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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 20 November 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 20 novembre 2018

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let us pause for a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.
Prayers.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(c), the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas has filed with the Clerk a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 57, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various statutes. The order for second reading of Bill 57 may therefore not be called today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREEN ENERGY REPEAL ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 ABROGEANT
LA LOI SUR L'ÉNERGIE VERTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 15, 2018, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Environmental Protection Act, the Planning Act and various other statutes / Projet de loi 34, Loi abrogeant la Loi de 2009 sur l'énergie verte et modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement, la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et diverses autres lois.

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

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I'm so pleased today to have the opportunity to speak about repealing this disastrous act. Like most of my colleagues, of course, I heard it at the doorsteps. I heard it over the phone. I heard it in the local hardware store from strangers and from friends alike. Yes, Mr. Speaker, of course, I heard it from my own family, from my wife, my mature daughters, sons-in-law and the whole motley crew—every one of them who talked about this so-called Green Energy Act—because they knew it was a fraud. They knew that it was not green. It did not do what it was intended to do. But they did know that it stripped our local municipalities of their voices, because people had lost jobs and they had seen businesses close.

The Green Energy Act was the lead villain in a million Ontario households. It made hydro bills literally explode.

It led to the province dumping electricity below cost to these same neighbouring states adjacent to us, to whom we were losing jobs and industry because of exorbitant, high energy costs. Yes, unbelievably, we discounted our energy

to our own competitors, while overcharging our own people—sheer lunacy. Unbelievable, but true.

You see, it wasn't what it claimed to be, despite the endless propaganda that we heard. The reality is, it was a job killer, not the job creator that it was sold as.

It was a community disrupter. It crushed businesses that had lasted through wars and recessions—multi-generational businesses—and it shattered their dreams as it stole the jobs and forced people to leave their homes, and in many cases their friends and their family.

It gouged massive holes in the province's finest farmland and filled each hole with 800 tonnes of reinforced concrete, destroying this farmland forever for future use. These hard concrete pods anchor monster wind turbines which produced power that wasn't needed at extortionate prices that were paid whether there was wind or not. Truly, truly mind-boggling. It just made no sense whatsoever. To exacerbate the situation even further, all the construction roads into this farmland leading to each wind turbine destroyed more and more farmland.

I'm very, very familiar, of course, with migratory bird corridors in my area, such as across the bottom of my riding along the shores of the Bay of Quinte and Lake Ontario. The wind turbines literally kill anything and everything with wings, from the majestic white swans that brighten Ontario's waterways with their fine-feathered families to the little bats, which the spinning blades both crush and implode with pressure pulses. So if you're starting to see more and more of the dratted mosquitoes in the summer, it's because all these bats aren't there to feed on them.

These unneeded wind turbines have destroyed farmlands and the magical vistas across the province. They have created widespread problems and, so, so sadly, I've seen personally where they have pitted neighbour against neighbour—people who have been friends for their entire lifetime, generational friends, now split and divided in communities.

They forced us to build new gas plants to provide the backup needed, of course, when the wind stops blowing or the sun don't shine. It cost much, much more than the value that they'll ever create. We're all strongly in favour of renewable energy and supporting our environment, but not at a cost that is out of proportion to the value.

In turn, they've destroyed families and finances. The Green Energy Act was, and is, a public policy catastrophe that has hurt more people than any other mistake by the preceding government, in my humble opinion; and believe me, they did make plenty. Indeed, if the Liberals ever wonder why they lost the election last June, the Green Energy Act, in my mind, was the biggest reason.

People have seen and been fed up with big-government arrogance and incompetence and that whole entire act by the ugliness that was perpetrated on the Ontario people, all in the pretext of caring for the environment, on which, quite frankly, it had very little impact. But they worked hard to keep its real impact hidden by glossy layers of public-relations spin, out and out myths and fabrications, and soul-crushing propaganda of which Joseph Goebbels would have been proud.

Yes, sadly—very sadly—the Liberals used schools to perpetrate and perpetuate their mythic claims of greening Ontario, even as they sent our green dollars down the drain. They used and abused the true value of our education professionals. They introduced curriculum packages that drilled deep into our unsuspecting families and softened us up as an innocent population for even more propaganda.

Yet, sadly, again, too, we find people who still don't get it. They've never witnessed or seen the actual suffering. There are those who want to believe that covering wonderful farmland with solar panels and destroying Ontario's food lands somehow isn't a lie. Well, folks, if we lose our farms, if we lose the ability to feed ourselves, we lose our sovereignty as a province and as a nation.

That's how deep and despairing the Green Energy Act has been to these same upcoming generations which will be forced to pay the billions of dollars borrowed by the Liberals. They will be forced to pay for power that we didn't need that was paid for with money that we didn't have, ultimately by citizens not yet born. So sad. And with what to show for it? Nothing, except—except—endless debt and devastation to both our natural wildlife and to human lives, and that doesn't even add up the decades of lost opportunity costs involved with this—multi-billions of dollars. As a result, they will continue to hold Ontario back from our destiny, the same way Pierre Elliott Trudeau's flagrant disregard for the taxpayer from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s created debt that crushed an entire Canadian generation. We tend to forget that until that time, Canada did not have an appreciable debt. Indeed, Trudeau's debt bomb, again with nothing to show for it, tied up every Prime Minister, of various parties, until his son, of course, came along to rack up debt at an even faster pace. But that's another Liberal horror story which Canadians will soon have to deal with on another level.

0910

If it was just Liberal incompetence at play in the Green Energy Act, an internalized, anti-democratic, authoritarian impulse to force citizens to swallow strong medicine that should be good for them, this ugly story could be written as a parable. It could simply show what good intentions can produce when optimists aren't tempered by realists. But we have seen that the story is far more sinister, as billions of dollars didn't just inadvertently flow into Liberal pockets. This was a calculated fleecing of the public by the well-connected insiders. Fortunately, we have a Liberal—I mean a legislative committee now, certainly not a Liberal group looking into it, but a legislative committee looking into these contracts and all the Liberal contacts and the henchmen and insiders that profited at every turn.

But with this repeal, we are taking away their hideout, we are removing their camouflage and we are showing how they misled and continue to mislead even, regrettably, after they've left office. But make no mistake, make no mistake, our government for the people is committed to removing every vestige of the complex of those acts, the schedules, the appendices and the rip-offs that the Liberals burrowed into Ontario's past, present and our children's future.

This bill represents a strong start, the repeal of it, but there is much, much more to be done and more that will be done by our government, both sooner and later, to remove the stench of exploitation and expropriation from our lands, our waters and our wallets. This again shows that when we committed on doorsteps across Ontario—and all the members on this side of the House and hopefully even some on the other side of the House—that we wanted to stop Ontario's bleeding, the province's bleeding, we actually meant it. We started with a totally, totally independent examination to ascertain the true status of Ontario's finances. Yes, another promise made and another promise that we are keeping.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most despicable elements of the Green Energy Act conspiracy, as a former municipal parliamentarian myself, was its removal from residents from local municipalities of their right to local self-determination. "What local planning?" said the Liberals? "No, we're going to impose this on them whether you like it or not," they said, "whether wind turbine setbacks are appropriate or not, whether Ontario's natural beauty and its local custodians are compromised or not. We don't care. They don't matter."

Well, I can tell you, and I think most of my colleagues and certainly the electorate demonstrated on June 7, people across Ontario at angry town halls said no to the Liberals. But, of course, the Liberals just said, "Well, that's tough," and unfortunately too many members of the NDP simply played the role of cheerleaders during this process. The public was told that people in Toronto's ivory towers knew best. But even that was sleight of hand, Mr. Speaker. The real string-pullers were the Liberal insiders, cackling on their way to the bank, relishing the ill-gotten money they had created by self-serving legislation. The ivory towers were just a simple distraction. Well, how sad and how disappointing.

Local citizens had the right to protect their neighbourhoods before the Green Energy Act, but certainly not afterwards. That will change very soon with a government that is for the people, not the insiders.

Once again, Ontario's new municipal councils—I congratulate all of those who were successful—and the voters who elected them will have their local say.

Let's just climb down from above the treetop view that the birds see before they're chopped up by these revolving windmills. Let's look at what the green menace did to one Ontario family and their small business. This family lives in my riding, north of Highway 7, in one of the most rugged and beautiful lands in southern Ontario. They had a simple dream: They would open a foodservice place, a

restaurant with food and service that was so good that they would keep customers coming back, and they would make new customers. They did it, to their credit. They laboured long and hard over three years. They had the location, the menu, the reputation and the dream. The success was theirs at their doorstep because they were making, not a lot of money, but they were making money, enough just to earn a living, to start paying down their debt incurred to go into business, and to keep just three employees paid in addition to themselves. The restaurant was popular, it offered something not found nearby, and was by all local accounts a success. Their customers came from all over, from far and wide.

I happen to know the owner's mother very well. I wanted to meet the daughter, the young woman whose dreams with her partner had built this success story. I had been in the hospitality business also, on the water, for over three decades, so I knew the business. I knew it was a good business, a healthy restaurant, when I saw it. This is what it was. I visited and I congratulated the owners, and they thanked me. They said they were very, very proud of what they and their staff had created. As well, they told me they had seen past summer staff earn the means to attend university.

