend beyond the parties in dispute: the students and, importantly, their families.

The continuation of these disputes, and the resulting disruption in education and its corresponding effects, give rise to serious public interest concerns. The interests of students, and the interests of families and the broader community require that this dispute be resolved.

Si le projet de loi est adopté, cela permettra aux étudiants de terminer leurs cours et de s'assurer que le semestre d'automne ne sera pas perturbé.

This legislation, if passed, would allow students to complete their classes and ensure that this fall semester isn't interrupted, isn't disrupted. We want the more than 37,000 students impacted by the strike, as well as many excited first-year students, to be able to continue their education at York University. That's why I urge all members to grant speedy passage of this proposed legislation. The public interest demands we do this expeditiously.

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What binds these elements together is accountability, respect and dedication to the public interest. Starting

now, we're sending a message to the entire energy sector that respect for the people is the norm, not the exception.

In the future, when the time comes that we need new electricity supply, we'll ensure that it's done right. This will include getting the best possible price. We're going to ensure that communities are consulted appropriately on energy projects that could affect their community.

We will ensure, Madam Speaker, that the students of York University can depend on a quality education without disruption.

Our government has acted swiftly and we have acted decisively, and we will continue to do so. We will be accountable to the people of Ontario for every decision and every action. We will never ask or expect the people to let us rest on a few accomplishments. We will be accountable, and we will demand accountability of others, today and every day going forward, Madam Speaker, for the people.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Be seated, please.

I recognize the member from Markham–Stouffville.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity to address the chamber. Let me congratulate you on your election to the chair. It's very nice to see you in the chair.

I just want to take an opportunity to congratulate and thank the minister and the entire cabinet—they have brought forward a very important piece of legislation—and also, at the same time, the entire caucus, because, of course, these are the issues that we heard during the election campaign, and these are the things that we promised to fight for, for the people of our ridings and across Ontario, and we're back here doing just that.

At the same time, let me just say, Madam Speaker, as excited as I am to be here and to talk about the issues, it is also a little bit disappointing to have to be here to discuss these three pieces of legislation. I'll tell you why it's disappointing. It's because it really highlights the failure of a previous government. It highlights how the people of Ontario weren't listened to.

It's disappointing because the people of Ontario send us here. They send us here to do their work; they send us here on their behalf. They work very hard. The people in my community are like all members of communities all across this province, on both sides. They get up early in the morning. In my community, they get on the GO train or they sit on the 404 and the Don Valley. They work hard all day. They're out 12 hours. They come home and they spend their time with their family. They pay taxes—too much taxes.

But they want their governments to listen to them. They want their government to listen to them. The fact that we have to be here doing this, Madam Speaker, highlights exactly why the previous government, the Liberal government, has been relegated to a rump in this House, begging for opportunities to speak. It's because they didn't listen to the people. They refused to listen to the people. They were timid in protecting taxpayers. That

is something that we will not do anymore on this side of the House.

We're going to protect taxpayers. We're going to protect students. We're going to bring the hydro system back under control, something that Ontarians have been asking for for so long. It is very exciting that we are going to have the opportunity to do that.

The fact that we are back here also highlights what this government is going to be all about over the next four years. We're going to be about opening the province up again, opening it up for business.

You can't show the people of the province, the people of Canada and the people in the broader international community that you're going to be open for business if you're allowing your students in higher education to be out of classrooms for months. Keeping people who should be graduating, or who should be getting ready for their final years of school or getting excited to get back in education—if you're keeping them out, that's not a province that is open for business.

A province that is open for business doesn't force unneeded hydro generation into communities that have to fight it. Imagine: A government forced hydroelectricity projects onto a community. They had to fight the government in court to try to stop something that wasn't needed and that they didn't want. We're not going to allow that to happen anymore.

We could spend hours—and I know that we will—talking about Hydro One. I'm going to take a bit of time speaking about Hydro One and how we've come to this point, and I'll get to it a little bit further in my remarks.

If there is anything that highlights the arrogance of the previous Liberal government, it is Hydro One and the broader hydro sector—how they treated the taxpayers of this province, and their inability to act when people were so desperate. We've heard it time and time again on this side. We've heard that you had to choose between heating and eating. It's not just a slogan that we've come up with because it sounds good; it's the reality. It was the reality. And it's not just the reality in far-flung parts of this province. In the rural parts of my hometown of Stouffville, much of that community is heated by electricity. Their bills have gone up so much over the last number of years—I had one gentleman come to see me. He knew me as the former member of Parliament and he saw me last winter, knowing that a campaign was coming. He showed me his monthly bill of \$900 to heat his home—\$900. It's hard to imagine getting a bill for \$900 for heating. At the same time, I'm in town and my heating is natural gas and it's a lot less. He went over for me what this meant for him. When I started to hear exactly what this gentleman had gone through over the last number of years, it really started to focus my attention on why it was that I wanted to get elected and get back into government, representing the people again. He showed me his bill and he went over his other expenses. There was no vacation for this gentleman. This was a senior gentleman. We went over everything, and he talked to me about how hard it was, all of the things that

he had been sacrificing, how hard he had worked his entire life for what he hoped would be a good retirement, where he could enjoy some more time, buy some things for his grandchildren and be the type of grandfather that he had always dreamt he could be. Then he showed me the bill. He showed me his water bill, which had gone up by 25%. He showed me some of the increase in property taxes, which we all had.

Then he started talking to me about the federal government. I don't want to spend too much time on the federal government. He was honest with me; he said, "I didn't vote for you in the election of 2015." I didn't believe him, but he didn't. He said, "I bought into all of this talk from the Liberals that things would be different, that the government knew better and that better times could be ahead." He said that a lot of people talked about boutique tax credits, cutting taxes, how it didn't mean a lot to a lot of different people. He talked to me about a credit that the federal government had gotten rid of. It had increased his income by about \$2,000, but what that \$2,000 meant was that it pushed him into a higher tax bracket. That small boutique tax credit that in Ottawa both the Liberals and the NDP had fought so hard against and said was wrong pushed him into a higher tax bracket, which meant that not only did he have to pay higher taxes on his retirement income, but he also lost the property tax benefit that came with being in the lower tax bracket. Then he had the hydro bill, he had the electricity bill, the water bill and everything else that came with that.

I could sense desperation in him, because he didn't know how he was going to make it through. Yes, there were no disconnections in the winter, but he knew that he still had to pay the bill. Whether it was in the winter or whether it was going to be in the summer months, this gentleman was going to have to pay the bill.

That's the situation we had put Ontario families in in so much of this province. Madam Speaker, if that isn't a reason for us to be back here doing what we're doing right now, I don't what is, because there are so many people who have the exact same story in communities across this province.

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It really doesn't matter whether you're in rural Canada where you spend probably far more than you would in urban centres; the increases that we have seen really are the hardest on low-income families. When you talked about the salaries and what people saw at Hydro One, it was very hard. It was very hard to even begin to justify what the previous government—and of course we didn't.

But, Madam Speaker, the hard work of uncovering what was going on at Hydro One—it had been around a while. In opposition, we had been doing a tremendous amount of work led by our opposition critic, who is now our government House leader—

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Applause.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Yes, yes. And of course, the current Minister of Finance was also very helpful, as was the entire PC opposition caucus, and now obviously the

government caucus. But they began to highlight many months ago that there was something going on at Hydro One. There was something going on, in particular with the salary. We all knew; we were all feeling the impact of higher hydro rates. But there was also something else going on.

It started to become very, very evident a couple of years ago when in one year—within the space of one year—the CEO's salary had increased by over \$1.7 million. In one year—imagine that, Madam Speaker. In one year—again, think of us—there was a \$1.7-million increase in the CEO's salary. Of course, it was the current House leader and the current Minister of Finance who started to highlight the issues that the province was having with Hydro One and the need for the then Liberal government to do something about it. But they didn't. They chose to do nothing, Madam Speaker. They continuously chose to do nothing. In fact, for the most part, they just accepted it.

It wasn't just the CEO. When you went down the whole list of compensation for these people: president and CEO, over \$6 million; CFO, \$1.1 million; \$2 million for the COO; and on and on, Madam Speaker. The top people in a utility that was causing so many people fear and was causing them to choose between heating and eating were being paid exorbitant amounts of money at a time when they were failing Ontarians the most. The ones who were failing Ontarians even more were the previous Liberals who accepted that. They accepted that. They didn't see anything wrong with that.

This is a quote from the previous Liberal energy minister. On hearing that the salary had increased by \$1.7 million, I guess you would have expected, as opposition and as MPPs, you just would have expected that when a government or when a minister hears this, he or she will react. Well, here was the reaction: "We recognize"—this was former-Minister Thibeault—"that executive salaries are high compared to the vast majority of Ontario salaries, and we remain committed to Hydro One's regulation, accountability and transparency. That said, Hydro One is now a publicly traded company, not a government entity, and that means it's subject to different oversight and disclosure rules. We are confident of the role"—and blah blah blah. There's no point in me even reading the rest of it.

He's confident of the fact that they had no desire to do anything about it. This is what the history of the previous government was when it came to Ontario hydro: Do nothing about it; do nothing about it. They thought by limited privatization that somehow it could shield them from any blame of what had happened over the last number of years, Madam Speaker, and nothing could be further from the truth, as we see today, by this government, by the Minister of Energy and by the cabinet. They aren't punting it to somebody else. They are taking action on it, because we can take action and because the people of Ontario demand that we do take action. That's why we're back here in July dealing with this situation head-on. We're dealing with it fairly, but

we are taking action, and the reason we're taking action is because we are the largest shareholder and because we have the ability to do it and because we were all—at least on this side of the House, and I hope on the other side of the House too—absolutely flabbergasted by what we saw and what we dealt with for months as candidates, as MPPs, as opposition members—

Interjection: As ratepayers.

Mr. Paul Calandra: —and as ratepayers—what we dealt with for months.

I can say, on my part, that when we were in opposition, it was our desire that they would do something about it. It doesn't make anybody happy to see that people are having to choose between heating and eating. That doesn't make any one of us happy. There's nothing worse, being a member of Parliament, a representative of the people, than being unable to assist the people you're supposed to represent. In this instance, they were begging for help, and the government said, "Oh, well." They washed their hands of it. The former government washed their hands of it: "Not a big deal."

But then, to go even further, Madam Speaker, the former minister's comments then gave carte blanche. Then Hydro One knew they had a previous government that wasn't going to do anything about it. They had washed their hands and said, "Okay, do what you like, because we aren't intervening at all."

Of course, as the election approaches and as time goes on, Ontarians then hear that the salaries, the severances and the compensation of the part-time board members were going to absolutely skyrocket. I remember listening to this and thinking, "No, this can't possibly be true. There's just no way." I thought it was bad reporting. I thought somebody had made a mistake. There was just no way that a government would allow this to happen. Sadly, I was wrong.

There was nothing that galvanized Ontarians more than this, Madam Speaker.

The opposition Liberals will now say, "Oh, it was just a drop in the bucket. When you look at how successful Ontario hydro is, and the dividend that they pay back to the people of Ontario, it's just a drop in the bucket."

But let me tell you, Hydro One and that executive team—boy, did they move quickly. Sensing that there was a weak team and a government that was going to do whatever they said they wanted to do, these guys moved quickly.

The energy minister at the time said these changes were a bit generous. But did he do anything? No. A bit generous, Madam Speaker? The \$1.7-million raise: That's egregiously generous. Over \$10 million in severance: I'd call that a bit more than a bit generous, Madam Speaker. But so be it.

Then they had the opportunity to do something about it. When our team started raising this constantly, before the election in the House, in the lead-up to the election, they all of a sudden said, "Well, we don't like this either. We don't like this either." The former energy minister and the former Liberal government didn't like it.

“Do you know what?” they said. “We’re going to use our power to vote against this at the annual general meeting.” They made a big show of it: “We’re going to do something about it. We’re going to vote against it.”

As a ratepayer, as somebody who had heard so many stories, I thought, “Okay. It has taken them 15 years, but okay. Finally they’re going to exercise some power.” Yes, it was a couple of weeks before an election. Yes, the member from Etobicoke North was forcing them into this, and our entire caucus and candidates had forced them into this. Ratepayers, more importantly, and the stories upon stories of people who had been suffering were forcing them into this decision. I think we all thought, “All right, great. They’re going to at least do this.”

Madam Speaker, I know it probably doesn’t surprise you, because you were here. It came to a vote. It was a couple of weeks before an election, and the board of Hydro One was meeting. They made it a big thing. The minister was going to order that his proxy vote against this. But then they decided to abstain. They decided to abstain. They decided that these egregious pay raises were not so bad after all.

Let’s put this into context. What are we talking about? This is the raise they gave themselves. Hydro One’s board of directors gave themselves a \$25,000 pay raise, and the chair gave himself a \$70,000 pay raise. Part-time members of the board bumped their salaries from \$160,000 to \$185,000 a year.

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The people of Ontario had hoped that their government would do something about it, that they would exercise the massive ownership that they had, that they would do what they said they were going to do and vote against it—which we all thought they were going to do. We would have applauded them had they done that, because that’s what we were asking. That’s what our critic was asking. That’s what our now-Premier was asking. Instead, they decided to abstain and do nothing.

That is absolutely, completely unacceptable. It is, again, one of the reasons why we’ve returned with 76 members, and they are a rump of seven people on that side of the House. But more importantly, it also highlights why Ontarians gave us such a strong mandate. They want to see us get things done. They are tired of broken promises. What they are liking so far, and what they will continue to see, is a promise that has been made is a promise that has been kept. That’s what we are going to continue to do.

I want to also, then—lest people think that I’m sucking up to the House leader for more opportunities to speak. So much of what frustrated Ontarians was crystallized in how poorly the previous government treated ratepayers and taxpayers in this province. It was crystallized in hydro. Part of this bill, of course, as the minister did an excellent job of highlighting, is the White Pines decision. I actually had a really good weekend, I will say this. I had the opportunity to visit some friends and go to the beach at Buckhorn. It was very nice. As you go on your way from Stouffville to Buckhorn beach,

you see a lot of these windmills. You see a lot of windmills. Windmills, in themselves—I mean, look, we support green energy on this side of the House. We support the investments in the technology. But here’s a project that was universally opposed by a community—a community that had taken their own government to court to stop a project.

Some would argue that if it’s in the national or the provincial interest, sometimes governments have to make a tough decision, and I would agree with that. There are a lot of times where a government has to make a decision that is in the best interest of the entire province and we just have to do what we have to do. But this, certainly, was not one of those times. What the government was doing was approving projects for power that we didn’t need, for generation that we didn’t need, and with guaranteed contracts that were going to cost Ontario ratepayers millions of dollars, millions of extra dollars. How could anybody in their right mind move forward on that basis?

When you look at where we are and a lot of the decisions that were made by the previous government, this, in part, is one of the reasons why we are now having to open the books up and we’re having to bring in some fresh eyes and shine a light on accountability and transparency in the government finances. Again, it falls back to hydro, because the previous government introduced a plan that would punt decisions down the road.

This is what the Auditor General said, talking about the previous government’s decisions on hydro and the cost to the people of Ontario. In part, she said this—and it starts off and sounds pretty good, I guess. This is about the fair hydro plan: Under the rate reduction people will pay less than the full cost of the electricity they use, but “power generators will still be owed the full cost of the electricity they supply.” As a result, the province would have to borrow to compensate generators for the shortfall.

So there’s a surplus of power; we’re putting windmills in a community that doesn’t want them, that is going to court to stop them; it’s going to cost ratepayers across this province billions of dollars. The Auditor General says it has to stop; they continue.

She goes on to say that the government “did not properly account” for this in the 2017-18 budget and was “not planning to account for it properly in its future consolidated financial statements.” She goes on to say that from 2028 to 2045 it was planned that ratepayers would be charged more than the actual cost of the electricity they use in order to repay the accumulated deficit of \$39.4 billion—this includes \$18.4 billion forwarded to cover the rate reduction and \$21 billion in accumulated interest—and that the accounting carnival of the previous Liberal government would have cost taxpayers an extra \$4 billion.

So when people come and ask why it is that we’re having to open up the books of Ontario to an outside audit team to assist in helping the auditor, this is one of the reasons why we’re doing it, Madam Speaker. And that’s why the Minister of Finance and the President of

the Treasury Board are moving forward to shine the light, because there are so many more fair hydro plans out there that had been ripping off the people of Ontario under silly—really, it's not even a silly scheme; this is an incredibly devious scheme that would have cost billions of dollars. And why? Because they wanted to show the world, or Al Gore, the former Vice-President of the United States, that they were going to bring in green energy. No matter what the cost to the taxpayer or to the province of Ontario, they were going to be the leaders on green energy. It didn't matter that we don't need it. It didn't matter that they were exporting the extra power, that they were paying other jurisdictions to take our surplus power, they were going to do it.

We've heard from the Liberals, "Well, it was the green energy that allowed us to close our coal." It wasn't the green energy that allowed us to close coal. I'll tell you what allowed us to close our coal-fired plants: It was the decisions made by the previous Progressive Conservative government in 1995 to 2003 to reinvest in our nuclear, to bring Bruce back on track, to reinvest in Darlington. That brought us into a surplus power position that allowed us to close down our coal-fired plants. That's why we were able to close those coal-fired plants. That's why we don't have the smog days: because our nuclear plants are some of the most effective—not some of—are the most effective. They are a technology that we, as Ontarians, should be so incredibly proud of. It is part of the future that will power this province well into future decades. We should be incredibly proud of that, Madam Speaker.

The minister highlighted how we will wind down White Pines. He highlighted the savings that will come from removing ourselves from this unneeded green energy program, the White Pines. He highlighted that. He also highlighted earlier on when he was able to cancel some 758 projects that will save Ontario taxpayers over \$700 million. Over \$700 million will be saved by some of the decisions that we've made in one month—in less than a month. That's what we are doing.