I asked them about their upcoming plans, for no business owner can stand still. One must continuously tweak the business plan, no matter how good, and make decisions that will make a future difference. They told me, "We're shutting down." A successful business, doing well, is shutting down. They said, "We can't afford to stay in business." Quite naturally, I was shocked. They told me that when they started, their electricity bill in one year had been around \$800 a month, but now their electricity bill was \$2,400 a month, and they just couldn't go on. They let their staff go. They couldn't serve the customers as they had done. If they kept going, they would just lose more money every day. It was a dead end.

That's just one tragic story of the human damage inflicted by the Liberals and their Green Energy Act catastrophe—literally one of the thousands that I would imagine most members in here have heard. There, five people lost their jobs. A community lost a wonderful business. Municipal, provincial and federal taxes were lost. Suppliers lost a client. The public lost a reason to visit there. We all lost, all of us, as Ontario's mosaic of hospitality and charm just took another hit, but not from a tornado or a bad storm or a forest fire, but from a government-inflicted, self-inflicted injury.

The members are here for a wide variety of reasons, most of them honourable and progressive, making a contribution to society and to the province of Ontario. I've often been asked why, at my tender age, I chose to run again for office. Mr. Speaker, this is really why; it's the essence of it: Serious wrongs need to be righted regardless of where we stand on the political spectrum. What's right is right and what's wrong is wrong. I just couldn't sit at home waiting for someone else to do the job. I had to put my community, my neighbours, my extended family, and my commitments sworn to Canada before anything else. I know every one of my caucus colleagues feels the same

way. We have a definitive sense of purpose and contribution. They saw this travesty unfold, and each of them left other lives to step forward, committed to the change that we're undertaking today, and to the other changes, the righting the wrongs of the incompetence left by our predecessors.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, this is personal. I would hope it would be personal for every member here, because we all have our stories to tell regarding the benefits and the gains. Legislation is only good legislation if it accomplishes what it sets out to do. This did nothing to dramatically impact the environment, but the damage was literally unbelievable, so this is serious.

0920

Now let's just take a final look. The Green Energy Act has been omnipresent for the past nine years, making each of us pay at every turn. If you eat, you pay. If you sleep, you pay. If you drive, you pay. Even if you don't drive, you still pay. The Green Energy Act's drags on the economy don't ever, ever stop. It will, has and will always continue.

The thing is, we have to shape the direction so there's a positive return for all citizens that we represent. That's why you can talk to every person in Ontario literally from all of our ridings. Regardless whether in an urban, rural or a cosmopolitan riding, and across genders and age gaps, you can find victims: someone who has paid dearly for this deception and this deceit.

I urge the members in the other parties—a lot of good, honourable, caring people and who are here, I would hope, for the right reasons as well; I urge the members in the other parties and the independents who still claim to actually have Liberal backgrounds to finally stop playing politics here. Let's try to admit when we've made a mistake, when we were wrong on something, as has been so, so clearly demonstrated with this ill-fated—maybe well-intentioned, but ill-fated—and ill-managed Green Energy Act.

So, folks, let's admit when we made a mistake. Let's move on. Our government is committed to doing that, and I would hope, as hard as it may be for members of the opposition and/or particularly the past members who were the government at that point, that they have the courage, the capacity and the integrity to move beyond the disastrous mistakes that they have made because, folks, enough is enough. That's why, today, we're stopping this madness.

To make it very, very clear: We are stopping this madness and we are giving all the members an opportunity to put themselves on the record. Our votes on this issue will put us on the record. Are you for continuing down this road that was an unbelievable waste, probably one of the worst pieces of legislation ever perpetrated on a Legislature, or are you for it? Are you for the people or against the people?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Ottawa Centre.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Oh, I've got to be in my seat. Sorry about that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Well, okay. The member for Ottawa Centre stood up and then he sat

down. Are we going to play musical chairs? Who's going to do the questions and comments?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): All right. The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Speaker, I apologize for the confusion.

I want to thank my friend from Hastings–Lennox and Addington for his passion. I'm from Ottawa Centre. That's the riding I'm proud to represent, but I was born and raised in rural Ontario and I'm connected through Glengarry–Prescott–Russell folks to exactly the kinds of stories you talked about. However, this morning we're going to have a disagreement about how to encourage renewable energy.

I want you to know, given what you said, that it happens in the urban setting too. One of the memorable moments of the election campaign for me was when we knocked on doors in community housing, particularly buildings powered by baseboard electrical heating, and I talked to people who lived on \$1,100 or \$1,000 a month about their hydro bills in the dead of winter. Given their apartments, which are like sieves that don't retain energy at all—\$200, \$300 and in one case \$340 a month in electricity costs. This isn't Hydro One; this is Ottawa Hydro, which didn't pass on the exorbitant increases we saw in rural parts of Ontario. It's a problem, and I take the member's point.

We set up an energy regime where people had to choose between eating and heating, and that's not appropriate. That's not the kind of Ontario I want to build. But this morning we are going to have a disagreement on what we decide to encourage in the future, because I think what we need to do in moving past previous errors is to not throw the baby out with the bathwater, necessarily. We have to figure out a way that renewable energy can grow on a level that the fossil-fuel-based energy sources have grown for decades, because we do maintain a very ambitious subsidy regime for fossil fuels, but we don't—and I take the member's point—in a sane way, which is not punitive to ratepayers, encourage the growth of renewable energy.

So I think that's the debate we're going to have this morning: not for or against the people, but for or against a sane approach to renewable energy.

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

Mr. Parm Gill: I also want to take this opportunity, first and foremost, to thank my colleague from Hastings–Lennox and Addington for his superb and very passionate speech. I can tell you first-hand, having served with the honourable colleague federally, how passionate he is about serving his constituents and how passionate he is about some of these important issues that affect not only our province but, of course, our country and future generations. He did an amazing job highlighting many, many shortfalls in the Liberal piece of legislation that hurt, I would say, most, if not all, Ontario families—not just families, it hurt farmers, it hurt small businesses.

In my riding of Milton, I've got a significant portion which is basically comprised of a rural part of my riding. I can tell you, leading up to the election I was going around

and talking to many of these farmers, especially the ones who live in rural parts of my riding, about how it negatively impacted them. It raised their electricity bills, in some cases, by not only hundreds but by thousands of dollars.

Understand, folks who live in the rural part of Ontario don't necessarily have the luxury of using natural gas. They are dependent either on oil, propane or, for the most part, electricity. To upgrade some of those would also cost thousands of dollars, which they don't necessarily have the means of doing.

So this is a huge burden, and I can tell you that we're hearing lots of positive comments from my riding of Milton from my constituents, and they're looking forward to the repeal of this Green Energy Act.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I just want to add to this debate on the government's Bill 34, a bill which, as we know, as the official opposition and as Ontarians watching, is largely symbolic and really doesn't actually do anything that's profitable for our environment or for Ontarians, who are looking for evidence-based bills and decisions that actually make their lives better.

This doesn't strengthen environmental protections. The bill does not address the real issues of privatization, which, as we know, seems to be the golden flower of the Progressive Conservatives—privatize, privatize, take away from the public, take away from Ontarians, take away from the residents of Toronto–St. Paul's.

We support evidence-based renewable energy planning and approvals. This Bill 34 just isn't evidence-based. So my thought this morning is: Bring it back to us after you've workshopped it a little better—that's what I tell my students—because environment matters, it absolutely does. Right now we have an opportunity to put something else in place, something that's actually working, something that actually supports Ontarians.

I've got a gentleman who came to see me the other day who suffers from environmental illness. His breathing—his body sometimes feels like it's on fire.

We have to be careful of what we're doing to our environment. We have to take issues like climate change seriously and we must put forth a plan that actually does something, that actually provides an alternative for positive, evidence-based green energy.

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

0930

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Today we are talking about the repealing of the Green Energy Act. Firstly, the Liberal Green Energy Act allowed energy rates to triple, drastically crippling our manufacturing sector, Mr. Speaker. Because of this Liberal act, thousands and thousands of jobs were lost in the province of Ontario. Unfortunately, it really hurt all Ontarians. The Green Energy Act made it so much harder for business in Ontario to stay in business. The people of Ontario lost thousands of jobs across Ontario because manufacturing plants were too expensive to operate in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, this government for the people is delivering on its promise to repeal the Green Energy Act, and our government is reducing Ontario's skyrocketing hydro rates. One of the first actions that we took as a government was to cancel 758 expensive and wasteful energy projects as part of our plan to cut hydro rates by 12% for the people of Ontario. This will save \$790 million for our electricity customers.

I urge the members of the House to support the Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018. Let's ensure that future decisions on energy supply in this province are not driven by ideology but by what is best for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll now return to the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington for his two-minute summary.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And yes, you do look fine sitting in that chair today, sir.

I certainly would like to thank all of the members who stood up today and offered comment with regard to my discussion: the member for Ottawa Centre—thank you; the member from Milton; the member for St. Paul's; and the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park. It is from the dialogue that we have in the House here that hopefully we can find a way to move forward.

I sense a little bit of a spirit that most people recognized that what was there didn't work. I would have a little bit more confidence in moving forward collectively; however, one of the challenges I have with the official opposition across on moving forward is that they so strongly supported the Green Energy Act in the first place. So I find that a little difficult, but I'm hoping we can get beyond that. As the story goes, bygones are bygones.