We're shining the light on finances. We're bringing our hydro system back under control and respecting our ratepayers. We're looking at the salaries of the board of Hydro One so that it respects, again, taxpayers. The new Hydro board will have to, as the minister highlighted, publish their salaries in advance, and they will have to be approved by the minister of Management Board. We're doing that because we're the largest shareholder and that's what we think is right for the people of the province of Ontario.

I am proud that we are taking swift action on this, because we heard about this throughout the election, and we're not waiting; we're just getting the job done.

In the few moments that I have left, I want to talk about the York University strike as well, because that is obviously a very, very important part of this. As the member for Thornhill talked about in a statement earlier, we had the opportunity, of course, to meet with the mayor of Markham, as did the member for Richmond Hill and the member for Markham–Thornhill.

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I'll just mention the member for Markham–Thornhill briefly, if I can. He'll probably be embarrassed by this, but as the chief budget officer for the city of Markham, he made sure that we had a zero per cent property tax increase in that part of my riding. He did it year after year, and I know that's the same spirit that he brings here so I'm very happy that he is here to join us in that.

But we met with the mayor of Markham and, do you know what, on this coming Monday we'll be unveiling that York University is coming to Markham, and that's good. That's good for our students; that's good for our community. But what's not good for the community is that York University seems to be on strike a lot of the time. That hurts their admissions. It hurts their ability to attract the finest students. It hurts our community. It hurts parents. And as I said, obviously the students are our number one concern, but it also hurts the educators.

I can't imagine that the educators who are out there who want to teach our children have any desire to be on the picket line. I know they would probably rather be pulling in a salary. I know they would probably rather be teaching kids and students. They're not all kids. There are a lot of graduate students among them. These are some of our highest-educated people. I know they would rather be doing that, but for months this strike has gone on and there is nothing that we can seem to do to get it done.

During the election campaign, I had a number of young people who joined me to make telephone calls, some for the very first time, as I'm sure many of you did. By and large, they were York University students who were not able to find a job because they didn't know if they were going to get back to school or not. They were—I won't use the words that they said, but they deserved to say the words that they said. They were angry. They were angry because, in one or two instances, this is the second strike they've had to endure and it was impacting their education.

I received an email from a student shortly after my election. I'm not going to mention her name because I haven't asked her permission to use this. She said this: "I really do hope that this strike ends soon and it is taken seriously. It needs to be seen as a priority. No student should have to go through what we are currently going through. The impact has been far too great and this should have never happened in the first place. My summer and many others have been affected. We've been scammed. This is my second strike with York University. My quality of education has been dampened. I can never get back what has been taken away from me."

This is a student, Madam Speaker, who works hard and invests in her education. She feels like she has been scammed. That's not the way the next generation of Ontarians should feel. So we have a province right now where our youngest feel that they have been scammed, where our seniors who have worked their entire lives to put money in their pockets to invest in their future can't make ends meet because simple things like hydro are bankrupting them. We have small businesses, and small,

medium and large job creators, who can't afford to be in the province of Ontario anymore because they're overregulated, they're overtaxed. Their hydro rates have gone through the roof. That's not what this province should be about. We have communities taking their government to court. That's not what this province should be about.

In my inaugural address I said that, in here, this is where we should debate and argue back and forth about the things that we disagree on. But when we leave this place, it should be about the people we represent. I know we are going to have a lot of disagreement on this bill and I know that we will fight over it but, ultimately, we will do what's right for the people of Ontario.

On the York University strike, Madam Speaker, it is very clear, as the minister very capably highlighted, these two cannot come to an agreement. They are at an impasse and this has historically been a negotiation that has failed between this particular union and the management of York University. They've declared an impasse. Students are frustrated, their parents are frustrated, and we've got to get things moving again. Think about this: This is hurting people who are weeks away from graduating, people who have to take final tests, people who are waiting to take tests to be a nurse or final tests on engineering—

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Just getting their marks.

Mr. Paul Calandra: —students who are waiting to get their marks. What's going to happen in September if we don't solve this right now?

There was an opportunity—and I'll take some umbrage. I know a lot of my discourse has been about the failings of the Liberal Party, but there was an opportunity, albeit a disingenuous attempt by the previous Liberal government on the day before the election to try to end the strike. But they knew full well that they were at an impasse. This had happened constantly. In the mediator's report, he highlighted the fact that this is one union and management that could never come to an agreement, so they knew that this was going to happen.

Unfortunately the NDP refused to give unanimous consent to send our students back to school, knowing that this was going to be the final outcome, that we would be here and students would be out of class for many, many months.

But ultimately, it wasn't the job of the NDP opposition to get students back into class; it was the job of the previous Liberal government. Although I may take umbrage, and I wish that they would have sent our students back at that point, it wasn't their responsibility. It was the rump on that side.

We are going to do what's right for the people of Ontario. We're going to get this province moving, and this piece of legislation highlights how we're going to do that. It's a good start.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Be seated, please.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Congratulations on your appointed post.

The strike at York University is about the quality of post-secondary education. The government of Ontario should really be addressing the root problem of this conflict, which is the chronic underfunding of post-secondary education that has led to a massive increase in precarious employment in our universities. As a direct consequence of the chronic underfunding of post-secondary education in Ontario, all these academic workers are precariously employed on short-term contracts.

The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that the right of meaningful collective bargaining and the right of strike are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Taking away those charter protections—the right to bargain and act collectively are among the most important rights workers have to ensure they are treated fairly.

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

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker; pardon me.

After 15 years of the former Liberal government's mismanagement, economic decline and the contraction of good jobs, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker. I apologize again. I'm just so used to watching the federal question period. Suffice it to say, nothing is like that in Ontario.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Don't look at that; they're boring.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I agree with the honourable opposition House leader.

But one thing both he and I would agree with is that the people of Ontario voted resoundingly and decisively for change in June. They voted for a government that will work each and every day to restore hope, to create jobs and to build an opportune society for those who want to work hard to get ahead—an opportune society where people who endeavour to achieve their God-given talents can do just that.

This is the mission of this government: a singular focus on improving the lives of every Ontarian in every region of this province. We will deliver on our mandate, deliver on our promises and deliver for taxpayers who long for politicians to finally do as they say.

I want to invoke the words of a former President—I'm not referring to the very honourable, competent President of the Treasury Board; I'm referring to a former President in the United States—to draw a contrast of choice between our party and the alternative opposition party, the Liberal Party. The quote is, "Government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it."

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This is not the way to prosperity. This is not the way to create jobs. This is not the way to instill confidence in the markets.

Interjections.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Well, you know, it is interesting, because I hear heckling from the opposition. I want to

invoke another quote: “You can’t be for big government, big taxes, and big bureaucracy and still be for the little guy.”

It is this government that is going to stand up for working families in Ontario and give back hope to the people who deserve it most.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions or comments?

Mr. Joel Harden: I just want to join with this comment on my union. I was a member of CUPE 3903, members of this House. I was on strike for 78 days through the winter in 2001, and as I said yesterday, I am worried that this government is going to carry on the failings of the previous government that we saw in 2017, where they legislated college teachers back to work. And for what? Who did they reward?

I can tell you locally in Ottawa who they rewarded: Cheryl Jensen, the president of Algonquin College. I went to the picket line several times and saw President Jensen drive by the picket line in her publicly funded, taxpayer-funded Lexus. It was a hybrid, for the record. She had a \$348,000 salary, while 70% of the people at Algonquin College teach part-time and work a heck of a lot outside of the classroom to deliver value for their students.

You’ll repeat those mistakes, my friends, if you legislate these workers back to work, because who is driving this back-to-work agenda? It’s overpaid executives in the university sector, who need to be brought to earth, who don’t teach, who don’t research and who don’t respect front-line workers. Madam Speaker, if this government respects front-line workers, you should be thinking about back-to-the-table, not back-to-work.

And you don’t respect students. With all due respect to my colleagues, you don’t respect students if you reward an employer that bargains for 15 minutes. Is that adequate leadership, for my friends on the other side of the aisle? I would hope not—15 minutes, and you’re giving them the nanny state. You’re giving them the huge anvil, and you’d better believe there’s going to be a big lineup of employers who will want the exact same thing.

If you believe in front-line workers, my friends—Madam Speaker, through you to them—stop this crazy nonsense of back-to-work legislation, encourage the parties to get back to the table, and for God’s sake, bring these executive salaries to earth.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Government is about setting priorities, and the priority of this government is the people. Frankly, the actions of this government are being guided by what is best for the people, and our government remembers who it is working for. This bill puts the people first by bringing forward these three acts which, as the minister indicated, are bound together by accountability to, respect for and dedication to the people of Ontario.

I have been knocking on doors in my diverse riding for 20 years in all types of elections, and I have met the

people. I have listened to the people. I have heard the people, and they told me about their concerns and challenges. Those concerns and challenges became ever more urgent over the past few years. A lot of that was about the hydro bills. In this recent election, I canvassed for over a year, every day, and I have some vivid recollections about what they told me. The people I spoke with are genuinely relieved now that they have a government which is paying attention to their concerns.

I talked to one woman, for example, an older woman who had been doing everything she could to take down her electricity usage to the bare essentials, and she still couldn’t afford to pay her bills and stay in her house. Another woman had unplugged her refrigerator and had not put up her Christmas lights that year so she could pay her hydro bills. They can’t believe it when they hear about the salaries that these people are getting.

That is why I am very, very pleased that our government is taking action to address those ridiculous salaries. This legislation, frankly, is exactly what the people have been asking for: accountability to the people; full, public and transparent; protecting the interests of Ontario’s ratepayers; and getting those students back to school. That’s what we should do, and I’m delighted to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): We go back to the minister for a two-minute wrap-up.

Hon. Greg Rickford: In my opportunity to make a couple of minutes’ worth of remarks on summarizing my speech earlier and my colleagues’ comments from across the floor, a couple of key words came to mind: transparency and accountability and people.

The back-to-class act: I can appreciate that this has affected some hard-working researchers. I spent a great deal of time in university myself. I was blessed that none of that education was interrupted. But I think that what we have come to now is a fair and reasonable response that ensures, in the name of public interests, that those students be able to go back to school, and that, in fairness, the researchers, teachers and folks who are doing this important work have an opportunity to have their issues addressed further.

For the people of the Bay of Quinte who made their plea, made their case, and it fell on deaf ears—that this project should proceed with the previous heavy-handed government, it’s now going to be in a position where that project won’t proceed. It isn’t just because the people didn’t need it. It’s because the people didn’t want it.

Finally, with respect to Hydro One, it’s my view, respectfully, that transparency and accountability and a renewed leadership of Hydro One will indeed address the member opposite’s cry, if you will, for executive salaries to be reeled in, and that we will have a lean, competitive Hydro One that will protect the public interest and ultimately send a strong signal to the energy sector that we are going to respect the ratepayer in this province. I think that’s something that ultimately all of us can agree on, to a certain extent.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate? I recognize the leader of the loyal opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Congratulations on your first time in the chair, I believe.

I'll be sharing my time with the member for London West and the member for Toronto–Danforth.

I want to start by saying how pleased I am to rise in this House and speak against Bill 2 and start debate on this legislation on behalf of the loyal opposition—the official opposition.

I'm also proud to stand here and speak up on behalf of New Democrats, because we have a vision of Ontario where our province is a place where everyone can build a good life; a vision of Ontario where life is more affordable, and people get real relief from sky-high hydro rates, the legacy of the previous Liberal and Conservative governments, a legacy of privatization that started with Mike Harris and the Conservatives and was finished off with Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals; a vision of a province where every worker can count on a good job with decent benefits, like drug coverage and dental coverage, and the security that they need, and where students have access to great education, and instructors, graduate students and teaching assistants are treated with the respect and dignity that every worker deserves; a vision of Ontario with better public services and with a government that is not beholden to insiders and backroom lobbyists but instead is working for all Ontarians. That's what New Democrats stand up for.

We are committed to putting people at the heart of every decision that government makes, and that's why we are so determined to hold this Conservative government accountable for the decisions that they make.

The vast majority of Ontarians believe that we can build a better future for Ontario and move this province forward and not backward. Unfortunately, what we've seen from the Ford Conservatives so far is not what people voted for. We see it in the decisions this government has made over the last couple of weeks, and we see it in this bill that is in front of us today. The Premier is taking things from bad to worse. He's being driven by backroom deals with insiders, he's busy giving political favours to his friends, and instead of trying to unite and find common ground and make people's lives better, he's choosing instead to divide Ontarians.

1450

Look at what this bill does and what it fails to do. This bill undermines the constitutionally protected rights of academic workers at York University. That's what it does, plain and simple. It undermines the constitutional rights of these workers. The first piece of legislation from the Conservative government is an attack on the rights of working people. Worst of all, this bill fails to fix the problems that led to the strike in the first place. Ontario universities are funded at the lowest per-student level in the entire country. That is the legacy of the Liberal government. The Liberal government allowed us to become the province that's at the bottom of the barrel when it comes to university per-student funding. What happens when you underfund these important places of

learning? It leads to higher tuition fees, which means of course that we also have students in our province who are carrying the highest debt loads of all of the students across our country. It also leads to insecure and precarious jobs for academic workers, including the graduate students and teaching assistants at York University.

This Liberal legacy is what the new government should be trying to fix.

Instead of fixing the underfunding in universities, the government instead has decided to trample on the constitutional rights of the people who work in those underfunded institutions. Instead of making sure that universities are funded in a way that we can be very confident in the quality of education that our students are receiving, we see a government that is prepared to continue with precarious work in university, and lead to the possibility of having a reduced quality of education because of this precarious work, and trample on the constitutional rights of the people who are trying to do their best to educate and support our students in their education.

The government could have helped to end the labour dispute at York by encouraging the university to go back to the bargaining table and start negotiating again in good faith. They could even do more to fix the problem by increasing the funding for our post-secondary institutions to help prevent these kinds of strikes from happening in the future, as well. Instead, they're stripping workers of their rights, in terms of the collective bargaining process.

This legislation—as everyone knows, because we've seen it happen time and time again in this province and in other provinces—could very well be challenged in court on the grounds that it is unconstitutional and could end up costing millions and millions of dollars of public money to defend this government's action, one of their first actions in office. That's not a good start, in my opinion.

The bill doesn't fix the problems because the Premier isn't focused on doing what's right for Ontario.

There's only one party that is committed to fighting for working people's rights, and that's the NDP.

The Liberals, in fact, spent the last election campaign—and people may recall this—in the last week or so, particularly, attacking working people, attacking unions. So we have a former Liberal government that, when it was convenient for them, tried to cozy up to those folks, but, of course, the last election campaign showed very clearly where the Liberals really land—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: True colours.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —what their true colours are, what they really believe. The Liberal legacy is 15 years of underfunding our universities and our colleges. And now the Conservatives are picking up exactly where the Liberals left off.

New Democrats stand up for the rights of working people each and every day, unlike the Liberals. We do that before elections, during elections and after elections, because that's what we believe and those are our values.

Of course, unlike the Conservatives, as we see in this bill here, which we will not support, we don't believe

that legislating people back to work is the right direction. Unlike the Conservatives and the Liberals, we stand up for the quality of education that we know students deserve. We are very proud to stand up for proper funding in our post-secondary institutions.

I would urge this government to reconsider the track they're on. Instead of taking away the constitutional rights of workers, they should consider better funding of our post-secondary institutions. Not only would that help to settle this strike that we are dealing with now that has been far too long and—I think we would all agree—is harmful to both students and the workers because, let's face it, nobody wins in a strike. The students aren't winning, the workers on strike aren't winning and the institution is not winning.

The responsibility of the government is to make sure that we have a resolution that puts us in a better position afterwards, but this won't do that. This bill will not do that because it won't fix 15 years of Liberal underfunding, it won't respect the workers' rights and it will leave an institution in a position where it is going to be vulnerable to even more strikes in the future because nothing fundamentally will have changed. In fact, the bitterness that exists in a situation of a prolonged work action like this one will continue to cause challenges, I think, and difficulties on a go-forward basis at York.

This bill also fails to fix the problems in our hydro system. The Liberals sold off Hydro One, as we all know, and gave up public control over our public hydro system. I just want to recall that that was exactly what the Conservatives had in mind too. In fact, in their 2014 platform, they were going to sell off Hydro One as well. Now they pretend to be the champions of everyday people when it comes to electricity, but this whole mess of privatization in our electricity system started with the Conservatives because they believe that the private sector does everything better and they believe that public corporations that are operating in the public interest and bringing value to the public are the wrong direction. They think that private interests are the ones that should benefit from public dollars.

New Democrats believe exactly the opposite. We don't think an electricity system, whether it's the generation side which is what the Harris Conservatives started the privatization and deregulation of—we don't think that the generation of power should be something that private shareholders benefit from more than everyday people. Notwithstanding the rhetoric that the Conservatives use, everybody, I think, is aware that Conservatives think that hydro generation belongs with the private sector. The only thing that they're, I think, unhappy about is the way that the Liberals implemented the Green Energy Act with their private sector friends instead of the Conservative private sector friends.

What New Democrats believe is that the private sector should not have been the primary interest in the Green Energy Act. In fact, it should have been the public interest. Whether it's Mike Harris's privatization of the generation of traditional fossil fuel types of energy gener-

ation or whether it's the Liberal privatization of green energy in Ontario, both of these parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, believe that the private sector is the priority when it comes to the generation of electricity.

Of course, the Liberal Party then went on to privatize the transmission of electricity with the sell-off of Hydro One. Again, who benefits? Not everyday people, not ratepayers, not businesses, not industry, not farming communities and families. None of those people are the priority when it comes to the privatization of generation or transmission. But the interests of the private shareholder reign supreme. Those are the values of Conservatives. Those are the values of Liberals. Those are not the values of New Democrats.

New Democrats believe that our energy system, all the way around, transmission—I guess I should start at the beginning: generation, transmission and distribution should be in the public realm, in the public sector, and operating in the best interests of the public.

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But, notwithstanding that, we now have a mess of a hydro system, a system that for 100 years put us at the forefront of economic strength in our province, that built cities and communities from one end of Ontario to the other, top to bottom. Instead, now we literally have businesses and companies that are closing up shop and leaving Ontario because of the legacy of Conservative and Liberal privatization in our electricity system.

It's shameful that the Liberals did exactly what the Conservatives did and sold off more of our electricity system, that they gave up public control over our public hydro system. It's people who have been paying the price, with unaffordable electricity bills. They started paying that price with the Conservatives, and they continue to pay that price—and that price rose, as we all know, exponentially—under the Liberals.

I've talked to all kinds of people across Ontario when it comes to this tragedy. I've talked to farmers who are struggling to keep their operations going because costs are so high—farmers who can't engage in time-of-use pricing because, as my friend John Vanthof has often said, the cows have to get milked when the cows have to get milked, and it has got nothing to do with time-of-use pricing. This is what a number of farmers have told me, as well.

I've talked to seniors. I've met with seniors. The stories are just heartbreaking. I met with a woman in Sault Ste. Marie who had been a nurse all her life. She was almost 80 at the time, and that was two or three years ago now. I went to visit her at her home, and it was very, very cold. Of course, it's Sault Ste. Marie and it was wintertime, but the reason it was very, very cold inside this woman's home is because she couldn't keep her electric baseboard heating on, because she couldn't afford to pay for it. She would keep the electric baseboard heating on in the kitchen, so that when she was making her meals she would be able to do that without freezing.

But as I sat with her in her living room and chatted with her about her inability to pay her bills, every surface

that had a capacity to hold some bulk was covered with afghans and blankets. It was quite sad. She said that in every one of the rooms of her house, she has piles and piles of blankets and quilts and things to stay warm, so that she can keep her heating bill down by keeping her baseboard heaters off in the various rooms. She does not invite friends over anymore, because she's too embarrassed, and she can't afford to go out and meet with her friends for lunch or dinner, because she can't afford to pay for her meals and her bills. This is what Conservative and Liberal policy changes in terms of privatization have done to people, to everyday families.

I've talked to many, many moms. I can remember talking to a mom in Sudbury who told me that she had to stop putting money away for her children's education fund because she couldn't afford to do that and still pay her hydro bill. In her situation, that's what she had to do. She and her husband could no longer put money away for their kids' future because of Conservative and Liberal policies on electricity.

Lots of parents, lots of families and lots of seniors who can't cook dinner at dinnertime or have to do their family's laundry—I met one young mom who said she was doing her laundry for her very, very young child, a baby, and babies generate lots of laundry, and she had to do that at midnight. This was in Sudbury, I believe, as well. She had to do that in Sudbury. She had a couple of children, and the only time that she could find the time in her busy, busy schedule as a mom with three kids was to literally do her laundry at midnight, because she had to do it at a time when the prices were low but all of the other things that she needed to get done in the day and evening were taken care of.

The only way to bring hydro costs down—the only way to bring hydro costs down—and keep them down for good is to make hydro public again. That is the only way to make that happen: to take the private profits out of our electricity system and to ensure that full public oversight is put back into our electricity system.

This government will not do that. They are going to make sure that their friends, their energy insiders, are going to benefit from our privatized system. They are happy to keep Kathleen Wynne's \$40-billion borrowing scheme in place, which the next generation is going to pay for. They're happy to do that. They're not going to talk about that; they're going to pretend that that doesn't exist. But what that will do is jack up the rates in a couple of years' time. I know my colleagues are going to talk about that in much more detail going forward.

This Conservative government is not going to fix the hydro system. It's going to make its friends rich, just like the Liberals made their friends rich. It's going to pretend that it's giving a break to families and businesses, but that break is not true. It's not real. It's a shell game. It's something that's not going to help the people of Ontario over the medium term, never mind the long term.

In fact, what they're doing is, some of the worst policies that the Liberals put in place, the Conservatives are keeping them in place. That's not the right thing to do

for the people. That's not the right thing to do for the businesses or the industries that operate in this province. Those bills are going to go up by about 70% over the next decade with that Liberal plan in place, and these Conservatives are not going to change that one bit. It's a borrowing scheme that the current government House leader once called "deceitful, dishonest and shady," and now the Conservatives have adopted that same \$40-billion scheme.

On top of all of that—on top of failing to bring hydro back into public hands and adopting the worst Liberal energy policies, which will drive rates up by 70%—the Premier is making backroom deals with insiders that will only cost the people of Ontario more. The Premier claimed that the payout for the CEO of Hydro One was going to be "zero ... absolutely zero," says Mr. Ford. But now we know that the Premier cut a backroom deal with Mayo Schmidt that turned him into a nine-million-dollar man, instead of a six-million-dollar man. He went from being a six-million-dollar man on the campaign trail, and then Mr. Ford becomes Premier and now he's a nine-million-dollar man. Wow, there's a success. Look, I've asked the Premier over and over to come clean and release what that secret deal says, but he has not committed to doing that.

So here we go again: yet another government that is not going to be upfront and transparent with the people of Ontario about what it is that they're actually doing. That is shameful. People are tired of that after 15 years with the Liberals. They deserve so much better than the same thing over again with the Conservatives. I still think the Premier has a chance: show that he is actually going to do something different and make that deal public.

We are going to be bringing forward, as a result, an amendment to the legislation that we're debating today that will require full public disclosure of all payments to the executives and board members that have been ousted by Doug Ford and the Conservatives, so that the people of Ontario know how much it's going to cost. Because they deserve to know.

What we should have is not a private entity that needs a new board of directors and that needs another private sector CEO. We don't need that. What we need is a publicly operated electricity system again in our province. It's unfortunate that the Conservatives are instead going to keep the Liberal legacy in place.

People don't want a Premier that's beholden to the insiders and lobbyists that he's making backroom deals with, but that's exactly what this Premier is doing. The Premier should be working for all Ontarians, but instead, we see an attack on working people and on the quality post-secondary education that students deserve; a complete failure to fix the problems in our hydro system; and backroom deals that make insiders, lobbyists and radical social conservatives happy but divide Ontarians and take things in this province from bad to worse.

I didn't talk about the cancellation of a private deal that's part of this bill as well, and I suspect that my critic will do exactly that. But once again, the cancellation of

that project is more about who is able to have Mr. Ford's ear, who is able to talk to the Premier in a backroom, to be able to get that deal ripped up. That's a very irresponsible thing.

I'll just say this one thing before concluding: We watched the Liberals pretend that their cancellation of energy projects was not going to be very expensive. They pretended for years that it wasn't going to cost people very much money at all to rip up those contracts.

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I think they started with low-balling it at about \$10 million. Eventually, they admitted it was going to be \$40 million, until we did the homework. Members of the Conservative caucus as well as members of the NDP caucus of the day did the homework to uncover the truth, which was that that gas plant cancellation deal that was done for political purposes, just like the ripping up of these contracts is going to be, cost us \$1.1 billion. And now, here's this government—Conservative—that claims to be all about fiscal responsibility doing the exact same thing and costing us billions and billions—untold billions. Who knows how many billions of dollars it's going to cost us to rip up those contracts.

Speaker, Ontarians deserve so much better than that. New Democrats are proud to speak up and we will be speaking up each and every time that we possibly can, with millions and millions of other Ontarians, for the kind of change that we know people deserve: change for the better.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much, Speaker, and congratulations on your new role.

I'm proud to rise to participate in this important debate on the government's first substantive piece of legislation, the Urgent Priorities Act. As the post-secondary education critic for the Ontario NDP, I will be focusing my comments exclusively on schedule 3, the Back to Class Act. I have to say, that title really does little to demonstrate respect for the workers of CUPE Local 3903, who have been calling for good-faith efforts to reach a negotiated settlement for more than four months.

As my leader said, it won't come as a surprise that New Democrats are opposed to this legislation, not only because we believe in negotiated settlements and the rights of workers to free collective bargaining, but also because legislating workers back to work poisons labour relations, and it does nothing to resolve the issues that led to the strike in the first place. Unless those issues are addressed at York and across the post-secondary sector, Ontario is likely to see more strikes as chronic underfunding worsens and as academic workers seek to improve job security and working conditions.

In the case of Bill 2, the legislation really gives the employer what they wanted from the very beginning. As William Kaplan, the industrial inquiry commissioner appointed by the previous Liberal government, noted in his May 2018 report on the dispute, York had signalled at the outset its desire for the current dispute to be resolved

through interest arbitration rather than through free collective bargaining.

York first made a request for interest arbitration in August 2017. It repeated it throughout the fall, winter and spring of last year and it has led, of course, to this back-to-work legislation and mandatory interest arbitration that's included in Bill 2. So it seems that the employer has been sitting back and waiting for the government to intervene for months; what some have described as a wait-for-arbitration approach to collective bargaining.

Certainly, we saw a similar dynamic in the five-week college strike last fall. As soon as the Premier indicated that she would be willing to introduce back-to-work legislation at around week two of the strike, there was no longer any incentive for the employer to bargain. And we all know the hardship that students and faculty in this province experienced as a result of that five-week strike.

From the very beginning of the York strike New Democrats called on the Liberal government to use its influence to bring the employer to the table. The government refused to do so, instead choosing to legislate back to work with the introduction of Bill 70, the York University Labour Disputes Resolution Act, in May 2018.

In the few weeks since the election of the PC government, the new Premier and the new Minister of Labour have followed the same path. They've made no effort whatsoever to get the two sides to the table so that a deal could be reached. Instead, they moved immediately to the back-to-work legislation we see before us. They were able to move quickly because the Liberals had already done the work for them. Bill 2 is almost identical to the legislation introduced by the Liberals just prior to dissolution, with one noteworthy difference which I will get to in a moment.

The Back to Class Act terminates the strike immediately upon royal assent and deems the parties to have referred their dispute to mediation-arbitration on that day. It has a number of other processes set out that are similar to arbitrated agreements in the essential services sector, including the relevant criteria that the arbitrator must consider in making a decision about a new collective agreement. I want to single out three of those criteria:

(1) the employer's ability to pay in light of its fiscal situation;

(2) the extent to which services may have to be reduced in light of the award if current funding and taxation levels are not increased;

(3) the economic situation in Ontario and the GTA.

These criteria clearly are set out to protect the employer's economic interests over the interests of CUPE 3903, academic workers. We know that many of these workers work very long hours in insecure jobs, earning poverty wages. Again, I will have more to say about that in a moment.

Since the government controls many of these criteria at the level of current funding, therefore York's ability to pay—York's fiscal situation—is directly in the control of the government, and we know that the recent directive to

the broader public sector to reduce costs could well end up rewarding York University for its refusal to participate in the bargaining process from the outset, and to sit back and wait for this legislation.

One very concerning difference between this bill and the previous Liberal bill is the addition of the “discipline and discharge” clause which prohibits the arbitrator from including language in the new agreement to prevent disciplinary action against workers for conduct during the strike.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It’s mean-spirited.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes, it’s very mean-spirited, and it removes the ability of employees to argue that reprisal that is taken against them is an unfair labour practice. They have to go through the normal grievance procedure if there is discipline implemented against them.

I want to acknowledge the PC government in, to some extent, following on the recommendations that were brought forward by the industrial inquiry commission back in May. However, they did not act on another key recommendation of that commission, and that is that a task force on precarity in post-secondary education employment be established. The commissioner noted that the explosion in post-secondary contract faculty, the overreliance on precarious workers in the sector, is really what is at the heart of the York University dispute. He said that this task force should be a comprehensive one that looks at these issues from a variety of perspectives.

So unless the government actually takes action to deal with these fundamental issues, it can introduce as much back-to-work legislation as it wants, but it won’t actually deal with the factors that are leading to labour disputes in the first place, and that is the chronic underfunding of post-secondary education, the spike in precarious work, and, frankly, a decline in the quality of post-secondary education that is resulting from these trends.

1520

What we have seen in Ontario is a 10-year downward trajectory in terms of funding for post-secondary education. In today’s dollars, university funding is the same in 2018 as it was back in 2005. For a decade, Ontario has provided the lowest per-student university funding of all Canadian provinces, and certainly our leader has just pointed that out. As a result, what’s happening is that universities are being forced to do more with less, to stretch resources thinner and thinner, and, as I said, the easiest place to cut costs, to reduce costs, is in payroll. So we are seeing a dramatic shift in the nature of the academic workforce. Full-time faculty, full-time employees, are more and more being replaced by contract faculty and by low-paid, insecure and temporary workers. There’s lots of evidence to show that this is indeed the case. Now 53% of post-secondary education workers in Ontario are precariously employed. Most of them are our TAs and RAs—teaching assistants and research assistants—the very members of CUPE Local 3903.

At the same time that this rise in precarious work is being implemented throughout the sector, we’re also seeing skyrocketing tuition fees. We know what that

means for young people: They are carrying huge debts as they graduate from post-secondary education, and they are struggling to be able to move out of their parents’ home, to launch their career. They are having to take survival jobs instead of the work that they were trained for just to try to make a start in paying off that huge debt that they have accumulated.

In the meantime, tuition fees are continuing to rise. We know, Speaker, that in the last Conservative government in Ontario, from 1995 to 2003, there was the largest increase in tuition in Ontario compared to every other province. In today’s dollars, tuition increased by \$2,318. The Liberals just continued to allow tuition to skyrocket. Under the Liberal government over the 15 years, we saw an increase of \$2,100.

And who knows what is going to happen under this new Conservative government? There was nothing in their platform about post-secondary education. It is entirely possible that we could see tuition fees completely deregulated. That would enable universities to deal with this underfunding by just continuing to increase tuition fees, worsening that huge debt burden that young people are forced to carry when they graduate from university.

Instead of creating the task force that Commissioner Kaplan had recommended to look at the sector, to look at the changing workforce, to look at the causes for this rise in precarious employment, the government has chosen to move ahead with this legislation. I hope the government will look at creating that task force, but more than that, I hope that they will actually follow through on allowing that task force to do its work.

We know that following the five-week college strike, there was a task force created in the wake of the strike. It was called the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Task Force. This was a crucial move forward. It was welcomed within the sector because it was important to look at the reasons for that strike, many of which are the same as York University is experiencing: the rise in precarious employment and the lack of secure full-time work.

What we saw from this new government on Friday, July 13, was that the task force was quietly cancelled. It was just completely shut down. This government has decided that they are not interested in looking at the conditions within the college sector. They’re certainly not interested in looking at the conditions within the university sector that are affecting academic workers and are affecting the quality of education that students are able to access in Ontario.

Before I move to our critic for energy, I did want to say a few words about the issue of sexual violence on campus. The reason I’m bringing this up is because this was one of the sticking points between Local 3903 and York University. It was the university’s refusal to create a fund for survivors of sexual violence that was one of these issues that couldn’t be resolved.

Speaker, we know the reality of sexual violence on campus. One in every five women will experience sexual violence while studying at a post-secondary institution;

and 80% of female students who identify as survivors of sexual violence were assaulted by someone they know—they were assaulted by another student at their university.

And here we see a government that wants to take consent out of K-to-12 education, that doesn't seem interested in raising awareness of the reality of rape culture and in trying to do something to address sexual violence on Ontario campuses.

Speaker, I tell you, the fact that this government is willing to stand aside while this issue of sexual violence at York University campus is being brought forward by RAs and TAs who want to see these supports in place—and yet this government is not interested in doing anything to help move that forward.

I just want to say again that New Democrats are going to be proudly voting against this legislation. From my perspective, schedule 3 is particularly troubling. I look forward to hearing the comments from the member for Toronto–Danforth about the other schedules of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Why, thank you, Speaker. I want to start off—because this is my first chance to actually address the House since I was re-elected—by thanking the people of Toronto–Danforth for their support, for their faith in the work that I do. I want to thank my amazing campaign team. They were totally relentless. They followed the rule that a candidate inside the campaign office was something that could not be tolerated, and the person had to be pushed out the door at every opportunity. They were good about it; they were totally disciplined. I want to thank my family, who supported me throughout and, as was said earlier today, were long-suffering in the campaign and the lead-up to it. To all of those, I owe a debt of thanks. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about it.

I also want to say that I appreciate the opportunity to respond to this bill. I'll be speaking to the first two schedules of what I call the bad-faith bill—because I think people have to understand that. They have to understand that this is a bill about breaking contracts, about not respecting the rule of law, and a bill that, in the end, undermines our ability to attract business investment and undermines our ability to take action on climate change. Those are fundamental issues.

This bill is symptomatic of Premier Ford's approach to hydro. It's about show. It's about going backwards on the environment. It's not about helping the people; it's about making sure that friends and insiders have opportunities.

Let's look at the first part, the first schedule of this bill.

The Premier campaigned on the question of getting rid of the six-million-dollar man. As our leader was able to note earlier, what he did, in effect, was make Mayo Schmidt the nine-million-dollar man, because he got a very handsome payout when he left.

The bill before us, and the Ford platform, did not address the fundamental issue, and that's the privatization of the system. That privatization has driven higher costs

in this province. It has made life difficult for people. It has not been addressed. Frankly, you can change all the CEOs and insiders you want, but until you address the fundamental problem of privatization—who owns this electricity system in this province, who benefits—then you aren't going to be able to deliver the solutions that people need. It won't happen.

This bill will provide a cover for the Premier for the backroom deal engineered with the CEO and the directors. We won't fully know how much money the CEO got, and that's something that a number of journalists have noted. What about ongoing pension payments in the future? What about payments to directors? I think the amendment we're bringing forward to actually require full disclosure of all compensation so that people know exactly how much this game of musical chairs is going to cost the people of Ontario is critical for us.