Let's suggest that we're all here for the right reason, to try to bring forth action that will—obviously here, there are two solitudes. The one solitude is definitely dealing with the environmental challenge. It's clear, unambiguous—not a problem. When I say, "Not a problem," it's a huge problem; however, it's not a problem with the recognition of the fact that we must move forward with it.

However, on the other side also, there has to be a proper way to do it, an effective way, a way that has the balance between affordability and effectiveness. I'm perpetually optimistic. I do believe that we, as members with the responsibility of finding solutions for the residents of Ontario, have to put our efforts into making that happen. So, I know that I—and we, as our government—are looking forward to continuing dialogue. Hopefully we can come up with that effective solution, but let's get rid of the problem first.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? Are you on a point of order?

Mr. Robert Bailey: No, I was ready to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): That's okay, thank you.

Further debate? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: I relish the opportunity to get up and speak to the bill that the government has put forward on repealing the Green Energy Act. Actually, as I said before, I really appreciate what my friend from Hastings–Lennox and Addington said. I am glad that there is an all-party

recognition in this House that climate change is the issue of our era.

Often, when I talk to my kids and they ask me why I do this job, this is the first thing I tell them. I tell them, "Dad's here in Toronto because I want you to have clean air, clean water and a job you can believe in—that you can work to make our society that much better." The ball has been passed to a generation of legislators in this House and in every elected Legislature in the world to make sure we can do that.

I'm a writer. I'm an educator by trade, Speaker, and the best thing that ever happened to me in my career as an educator and a writer was when an editor put me on a deadline. Talk to anybody I've ever written for, and they'll tell you the same thing about Harden: "Put that guy on a deadline; otherwise, bad things happen."

And do you know what just happened to us on climate change, Speaker? The scientists who are engaged in climatology—measuring the impact of climate change—just put the world on a deadline. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change just put us on a 12-year deadline, the first three years of which are crucial if we're to avert catastrophic impact from climate change. We've seen it in the province of Ontario. We've debated it in this House—what's happening up in northern Ontario with the floods, with the forest fires; the impacts that the insurance industry, which has been in this House, has told us about: \$1.2 billion in the past year in climate change impacts, which they are ringing the alarm bells about, not just environmentalists from Ottawa Centre.

So this is a real thing, and we have a deadline in front of us. If there's something that troubles me about this bill, it's that it does a lot to take away what the government didn't like about the previous approach to renewable energy, but I don't see anything put in its place.

What I want to do this morning is not just criticize this bill—because I will be voting against it—but I want to suggest something that is perhaps within the government's worldview that it could do, a regulatory change it could do, to empower the growth of renewable energy. It's called virtual net metering. You can enable virtual net metering in the renewable energy industry, which will not repeat the failures of the Green Energy Act, which will not negotiate private, secret deals that are extremely expensive, that burden our electricity system. You could do it in such a way that would actually embrace the Conservative Party's history. The Conservative Party is the party that gave the province public hydro 100 years ago, because, specifically, it wanted to make sure that employers and citizens had affordable power. That's the legacy of the Conservative Party, a legacy that I support. But in your approach to renewable energy, what I want to encourage you to consider this morning is that same idea through renewable energy, through a smart approach to growing renewable energy.

What I see in this bill, Speaker, is the disproportionate influence nuclear power and private fossil fuel power will have in the current regime put forward by this bill. I want to encourage you to take a different tack—amendments that I brought forward at the social policy committee that the member for Markham–Stouffville knows very well.

I also want to acknowledge not just that we have this existential crisis of climate change but that two thirds of our greenhouse gas emissions right now are coming from energy-related costs, whether it's transportation or housing. The energy paradigm we embrace is going to be important, and how we encourage energy is also important.

I take the member's point that the Green Energy Act was a top-down, secretive approach, which enabled vested interests to bid up the cost of electricity at the expense of the province. The private model didn't work. I take your point. But we can look to other countries. We can look to Germany. We can look to Denmark. We can look to Norway. We can even look to India, at how they're growing renewable energy, not from the top down but from the bottom up.

In fact, there's a very interesting parallel going on worldwide right now as to the growth of renewable energy at a local, co-operative, non-profit level to the emergence of the Canadian health care system, because it came from the same place. When people in rural Saskatchewan wanted to figure out a way to get medical professionals into their community, they banded together and pooled their resources to bring nurses and doctors to their communities. That's the origin of medicare in Saskatchewan. It's the origin of medicare in our country: people coming together collectively, encouraged at a certain important scalable moment by the province of Saskatchewan and by the state of Canada.

Let's talk about the kind of energy economy we have, let's talk about the kind of energy economy we need, and let's talk about how to get there. That's what I want to talk about this morning.

What kind of energy economy do we have right now? At the moment, close to 60% of our energy needs are provided by one source: nuclear energy. I know my friend the member from Markham–Stouffville has talked about the fact this is fantastic because it's emission-free and we can rely on this as a continued source of energy generation, going forward, because it doesn't share the unfortunate outcomes of fossil-fuel-based energy generation.

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But there is a problem. There are externalities, as economists like to say. There are outcomes to nuclear power. Increasingly, in the Ottawa Valley, we're having this debate because there is a plan right now being proposed by the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories to entomb 50 years of nuclear waste in an above-ground cement facility right next to the Ottawa River, a source of drinking water for millions of people that already has seen detection of radionuclides in the water—at allowable levels, but detection of radionuclides in the river. The community is up in arms, Speaker, just upriver from me, about this particular approach to creating a bunker that is seven stories high, the size of 70 NHL hockey rinks, to entomb decades of waste.

When you talk to municipal energy providers—again, not urban environmentalists, let me be clear, but municipal energy providers—they're telling the government one particular thing about the future of energy generation. They want it to be less centralized around nuclear and more distributed. There are two reasons why: You give choice to

consumers; you give them options, and you also distribute the generation of the energy system such that you have resiliency in critical moments.

I know whereof I speak. In the city of Ottawa, as the member for Nepean knows very well and as the government knows very well, we just had three tornadoes touch ground in September. There are two nodes going into Ottawa that feed Hydro One into Hydro Ottawa, and one of the tornadoes destroyed one of them. It blackened our city for three days. What happened in that context is a city debate started by the mayor's office, first responders and all elected officials about an emergency readiness plan. What started in those conversations, I'm proud to say, is a discussion of how we could we be more resilient. How could we be more self-reliant in the growth of renewable energy? Because what that would do was offer the city options beyond a crazed run for diesel-powered generators.

Renewable energy in Germany, in the Netherlands, in Denmark, in Norway and even in countries like India is being increasingly used to transition away from the dirtiest forms of energy, coal being the worst. So that's what we have with the kind of energy economy we need. We can transition, Speaker, to an energy economy where, subsidy-free—and this is what I want to segue to—people at a local level can generate power.

I want to talk about the Ottawa Renewable Energy Co-operative, Speaker. This is an organization in my riding that has 750 members: 750 people who have pooled their retirement assets or their saving assets to generate over \$7 million in investment in renewable energy. They, to me, are leaders worldwide. And how have they been able to do that? They've been able to do it because there's an interest in Ottawa in investing in renewable energy. There's an appetite for it in solarizing the rooftops of schools, hospitals, churches, and even in one path-breaking case, an Indigenous First Nation. That's what the Ottawa Renewable Energy Co-operative did with the Green Energy Act, to address the comments made by my friend earlier. There were some organizations in that earlier regime that attempted to take advantage of the FIT contracts to generate renewable energy at local benefit: an investment of \$2.5 million, Speaker, in economic costs and employing local people.

To date, the energy economy we have, what it tends to do, because it's centralized around certain nuclear generators, is that it takes jobs out of most local economies except those impacted by the nuclear plants. What renewable energy could do is give youth jobs, give people jobs. That's what the Ottawa Renewable Energy Co-operative has, in fact, done.

The other organization I want to give some support to is the folks at Hydro Ottawa where I'm from. At Hydro Ottawa, they have an experiment right now called the GREAT-DR, and that's science speak for distributed resource energy. What the folks at Hydro Ottawa are offering customers is an opportunity to invest in solar capacity with storage that's intelligent, because what researchers are telling us is that energy use tends to be sparse and spiky. We don't live in our homes all the time and power

them for energy use. It tends to spike at particular moments, particularly in the summer when air conditioning units are run province-wide. That's when our need is highest. Well, it just so happens that's when our solar capacity to produce energy is also highest.

The folks at Hydro Ottawa are looking to the future. They've created a pilot, with the support of the Ministry of Natural Resources, to think about, "What can we do in those off-peak moments, where someone who has solarized their house can share their energy with their neighbour?" When their personal electrical storage capacity is out, they could borrow from a neighbour down the road. Or this system can even intelligently, from Hydro Ottawa's central office, detect if shutting your fridge or shutting your air conditioning system could advantage your energy generation. That's how state of the art it is. That's the future. Electrifying systems of transport and creating resilient, distributed systems of energy—that's the future.

The past, which I'm hearing increasingly from environmental watchdogs, is embracing centralized, wasteful forms of energy. The member mentioned it: Our nuclear energy regime wastes a terrific amount of energy because it only has one gear, full on or off. There are off-peak times when we sell our power to the United States for nothing—23% of the time when our nuclear power generators are firing and we're distributing the excess energy to the United States, we're essentially paying the United States customers to take our energy from us. That makes no sense.