1530

I want to note—and this was interesting to me; I got briefed yesterday by Ministry of Energy staff, and I appreciate their thoroughness—that in the bill, the ability for the cabinet to control compensation will end shortly after the next election. So, friends, the trough is closed briefly, but the trough doors will be thrown open after the next election. So anyone who wants to make \$6 million a year or \$9 million a year or \$15 million a year, come on down, because things are rolling.

I want to talk a bit more about the sky-high salaries and compensation. The question is, who is going to become the CEO? Who are going to become the directors? I think you have to look at the record of the last two weeks to get a sense of who is going to be there.

My colleague France Gélinas, the health critic, spoke the other day about the appointment of Rueben Devlin to a million-dollar contract to look at the health system—Rueben Devlin, one of his friends, former president of the Conservative Party. In 2006, the hospitals run by Devlin had the second-worst death rates in Canada. That's who's going to be advising us on how to deal with health. That's the kind of person who's going to be on the board of, or the head of, Hydro One in the future. She went on to say that while nurses warned of chronic understaffing at his hospitals, he shut down three Toronto hospitals and replaced them with just one P3 hospital. A P3 hospital, for those on the other side of the camera, is a public-private partnership, privately financed, with more profits going to the private sector. There's a pattern here.

Why did the Premier hand a million-dollar contract to his friend instead of investing in front-line services? I think we'll be asking that after the appointments are made to this new Hydro One.

And then, the appointment of the commission of inquiry into the province's finances—who got the lead? Embattled former British Columbia Premier Gordon Campbell. Campbell presided over one of the most notorious backroom deal scandals in Canadian history, one which led to the RCMP raiding the BC Legislature—not an everyday occurrence. That's the kind of quality that we're going to be having. Premier Campbell cut

social services, fired scores of public employees and privatized public assets like ferries and BC Rail's entire operation.

Well, my friends, I think you get a sense of the kind of people who are going to follow in the train of the Premier, the kind of people who will be put in charge of Hydro One. That alone is enough to make us all—what can I say? Anxious? Uncertain? Perhaps. Unhappy? Take your pick. It's sort of like taking Dalton McGuinty and putting him in charge of an inquiry into provincial finances. Everyone in this room—you all know—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes. Gordon Campbell is the Conservative version of Dalton McGuinty, a guy who shouldn't be allowed near public finance at all.

Let's look at the Tory hydro plan. Let's look at the larger context in which we're dealing with this matter. There's a proposal to use hydro dividends to reduce hydro rates, which at the heart of it is not a bad thing. But I have to say to all, currently that flows into general revenues—it goes to schools, to hospitals—so the money is going to have to be replaced. It's not free money. It's maybe not a bad idea. But the Conservative Party, in the last election, didn't provide the full picture of finances so we don't know how that \$300 million or so is going to be made up. I'm sure we will find out, my friends.

The conservation part of hydro operations has been taken out of the rate base and put into the tax base. I want to say to all of you that you can provide electricity services for about three cents a kilowatt hour with conservation. Frankly, it's the cheapest you're going to get. If the Liberals had used it, if the Liberals hadn't built all the gas plants they did—because, frankly, folks, you heard about two that were part of the scandal, but there are a whole bunch of others that are sitting out there just waiting, mostly not operating. If, in fact, they had put in conservation at three cents a kilowatt hour instead of the 15, 20 or 30 cents a kilowatt hour for gas-fired power plants, we would have a very different picture here in Ontario.

But in moving conservation from the hydro base to the tax base, it is going to be vulnerable to cuts in the future, because Premier Ford is outlining a whole bunch of cuts. He's looking for easy ones. This might survive a year. Conservation programs might survive a year, but I'll tell you, when they aren't out there actively being used to reduce hydro costs, they are going to be vulnerable to being cut. That is bad news environmentally and economically—very bad news.

All of those things being said, the initial Conservative drive, under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, to privatize the system, which was continued and deepened by the Liberals, is something that the Conservatives have shown no interest in ending. I used to say the Liberals were just Tories in a hurry. It has turned around: Now, the Tories are going to be Liberals in a hurry, on the privatization side. There's no getting around it.

We all know that with privatization will come those lobbyists who want more and more projects built because

they want that business. So we will continue this process of overbuilding generation as we have, heavily, with gas, something we need to get out of.

I have heard not a word from this government about looking at the contracts that are coming up to the end of their lifespan that should be cancelled. No, instead—and we'll get into this in the second part—we're going to spend a lot of bucks on cancelling renewable energy contracts when we need that renewable energy, when we need that.

Last thing before I go on to the second schedule—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I know, Minister, you can hardly wait. I know. I can see the anticipation in your eyes. I can see it right now.

The Liberal borrowing scheme: People are well aware that the Liberals committed us to borrowing \$20 billion with another \$20 billion in interest that is going to have to be paid. That was their hydro reduction plan; a pretty pricey plan, I want to say to all of you. Part of the Conservative platform—I asked the Minister of Energy about it the other day. My sense is he knows about it, but it's not something he wants to talk about. That program alone and the billions we're borrowing every year are going to be a millstone around the necks of Ontarians for years and years to come. Privatization and the continuation of the borrowing scheme: Those things are going to make life very difficult for Ontarians. It's not being addressed in this bill—not being addressed in this bill.

Let's move on to the White Pines wind farm. Governments have the right to cancel projects. Now, I disagree with setting aside renewable energy because I think we are going to need energy in the future, and we're going to need energy that does not emit, but you have the right to say, "No, we don't want this contract anymore." What is hugely problematic, aside from those larger considerations, is that you've written a bill that contradicts everything you've said about bringing business investment into Ontario, because you don't say, "We're going to put up a big neon sign at the border of Ontario: Come invest here because we're your kind of folks," and then suspend the rule of law. It's not a good thing. Typically, people don't like investing in jurisdictions where the law is murky, where governments can just reach in at any time and say, "Nah, we don't like the law. It was kind of good a while ago, but we don't like it. We're just going to suspend the rule of law." And that's what you're doing with this.

You know, it was interesting. It's not every day that I agree with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and they will be shocked that I am quoting them—yes, yes, Minister. You know exactly.

David Hains in QP Briefing quotes Ashley Challinor, the director of policy for the Ontario Chamber of Commerce: "The sanctity of contracts is fundamental. The government unilaterally cancelling contracts is harmful to business investment in Ontario." Well, she's got a point. She's got a point. It's not just unilaterally cancelling them, but saying to the company that has been cheated out of this contract that it can't sue to protect its rights under the contract.

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There's a compensation formula. There's an A, plus B and C, minus D and E, equals how much we've got to pay you. People can argue about what's assigned to each letter, whether it's good, bad or indifferent. I'll leave it to them. But what's extraordinary is that there is also a section in this act that says, notwithstanding what the formula produces in terms of money that has to be paid back, we can arbitrarily say, "This how much we're paying—done." That's amazing.

So, you cancel a contract—okay—and then you give a formula for determining compensation. Then you say, "But if we don't like the outcome, we're not going to have that either. And, on top of that, you can't sue us." Well, that's groundbreaking, I have to say. It's groundbreaking. I would say, if I were an investor in other parts of the world, I would have real questions about going to Ontario, a place where contracts won't be honoured, and when they're dishonoured, there are further punitive measures in the legislation.

If people don't believe that your word is of consequence, in general human interactions, that is really substantial. It's very big when it comes to business. A number of you folks are business people. I think you could speak about how you value those who break their contracts, those who break their word. Maybe it matters to you. I suspect it does.

When we were getting briefed yesterday, I asked the staff about the constitutionality of these provisions saying that contracts don't matter. I have to tell you, when I was here many years ago—my hair was darker then—Bill 115, the crush educators act. People remember that. The Tories at the time voted for it. We said at the time, "This is unconstitutional." I remember the minister, Laurel Broten, standing up to assure me, repeatedly, "No, it's totally constitutional. This is kosher. No problem. Back off, buddy." Anyway, she was wrong, and that was proved when it went to the Supreme Court.

I'm not a lawyer; people may have noticed. But I did check around to see if someone who knew more about constitutional law than me had any commentary. There's a guy, Patrick J. Monahan, a judge of the Superior Court of Justice in Toronto and former dean of the Osgoode Hall Law School, who wrote the textbook on constitutional law in Canada. He's kind of recognized as someone who knows what he's talking about. He wrote a piece a while ago, "Is the Pearson Airport Legislation Unconstitutional?" Here are a few of his comments:

"The rule of law does limit Parliament's power to appropriate contractual rights." Governments are not above the law. Premier Ford, take note: You are not above the law. This is important for you. There are many others who may think they are above the law, but frankly, you're not.

He writes, "The Supreme Court has indicated that the rule of law binds Parliament as well as the government, and that the principle can be used to rule legislation unconstitutional." Now, this is an important point, because I think respecting the Constitution is a pretty good

idea. Whatever flaws there may be in it, in general, it respects our rights. Agreed?

Interjection: Agreed.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes. Absolutely.

He notes, "A government that regularly breaks its promises for no good reason will come to be regarded as untrustworthy and eventually will discover that no one is willing to contract with it"—good point. He notes, in fact, that "there is no case which has ever upheld a provincial statute nullifying contractual rights and denying compensation to the owner."

I say all of this because the government may think that it stepped away from this: "Yes, that's not to our advantage. We're going to go by. We'll pay this amount. We may set a smaller amount, but you're going to have to live with it." You may be right, and it may not be possible for the company involved to pay the legal costs of pursuing this case at length. In which case, simply the dishonouring of Ontario, a worldwide statement about our values and our reliability will be made. On the other hand, the company might pursue this legally to the Supreme Court, win a constitutional challenge and recover damages—as well as us having besmirched our reputation.

On a number of levels, this bill is wrong. The government should not have brought it forward; it should abandon it now. We will certainly be voting against it.

The last thing I want to say is that this cancellation, and the cancellation of hundreds of renewable energy projects, says something profound about this government's understanding of and commitment to action on climate change. Many may think, on that side, that climate change is a distant thing, that it's not real and, really, we can say a few nice things now and then, and then it's over. But in fact, it's real. Its impact is now, and its impact is profound.

In 2014, Toledo, Ohio, had to shut down their water intake because the warming waters of Lake Erie helped develop a huge bloom of toxic algae. They had to shut down their water system for three days so that they didn't poison that whole system. Just the other day, blue-green algae was reported by Toronto Public Health in Mimico Creek. Lake Ontario is deeper; it's colder and it has got more resilience; Lake Erie, not so much.

The impact is now.

Speaker, you're from Windsor. I've heard rumours. You've gone through flooding in your city a number of times in the last few years. People had their basements flooded out and their lives completely disrupted.

It's real, it's now and it's affecting people's lives. It's expensive.

When you take a course of action that dismantles those steps that are needed to take on this issue, you are putting people in harm's way. You are putting your society in harm's way, because it will impact individuals and their lives but it will impact your ability to actually function, to have an economy that's effective, to have an infrastructure that is not damaged.

So, on every level, this legislation is wrong. It is morally wrong, it's wrong in terms of the statement it

makes about our values to the wider world, and it's wrong concretely, in terms of what it will bring to us in the years to come.

I only have a few seconds left. I urge the government to think twice about this legislation—all three schedules. My colleague very ably set out why schedule 3 was one that couldn't be supported and shouldn't be supported by this Legislature and by the people of this province.

With that, Speaker, I thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Christina Mitas: I have to say that I am appalled to have not heard the Leader of the Opposition mention students and their needs during her spin session on the York University strike.

The member for Toronto–Danforth mentioned that we have a lot of business people here on our team. As a teacher, a graduate student and the former president of the largest graduate students' union at the University of Toronto, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, I have to say I'm incredibly proud of the actions that this government is taking to get students back into the classroom.

I must disagree with the Leader of the Opposition as she attempts to negatively spin the good work that we are doing. While the NDP wants to neglect students, this government is focused on getting them back into the classroom. We are helping students complete their schooling, which will then allow them to procure gainful employment and prosper.

I will also emphatically disagree with the Leader of the Opposition on her claim that the NDP is the only party that is here for the working people. Our Progressive Conservative government is here for students. We will not allow them to be used as pawns because the opposition wants to get bogged down in partisanship.

Ontario's students are faced with a serious mental health crisis, and this is compounded for York University students as they struggle through the longest post-secondary strike in Ontario's history.

Our Progressive Conservative government will stand up for Ontario's students, and we will give them the assistance that they need.

We are here for students, we are here for workers and we are here for the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

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Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to address my sincere concern that this bill does nothing to address the crisis of precarious work in our academic institutions that we are facing in this province. Precarious work in academia is reaching a boiling point.

I'd like to tell you a little bit about my husband, who, I'm fortunate enough, works very close to this building and was able to come and have lunch with me today. He works for the Hospital for Sick Children, in the research branch just over on Bay Street. He's a post-doctoral research fellow. My husband, Trevor, has three degrees.

He recently graduated with his PhD from Western. He is now in the midst of undertaking post-doctoral research. He has three degrees, has spent 13 years in post-secondary education and has over \$100,000 in student debt. He is very unlikely, in the near future, to find employment in his field, and that's because increasingly all of our academic jobs are short-term contracts, and our teachers, our most important people who are guiding our young people, are bouncing around from contract to contract and piecing together work.

This bill signals to employers in the academic sector that they do not have to negotiate in good faith, that they do not have to address the increasingly precarious work in our academic institutions. It gives them the upper hand, knowing that they can not negotiate in good faith, that they can not come to the table, and that they can sit on their laurels and wait for this Conservative government to continue to legislate our academic instructors back to work. I'm incredibly disappointed by it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments? The member from York Centre.

Mr. Roman Baber: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I congratulate you on your appointment.

I want to talk briefly about the Back to Class Act and congratulate the minister on the introduction of the act.

The York University strike started on March 5, 2018. That makes it 136 days old. That also makes it the longest strike in Canadian post-secondary educational history. The only strike that lasted anywhere near that was the Laval strike in 1976. The net result of the York University strike: 37,000 students out of school, 45,000 students waiting for grades, international students whose visas are disrupted and who face uncertainty. And what's worse is the reputational risk.

York University is a magnificent institution, not just because it awarded me with a degree, but also because it has world-class research facilities, it has an incredible business and law school, and it serves as a hub of diversity and excellence in north Toronto. Imagine a student contemplating post-secondary education next year and thinking about the fact that every couple of years, York University experiences a labour disruption. I think that it's the mandate of this government, the government for the people, to help to preserve the excellence at York University and make sure that it preserves its reputation by making sure that this strike, the longest strike in Canadian academic history, comes to an end.

I am proud to vote in favour of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

M. Guy Bourgouin: C'est plus fort que moi; je devais me lever parce que, comme ancien syndiqué, je peux vous dire que je n'aime pas ce que j'entends. Quand on voit s'éroder les droits des personnes qui sont syndiquées—une des seules forces de pouvoir qu'on a—veux, veux pas—quand on est syndiqué, c'est que des fois on est obligé d'aller en grève. Je peux vous dire que, par expérience, je ne crois pas que les travailleurs aiment

aller en grève. Mais, des fois, un travailleur n'a pas le choix d'aller en grève. Pourquoi? Pour faire respecter leurs droits.

Je crois que l'autre bord devrait comprendre que pour des travailleurs, c'est le seul outil qu'ils ont—d'amener leur employeur en grève—pour faire comprendre que des fois le travail précaire a besoin d'être adressé. Ce monde-là, ils veulent avoir des meilleures conditions de travail. Ils veulent avoir des bénéfices. On se dit les vraies choses : ce sont les bénéficiaires qui sont en cause; c'est seulement une question d'argent.

Arrêtons de se faire ancrer en toutes sortes d'histoires. La raison, c'est que ce monde-là veut de bons jobs. Ils veulent donner de l'enseignement. Les élèves les supportent dans ça, parce qu'ils veulent avoir de bons profs. Ils veulent avoir les professeurs qui amènent ce qu'ils ont pour les études, puis que les professeurs soient capables de le livrer.

Mais quand j'entends qu'on veut mettre dans un projet de loi des précédents qui sont très dangereux dans un milieu de travail, je ne peux pas me lever aujourd'hui et ne rien dire, quand j'ai négocié des conventions collectives et que j'ai vu des abus de pouvoir. Quand on voit un gouvernement qui abuse du pouvoir pour imposer un projet de loi qui va enlever les droits constitutionnels aux travailleurs, je ne peux pas ne rien faire, m'asseoir et ne rien dire. C'est pour ça que je vais voter contre le projet de loi, madame la Présidente.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I return to the member from London West for final comment.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank the members from Scarborough Centre and York Centre, as well as my colleagues the members for Toronto Centre and Mushkegowuk—James Bay for their comments on our remarks.

I certainly agree with the comments from the members for Toronto Centre and Mushkegowuk—James Bay that what we saw with this York University strike was an employer deliberately choosing to wait things out, knowing that they could count on the previous Liberal government and now the Conservative government to bring in legislation so that they could get what they want. This is rewarding an employer for taking this action. It's rewarding an employer's refusal to bargain in good faith, and, as was said, it is an affront to the constitutional rights of workers to engage in free and democratic collective bargaining and reach a negotiated settlement at a bargaining table.

I want to say to the member for Toronto Centre, who talked about students and mental health of students, the TAs and the RAs who are part of CUPE Local 3903 are students too. They are both academic workers and students, and we have to think about their mental health when they don't know from one week to another how much teaching they'll have to do and what kind of unpaid work they will have to do in terms of marking assignments and talking to students. The working conditions for academic workers are the learning conditions for students, and we have to be very cognizant

of that as we look at how to ensure that academic workers have the stable, fulfilling work that everybody in Ontario deserves.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, I'm very pleased to rise and speak to second reading of the Urgent Priorities Act, 2018, and I'm really pleased to focus on the proposed Back to Class Act (York University), 2018, part of the act. This legislation, if passed, would require an end to the deadlocked labour dispute between York University and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3903, CUPE.

Our government for the people is getting to work quickly so people can see real change fast. The sad reality is that many York University students have been out of the classroom for more than 100 days because of this strike by CUPE Local 3903. Speaker, this is an extremely unfortunate situation where the Legislature has to deal with a clear deadlock between York University and two units of CUPE 3903.

Unit number 1 represents graduate teaching assistants who conduct tutorials and labs, teach courses and grade. Then there's unit number 3, representing graduate research assistants who are employed by the university for administrative, clerical or research jobs that generally are not related to their degree. A third unit, unit number 2, represents contract faculty who teach courses, conduct tutorials and labs, and grade. I'm happy to report that unit number 2 recently reached an agreement with York University and is back to work with all outstanding items going to voluntary interest arbitration.

A clear deadlock affecting units number 1 and 3 has come about in this strike despite extensive attempts at mediation. The collective agreements between York University and CUPE 3903 expired on August 31, 2017. This strike by approximately 2,700 workers began on March 5, 2018.

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As a result of the strike, the numbers speak for themselves:

Over 45,000 students are missing course grades.

Thirty-seven thousand and one hundred students have at least one course taught or supported by a unit 1 member. That works out to about 92,500 enrollments at York.

Approximately 20% of students who applied to graduate this past June were not able to graduate. This includes 363 nursing students who needed to complete their practicums.

More than 12,000 students dropped courses because they could not wait any longer for remediation and had to go to summer jobs and other commitments.

Getting these students back to class is a priority for our government. We have heard loud and clear from the people of Ontario, particularly impacted students and their families, that this strike has gone on far too long. Despite extensive attempts at mediation, this is now the

longest post-secondary strike in Canadian history. This has to end now. This strike is hurting students and their families. We cannot let this continue.

Speaker, I think everyone in this House agrees that it is only in special circumstances that government intervention should even occur. Our government respects and believes in the collective bargaining process and yet here we are, debating back-to-work legislation.

Our government is focused on putting everyday workers and families first. At the Ministry of Labour, we have professionals who work with unions and employers to help them resolve their differences. At all times, we are available to help the parties craft agreements that meet the needs of both sides.

Over 97% of all collective agreements in Ontario are settled without a strike. In fact, the majority of university collective agreements are achieved without a work stoppage. It is our belief that the best agreements are settled at the bargaining table. The Ministry of Labour conciliation officers and mediators have been working with both parties since last December to achieve a negotiated agreement. Yet they could not break the impasse.

In March, York University formally requested that the Ministry of Labour conduct a last-offer vote under section 42 of the Labour Relations Act. The vote was conducted by electronic balloting, and the employees were able to cast their ballot between April 6 and April 9. All three bargaining units rejected their respective offers. In May, an independent, neutral industrial inquiry commission confirmed that the parties were deadlocked. The commission was conducted by an independent third party, William Kaplan, a highly regarded arbitrator.

Mr. Kaplan conducted a thorough review and came up with an inescapable conclusion about the current situation at York University. I'll quote from his report: "Free collective bargaining has failed. There is no reason to believe that it will succeed in the future through the prolongation of the labour dispute, and every reason to conclude that it will not. It is, accordingly, my primary and most time-sensitive recommendation to the minister that he"—and I will add "she"—"call upon the parties to enter into consensual interest arbitration: for their own good, and for the good of thousands of students and the university. York University has indicated its willingness to do so. Failing consensual interest arbitration, and assuming the continuation of this dispute, legislative intervention imposing interest arbitration will almost certainly be necessary."

This, Speaker, is from a neutral, independent third party. It's now mid-July and the parties remain deadlocked. There is no negotiated solution in sight. This deadlock and the adverse effect on students have left us with no alternative. We have introduced this legislation to end the strike and send the issues in dispute to a mediator-arbitrator for resolution.

Madam Speaker, it would be irresponsible of us in this Legislature to allow the labour disruption at York University to continue and ignore the many serious ongoing adverse impacts on students. For these students, the

burden of this labour disruption is falling acutely and severely upon them. It is unacceptable when you consider that approximately 76% of York's student population have had one or more courses adversely impacted by the labour disruption. I'm going to repeat that: 76% of York's student population have had one or more courses adversely impacted by this labour disruption.

This is a very large university. Lectures were cancelled. Labs were closed. For these students, full access to their classes was necessary for successful completion of their academic year. Nursing clinical placements and non-graduating-year teaching placements, mandatory components of the programs, have been suspended. This has jeopardized the completion of the academic year for these students. The burden of this labour disruption is falling acutely and severely upon them.

York University students living in and near my Thornhill riding have reached out to me to tell me the impact that this strike is having upon them. Shoshana, a student who values her education and academic reputation, has found the strike to be overwhelmingly stressful. She has yet to receive grades for work she turned in at the beginning of March. As a result, she is left feeling that students are just pawns and collateral damage in this negotiation. She hopes that the two sides can resolve the strike and work together to help students return to their normal learning environment.

Celia told me that the uncertainty of the ongoing strike with no end in sight has drastically affected her ability to make money this summer because she had concerns about taking on a job and having to quit to return to class.

Finally, for Judy, who came to Canada with her family at the age of seven from South Korea, this is the third strike she has endured in the last 10 years as a student at York. She returned to York last fall for a certificate program to improve her standing in the labour market and enhance her ability to get a better job. Unfortunately, her program has been completely derailed because of the strike, now the longest post-secondary strike in Canadian history.

Madam Speaker, this is not a strike at an ordinary business where consumers can find the goods and services they need from other suppliers. Many of these students have no other choices in terms of post-secondary schooling for this year. Many, perhaps most of them have already paid their tuition in advance and in full. They are looking to us for assistance. We need to help them, and we need to help them now. Their futures are literally in our hands.

The continuation of this dispute and the resulting disruption in education and its corresponding effects give rise to serious public interest concerns. For these reasons, we are acting decisively and fairly to restore normal operations at York University. As a government, we cannot stand idly by when, even after extensive attempts at negotiation and mediation and a strike that has continued for more than a 100 days, there remains a clear deadlock between the parties, endangering the academic year for thousands of students.

If passed, the Back to Class Act (York University) would require an end to the ongoing work stoppage at York University immediately upon royal assent. Let me provide all of you here in the Legislature with some of the details on what this means. Employees would be required to resume their duties without delay, and York University would be required to resume normal operations. There would also be a ban on any further strike or lockout with respect to this round of collective bargaining. Any action to call, authorize, threaten, counsel, procure, support or encourage a strike or lockout would also be illegal.

If York University and CUPE 3903 have not executed a collective agreement before the day that the act receives royal assent, all outstanding issues in dispute between them would be referred to a mediator-arbitrator for resolution. York University and CUPE would have five days following royal assent to agree upon the appointment of a mediator-arbitrator and to notify the Minister of Labour. If they are unable to agree, a mediator-arbitrator would be appointed by the Minister of Labour.

The mediator-arbitrator would have the exclusive power to determine all matters necessary to conclude a new collective agreement and would also have the ability to assist the parties in settling any remaining matter. In determining the method of arbitration, the mediator-arbitrator can use the method of dispute resolution that he or she considers appropriate in the circumstances. Generally, the arbitrator would begin work within 30 days of the appointment and be required to make the decision within 90 days. The decision would address all matters necessary to conclude a new collective agreement.

In making the award, the arbitrator would be required to take into consideration some standard guidelines, including the employer's ability to pay and contract terms for other similarly situated employees. The mediator-arbitrator's award would be final and binding on York University, CUPE 3903 and all employees who are in the affected bargaining units.

Nothing in the act would stop both sides from continuing to bargain, and they would be encouraged to do so. If the parties reached a new collective agreement, the dispute resolution process would be terminated. Until a new collective agreement is in place, the terms and conditions of employment that applied the day before a strike became lawful would continue to apply with respect to the employees in the affected bargaining units represented by CUPE 3903, unless York University and CUPE 3903 agree otherwise.

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There are significant financial consequences for non-compliance with this legislation. Failure to comply with the provisions of the proposed act that require the termination of lockouts and strikes and prohibit them from occurring would result in maximum fines of up to \$25,000 a day for a union or employer and \$2,000 a day for an individual.

The good news is that in the meantime York students will be back in class receiving the excellent post-

secondary instruction that the university offers and that our students need to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Madam Speaker, post-secondary education serves a critical public function. A lengthy extension or loss of an academic year has significant personal, educational, social and financial implications for students and their families. As well, there are serious organizational and economic impacts on the broader public and employers. These negative consequences may be long-term in nature, and the repercussions could extend beyond the parties in dispute, the students and their families. The continuation of these disputes and the resulting disruption in education and its corresponding effects give rise to serious public interest concerns. The interests of students, families and the broader community require that these disputes be resolved. They are desperately looking to us for help right now.

Our government for the people is a government of respect. We respect students, families and workers. This legislation, if passed, would allow students to complete their classes and ensure the fall semester isn't disrupted. We want tens of thousands of students impacted by the strike, as well as new first-year students, to be able to continue their education at York University. That's why all my colleagues on this side of the House and I are urging all members to grant speedy passage of this proposed legislation. The public interest demands that we do this expeditiously.

Obviously, it has been a while since I myself was in university, but I recall how stressful it was to start university, to go out of town, to register for courses, to figure out the books. I did not have to go through a strike during my time at the University of Waterloo. I cannot imagine what these students and their families are going through. I have two children who graduated university. I have two now at the University of Guelph. It's difficult enough for our students to juggle university, part-time employment, summer employment, course selection and planning for the future. They have friends at other universities who are going on with their scheduled courses, who are able to graduate, who are able to get jobs, while these students and their families are really paying the price because this settlement was not negotiated quickly.

Many of us were here before the Legislature got up, before the writ dropped, before we went into election mode. We were here and we saw that the Liberals just did not seem to take this matter seriously enough. We did not see a quick end to the strike. The students were calling all of our constituency offices. The students were certainly at the forefront of my mind when the strike was going on, week after week. We knew an election was coming. We knew something had to be done quickly. What the Liberal government did is, they tried to get unanimous consent right before the writ dropped. Instead of proceeding with a piece of legislation early on, they just figured they could have it both ways and blame the NDP—because they knew the NDP would never agree to unanimous consent on a piece of legislation like this.

I would just ask everybody here to think of the students at York. This is the problem: Too often, until we see a family, a name, a picture in the news in a tragedy or a difficult situation, we just don't have the same empathy. So I would ask everybody to remember Shoshana, Celia, Judy; all of the tens of thousands of students at York University and their families, who scrimped and saved so that they could go to university, so that they could get an education; the employers who are counting on those students to come and work for them; and the future of these students. I'm concerned with the students who dropped courses and stopped going to school. Will they pick it up again? Because we all know that it's not easy if you stop your education. You lose focus, and it's very hard to get back into it. I would just urge all the students and their families to look at the future and to not get dejected. We're going to end the strike quickly and reasonably.

I hope that the university is working with the unions and with the teaching assistants, that the students are getting back to class quickly and that everybody is going to look to the future and consider the students, consider their families and consider what's in the benefit of the broader community, and to work on having better contracts in place, to negotiate the contracts sooner and not wait until things become a strike situation.

I think that we're having a healthy debate here in the Legislature. This is what we're here for. We are getting back to work very quickly after an election period. I know it's hard for many. I congratulate everybody who got elected. I haven't managed to meet everybody yet, but I congratulate everybody. I know it's hard to all of a sudden be coming into a Legislature. It's a new job. You may not have been here before. Everybody's learning how it works in terms of the rotations, the questions and comments and things like that, and I know it's hard to get into a big piece of legislation like this, which is serious, important and complicated.

I hope people are putting aside their partisan politics. After an election, it's hard, because everybody is very pumped up. But I hope that people are really sitting down and considering the future of our students, of our children—the future generation, the future employees of Ontario—and that we're putting their interests at the forefront of this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Be seated, please. Questions and comments?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I want to speak to section 3 of the bill. I'd like to speak from personal experience. I was a sessional at Ryerson University for a number of years, and I taught a subject that I loved. I worked many hours more than I was paid, as many sessional workers do. Typically, if you're a sessional, you get paid for maybe 12 hours of work a week to deliver a class, and that includes so many pieces of it, from writing reference letters, to preparing the best syllabus you can, to marking

assignments, to helping people with their grammar and their writing skills—which is a common experience for many sessional instructors—to providing advice to people who want to get into the workforce that you're going into, to being available to students.

I worked, as I mentioned, many more hours than I was paid. It's something that you do because you love it. I chose to leave sessional teaching not because of the experience in the classroom and teaching so many of the wonderful students; I left because of the precarious nature of the work. Typically, you are hired maybe three weeks to a few days before your course is supposed to begin, and then you have to scramble as quickly as you can to create the best syllabus that you can within the limited time that you have available. Students suffer as a result of that, and it's difficult to build a life and a career and become the best teacher that you can with that kind of precarious work.

When we look at what's happening at York University and the negotiations, we know that the precarious nature of teaching is one of the key sticking points in the negotiations. What we also know is that this bill does nothing to address one of those key sticking points, which is the precarious nature of the work. That is why I am opposed to this bill. I call on this government to look at more of the root causes and issues that led to the strike in the first place, like a lack of funding to universities.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further questions and comments? I recognize the President of the Treasury Board.

Applause.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess I've got a few friends.

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Thank you for the comments. This bill is very important. In fact, in my riding of Pickering-Uxbridge, I met a woman who, for the second time, was hurt by the strike at York University. She told me about the anxiety of not only having to worry about final exams, but we have big youth unemployment in Durham and she was very concerned about finding a job. So it was a double level of anxiety for her.

I am somewhat shocked to hear about the numbers of people: 363 nurses who can't graduate—we need nurses—and 12,000 dropped courses. This hurts. When we hear things about what's going on with the strike at York University, there are thousands and thousands of students who are suffering terribly from this strike.

I also think that—hearing from my other colleague, the other member, about the last strike going on, the second-longest is from 1970. This is not a common occurrence. Something has to be done. I'm proud of being able to stand forward today and talk about the need for getting our students back to classes to take away some of the stress.

We all know being young is a tough time. There are a lot of mental health and addiction concerns at that age. I think we are doing the right thing by putting forward this legislation so we can allow our students and our children

and youth who are going to build this province and bring it back—that's very important to all of us and very important to the people in my constituency. I'm very proud to support this bill and will continue to support efforts to get our students back to school.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to address the hydro component of the bill. The issue here is that like so many things that I have heard from the Conservative government—the Ford government—over the last two weeks, it only deals with the symptom of the problem without dealing with the root of the problem. The root of the problem is the privatization of Hydro One, and now Ontario Hydro.

I just want to give a little bit of a history lesson. Ontario Hydro was started in 1906 by Adam Beck. He managed to coerce the Premier at the time, Premier Whitney, to create Ontario Hydro, to create a public utility because it would give—and the logo was, at the time—"Power at Cost." It would provide residents of Ontario with low-cost electricity, and it would also provide businesses in Ontario with a competitive advantage over their American competitors so that we would have lower electricity rates.

In the early 1900s, electricity, because it started as a private enterprise—the rates were 10 cents a kilowatt hour. When Adam Beck nationalized it, the rates went down to four cents a kilowatt hour and they stayed in that range until 1995. I will point out that Adam Beck and Premier Whitney were both Conservatives.

In the early 1990s, the Conservative Party got taken over by these right-wing ideologues who believe that everything should be run by the private sector, even if it provides us with a competitive disadvantage. The former Conservative government broke up Ontario Hydro in the mid-1990s to set it up for sale. That was a sale that was started by the Conservative government and finished by the Liberal government. And now this government, the Ford government, is trying to deal with just one symptom that has come out of that policy. So the real root of the problem is the privatization of Hydro One, and we need to take it back into public hands.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Stan Cho: I, like the member opposite from Toronto–Danforth, was fortunate enough to have an incredibly great campaign team during the election that didn't let me spend a lot of time in the campaign office. In fact, they would get physical sometimes and they would push me out the door. The result of that was that I got to talk at 40,000 doors in Willowdale, and I got to hear some really great stories. Unfortunately, I had to hear some sad ones and, like my esteemed colleagues in government, I heard some very sad stories from students.

The member from Thornhill brought up Shoshana and Judy. I would like to throw another name in there. Her name is Sara M. She sent me a very, very long email on the eve of June 7, not just congratulating me on the

election victory, but telling me her story. In her first year, York University went on strike. In her last year, York University went on strike. The result of that was that she was unable to enter her master's degree program, because she graduated with a three-year degree, not a four-year degree. She has yet to find employment.

My heart breaks for the young people of today. Not only have we burdened them with an increased cost of living, from increased hydro costs, gas costs; they have an enormous skills gap even if they can graduate. We always say that they're the leaders of tomorrow. Well, I disagree. They're the leaders of today, and we are crippling them when we should be helping them.

So I ask that we acknowledge that the right to collective bargaining is important, but when two sides cannot come to an agreement, it must be stopped, because it is at the expense of our youth today.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Be seated, please.

I return to the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: It's fun to see all the exercise we're getting on this side of the House, giving standing ovations even for questions and comments. We're very enthusiastic. One of the things we want to see is this bill passed, and quickly.

I want to thank the member from University–Rosedale, the President of the Treasury Board, the member from Spadina–Fort York and, of course, my colleague the member from Willowdale for their comments.

I think that we are getting into the spirit here, in this debate, in terms of thinking about not just the workers in this situation but the students and their families. After this dispute is resolved and the students are back at work at York, I'm hoping that there is going to be serious discussion at York University and the other universities about how to prevent, in the future, strikes like this. I think none of us want to be back here in another three years, discussing back-to-work legislation for another strike at York or any other university. I really hope that the students are going to be at the forefront of the discussions.