Neither does it make sense to think about recommissioning or expanding energy sources which will create billion-dollar legacy costs down the road. That's the investment capacity we need right now to empower organizations like the Ottawa Renewable Energy Co-operative and their counterparts. There are 10,000 people in the province of Ontario right now participating in energy co-operative generation.

I want to end by talking about that particular model. What my friends in government may have heard about already is the notion of net metering. When you solarize your apartment or your home or your business, you get a meter that's specific to the generation of renewable energy. It rolls one way when you're drawing from the grid, but if you're generating enough power through your solar panels you can see the meter moving in the opposite direction because you're now feeding energy back to the grid. That's net metering, and that was to encourage people to embrace renewable energy.

What virtual net metering could do, if you listen to people in the renewable energy sector, which I have, is empower people to invest in renewable energy off-residence—a large collective solar farm, for example, on top of a hospital or school—and benefit electronically from that investment. The grid will detect your investment in that particular collective renewable energy project and reduce your bill accordingly. That's the future. It's happening in the United States. They just had a major renewable energy conference here in Toronto, which my friend Janice Ashworth from the Ottawa Renewable Energy Co-operative attended. That's what the state of Minnesota,

that's what the state of New York are doing right now: virtual net metering.

I caution the government—because this works within a market framework, and I can see how it could be embraced with a private model and getting private operators to rush in and provide renewable energy for people: If you embrace the private-provider approach, you'll do exactly what the Liberal government did in potentially driving up costs massively. I would encourage my friends in government to embrace the history of their own party—public power—and to think about how with a co-operative and non-profit basis they could grow renewable energy faster, they could create local jobs and they could do it with absolutely no subsidy.

The testimony we heard at the social policy committee was very clear: The renewable energy industry is no longer in a start-up phase. It can produce energy cheaper and quicker than fossil fuel-based sources. Half the energy jobs in the United States right now are in the renewable energy industry.

Canada has decided to pitch its tent in the old energy world, and I have enormous sympathy for energy workers and resource-based communities that are in that particular bind. We have to figure out how they have a just transition from an earlier energy era to a new one. I have enormous sympathy for those communities, but as legislators we can't look to the past. There's no magical DeLorean we can jump into, powered by plutonium, that can take us to a renewable energy future. We have to make conscious decisions and conscious investments.

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This is where Conservative friends of mine have often had a laugh about my own political beliefs and theirs: Sometimes government can get out of the way and allow local innovators, at a local, co-operative level, to show us what's possible at a small scale, and then help them scale up. That's the moment we're in with renewable energy. But your bill, the renewable energy bill that you have before us today: What it will do is empower municipalities to say no to renewable energy projects. But the minister still retains the right under this bill to override those municipalities, and the minister still has the ability—to my mind, misinformed about the possibilities of local co-operative renewable energy—to say no. What we need as a society, what energy workers and their families are telling me—whom I used to work for in a previous life—is that we need the growth of thousands of renewable energy jobs.

I would love to think of a government one day that didn't do what our current federal government does: buy some unbelievably overpriced stranded asset, like the Kinder Morgan pipeline, for \$4.6 billion, when a company bought it 13 years ago for south of \$400 million. That is a terrible investment decision. What a government with vision would do is create a green new deal, with the promise of full employment for any graduate of a skilled trade program, of a college or university, to power the renewable energy economy. The Building Trades Unions of Canada—the carpenters, the building trades workers—have released a report that shows that by 2050 there's a

potential to produce four million green jobs in building retrofits, in conservation-oriented strategies and in the growth of renewable energy. That's the future.

Members on this side of the House are going to be voting against this bill not because we want to lock in the old private model; we're voting against this bill because we want to see a government with more ambition on renewable energy, not to encourage the privatized model that wastes money and hurts people but to encourage the local co-operative model that echoes the paradigm of our medicare system. That's our grandmothers and grandfathers—that's the legacy they bequeathed to us. I'm encouraging our friends in government: Don't squander that legacy. Don't say no to what happened before without offering us a plan for the future. We have yet, on this side of the House, to hear the government's climate change plan. I've heard a lot about the ills of carbon taxes but have yet to see a plan to take us from A to B. What I'm encouraging you to consider is that there is a plan that is in front of us.

I want to end on a lighthearted note, if it's okay. One of my favourite things that I like to read to my kids is the book *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* by Dr. Seuss. My favourite passage reads the following:

You will come to a place
where the streets are not marked.
Some windows are lighted. But mostly they're darked.
A place you could sprain both your elbow and chin!
Do you dare to stay out? Do you dare to go in?
How much can you lose? How much can you win?

And IF you go in, should you turn left or right ...
or right-and-three-quarters? Or, maybe, not quite?
Or go around back and sneak in from behind?
Simple it's not, I'm afraid you will find,
for a mind-maker-upper to make up his mind.

You can get so confused and end up in
The Waiting Place ...

... for people just waiting.
Waiting for a train to go
or a bus to come, or a plane to go....
That's not for you!

Somehow you'll escape
all that waiting and staying
You'll find the bright places
where Boom Bands are playing.

With banner flip-flapping,
once more you'll ride high!
Ready for anything under the sky.
Ready because you're that kind of a guy!

That's the kind of vision we want to see on renewable energy, Speaker, and I encourage my friends to embrace it.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Good morning, everyone. I'm proud to stand here today in support of Bill 34, the Green Energy Repeal Act, introduced by the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines.

I wanted to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for his very insightful comments; however, Mr. Speaker, I respectfully disagree with the premise of his entire statement.

The reality is, the Green Energy Act was designed in such a way that not only did it raise prices for everyone across Ontario, but it unfairly penalized people in rural areas. For example, in my riding of Carleton, there's no public transportation. There's no natural gas in a lot of places. So, with the Green Energy Act, everyone was being penalized, especially in those rural areas. We're talking about people who are commuters. They are not polluters.

The repeal of the Green Energy Act allows Ontarians to go back to being able to live comfortably, to being able to afford paying for gas and using the additional money toward other life expenses, whether it's putting it toward their children, whether it's putting more money back in their pockets or their life savings.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support this act. I am proud to stand here and say that Carleton and the people in Carleton are very happy that we are repealing the Green Energy Act. It can't come soon enough. I would be happy to debate as long as possible, but again, we're moving forward with this. Our government and our party campaigned on this in the election. This is what the people of Ontario want. They made that decision on June 7 with the resounding majority victory that our government had under the Premier.

Again, I am proud to support this bill, and I hope everyone, especially those on the other side, can support it as well.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ça me fait plaisir aujourd'hui de me lever et puis de parler contre ce projet de loi de l'énergie verte. Comme mon collègue disait, on est contre le projet de loi. Ce n'est pas à cause qu'on supporte l'ancien programme des libéraux. Je peux vous dire que le programme qu'ils avaient instauré n'était définitivement pas le bon, et tout le monde en payait le prix.

Je sais que mon collègue a mentionné ma circonscription. Vous savez, dans ma circonscription de Mushkegowuk—James Bay, l'hiver, ça fait longtemps qu'il est arrivé. La température qu'on vit comme c'est là à Toronto est plutôt comme une température d'automne pour nous.

En annulant des programmes comme l'énergie verte et puis en les remplaçant avec rien—c'est beau de dire que le programme ne fonctionnait pas, que le programme n'était pas bon ou que le programme ne répondait pas aux exigences ou à ce que le monde voulait voir dans un plan d'énergie. Mais de le remplacer avec rien n'est pas une solution non plus.

On n'a rien qu'à regarder dans ma circonscription. J'en ai parlé souvent dans cette Chambre, qu'il y a du monde à Mushkegowuk à chaque printemps, à cause que la planète se réchauffe, à qui on demande de s'exiler dans les

communautés du Nord. Il faut répondre à ces problèmes-là et puis résoudre le problème de la planète.

De ne juste rien faire ou de dire que le programme des libéraux—taper sur la tête des libéraux, c'est bien fait de le faire, mais à la fin de la journée, il faut trouver un meilleur programme si on veut dire que le programme n'est pas bon. Tous les jours, je pense, dans ma circonscription, je peux vous dire que j'entends que le monde vient me voir pour leur revêtement ou leur isolation. Quand on pogne des moins 30 et moins 40, il faut trouver des solutions pour garder notre énergie, parce qu'on a bien des places où il n'y a pas de mazout—où on n'a rien que l'électricité, ce qui nous coûte une fortune.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I was quite pleased to hear my colleague from Ottawa Centre agree that “the Green Energy Act was a top-down, secretive approach.” That’s what we had been advocating for a long time.

What the former government did is not short of what the Communist Party in the former Soviet Union used to do when the politburo issued their edicts to the central and local governments to follow their instructions. That’s exactly what the former government did when they forced the local governments to accept this green energy plan, even without their consent or their residents’ consent.

The green energy plan is the worst con job that I have ever seen in the history of Ontario. The green energy plan did not benefit the environment, did not benefit the people of Ontario. It only benefited the Liberal insiders, who made billions of dollars from the secretive deals that they struck with the Liberal government.

When I talk with my colleagues around the world about energy and other issues related to energy, they are amazed that we are sending our surplus energy to California for free. When they suffer from a shortage of energy and they ask us to provide them with that energy, they are willing to buy it from us. So that’s why I’m standing here today in support of this bill, and I urge my colleagues on the opposition side to join us to eliminate this charade of the green energy bill.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Just before we continue with questions and comments, I see a former member in the gallery, Ms. Cheri DiNovo, who represented the riding of Parkdale–High Park in the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Legislatures. Nice to see you again, Cheri. Welcome back to Queen’s Park.

Questions and comments?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I’m honoured here to stand on behalf of the constituents of St. Catharines.

I know that our contractors and ratepayers were hurt after this government decided to scrap the Green Ontario Fund. I know that our green-conscious businesses were blindsided by the decision to end the cap-and-trade program.

Here before us we have another piece of legislation that does nothing for businesses. It does nothing to lower

electricity rates for ordinary families. It does nothing to lower our carbon emissions.

What this bill will do is make it harder for businesses to gain approval for green energy projects. This bill threatens small rooftop projects, harming local engineers, workers and investors in the process. This bill will make it harder for farmers to earn some extra cash by having renewable projects on their properties.

This government has chosen to abdicate their responsibility to our environment and to our children. It has, through decisions like this bill, ensured that Ontarians and Ontario will be decades behind our neighbours in the economy of the future.

If you want to make Ontario a have-not province, there is no quicker way to do so than to ignore the fact that carbon-neutral is the future of global business. Whether we, in this House, like it or not, a carbon-neutral economy is the future, or there will be no future to have. That much is clear.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We’ll return to the member from Ottawa Centre for his two-minute summation of what he has heard.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the members from Carleton, Mushkegowuk–James Bay, Scarborough–Agin-court and St. Catharines for your comments.

I detect some potential in this debate. I think there is some potential in this debate to move forward on local, co-operative approaches to generating renewable energy that will demonstrably help us.

As much as we would like to be persuaded that it could happen, Elon Musk is not going to save us. Technology won’t save us. Technology will play an important role in adapting to climate change, but we have to play a role in providing leadership in this very moment.

Ontario does not have a wealth problem. We have a wealth distribution problem. We have a lack of foresight in thinking about how we make investments now that will benefit us later. When I talk to retirees back in Ottawa Centre and around the province, they constantly tell me this: “Where is the vision that our generation had for public pensions and medicare and unemployment insurance, all the things that we gave your generation? Where is that vision now?”

That’s why I’m asking all of us across the aisle and in this place to consider what we will do to empower an energy economy now, in the short term, in the medium term, in the long term, to take us where we have to be, because we are on a 12-year deadline. That’s not hocus-pocus. That’s a fact.

If we want to park all of our interests in recommissioning and regenerating nuclear energy, and throwing out the old renewable energy regime without having anything new in place to demonstrably expand this particular sector, which could put hundreds of thousands of people back to work, we’re missing a huge opportunity. We’re missing an enormous opportunity.

Speaker, I’ve got a tinge of hope this morning after what I’ve heard. I think there’s something we could work

on in the next few years to get choice back in the energy market that helps communities and doesn't hurt them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? I recognize, finally, the member who tried to jump the queue earlier: the member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you in the chair. It looks like my time is limited this morning. I hope I get a chance to finish this.

It's a privilege to rise in the Legislature to speak to Bill 34, the Green Energy Repeal Act.

We promised, Mr. Speaker, in the last election to be accountable to the people who pay their bills day in and day out. We promised to drive efficiencies in the electricity sector and to push energy costs down. More importantly, we promised to restore the public's faith in our electricity system.

As a member who has had the good fortune and privilege to be elected and re-elected to this Legislature four times now, I've had the opportunity to speak to many bills over the years. Included in that list is the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, which I debated all the way back as far as March 9, 2009. Sadly, some of the remarks I made at the time turned out to be true, I'm sorry to say. Based on my view of the bill back then even, and what I've witnessed unfold over the last nine years, I couldn't be happier that we're today discussing the Green Energy Repeal Act. I think our Premier said it best when he said, "The party with the taxpayers' money is over."

I want to commend the new Minister of Energy, the honourable member from Kenora–Rainy River, on his quick work to bring forward this legislation on behalf of our government and the people.

Mr. Speaker, the previous government's legislation was flawed from the start. Under that legislation, energy rates skyrocketed, hurting families and driving manufacturing jobs out of Ontario, and many out of my riding. I've mentioned this before but it bears mentioning again: As I said previously, I've been raising concerns about the rising cost of energy in this Legislature going all the way back over a decade now.

Here's what I said when I spoke about the Liberals' Green Energy and Green Economy Act back in 2009 during debate: I feel that this bill "will do nothing but impose new costs on the energy system and consumers, that what it in fact is going to do is create a new bureaucracy with very little accountability to both the ratepayers and to the Legislature." I "also don't believe that the government has really figured out how much this is going to cost consumers at the very end, and" I "believe that their initial estimates are way off." That was 2009. It's sad to say that I guess I was right in my remarks at the time.

I'll just remind this House that the Minister of Energy at that time insisted that bills would only increase by about 1% per year as a result of the Green Energy and Green Economy Act. He, as we know, is not here now; he went on to other venues.

I think what we saw play out over the next eight years of Liberal government mismanagement was exactly what the members in the Ontario PC caucus were warning this

Legislature about at the time. For many people in Ontario, the Green Energy Act had become a symbol of an inefficient and burdensome energy economy, representing some of the worst tendencies of a government that was out of touch. That's why repealing it has been a key priority for our government, because that's what the people elected us to do. That's amazing—a government doing what it was elected to do.

That is why I'm extremely pleased that we have a government in place now in the province of Ontario that is delivering on its promise to repeal the Green Energy Act and reduce Ontario's skyrocketing hydro rates. This is putting the brakes on additional projects that would add costs to electricity bills that the people of Ontario simply cannot afford. After years of skyrocketing electricity rates, hydro bills will finally start to come down.

Let's be clear: The Green Energy Act helped Liberal insiders get rich while families across Ontario were forced to choose between heating their homes or putting food on their plates. What a sad commentary on the province of Ontario. Manufacturers, workers, small businesses, single mothers, struggling seniors and families—all of Ontario—everyone watched their hydro bills go through the roof.

I'm reminded of some of the questions that I posed to the previous government about the failing Green Energy Act and its disastrous impact. These are just a sample of the questions that I asked during question period. This doesn't even scratch the surface of the thousands of letters, petitions, and emails that I and many other members, I'm sure from all sides, even the government of the day—which they would have got if they had wanted to pay attention to them. In 2011, when the previous government was still boasting of the windfall of jobs that would be created by these green projects—I remember sitting right on that side when the minister at that time kept boasting about 50,000 jobs, blah, blah, blah—a lot of hot air. I asked the Liberal Minister of Energy at that time to explain why only 1% of the jobs that were promised in my riding had materialized. This was an example at the time: The minister at the time said that the Sarnia solar farm created 800 jobs, but solar panels for that site were manufactured in Ohio. Only eight people worked at the solar farm at the time, and they were cutting the grass and doing maintenance work around there. That was a cause célèbre, to quote a word in the local media and the Toronto media at the time.

At the same time, communities like Sarnia–Lambton that rely on good jobs in the manufacturing sector saw businesses shut their doors and jobs lost while energy rates climbed to the highest levels in North America.

1010

The Green Energy Act made it so much harder for businesses in Ontario to stay in business. The Liberals' Green Energy Act led to the feed-in tariff program and skyrocketing electricity rates for Ontario families. Under the last government, energy rates tripled, hurting families and driving manufacturing jobs out of Ontario. Thousands of jobs were lost across Ontario. That's why we took immediate action to cancel 758 needless, expensive energy projects.

Something I did want to get on the record is that in 2011, I also asked the previous Liberal government about

why they stripped local municipalities, including those in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, of all decision-making powers when it came to the placement of industrial wind turbines. This is probably the most important part of my speech. Lambton county was one of the first regions to declare themselves an unwilling host. Did that matter to the previous government and their supporters? No. The previous government shoved these wind and solar farms into the backyards of our communities that didn't want them and made it plain that they didn't want them.

I want to particularly get on the record and mention Mayor Lonny Napper of Plympton-Wyoming and his council who, along with a community organization called WAIT, We're Against Industrial Turbines, fought long and hard to keep the wind turbines out of their municipality and were relatively successful. They do have a few in the corner, but those days are gone now.

I also want to mention Mayor Kevin Marriott and his council in my home township of Enniskillen, whose council also fought long and hard. They encouraged their ratepayers and their landowners to never sign any leases. That was what made them successful, I think, in that part of Ontario, because if you don't sign a lease in the first place, these salespersons—and some other names you could use to describe them—can't come in and force you, or tell you that your neighbour signed a lease so you'd better sign a lease and you'd better get on board. So I really applaud Enniskillen township and the other townships that caught on to what these wind energy companies, and solar as well, were doing.

Mayor Ian Veen of Oil Springs, a small municipality, also showed leadership on his council in this regard, and also Mayor Steve Arnold of one of the larger townships, St. Clair township, who also led in the resistance as well.