I know a lot of the students are concerned about the state of their TAs. They support their professors; they support their TAs. It shouldn't be this tug-of-war all the time between the students on the one hand, the administrators, the TAs and the professors. If, within a community at a university, they can't have the adult discussions and work on how to have contract negotiations take place in a reasonable manner so that they don't go out on strike, I can't imagine where that can happen.

I hope that they're going to be at the forefront, and I'm hoping the Ministry of Labour will help them to get there.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: It's my great pleasure to rise and give my maiden speech in this House. It's an opportunity for me to thank my constituents and also tell you a little

bit more about what I heard in Ottawa Centre. But, Madam Speaker, I intend to make reference to many of the things under discussion in this bill that we are debating today.

I want to begin the right way, by thanking the Indigenous peoples of this territory around which this chamber is based. I want to thank the Indigenous peoples where I come from, the Algonquin peoples—and the wampum belts and the history that exists between all the peoples of Ottawa Centre.

I remember really well, when I ran for the nomination—and maybe my friends on this side of the House and my friends on the other side of the House experienced this—the incredible stress that comes with a nomination race.

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In Ottawa Centre, the nomination race was contested by what I believe to be four very fine people—with some immodesty, I'm including myself in that list—three other people who, together, drew a nomination meeting of over 650 people. That meeting was opened by Annie Smith St-Georges, one of the most respected Algonquin elders of our territory. She met me in the hallway and she said to me, "Joel, are you worried? Are you okay?"

She'd told me beforehand, because we're friends, that she couldn't go out of her way to talk to me, that she thought it would be discriminatory to the other candidates. But she could tell I was a little nervous—650 people in a room, a lot on the line, a lot of work. I had to confess to her, rather like even now, "Yes, Annie, I'm worried. I'm worried I'm going to stumble. A lot of people have put hope in me. A lot of people have put in their time and resources and energy and passion throughout the campaign I'm so proud to be a part of. I am worried."

And she smiled and she said—advice I'd like to share with you, Mr. Speaker, and through you, to the whole House—"So what you're telling me, Joel, is that you have butterflies in your stomach." And I said, "Yes, Annie, I do. I have butterflies in my stomach." She said, "Joel, open up your mouth and let those butterflies fly."

Mr. Speaker, from that moment, when I swallowed hard and got up in front of that room, I was so honoured to speak to the members of Ottawa Centre and to earn their respect.

You know, for NDPers, Ottawa Centre is very special territory. This is the land of Ed Broadbent; It's the land of Paul Dewar and Marion Dewar; Evelyn Gigantes, who sat in this chamber for so long; and names maybe members here haven't heard about that I want to talk about, people like Dr. Eleanor Sutherland, one of Canada's first women physicians, who was there in Swift Current when the first public hospital was opened. That was her first job as a medical student, to go to Swift Current and stand there with Tommy Douglas.

Let me tell my friends opposite, Mr. Speaker, through you, that there were more than a few people inconvenienced in the province of Saskatchewan when public medicare was introduced. The entire medical profession

went on strike for their very narrow-minded interests at the time, I should say—my friend Eleanor being the exception to the rule.

But the people of Saskatchewan showed us values that gave birth to the party I'm so proud to be a part of today. They showed us that working together, not rebating taxpayers some tiny piece of a larger pie, but working together, we can do amazing things.

In Ottawa Centre, that history is present. It's there every day. I have such a wonderful constituency. It's geographically the largest urban centre in Canada. To take my cargo bike from one side to the other was a real workout; it kept me in shape in the campaign.

We have great innovators in our riding. We have people who innovate on energy and renewable energy: the Ottawa Renewable Energy Co-operative.

We have people who innovate on food security: the Parkdale Food Centre, which doesn't just help people, particularly marginalized people, get a square meal; it teaches people, newcomers to our country, people on the Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Works, who I was proud to ask a question for earlier today, how to not only find some food that they so desperately need but it's a community kitchen. They teach people how to cook breakfast and lunch and dinner five days a week, sometimes six days a week. It's a revolutionary approach to food security. And they live in this riding.

Causeway, another unbelievable social enterprise in our riding not far from the Parkdale Food Centre, is an existing temporary employment placement agency specifically for differently abled people. The unemployment rate can reach up to 50%, 60%, sometimes 70% for people who are simply differently abled, perfectly skilled, perfectly talented, but disadvantaged by our modern labour market. Causeway exists for them.

This gives you a flavour of my neighbourhood. It gives you a flavour of who I'm so proud to serve.

I also want to thank my family. The reason I am able to stand in this place is because the person I'm married to decided it was okay for her partner to be unemployed for eight months. It was okay. She would shoulder the burden. I was available for the after-school and preschool pick-ups a little bit more before the pre-writ time, but it was okay for her to do that. Clare Roscoe is the reason I'm here, and my kids: Emery, my son, almost seven years old, seven years old next Thursday, and my daughter, Adele, who right now is in Ontario's wild. She's in Algonquin Park doing a canoe camping trip with musical theatre. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker? Singing for breakfast and lunch and supper and learning about our wilderness. I think many of us are jealous of that experience. But that's what you get in Ontario. You get wonderful wildness in Ontario. I'm so thankful for my family.

I'm thankful for my parents, Rosemary and Reg Harden. My mom was here in Toronto and her first marriage fell apart and she went back home to eastern Ontario. Some of you will know where I'm from, a little town called Vankleek Hill, Ontario: 1,800 people, home

of a very famous beer company, now a worker co-operative called Beau's All Natural beer. That's where I'm from. That's where, when my mom's marriage fell apart in this city, she moved back to her parents'.

I was raised in a Presbyterian church by Conservative voters—I will say to you, Speaker, and to my friends on the opposite aisle—who taught me the value of self-reliance and hard work and respect and paying your bills and being honest. I believe all of those people can identify with that.

Interestingly enough, the lovely person I married—my mother-in-law, Pat Roscoe, who I've been so privileged to get to know, is a lifelong Conservative voter, although more recently she turned to the NDP, thanks to me. Pat Roscoe's father, Ronald Martland, served on the Supreme Court of Canada and went to school with David Lewis, whose grandson, Avi Lewis, is one of my friends. Through all of these relationships and the support they have given me, I have come to understand how important community really is. I certainly wouldn't be here without my family, my parents, my mother-in-law and my grandparents.

But I want to mention my campaign team too.

We all have the story where we know that real leadership is collective leadership. We get to make speeches and be in the public eye, but behind us are dozens, hundreds, thousands of people. That's absolutely the case with me.

When we got through that nomination race, I made one phone call. That phone call was to Jill O'Reilly, who was the leader of Ottawa ACORN, a low-income-persons' group in Ottawa that went from 400 people, when Jill started it 14 years ago, to now 24,000 people in the city of Ottawa. They are the group in the city that makes sure that landlords are held accountable on bedbugs, and makes sure that the housing stock is in good condition and public transit has low-income passes. So I knew Jill, and I knew the kind of door-knocking campaign that I wanted to engage in, and Jill was there. She quit her job just like I quit mine, and we were off to the races.

Peyton Veitch—who I think is watching this through closed-circuit in the office—our lead organizer, also gave a lot to our campaign. He's a former national treasurer of the Canadian Federation of Students, and like me, majorly inspired by what Jeremy Corbyn's group has been able to achieve in England through grassroots organizing strategy. Thank you, Peyton.

Thank you, Miles Krauter, who many people won't know here. Miles is one of those silent soldiers, who exist in the community association, who find people. I was the fifth person Miles tried to persuade to run for the nomination. I'm proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that he asked four women and one trans person before me, because that's the kind of person Miles is. Miles wanted a diverse riding, so he found the overeducated white guy in the end. Nonetheless, I thank you, Miles.

I want to end, before I segue to more substantive topics that we're talking about in legislation, by thanking

Yasir Naqvi. Yasir and I may not agree on policy issues, but I will say to you and the House, Speaker, that I was impressed. I learned, as we knocked on tens of thousands of doors with a volunteer team that grew to be, at its highest, more than 1,200 people. I met people Yasir helped. I met seniors he had helped to get access to medications. I met people who had used his office to intervene with unfairness in their condo associations. I met people who had OSAP flaws in their applications that his office helped.

What I'm telling our friends in this assembly, through you, Speaker, is that our office is committing to continue to stay that engaged. We will knock on doors on the weekend. We will hold monthly town halls. The one that we are holding in September, if any of you happen to be in our neighbourhood, is on cannabis policy, because I'm actually quite worried, given conversations I've had with our mayor and with the police, that we haven't really thought about all elements of what the federal moment of legalization will mean for our city.

I have talked to too many veterans who are worried about needing ready access to their medicines. I have talked to too many dispensaries that are trying to help people but are finding themselves criminalized. Millions of dollars of police resources are being spent criminalizing a problem that needs a social solution.

I'm looking forward to a public conversation in the riding, Speaker, on Monday about that, where I don't pretend to know the answers, but I open up the resources of my office to bring experts into the room so that they can educate me. Hopefully, I'll turn some of those resources back to this chamber so that we can have an adult conversation on cannabis.

I also want to say a couple of things about this chamber, for me, and why it's kind of culturally interesting being in here.

My first experience being in this chamber was being right up there. I went there, in the gallery, in 1995, when the previous Conservative government, led by Mike Harris, decided to cut social assistance rates by 22%.

I was a graduate student at York University. I was just trying to do my work, get my scholarship applications and be the good student, be a high achiever. But from the moment that announcement was made in September 1995, I couldn't help but think of my youth on social assistance for four years, with my mom and my brother and me. I couldn't help but think of what it must be like to have groceries disappearing from your shelf, because living on social assistance in the late 1970s and 1980s was a lot different than doing it today. This is something that's been confirmed for me at the door.

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I'll admit to losing my mental capacities. I left York University. I jumped on the bus to Downsview—it's a subway now, isn't it? Anyway, I took the subway down here to Queen's Park. I sat in that Legislature and I didn't know what I was going to do. When the Premier got up, I started yelling. I started yelling and I said, "Why are you doing this to poor people? Why are you taking a fifth of their income away? How is this going to help?"

At that point, a nice gentleman escorted me out. You know what the funny thing is? The first day I reported for work in this building, I met him again. He said, “Mr. Harden, do you remember me?” I said, “Yes.” “There won’t be any trouble today, will there, Mr. Harden?” I said, “In the security environment right now, would I get tasered for that kind of thing?” He said, “Just don’t make me go there.”

This place has cultural significance for me because it was the beginning of my activist journey. It was when I tried to take the humanity I was raised with and apply it in practice.

I was taken to some holding place somewhere in this building and, 20 minutes later, emerged to a bunch of reporters who wanted to know who I was and what I was doing. I think I had green hair and red Doc Martens at the time. I said, “I’m tired of people beating up on the poor. It doesn’t help.”

Nobody wants to be on Ontario Works. For people who are on the Ontario Disability Support Program, they’re there because they have no other means. It’s sad that in 2018, we legislate poverty in this province. That is what we do.

When I did that, it set in motion a chain of events for me that brought me to this place today. What I’ll try to do in this job, working with my friends here in our caucus but also across the aisle, is try to resurrect some humanity in this business.

I don’t mind telling you that I was pretty ir retrievable for about four or five years after doing that act. It took two people to make me feel hopeful about politics again, and their names were Jack Layton and Olivia Chow. They came up to York and they said, “We’re going to talk to Mayor Mel Lastman’s staff about the fiscal case for harm reduction and affordable housing. Who’s in?” I remember smirking at the time, thinking, “Oh, well, this could be interesting. Why don’t I go?” I saw Jack and Olivia and a bunch of really articulate people meet with Mel Lastman’s staff, meet with the mayor’s staff, and ask the mayor, “What’s more cost-effective for the city? We’ll make the ethical case in a minute, but what’s more cost-effective for the city: a first responder, a police officer, an EMS bus and an emergency room on a rotating basis for the same folks—humiliating for everyone involved—or giving somebody access to affordable housing, giving somebody access to a safe injection site or other forms of harm reduction, giving somebody access to a centre”—like the centre in my riding, the Causeway—“which will give people a pathway to employment, which will give people the opportunity for self-reliance?” I saw Mayor Mel Lastman’s staff and the mayor himself slowly warm to this.

I came to learn that Jack and Olivia were famous for this. They were famous for trying to figure out ways in which to build large coalitions to get things done.

There have been a lot of fireworks in this chamber this week. We’ve all picked up our partisan cudgels and attempted to beat the snot out of each other. I guess that’s part of the business. But what I’m trying to tell the

House, Mr. Speaker, through you, is that I also think we can get stuff done together.

When I think about schedule 3 of this bill and the York University strike, and I think about the stakes for contract instructors, teaching assistants and graduate assistants—and I’ve worked in that industry for at least a decade—I see a government, sadly—I’m sorry, my friends—following the lead of the Liberal government, which legislated college educators back to work while leaving in place this infrastructure of entitlement at the top of the college sector.

Do you know that they went to the Premier of the day? They went to Premier Wynne and they asked her the year before that strike for pay increases of between 50% and 70%. It would have given Cheryl Jensen at Algonquin a \$48,000 pay increase. When I met with the academic and support staff at Algonquin in my riding, they effectively said, “That’s the median wage on our campus.” Cheryl Jensen felt she was entitled to a wage increase of effectively the median wage on this campus.

I can tell you the joke, having taught for four years in legal studies at Carleton University, Mr. Speaker. The joke on our campus was that there’s a tree somewhere at Carleton University that grows associate vice-presidents, because a decade ago there were three of them, and now I believe the number is 16. There is massive bloat in the administrative sector. I’ll invite my friends in this House to check out our Twitter feed, because Peyton Veitch, the talented person I spoke about earlier, has put an infographic there which documents that York has had, since the year 2000, a 36% increase in enrolment, but a 63% increase in the size of upper administration—63%.

If you want to talk about a gravy train, Mr. Speaker, if you want to talk about waste, if you want to talk about bringing sense to the public finances—you’re legislating already precarious workers back to a situation presided over by a bunch of academic feudal lords who care nothing for the workers of that university. I say that confidently, because they only bargained with them for 15 minutes, and constantly requested interest arbitration instead. That is not leadership. That’s not leadership.

I would hope that the government, when it engages in bargaining with its employees, bargains for more than 15 minutes. I would hope you do. That would seem to be in good faith. But you’re legislating an end to a strike where there has never been bargaining in good faith, in my opinion—never. And you’re setting a precedent; there will be others that will test you after this.

I ask you to consider: Is it right? Or, if you truly believe in the front-line workers, if you truly believe in making sure that the people’s money is spent wisely—and there will be support for that, I believe, in this entire House—let’s do a true look at how these palaces are being built with the people’s money.

Some other time, at some other point in the 42nd session, I hope I get to talk about the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, presided over by a guy making a million dollars denying people benefits. I’ve talked to a firefighter in my riding with post-traumatic stress who

has been denied benefits by an organization presided over by somebody making a million bucks. If we're for the people, if we're for making sure the public's money is spent wisely, let's remember that we have a common interest here.

Those of us on this side of the House will hear the rhetoric, but we'll watch the action more, right? If we hear the rhetoric about the six-million-dollar man who becomes the nine-million-dollar man, we're going to become skeptical, right? If we hear the rhetoric about wanting to send students back to work in good environments and we know the environments are poor to work in and advantage already overcompensated, lavished executives, we're going to be skeptical.

But if you actually take the magnanimous move to look at the public finances in a systematic way and ensure, for the sake of argument, that no public-sector official makes more than the Premier of this province—seems like a reasonable threshold to me—let's talk. Let's make sure that everybody who works for a living in this province has respect. If we can do that, with the roots that I'm from and that I've tried to communicate in this speech to you today, I'll feel like I'm working with colleagues on many sides of the aisle. I think that should be our goal. I think the people of Ontario deserve no less.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity, all of you, to be your colleague.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Be seated, please. Questions and comments?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Madam Speaker, I'm proud of my youth-driven campaign with a lot of students. Some of them are from York University. Day in and day out, these students told me and told our residents that they have been neglected. Students have been neglected by the previous government, the Liberal government. We have to act decisively and certainly to ensure that our students are back to school, get their final grades and move forward with their higher education and careers.

Madam Speaker, we are the government for all the people. Ontarians made their intentions loud and clear by electing 76 PC members to deliver our mandate. I am proud to be part of this government that is finally putting students first.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jill Andrew: What I'd like to say today is a general comment around the piece of privatization. When we privatize public resources, public services, we are taking power away from Ontarians, we are taking power away from the residents, my residents in Toronto—St. Paul's, the people whose doors I knocked on—thousands of them—who dreamed of a day when they didn't have to choose between keeping the lights on, reading their newspaper or having dinner. When we privatize public resources, we hurt families. We take jobs away. We take away chances to dream.

I want to thank Joel, my colleague, for his inspirational speech—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I just remind the member that we don't use members' names—just ridings.

Ms. Jill Andrew: My apologies, Madam Speaker.

I would like to thank my colleague from Ottawa Centre, who spoke about dreams that started right here. We need to create an Ontario—we all want to create this in our ridings—where dreams can happen. We don't want dreams to be deferred.

As I have thought about throughout today, and as some of my colleagues have said, we have to address the root causes of poverty, the root causes of violence, the root causes of exclusion in schools, in universities and colleges.

We have to do better. Doing better means putting our people first. I am so proud to be a member of the NDP, where I know we're putting people first—the most marginalized of people, the ones who need their voices to be heard the loudest.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Smith: My colleague from Ottawa Centre spoke about one thing that stuck out to me, and that was legislating poverty. In 2015, Georgetown University released a study that showed that in the United States—it's very similar to Canada, but it is in the United States—a bachelor's degree holder earned \$17,000 more per year than someone who only held a diploma. When we're talking about legislating poverty—we are legislating wealth. We're giving those students the opportunity to earn \$765,000 more by going back to school.