Unlike the previous government, Mr. Speaker, this government, the Doug Ford government, believes that the people of Ontario should have the final say about who gets to build what in their communities. I'm happy to say that with Bill 34, the trampling of local decision-making authority has come to an end. Promise made, promise kept. We're restoring the ability of local communities to control where major facilities can be built. This is an important step. If a local municipality can say where a Tim Hortons is located or how many entrances it can have or some such business as that, why couldn't you have some say over these major industrial wind turbines and solar plants?

I haven't got quite to that page yet, but our municipality—I don't want to sound like we didn't take part in renewable energy. We had more NUG plants, non-utility generators, in my riding than probably any place. Those are the gas-generating sectors—I see you nodding your head; you know what I'm talking about—who chase the load when the wind turbines or the sun doesn't shine. We've got a number of them in my riding, at least half a dozen that I can think of.

We have a number of cogeneration facilities in my riding. Long before green energy and the Liberal government of the day came along, we had cogeneration plants. They became unaffordable to run almost, but they're ready

to go again. We also have the largest solar farm, at one time anyway, in North America—built on some of the best agricultural land. This was even before the Green Energy Act. It should never have happened. It's there now, and they're good operators; I don't want to say they're not. But, you know, that shouldn't have happened. But they're there.

So it's not like we're Neanderthals, dragging our knuckles along there, like some people like to imply. I think Sarnia–Lambton has done more than its share. We're not against green energy. It had to be renewable and it had to be affordable and sustainable. The Liberal plan was not that. I heard someone say, and they used the term—I can't remember—oh, that we were going to be a have-not province. Well, we already have have-not ratepayers in this province, and we are receiving a transfer of payments from other provinces.

For all those reasons—I think you're getting ready to stand up and tell me I'm out of time. Is that—okay, well, I hope to get a chance to finish this speech some time in the near future, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you, member from Sarnia–Lambton. Yes, you will have time the next time you're in the House and this bill is up for debate. Unfortunately, at this point, we are out of time for further debate this morning.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): This House stands in recess until 10:30 and question period.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the member for London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent for a moment of silence on this International Trans Day of Remembrance for the thousands of trans, non-binary and two-spirited persons who have died due to transphobia.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for London North Centre is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence in remembrance of trans persons. Agreed? Agreed.

I would ask the House to rise and observe a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let us always remember them. Thank you very much.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I'd like to say thank you to the member for offering us that opportunity for the moment of silence. It was my intent to seek unanimous consent to have the pages distribute cards to members' desks for Trans Day of Remembrance; however, I see a thoughtful colleague has already done that for us.

But as I stand here, I just wanted to recognize my friend and colleague, and I know you'll introduce her later, Speaker: Cheri DiNovo, who I helped co-sponsor this piece of legislation with, so that we do have trans remembrance in the province of Ontario. Thank you very much, Cheri.

And, of course, our friend Susan Gapka is in the audience today, and I would simply be remiss if I didn't also acknowledge Nathalie Des Rosiers from Ottawa–Vanier as the third co-sponsor for this legislation in the previous Parliament.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the minister. It's normally the purview of the Speaker to introduce former members, but sometimes the Speaker is pre-empted. But I do also want to welcome Cheri DiNovo, the NDP member from Parkdale–High Park in the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Parliaments. Once again, welcome back to the Ontario Legislature. We're delighted that you're here.

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Another point of order?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's a busy day for me. It's also Woman Abuse Prevention Month, and I'm proud as women's minister to welcome OAITH, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, during Woman Abuse Prevention Month and during their Wrapped in Courage campaign that they had here earlier this morning. They are here in the gallery today, but I would ask all members of the assembly who are wearing purple to join us on the grand staircase after question period for a photo. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Of course we would now have our introduction of guests, but the member for Cambridge has a point of order, I think.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent for members to wear purple scarves today as part of Wrapped in Courage, a campaign to honour victims of violence against women.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Cambridge is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear purple scarves in recognition of preventing violence against women. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to introduce Dr. Murray Townsend from my riding of Perth–Wellington. Dr. Townsend is a chiropractor and he's here with the OCA. They are having a reception in room 228.

I would also like to introduce members of Fertilizer Canada who are here today: Lindsay Kaspick, Catherine King, Don Kitson, Faical Lamrini, Bob McNaughton, Dan Mulder, Emily Pearce Rayner, Tamara Sealy, McKenzie Smith, Karen Stephenson and Allison Watcher. They are also having a reception in room 228 today at 5 o'clock.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome my predecessor, the former MPP

for Parkdale–High Park and my friend, Cheri DiNovo to the House.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I would like to take a moment to introduce Caroline Brereton, CEO of the Ontario Chiropractic Association; Dr. Ken Brough, Ontario Chiropractic Association board chair; Nancy Gale, vice-president, strategic communications and stakeholder management for the Ontario Chiropractic Association; Dr. Brian Gleberzon, Ontario Chiropractic Association board secretary and treasurer; Dr. Ayla Azad, Ontario Chiropractic Association past chair; and Lisa Morris, a patient who was treated through the Belleville primary care low-back pain program.

Again, a reminder that they're having a lunch reception in room 228 for all members from 11:30 to 1:30; we certainly hope that all members are able to join.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to warmly welcome today members of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. Welcome to Queen's Park. Specifically, I'd like to welcome Charlene Catchpole, the chair of OAITH, and Marlene Ham, the executive director.

I'd also like to welcome Susan Gapka, a long-time trans activist and proud resident of Toronto Centre. Welcome, Susan. Thank you so, so much.

Hon. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a very special guest from the Bay of Quinte—Belleville, to be specific. Sandy Watson-Moyles is here from Three Oaks women's shelter and services. It's so great to see you up there, Sandy. Thank you for everything you do.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome my friend Thom Rolfe from Hiatus House in Windsor, a sanctuary for women and children fleeing domestic violence. Welcome back to Queen's Park, Thom.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm asking if we can have unanimous consent that I can ask a question on behalf of my colleague who's not in the House this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Orléans is seeking unanimous consent of the House to ask a question on behalf of a colleague who is not in the House this morning. Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I wanted to introduce my daughter. Taylor McKenna from Ontario's Nuclear Advantage is here today. It's always lovely, when your children don't live with you anymore, when they happen to pop by Queen's Park and say hello.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to welcome the folks here from St. Catharines from Gillian's Place: their executive director, Tanja Loeb. Thank you for coming. Welcome.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm proud to introduce a life-long entrepreneur, a good friend of mine, someone who's very passionate about growing Ontario and getting the economy moving here, Mr. John Chisholm.

Ms. Sara Singh: Good morning. I'd like to introduce my fantastic team members: my constituency assistants Jesse Guy-Herman and Bhani Wadhwa; and also my Legislative Assembly assistant, Colleen Rodriguez.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: It's a pleasure to introduce some of the representatives from Fertilizer Canada today: Bob Adamson, Cam Baker, Suzanne Beattie, Steve

Biggar, Colin Braithwaite, Giulia Brutesco, Meriem El Asraoui, Karim El Mansouri, Sarah Fedorchuk, Clyde Graham and Tom Houston. Please welcome all these good representatives here to Queen's Park, and I ask you to join them at 5 o'clock in room 228 for a reception.

1040

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to welcome my dear friend May Lui, whom I don't see right now but I know she's on her way; I saw her at the OAITH reception earlier this morning.

Also, I would welcome the Rev. Dr. Cheri DiNovo, a friend, a mentor, a role model, an icon politically, and my dear friend Susan Gapka as well.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I would like to welcome to the Legislature today the family of page Shlok Panchal from my riding: his father, Amish; his mother, Ranchana; and his brother Rhythm. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to welcome OAITH today, and the executive director of Hamilton Interval House, Nancy Smith. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I feel like it's leg day today, just given the up and down, but I want to welcome three colleagues who are here with us—I met with them this morning—from the Ontario Chiropractic Association, if I could add my voice: Caroline Brereton, the CEO; Dr. Azad, the past president; and Caroline Pinto. I want to thank you for sharing your priorities with the government and thank you for your time this morning.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I would like to welcome two Brock University students, Curtis Fric and Noah Nickle, who are here to deliver petitions on behalf of their fellow students.

Hon. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park this morning Ben Snair, who is a senior communications adviser in my office at the Ministry of Natural Resources. Ben, welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: It's my pleasure to welcome Fatima Altaf, the coordinator with Social Action and Community Building and Ontario Campaign 2000, to Queen's Park. Es salaam aleikum, Fatima.

Mr. Doug Downey: I would like to introduce two guests to the Legislature: Charles Wilson, a huge parliamentary procedure fan—yes, they exist—from Parry Sound–Muskoka; and Sangeeta Wylie, a dentist and actor. They're friends of Clara Pasioka, who remains uncontested for best attendance in the members' gallery. Welcome.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I just want to recognize, from Barrie–Innisfil, Marlene Ham, who is here from OAITH—she's the executive director—and Teresa MacLennan, the executive director of the Women and Children's Shelter of Barrie. As well as—she doesn't often get recognized, but Monica Stefanick, who's our multimedia specialist, is always in the gallery taking wonderful photos of us, so thank you.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I would like to formally recognize and welcome two guests to the Legislature today: Cynthia Saxena and George Collins. George is a director of the Professional Engineers Government of Ontario, and Cynthia is a resident of my riding, Oakville

North–Burlington, and a recent graduate from the University of Toronto, majoring in political science. She is attending question period at the Legislature for the first time today. Welcome.

Mr. Mike Harris: I would also like to welcome the members of Fertilizer Canada here today. I had a great meeting with them this morning.

I would also like to welcome, in the members' gallery, my very hard-working legislative assistant, Jonathan Lesage.

Mr. Dave Smith: I would like to welcome a fellow alumna of mine from Trent University, Emily McCullough, the brains behind everything I do. She is my executive assistant. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: As many members know, today is the international day of the child, and I'm pleased that I have a dozen or so young children in care who are joining me today for a round table, as well as Mary Ballantyne, who is the head of the Ontario Children's Aid Society. I'm looking forward to having a robust discussion and continuing to be their strongest advocate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to have to remind members that the introductions—we have allowed great latitude—are not supposed to be ministers' statements or members' statements, just introductions.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I would like to welcome this morning Howard Brown, who's here for Professional Engineers Ontario. I'll have a chance to see him this afternoon.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to introduce Mr. David Shiner, former Toronto city councillor, to Queen's Park, as well as my legislative assistant, Daniel Paolini.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I would be remiss—he's not here yet, but later today, my son Lucas will be coming to visit the Legislature, and I'm looking forward to that.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Bonjour, monsieur le Président. I would like to welcome my constituency caseworker, Ania Barycka, to the House. I would like to thank her for all of the wonderful work she's doing on behalf of the constituents of Mississauga Centre.

Mr. Ross Romano: I would like to welcome to the House this morning my intern through the OLIP intern process, Ms. Janessa Duran, hiding in the back of the gallery there. She has the unfortunate experience of having to work with me. Thank you very much for being here today, Janessa.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce in the legislative chamber today my recent addition, Andrew Esser, my legislative assistant at Queen's Park.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I'll have to borrow from our good friend from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: To everyone else who's in the Legislature today who hasn't been introduced, welcome.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I would like to introduce—a lot of you already know her as my legislative assistant, Maxine Young. She has been very helpful and very hard-working. I thank her for all of the great work.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the NDP caucus, I'd also like to welcome the fertilizer institute. I've had time

in the last few minutes to figure out my order, so I'd like to talk to you after.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'd like to welcome, from OAITH, which is here today for the Wrapped in Courage campaign, chair Charlene Catchpole and Marlene Ham, who is the executive director, and thank them for all of the work they've done over the many years. I've enjoyed working with you. Thank you very much to everyone here—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I think that concludes the time we have available this morning for introductions of guests.

TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

JOURNÉE DU SOUVENIR TRANS

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to remind everybody that at 1 o'clock, by the flagpole, we're going to be commemorating the Trans Day of Remembrance.

Monsieur le Président, si je peux le dire en français, à une heure de l'après-midi, au lever du drapeau aujourd'hui, nous commémorerons la mémoire des personnes de la communauté transgenre de l'Ontario qui sont décédées de façon tragique et celles qui continuent d'être victimes de violence et de préjudice. Merci beaucoup.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order?

Hon. Steve Clark: No, I want to introduce a guest, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay. This is the last one.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Excellent. Thank you so much, Speaker. I love to be last.

I just want to introduce to the members of the Legislative Assembly Charlene Catchpole, who is the executive director of Interval House in my riding of Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to clarify something. I've been advised that the Trans Day of Remembrance flag-raising is taking place this afternoon at 2 p.m. As Speaker of the Legislature, I will be present on behalf of the Legislative Assembly.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is for the Acting Premier. In last week's fall economic statement, the government announced their intention to review the Ontario Drug Benefit plan to find "efficiencies." The Ontario Drug Benefit plan provides drug coverage to every senior in our

province, as well as to people relying on disability supports and social assistance.

Can the Acting Premier tell us what drug benefits are planned for this cut?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I want to thank you for the question, and I want to say how pleased we are to have presented A Plan for the People last week. In the plan—

Interjections: Prop.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Some people may call it a prop; we call it a very important document, a guideline, a blueprint to the future of the province of Ontario. This is a plan for the people that was—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to say, if you hold it up constantly, it has to be seen as a prop.

I would ask the minister to conclude his response.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: In A Plan for the People, which we presented in this Legislature last Thursday, there were \$3.2 billion in savings that were found for the people of Ontario and \$2.7 billion in money returned to the people of Ontario. For the first time, there is relief for families, for individuals and for businesses, and that reduced the deficit by \$500 million, the \$15-billion deficit that that Liberal government left.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Sara Singh: The fall economic statement promises to make health benefits more efficient and fiscally responsible. It goes on to state that the first target will be drug benefits. Seniors and people with disabilities in this province rely on those benefits, Speaker. What cost-cutting measures is the Premier planning for Ontario's drug benefits?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Again, what our Premier has continually said is that not only have we found \$3.2 billion in savings without any job losses—all of those are efficiencies, Speaker.

Let me take a moment to explain an efficiency. OHIP+ is a great example. The Liberal government that put OHIP+ in stated that anybody under 25 would have free drugs. We have gone in and improved that with an efficiency so that anybody under 25 first uses their parents' or their own drug benefit. They still have the same coverage they had before our announcement. They saved \$300 million in efficiencies and never lost a job. That's what efficiencies are all about—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Efficiencies. You guys should try that sometime.

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo, come to order. The member for King–Vaughan, come to order. The member for Windsor West, come to

order. The Minister of Community Safety, come to order. The member for Niagara Falls, come to order. We've got a long way to go, folks.

Start the clock. Final supplementary.

Ms. Sara Singh: Families across this province have seen very clearly what Conservative efficiencies in health care mean: 28 closed hospitals and 6,000 fired nurses the last time they were in office.

The Premier says that the \$3 billion in cuts in the fall economic statement are just a warm-up. Seniors and families that rely on drug benefits deserve some answers. What is the Premier planning to cut?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We're certainly cutting low-income workers' taxes, down to zero. When you think about the Low-income Individuals and Families Tax Credit, Speaker, this is one of the most generous tax cuts for low-income workers in a generation; 1.1 million low-income workers will see their taxes reduced. If you are making \$30,000 a year or less, you will pay no provincial income tax—zero, nada, niente.

TAXATION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is for the Acting Premier. The Premier says that he's looking to squeeze every possible penny, even out of seniors who rely on drug benefits. He says no one will be spared as he searches for savings. But can he explain, or can the Acting Premier explain, how he found \$275 million to give a tax break to himself and Ontario's wealthiest?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We made it very clear during the election that we would not implement any of the former government's punitive tax increases, especially the increases on our low-income families. That's why our government introduced one of the most generous tax cuts for low-income workers, as I said, in a generation. If you're earning \$30,000 per year or less, you will pay no personal income tax—zero. In fact, low-income taxpayers earning just over \$30,000 will also receive a graduated income tax relief.

Speaker, this measure will provide relief to 1.1 million people in the province of Ontario who will have relief for families for the first time in a generation.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: The Premier says that no one will be spared when it comes to government cuts. Now he's looking at taking away from seniors who rely on drug benefits and from families tired of hallway care, but he gives himself and some of the wealthiest people in the province a tax cut. How does that make sense?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I realize that the NDP don't want to talk about the 1.1 million people who are going to have relief from their taxes. In fact, they have such a hard time with this, we'll hear from the NDP member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas: "There's a lot of talk now that you are talking about an income tax break, or zero income tax, for low-income people, but you're talking about people who earn so little that they in fact don't need a tax break."

This member believes that people don't need a tax break. Well, that amount of money that we're investing in low-income families is \$500 million that is being returned to low-income families. That's the tax break that she's talking about that she says they don't deserve.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members, take your seats.

Final supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: The Minister of Finance protests a bit too much, because the high-income tax break that he's giving the wealthiest is costing the province twice as much as what they're saying they're going to give the low-income people.

The Premier said that no one would be spared from cuts. But while he's asking struggling seniors to brace for cuts to drug benefits, he's handing himself and other wealthy Ontarians a tax break. If the Premier truly believes that no one should be spared in his quest for cuts, why is he sparing himself?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane—fellow northerner, but I have to say your math is completely wrong. You have said numbers in this Legislature that simply do not add up. You are absolutely and unequivocally wrong in your math. That should come as no surprise, Speaker, for a party who told us that they had a \$7-billion mistake in their own campaign budget, so we can understand.

It's really disappointing that they feel that this \$500-million investment in low-income families—that those families do not need a tax break. I've said this before and I'm going to say again how disappointing it is. The NDP deal in chaos; we deal in confidence. The NDP deals in resistance, and we will deal in results.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Madame la Ministre, hier pendant un point de presse, vous avez dit que la question d'annuler le projet de l'Université de l'Ontario français et le Commissariat aux services en français n'est que pour des questions financières. Par contre, M^{me} la ministre a dit : « Nous reconnaissons l'importance de cette nouvelle université pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario et nous voulons lui accorder l'attention et le soutien qu'elle mérite. »

1100

De plus, c'est bien connu que le Commissariat aux services en français était autrefois avec l'ombudsman, que ça ne marchait pas en tant qu'institution indépendante, et qu'il joue un rôle essentiel pour la défense des droits constitutionnels des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes.