In 1991, I was a student at Trent University, and I lived through a university strike. I can tell you how devastating it was for me. I completed my degree, my bachelor of science, in 2015. It took me 25 years to get my bachelor degree, in part because I lost a year due to a strike.

The damage that we're doing to those students is irreparable, by not letting them go back to school.

We can talk about what's fair and what's not fair—it's not fair to have those students lose \$765,000 over their lifetime simply because we don't want to offend someone.

We need to pass this legislation. We need to make sure that those students go back to school and reach their full potential.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further questions and comments? I recognize the member from Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think this is your first time in the chair, so congratulations. It's great to see you there.

I just wanted to comment for a moment on something that my colleague from Ottawa Centre mentioned. He was talking a lot about how he became an activist, and it was a very similar story to my own. I think we are kind of contemporaries that way, and we knew each other

back then. I think when we were elected here—what has been striking to those of us who come from that background is the truly undemocratic nature of some pieces of legislation, like this one, that come forward in this House, which is essentially an omnibus bill.

I'm constantly amazed that government would not allow for real and meaningful debate of legislation like this—legislation that has deep implications for so many people. By piling all of these issues, these bills, together in one, it's really preventing the kind of considered debate and discussion that, really, it merits.

I do want to mention a couple of things, particularly regarding this bill. Schedule 2: We have seen this show before—the comedy, the drama, the horror, the \$1.1 billion that it was going to cost a generation of Ontarians when the Liberals cancelled their gas plant. And yet, here, this government is going to lay that kind of cost on the shoulders of future generations again.

The message that that's going to send to businesses that want to invest—that they say they want to invest in this province, but who are going to feel the chill. That worries me, because I think we all believe that we need a strong economy and we need to attract business here. I think the chill that's going to be sent out by that legislation is really frightening. I hope and I wish we had more opportunity to debate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I return to the member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: I thank all of my colleagues for their comments. I would only say a couple of things to end this.

I'm mindful of what my colleague from Peterborough just said. I actually, through you, Madam Speaker, hope the government does offend somebody. I'm looking for them to offend the firm of Hicks Morley, a predatory legal firm that approaches university administrations and encourages them to rip away aspects of their collective agreement. I hope you offend Hicks Morley.

I hope you offend the offices of the president at York University and tell them you can't treat academic workers this way and expect students to go back to a healthy learning environment.

You can't have colleges in this province have 70% of their faculty be part-time, low-paid instructors and not have a consequence on learning. Do you know the only reason why we still do have high-quality learning in the province of Ontario? Because people who I used to work shoulder to shoulder with on the front lines make it happen anyway. They make it happen anyway. They take the work home at night. They answer the emails at night. As my colleague mentioned, they write reference letters. They work their tails off.

We are asking this government to offend the gravy train purveyors in the public sector, absolutely. Do it. Tell them that you can't treat students, parents and academic workers—please finish that sentence for us—this way. But if you legislate people back to work, if you let the gravy train at York University—and other universities, because we'll see this movie again; I agree with my

colleague—you're sending a message to them: "You can be lazy. You can keep them out on the picket line for as long as you want. We've got your back when it matters. We'll sip lattes with you. We'll sip martinis with you and talk about how we made sure those workers knew their role."

I hope this government believes in its front-line worker rhetoric. This is an opportunity in this strike to do an about-face and say, "Back to the table. Justice for academic workers."

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

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you to the member from Ottawa Centre. His passion there is clearly evident. Unfortunately, I regret to inform him that we will not be sipping martinis in ivory towers. We're going to be on the ground with the people, with the students, having a beer.

Last week, in the speech from the throne, we heard about the government's commitment to work together with and for the people of Ontario, to create unprecedented jobs, growth and prosperity right here in the province of Ontario. We heard about the importance this government places on ensuring everyone gets a fair chance to compete for opportunities and build their careers right here in the province we love.

The ongoing strike at York University and the impact it's having on more than 45,000 students doesn't contribute to the vision of an Ontario where our next generation are being prepared and are being supported for the jobs of tomorrow. How can we send a clear message to the world that Ontario is open for business when we have students who are not able to access the university education they signed up for, they paid for and they're duly entitled to?

1700

Students have been out of the classroom now for 136 days. That's more than 750 learning hours missed. That's not the way to provide prosperity and to create opportunity.

Madam Speaker, this legislation, if passed, is in the best interests of the students of York University. They came to York for a world-class education, and that's exactly what they should get. These are the students who will graduate to become entrepreneurs, job creators and who will build a stronger economy for the future of Ontario.

Ontario has a strong reputation for its world-class education system. The situation that both our Ontario students and international students at York are going through due to the ongoing strike is a blight on that reputation.

Madam Speaker, the Back to Class Act we are discussing today about York University is not merely about resolving a labour dispute. It's about ensuring York University students, whose education has been disrupted since March 5, are able to complete their school year, get on with their education and get on with their lives. The proposed legislation is about students, tens of thousands of students who need to resume their courses.

For more than four months now, York University students have had their studies disrupted. I'll say it again: 136 days of disruption, 750 hours of missed learning time. Even with the return to work of sessional instructors, students continue to face uncertainty and delays in completing their courses. Failing to end the strike before July 23 will delay the beginning of the fall term. This will impact not only the current York students but incoming students who are eager to begin their university education. This is simply unacceptable.

The wide-ranging impacts for those students represent far more than a failure to reach a labour settlement. It represents a failure to give our students the full educational support they need and so deserve.

Going to university should be an enriching time for students, a time when they gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed and thrive in their future careers. It should be a time when their focus and their energy is devoted to learning and to building lifelong positive experiences. This strike has tarnished that experience for tens of thousands of students. Students who expected to complete their studies and start the next phase of their career, the next phase of their lives, now see that future in perilous jeopardy. Their plans to either start working or to continue an advanced degree are now up in the air.

Madam Speaker, students starting at university have seen their first year marked by the uncertainty and disruption this strike has caused for them over the course of the last many months. What should have been a challenging, exciting new phase in their lives as they started their post-secondary education has been challenging for all the wrong reasons.

This strike has undermined the experience of all students who have been affected. Madam Speaker, I will say to the members in this House, not one of us would want a student in our family to be in this situation—not one of us. It cannot continue; it will not continue.

We have heard directly from students who have told us about how this strike is affecting them. I'd like to tell you some of their stories. I'm talking about students like Alissa, who is a dedicated nursing student at York University. She can't finish her degree because she hasn't been able to get her required clinical hours. This strike is fundamentally impeding her ability to move on in her profession, this after years and years of cuts in nursing from the previous Liberal government that have left us with chronic shortages. Shame.

Let me tell you about another student, Sarah, who has had to cut down on planned work hours over the summer in case her classes start up again. She has cancelled plans to go back home to Norfolk county for the summer. She is in limbo. This kind of disruption, this uncertainty for our students, is simply deplorable.

New students are also being affected. First-year student Samantha told us that three of her four classes have been suspended by the university since the strike began, and the instructor of her fourth course went on to cancel all classes. Imagine her disappointment, starting her year with the enthusiasm, with the excitement so

many of us had when we started our studies, only to have things deteriorate to the point that she can't attend class.

Summer students are also being affected. The summer term is offering fewer courses than planned due to labour disruption. The summer term is critical for many students in achieving their goals when they wish to graduate. I know that as a co-op student I very much valued the opportunity to study in the summers. The best and the brightest of our next generation in Ontario, Madam Speaker, who want to learn, who have paid to learn, are being denied the opportunity to learn.

The strike also has impacts on mental health for students. Professor Greenglass, a York University faculty of health member, has done several studies on the effect of strikes on students. According to her work, a university strike is a major stressor for students, affecting all aspects of their lives, increasing anxiety and possibly leading to depression. Post-secondary education can be stressful enough without this added pressure and uncertainty that we are forcing on Ontario students. We want the tens of thousands of students, including new first-year students, to be able to continue their education at York University. This should be an exciting time of growth and learning for these students, not a time of anxiety.

Many students are frustrated with the length of this labour disruption. In fact, Hanaa, a first-year health student, said that she had no choice but to stay at York University. Her program is only offered at York, so she's forced to just wait it out as she looks at the possibility of losing yet another year of university.

Other students are feeling forgotten. They worry about the additional costs and hours, like Libbey, a second-year student. The strike has affected international students who have had to deal with the consequences of the strike far from home and their support network.

For all these reasons and for all the students, as well as their parents and families, it is important that we pass this Back to Class Act.

Ideally, Madam Speaker, agreements are decided at the bargaining table. It's absolutely preferable that the parties involved come to a mutually acceptable agreement. However, after months and months of negotiations and more than two dozen meetings, the parties were unable to come to an agreement. Despite extensive attempts at mediation, this is now the longest post-secondary strike in Canadian history. Needless to say, this is not what anyone wants to make history.

It's obvious that the parties are deadlocked and there seems to be no solution in sight. While the collective bargaining process works well the very vast majority of times, in this particular instance the parties have reached an impasse. We have heard loud and clear from the people of Ontario, especially from students and parents, that this strike has gone on far too long and that the consequences for students have been far too significant to allow this to continue. York students and their families are relying on the government to take decisive action. We've heard them. Our government is acting decisively

and putting our next generation and Ontario students first.

York University has a fine record. Nearly 50,000 students a year choose York, including over 6,000 international students from many different countries around the world. It is the second-largest university in Ontario and the third-largest in Canada. But these past achievements and York's fine record do not help today's students if they are prevented from being in the classroom due to this ongoing labour dispute.

A strike of this magnitude does not just threaten this year's students; it compromises the institution's reputation and the confidence of future students looking to enrol in York University. This legislation, if passed, would allow this year's students to continue with their education in the vital, enriching environment they signed up to partake in. It would allow York University to move forward and repair the impact this strike has had on its reputation so that future students will not be concerned about enrolling and can apply to and attend this excellent university. It would demonstrate that Ontario puts its students first and that we are listening. We're listening to students and their parents, we're listening to the people of Ontario, and we don't want to see their future put on hold. We will not stand by while our next generation's future is put on hold.

1710

This legislation, if passed, would help York and its workers achieve a collective bargaining agreement that they have clearly demonstrated they cannot achieve themselves.

As well, it would help York University return as quickly as possible to restoring business as usual—the business of providing high-quality post-secondary education with a full complement of full-time and contract faculty, graduate research assistants and teaching assistants. It would help York to restore faith to its students. Madam Speaker, these students deserve nothing less.

This legislation, if passed, would allow students to complete their classes and ensure that the fall semester is not disrupted. This legislation, if passed, would permit York University students to return to their studies and let them take their future off the hold button and seize their potential.

Students have already lost too much time and have been subjected to too much stress and anxiety. Many are also bearing a heavy financial burden as a result of the strike. York University students, as compared to the provincial and national average, are more likely to have multiple jobs, part-time jobs. They represent all that is best in our next generation, and we owe it to them to get them back in the classroom.

That is why our government is working with York University's financial aid office to help students receiving OSAP and who are returning to class following this labour disruption. Students who return to their studies to complete outstanding winter course requirements could be eligible for additional financial support through OSAP

for their living expenses. We've heard from them. This is so desperately needed.

This government believes in collective bargaining. This is not a step we take lightly, but neither do we take our responsibility to York University students and our next generation lightly either.

When collective bargaining fails, as it has undoubtedly done in this situation, it is the responsibility of government to take the requisite steps to protect students and their future success. We need to make sure that we act now, to ensure that tens of thousands of promising futures do not continue to be delayed unnecessarily, and to allow Canada's third-largest university to begin what could well be a lengthy process to restore its reputation and re-earn the trust of students, parents and international families.

Post-secondary education is a critical part of preparing the people of Ontario for their future. We want to make sure that all York University students are back in class, so that they can continue their journey to success. This is why our government introduced the Back to Class Act, and this is why we are calling on the Legislature to support it, to get our students back to their studies and to secure the future of Ontario's next generation.

We have committed, as a government, to listen to Ontarians, to make decisions that support them and to meet their needs. We have committed to listening to Alissa, to listening to that young nursing student who is very much worried that her future is in jeopardy.

In this House over the last number of days, we've spoken at length over the challenge our health care system is in. We are at a breaking point with our aging population. It's fundamentally not acceptable that we would allow a whole cadre of nurses, our future health care professionals—that we would delay their education of vital clinical hours. We need more nurses, we need more doctors, we need more health care professionals. So it's our responsibility—it's the responsibility of this government; it's the responsibility of everyone in this House—to ensure that we preserve the future of this next generation, to ensure that we preserve the future of these health care professionals.

We can stand by idly no more as this strike goes on. We will act. This is a government that is committed to acting, and this is what we're doing in the legislation.

We have clearly heard from the students, and we've heard from their parents. We know that students want and need to get back in the classroom at York University.

On behalf of our government, what I would like to say to these students, to their parents, is that we've received your message loud and clear: We hear your struggles. We hear the struggles of these students who are worried about their financial situation, who are worried about their future, who are worried about getting the clinical hours they need. We hear you. We listened to you. On behalf of our government, I want to say, we stand shoulder to shoulder with you, with our next generation. Help is here. This is a government that is very much for the people.

Madam Speaker, when I said yesterday in this House that the future of Alissa, the future of these students—while it's not my future, their future matters to me. The future of our nursing students matters to me. It might not be my parents who will be in the hospital tomorrow, but it might be any one of yours. That matters to me. That matters to my caucus colleagues. That matters to our government. So when we are delaying this vital education that they so desperately need, that they yearn for, that they desire, that they've worked hard for—we will not stand by idly as their future is jeopardized. Our government will not stand by.

We were elected to this place on a strong mandate from the people. That is why we have members on this side; that is why we have members on that side. We were elected on a mandate to act for the people. This is what we are doing. We are decisively acting on hydro.

I heard from the member opposite about the executives, about university presidents. I hope he's so excited, as I am, as are my constituents, as are so many in this House, that we made a promise to the people that we're going to act and restructure the Hydro executive, get rid of the six-million-dollar man. Promise made, promise kept.

A promise we made, a promise equally as important, is to our students, to our future generation, the next generation of Ontarians who will stand up, the next generation of Ontarians who may very well be in this place—we made a commitment to them. We're not going to stand by as we jeopardize our next generation.

This government is acting. This government is going to get the students back in the classroom.

I thank the House.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Glover: I wish to address my comments to the Hydro One section of this and the executive compensation part of that.

The Ford government has said several times in this House that they are “open for business.” This has become one of their tag lines. For somebody who lived through the Harris government, those three words actually bring terror to me, because those are the three words that Harris came into this House with, and the next things he did were: He sold off the 407; he privatized water treatment, which led to the illness of 2,000 people in Walkerton and the deaths of six; and then he broke up Ontario Hydro and began selling off the pieces. So when this government says that they're open for business—it's not good for our business; it's not good for Ontarians.

As soon as the former Conservative government broke up Ontario Hydro and started selling off the pieces, our hydro rates started to go up. We are still suffering from that—not only for us, as residents, but it is a competitive disadvantage that we no longer have a public hydro utility, because for a hundred years it kept our hydro costs low and allowed our businesses to function at a

competitive advantage to our American neighbours. So when they say they are talking about opening Ontario for business, they need to be friendly to Ontario's business.

One of the things that they should be doing, rather than just dealing with the symptom of the executive compensation, is dealing with the root of the problem, which was the privatization of Ontario hydro, and bring it back into public hands.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I was so pleased, and I think my colleagues as well, to hear the new member from Northumberland–Peterborough South. He spoke so passionately and so eloquently and it was riveting. I want to really thank him. I hope he's on duty day with me very often, because it really was a great speech. It really was heartfelt. I'm just so glad to be part of this caucus, our new, expanded caucus: incredibly talented and hard-working individuals.

The member who just spoke and did his hit—Humber River–Black Creek is his riding, I believe. Do I have the right person?

Interjection: Spadina–Fort York.

Mrs. Gila Martow: No, Spadina–Fort York. Sorry, I was off on the map.

He was talking about being open for business. We are open for business. I would just remind everybody here that it's an old expression that we used to hear in our youth, that money doesn't grow on trees, but it's true. Money doesn't grow on trees. We are given the taxpayers' money. Where does the income come from, the government revenue come from? It certainly doesn't grow on trees. It comes from a strong economy. Without a strong economy, we have a big problem.

I think that's what the voters thought about when they put the X on their ballots on June 7. I think they trusted a PC government to ensure that the economy got back on track, that we turned around the ship of the province of Ontario and we moved into a new era where we had a strong economy, we had reliable energy rates and people had employment.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to speak about how this omnibus bill is an affront to workers' rights. The labour movement in Ontario is responsible for many of the rights and privileges that we all enjoy and benefit from. To name a few: weekends, child labour protections, health and safety standards, fair wages and paternity leave. We rely on a strong and healthy labour movement to push us, to help us achieve greater things as a society, to help us strive for equality in our communities and help us to bolster a more productive economy. Without a strong labour movement, we wouldn't have weekends, we wouldn't have paternity leave, children would be labouring in factories and on farms and in mines, and workers would have no health and safety protections.

The right to strike is an integral component of a meaningful collective bargaining process, which, I will remind the members in this House, is protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as part of the right of freedom of association.

Let me be perfectly clear: Precarious workers in academia do not have the same workplace protections that many of us enjoy today. It is shameful, absolutely shameful, that this government is taking away workers' rights to strike in this province through this bill, and I stand here firmly opposed against it today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: We have been debating this issue, and I just wanted to share my personal experience, as I have been the victim of such a strike during the time when I was in university myself.

I remember the time, the anxiety, because I was like: Am I going to be able to finish my school year or not? Or do I have to get another tuition fee to increase that year moving forward? I remember the fourth-year students who were so worried about the fact that they couldn't see the future in sight and were not aware of the fact that they would be able to finish their school year or not.

Mrs. Robin Martin: That's serious.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Madam Speaker, this is an extremely serious issue.

I do understand the opposite side would like to have this thing be about the labour and all those things, but what about the students? What about me at that time, when I was sitting at home thinking about what was going to happen next? The anxiety—this is extremely important. It goes to the mental health of these students.

So, today, my humble request to the opposite side, as well: Please, work with us. Under the strong leadership of our Premier Ford, let's end this strike. Let's put our students back into their classes so that they can continue their school year.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Be seated, please.

I return to the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South for wrap-up.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you to everyone for your comments.

And thank you to the member opposite as well. I appreciate the blast from the past. I do appreciate what she outlined, collective bargaining and what that has achieved for us over the number of years. But Madam Speaker, I must remind you and this House that after dozens of meetings, after months of negotiation, we are at a fundamental impasse.

What's really shameful here is that members opposite are willing to mortgage the future of tens of thousands of bright young minds. That's what's shameful. How long? How long will we go? How long will we go until we stand up and say, "Enough is enough"? This government, on this side of the House, we were elected with a very strong mandate to act. That's what students want.

The members in the House who spoke about having so many youth on their campaigns—I had a number from colleges and universities on mine. They're in class. They're getting involved still, despite 15 years of cuts and 15 years of creating an economy that is fundamentally less competitive for jobs. These students are concerned about their future. To compound, to add insult to injury here, we're willing to jeopardize tens of thousands of York University students' education. It's not something this government will stand by idly and witness.

To the other member opposite who talked about the Harris years: This is all the opposition have left now, is to talk about the past.

This Premier, this government, is focused on the future. We're focused on the next generation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate? The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations. You look very good in the chair. You're doing a great job, too.

It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House. I've been here now for, I guess, almost eight years. After each election, with the inaugural speeches, it's really interesting, because what's always amazed me are our varied life experiences and how, whether we agree or not philosophically, our meeting of the minds or our opposition will hopefully benefit the people of Ontario.

Today, this debate—I've been here all afternoon. There are always two sides to an issue—or three, or four, or 10. This debate has been a pretty good example of how we each have our black and white sides, but actually, there's an awful lot of grey. That's what we all have to be cognizant of.

1730

One of the things that I really like about maiden speeches is, like I said, life experience, so I'm just going to give you a couple of minutes of mine. When I hear about the strong economy and people say, "Oh, well, the NDP doesn't understand stuff like that"—I didn't spend a lot of time in school, but I paid dearly. I didn't spend any money on books, but I paid dearly for my education. When I was 17, my father got sick and I had a choice to make: Take over the family farm or continue in high school. My choice, and I'm very proud of that choice: I took over the family farm. Being young, I helped my dad, and as soon as I had the chance, I convinced him and we borrowed a whole bunch of money and we expanded. That's when interest went, on a demand loan, to 24%.

I know about economy. I almost had the shortest farming career in history. There was a program, the beginning farmer program. It brought my mortgage down to 13% and I thought I was in heaven.

I don't want people to tell me that I don't know anything about business or about what drives an economy. We may have differences in opinion, but we all believe in a strong economy—all of us. I try to be very reasonable, but I'm a bit offended when I hear—and this afternoon hasn't been like that—that one side is totally

right and the other side is totally wrong. I don't agree with that.

On the bill itself—I've listened all afternoon. I haven't heard a lot of people actually talk about the bill.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I tried.

Mr. John Vanthof: My colleague from Toronto—where are you from?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. John Vanthof: Toronto–Danforth. I should know that. I'm the whip; I should know that. I'm a friendly whip. I know people by their first names.

What this bill does, and what I found incredibly confusing when I got here—at the time, I thought that only the government of the day, the Liberal government, would do this, because at the time, the loyal opposition complained bitterly about this as well. It's something you just don't do in the private sector—and I'm not anti-private-sector: You take three things that have nothing to do with each other and you decide them at the same time. That just doesn't make sense.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Get 'er done, John. Get 'er done.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's part of the problem, the "Get 'er done." There's a lot of mistakes made when you "Get 'er done." That is part of the problem.

My colleagues on both sides—the government as well—have done a very eloquent job of laying out both sides of the work stoppage at York University. That needs to be fully debated and it needs to be decided by itself, because it's not the same issue as the wind farm issue or the hydro issue. It's not the same issue.

When people talk about an omnibus bill—that's what an omnibus bill is. It should be an "ominous" bill. That's the problem with those bills. Every opposition complains about them, and then as soon as they become government, guess what they do. Boom. I predict that it's going to get even better next week—or worse, depending on your point of view—because if you'll recall, when we were talking about another issue, they were going to have the biggest consultation in history on the education curriculum, but next week, on this piece of legislation, I'm predicting—and hopefully I'm wrong; I really hope I'm wrong. The way legislation is supposed to work, you have first reading, right, and that kind of goes, and then second reading. We're having the debate right now on second reading. And then, if it passes, it goes to committee. Committee is actually the consultation part. That's when you talk to people so you can make improvements, because you know what? There are 124 of us now. The 124 of us—actually, the 76 on the government side who come up with this stuff—rightly so; you have a mandate—and your staff and your political guys—political people, better wording—come up with this stuff. No one is expecting you to be perfect. People are expecting you to put forward legislation on what you've campaigned on. You know what? We don't like it but that's the way the system works.

But when the bill goes to committee is when people who are actually interested, who have a vested interest—there's nothing wrong with having a vested interest and

presenting to committee—when people who are experts in their area can say, "Wait a second, government. I think maybe you missed something." That's when you do that.

But you know what I think is going to happen next week—and for the people who haven't been here before, we're going to be in something called time allocation. You should go back in the Hansard and go to some YouTube, because you know who does the best job at describing time allocation?

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, the best speeches were by the former member from St. Catharines, Jim Bradley, who was the dean of the Legislature. I miss Jim Bradley. He is a class act. He's not here anymore. He's a class act. I'm sorry for using a name.

The best description of time allocation is the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: "Whoosh. The guillotine." You should ask him at a caucus meeting to do it. I'm sure he's not going to do it anymore because now he's on the government side.

This bill could very well go through without any committee because the government has the right to do that. You know what? All that consultation stuff just went out the window—like, actual people. If you go back to omnibus bills—there should be a full consultation on York University. We totally disagree with back-to-work; you obviously agree. But there should be a full consultation. It would make sense. Obviously the government—and this just drives me nuts. I have heard it being said that you are the first government for the people. What happened to Bill Davis? The first government for the people. Come on.

Interjection: For the century.

Mr. John Vanthof: No. It says the first government for the people. It drives me crazy.

But there should be a full consultation on each section of this. These should be divided into three bills; they're not. The actual committee process, very likely—and the House leader probably knows better than I do, but very likely there will be—I'm suggesting right now there might not be any committee because you want to get it done. Get 'er done.

Another great one that I've heard a lot is promise made, promise kept. But the third part is—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. It gets better. Promise made, promise—but we don't really care what the consequences are. That should be the rest of that sentence. We made a promise and we don't care what the consequences are.

And you know one example of that? Now, as I said before, we worked really hard. Actually, after the 20% interest, we had a pretty successful farm. I worked really hard so my kids had the opportunity to go to university, and my second daughter just graduated. She just passed the bar exam. And I don't think she would appreciate some of the stuff that's in this legislation.

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Mr. Stephen Lecce: I hope she's not at York U.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no.

I don't claim to be any type of legal scholar, but on the farm, if something smells, there's usually something. So I'm going to go into the actual bill. Again, I don't pretend to be a legal scholar or an expert on reading bills, but I look at section 6(1) in the Hydro One Accountability Act, and the title starts with, "Termination of Rights and Crown Immunity." Basically, the government wants to make themselves immune from damages. I don't pretend to be a constitutional expert either, but—

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We're protecting the people.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, protecting the people, okay, but from "any alleged misrepresentation" by the government. That's in the bill: "any alleged misrepresentation."

Now, I'm from the farm, and I'm wondering, "Misrepresentation—maybe I missed what that means." So I looked at a thesaurus.

Hon. Todd Smith: They still make those?

Mr. John Vanthof: Online. I learned how to use Google here, after I got elected.

So from the government: distortion, exaggeration, fabrication, falsification, misstatement, untruth—from the government. That's in your bill.

I have never seen that. We both had our problems with the former Liberal regime, but at no time did the Liberal regime say in legislation that they were going to protect themselves from misrepresentation that they were going to do or that they could do. I've never seen that. Oh, yes, you're for the people, unless you screw up. You're for the people—oh, except.

Getting back to the wind farm issue: Do you know what? A lot of things were done badly in the Green Energy Act. The biggest issue in the Green Energy Act—it was before my time, but we take responsibility. We were in favour of the principle. What we weren't in favour of was the privatization of green energy, and that is what happened with the Green Energy Act. It was privatization of green energy. They gave out private power contracts. I believe OPG had a wind farm and they were forced to sell it, because they shouldn't have been in green energy. The problem with the Green Energy Act was the privatization.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: That wasn't all.

Mr. John Vanthof: There were other issues, but one of the things that the Green Energy Act did wrong, that the Liberal government did wrong, was that that act superseded everything else. In rural Ontario, you couldn't build a barn because of the Planning Act, but you could put up a windmill. That was wrong. We'll agree.

But the problem with this legislation that you're potentially creating is that these contracts are there—they're built, in some cases—and you're breaking the contracts after the fact, contracts that companies entered into in good faith with a democratically elected government. You're going in after the fact and saying, "No, no." Retroactively, you're going, "Oh, sorry." For the people, you're doing that.

Hon. Todd Smith: You got that right.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. What you're potentially doing—the Conservative House leader was elected at the

same time as I was, and I have a lot of respect for the Conservative House leader. I disagree with him philosophically a lot of the time. I have a lot of respect for him. But we were both here when the Liberal gas plant scandal started. We were both here. I remember it was, "Oh, it's going to cost \$10 million." And it was then going to cost \$40 million. And then it went to \$1 billion, or \$1.1 billion, whatever. The issue really deep down with the gas plants scandal was that the companies with those gas plants entered into a contract with the government in good faith and the government squelched on the deal.

Hon. Todd Smith: No, they didn't really. They made good on it.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's right, because they would have gotten sued. But they squelched on the deal, and the company said, "We're going to sue you."

Hon. Todd Smith: That's why we're bringing in this legislation.

Mr. John Vanthof: According to the House leader, that's why they're bringing in this legislation, but that doesn't make sense, from a business point of view. As a business person, I would not enter into contracts with a government saying, "You know what? Join us until we change our mind, and then it sucks to be you." Because that's what you're saying: "Guess what? If you signed a contract with the former democratically elected Liberal government, now it sucks to be you."

You know what? That is not creating the business climate that you guys are portraying. Maybe for your friends, but if you really think about it—if you're so confident with that, good. We will remember this conversation, because I'm predicting that we are going to enter into a Ford gas plant scandal, or a gas plant scandal Ford-style—I keep wanting to say "Gangnam Style."

And that's what you're afraid of too. That's what you're afraid of too because that is why you are putting in legislation to protect yourself from getting sued by people who entered into contracts with the government in good faith. I would say that that shows—at least it shows to me—that you are starting your regime off as a bad-faith government.

Neither one of us likes some of those contracts, and for issues with contracts that haven't gone too far and where you can actually negotiate a penalty without major, major costs, I think we could work with that. If that's the case and if you're also the government of accountability and transparency or supposed to be, you know, the most transparent in the free world—if that's the case and if you're so happy about it, put out all the costs. Just lay them out there. In your new commission of inquiry, also put out the costs of the decisions that you are making right here. That's accountability and transparency. Right now. You know what? Give them an extra 15 days to put your stuff up. Instead of just talking about it, do it.

I'm predicting you're not. Why I'm predicting that is because you are passing legislation that keeps you from getting sued by people who entered into good-faith

contracts with the previous government. Quite frankly, that is despicable. It really is, and for this to be your first piece of legislation does not bode well for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments? The member from Etobicoke Centre.

Applause.

Ms. Kinga Surma: They're so excited for me because this is the first time that I'm rising in the House.

Interjections: Hear, hear.

Ms. Kinga Surma: Thank you.

I would like to congratulate the returning members of provincial Parliament, and of course the newly elected members, and my colleagues as well.

Over the course of the last week, I've listened very intently to my colleagues, cabinet and the Premier speak. Throughout that week, we've focused predominantly on the promises that were made during the election and, of course, on the victory of June 7.

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But what I wanted to take a moment to speak to you all about is the reaction of my constituents in Etobicoke Centre to what we are doing now. They are so incredibly proud of us and so incredibly supportive that our team called the House into session and that we are getting things done. I was very excited during the campaign because people were excited to go out and vote and support us. But this is the first time I'm being stopped in my neighbourhood when I'm going to the gas station and the grocery store—about how proud they are of us. They're continually encouraging us and shaking my hand. I just want to thank the constituents of Etobicoke Centre for putting their faith in me and our team.

I would just like to add to what the member from Thornhill said this morning—that we're changing the course, the direction. I want to re-emphasize that we will be steady, we will be united, and we will be strong.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Be seated, please.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I appreciate the member's comments on this issue.

I want to draw attention to the issue of the cancellation of the White Pines renewable energy project. I have many residents in University–Rosedale who are very concerned about climate change and the long-term impact of climate change. A project like the White Pines renewable energy project—maybe it's not perfect, but what it does do right is that it puts us on a path to transitioning to more renewable, more green energy and doing our fair share in Ontario to tackle one of the gravest threats that we're facing, which is climate change.

Residents in University–Rosedale come up to me and remind me again and again about how we're experiencing the impacts of climate change both here and abroad. We're seeing the west, last year, going up in flames, with the dramatic increase in wildfires. In Houston, we saw

Biblical-level floods last year because of the increase in the number of extreme storm events. With New Orleans, in 2005, we had a city in ruins. Even here in Toronto, we are experiencing the effects of climate change. We had an ice storm which cost insurance companies and people who had to renovate their basements again millions of dollars. In Quebec, we have people who live in apartments and can't afford air conditioning and are dying. It's in the news, in the Toronto Star. That's the kind of impact that we're seeing with climate change.

This project is one thing that we can do to do our part to tackle this grave issue. I think we should keep this contract and do what we can to tackle this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'd like to thank my colleagues for their comments: the member from University–Rosedale, who I met earlier and I really enjoyed talking to; the member from Etobicoke Centre; and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

The comments really focus on the idea of what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances. It's a difficult issue to see what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances. We think that this bill is fair and reasonable in the circumstances; that's why we've brought it forward. We did just have an election and the people voted in favour of all of these things. They told us that this is what they want.

My friend from University–Rosedale mentioned that she's hearing a lot about environmental concerns and that we should be doing our fair share for climate change. But people who I talked to at the door said, "Every day, we feel like we're doing a lot. We're paying for all these green energy programs. We're paying through the nose. We're paying for 20 years. We're paying more than we can afford to pay." We have to be fair and reasonable to people, and what has happened is not fair and reasonable. We're all required to pay through the nose for 20 years. It's going to be very difficult for a lot of people to be able to pay those bills; it already is, and we've heard about some of the stories today.

On the other hand, what's fair and reasonable in a strike? Well, how long of a strike is too long? I think this strike has gone on far too long. I've asked other people in other jurisdictions, "Do you have anything like this going on?" "No." Nobody does. It was four days in Saskatchewan. You mentioned Saskatchewan—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Glover: I just want to speak in response to the comments from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. He was talking—and I love the way the member speaks, because it's real down-home wisdom. It talks about the wisdom of making sure that you don't make a mistake, and the importance of democratic process and

taking this bill to committee so that we have a chance to go through it.

I got a call earlier today from a constituent who ordered a Tesla Model 3 several months ago. He's taking delivery on Saturday. He was supposed to get a \$12,000 rebate from the government on that Tesla, and now the new government is renegeing. Where is the confidence that he is supposed to have? When you say "for the people"—he ordered that car in good faith, looking at the economics of that situation and knowing that he wanted to make a contribution to green energy, to our environment, to do his part to slow down climate change. He's taking delivery of that car on Saturday, and now this government is saying, "Well, yes, we're the Ontario government, but we are not going to honour the promise that was made by the previous government, and we're going to put into legislation that we don't have to honour any of our contracts."

Then the question will be, what will be the reputation of the Ontario government when Ford is the Premier?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I return to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to thank the member from Etobicoke Centre, my colleague the member from University–Rosedale, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and my colleague from Spadina–Fort York.

I'd like to wish everybody a happy weekend. For the new folks, this is known as legislative Friday. We usually don't sit legislative Friday in July, but—

Interjection: It's for the people.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, yes. You guys always claim to be for the people.

But since you are trying to render yourself immune from legal action, because you are basically acting in bad faith on contracts made by previous governments, I'm also going to quote the Ontario Chamber of Commerce: "The sanctity of contracts is fundamental. The government unilaterally cancelling contracts is harmful to business investment in Ontario."

The Conservative Party won an election. You should be proud of that. But you're not always going to be there. You guys love to privatize; you love to enter into private contracts. Well, you know what? Your contractual friends wouldn't be very happy if the next government did what you are doing. You will someday be on this side saying, "Whoa, that's wrong." Deep down, you know yourselves that it's wrong to pass legislation to render yourself immune and make yourself a bad-faith government.

Have a nice weekend.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I just want to thank everybody for making my first time in the chair rather uneventful. Thank you all for behaving. I won't expect the same next time.

It being 6 p.m. on the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m. on Monday, July 23, 2018.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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