Ma question est simple : qu'est-ce qui a changé?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie le député opposé pour sa question. Nous avons été élus avec un mandat très clair de trouver des moyens efficaces de livrer les services aux Ontariens. Le travail du commissaire, qui

est important—la protection des droits linguistiques en Ontario—va continuer à être fait au sein du Bureau de l'Ombudsman. Depuis son indépendance cette année, son budget a plus que quadruplé. Maintenant, au sein du Bureau de l'Ombudsman, l'ombudsman lui-même, en travaillant avec les gens du commissariat, va trouver des économies d'échelle, parce que nous avons été élus avec un mandat très clair d'essayer d'arrêter ces pratiques dispendieuses du gouvernement précédent, qui nous ont laissé un déficit de 15 milliards de dollars et une dette de 347 milliards de dollars. Ils nous demandent d'hypothéquer l'avenir de nos enfants et de nos petits-enfants, et nous allons arrêter de faire ça.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Demain après-midi, la leader de l'opposition officielle, M^{me} Andrea Horwath, présentera une motion demandant au gouvernement Ford de rétablir le Commissariat aux services en français et le projet de l'Université de l'Ontario français. Comme elle, je crois fermement que les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes ont le droit constitutionnel d'être éduqués et servis dans leur langue par des institutions indépendantes.

Ma question est très simple : ce gouvernement va-t-il appuyer cette motion?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: C'est très clair que les droits linguistiques des minorités en Ontario vont continuer à être préservés ici en Ontario par le travail du Bureau de l'Ombudsman. Je demanderais au député opposé d'arrêter de mettre ces informations erronées dans les médias, et de corriger ses propos.

Nous reconnaissons l'importance de ce projet. C'est pourquoi nous avons passé beaucoup de temps à étudier pour trouver des moyens pour financer ce projet. Mais, malheureusement, avec le déficit de 15 milliards de dollars, une dette de 347 milliards de dollars—monsieur le Président, on dépense 12,5 milliards de dollars; on paye ça aux créanciers à l'extérieur de l'Ontario, à l'extérieur du Canada, au lieu d'investir ça ici au Canada et ici en Ontario. Alors, on arrête de faire ça, monsieur le Président. On est honnêtes. Quand on aura remis l'Ontario sur la voie de la prospérité, on va pouvoir revisiter ces projets très importants.

VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Ma question est pour la ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires. Aujourd'hui, une femme sur trois subira des violences sexuelles au cours de sa vie.

Unfortunately, women from minority groups are much more likely to experience violence.

Indigenous women are three times more likely to be victims of a violent crime and to experience spousal violence than non-Indigenous women. Immigrant and refugee women are seen to be more vulnerable to violence due to language barriers, isolation from their family, precarious work and uncertain legal status. Women with disabilities

are three times more likely to experience violence. Lesbian or bisexual women are three times more likely to report intimate-partner violence.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell this House how diverse voices for women across this province will be included in the discussions about ending violence against women?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: To my colleague from Mississauga Centre—she has been a strong advocate for vulnerable women in this Legislature, asking the tough questions on human trafficking, sex trafficking of women and, of course, here today on violence against women. I really commend you for doing that. Thank you so much.

I'd also like to once again welcome those from OAITH who are today who are on the front lines, helping us with violence against women right throughout Ontario. The work that they're doing is very much appreciated by me and my ministry.

Today, I had the opportunity to address with them and to announce that our government for the people will be engaging in consultations with the 48 existing violence against women coordinating committees across the province. They will help me integrate and improve services for women in Ontario who need it most. It is these front-line workers who we will be consulting with so that we can ensure that we get the most important services and most important wraparound programming to the women who need it most.

Unfortunately, the Ontario New Democratic Party doesn't want to actually talk about the solution. They just want to complain.

I'd like to thank, again, the member from our government party for continually and consistently bringing up this very important issue.

I know that all members condemn violence against—

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

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Je remercie la ministre pour sa réponse et pour avoir affirmé son engagement à écouter et à agir pour combattre la violence contre les femmes.

Mr. Speaker, too many women and girls experience violence in their lives, whether through spousal violence, sexual harassment or human trafficking. It is critical that services across our province are coordinated and all women who need assistance have access to emergency shelters, counselling, safety planning, transitional housing and referral services, and more.

Violence against women also has significant economic costs, estimated at \$7.4 billion, which includes medical, legal, lost income and productivity costs.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain how the government will expand access to services for women who have experienced violence and assist front-line staff?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Earlier this morning, I was fortunate to be with OAITH and to announce that our government for the people will be investing \$11.5 million in front-line supports to over 400 agencies throughout this great province so that we can protect more women.

Let me be perfectly clear, Speaker: I am so proud of the work that my colleague the Minister of Labour did previously in her role as our women's critic, before we served in government.

I also want to single out a few men in our caucus who have inspired me day in and day out: our Minister of Natural Resources, who has stood up for women in rural communities right across this province; Randy Hillier, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston; the Minister of Housing, who first ensured that there was a VAW centre in his home community of Brockville; and of course, my colleague Minister Todd Smith from economic development and trade, who ensured that I got to see Three Oaks in his community.

We need strong women supporting women. We also need strong men—

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

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

I say to all members of the House, it's a little more difficult to watch the clock when there are constant outbursts from members in the House and I have to call them to order. We are trying to pay close attention to the clock.

Interjections.

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

CANCER TREATMENT

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

When a loved one is fighting cancer, the last thing they should worry about is whether or not they can afford to pay for the treatment that works best for them. If the treatment is in the hospital, it is completely free. The minute you can be treated at home, you are on your own, you have to pay. People much prefer to be treated at home, and take-home cancer drugs are often the best treatment option. Yet Ontario refuses to cover take-home cancer medication.

Does the Premier agree that it is time to guarantee universal access to take-home cancer drugs?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member opposite for the question.

I know there has been some discussion about this. Of course, people would rather be treated at home for cancer, as well as for many other illnesses and health problems. There are situations where a number of the take-home cancer drugs can be covered under policies. Other times, people have policies that cover them. Universal access is not necessary.

We make sure that people who are not able to pay for their own cancer drugs that aren't covered by a policy can have access under the Trillium program and other programs. We don't want anybody who has cancer to go without treatment—and that's what we will make sure is covered. It's not necessary to do it with a universal access program, per se.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: While the Premier and minister look for drug benefit cuts, cancer patients will tell them that the smartest savings comes from people moving out of the hospital when it isn't the best treatment option. But our current system forces people to stay in the hospital if they cannot afford to pay for their take-home cancer drugs, even when this is not the best treatment option.

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Tomorrow, we will be debating a motion calling on funding for take-home cancer drugs. Will the minister and the Premier support it?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, I think it is important to note that Ontario spends close to \$1 billion a year on cancer drugs and supportive therapies, including \$543 million for take-home cancer drugs. So those cancer drugs are available for people who need them, and we will continue to do so. In fact, what we want to do is expand access, because we know there are many new cancer and other drugs coming onto the market. We want to expand the drugs that are available to people, including more and more personalized types of medications.

But as I indicated in my previous comments, it's not necessary to have a universal access program as long as we have programs that make sure that people who are not able to afford them have them. We have that under the Ontario Drug Benefit program and the Ontario Trillium Benefit Program. So people need to be reassured that if they need take-home cancer remedies, they will get them.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Jim McDonell: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Farmers and food processors in my riding have been telling me that many of Ontario's regulatory requirements are out of date, unnecessary and don't provide any real protections for them. Red tape is costing our farmers their time and money and causing a lot of frustration that makes it more difficult for their businesses to get ahead.

Yesterday, the minister announced that his ministry is proposing to cut red tape and regulatory burdens for dairy and meat processors in the province. Can the minister please tell us what this government is doing to target costly and unnecessary red tape to help those in the agri-food sector, while maintaining rules to keep Ontarians and the foods they consume safe?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for the important question.

As he mentioned, I want to assure everyone that our government, first and foremost, is committed to food safety and public safety. First, food processors play a key role in keeping our food safe. With the proposed regulations, food safety will stay top of mind.

Yesterday, I was pleased to announce that our government is proposing to cut red tape and regulatory burdens for dairy and meat processing in Ontario. I had the opportunity to tour a family-owned dairy processing facility yesterday in Mississauga, where I heard from the owners

about red tape headaches and the cost of unnecessary regulations. If approved, the changes we are proposing will make it easier and faster for the agri-food companies to do business in Ontario.

I look forward to providing more details in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thanks to the minister for his leadership in making life more affordable for those in the agri-food industry in Ontario. We know that this government is committed to cutting red tape and regulatory burdens for all businesses in Ontario to make them more competitive and to reduce operating costs across the board.

The proposed changes to both acts are simple and efficient steps. They are long overdue to help our agri-food sector, like those in the meat and dairy processing industries. Can the minister tell us how the proposed changes will help strengthen both our dairy and meat processing industries?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for the supplementary question.

The proposed changes will allow meat processing plant operators to save \$300 every three years by no longer needing to re-apply for the licence.

In another proposed change, owners who no longer want to operate meat plants will be able to voluntarily give up their licences, avoiding a number of current administrative hoops. Presently, if you have a meat-packing plant and you want to quit, you have to apply to get rid of the licence.

The proposed changes for dairy processors would amend requirements relating to receiving bays, plant ceiling heights and floor drains, which would reduce the costs for small dairy processors who currently can spend up to one third of their construction budget on updating building requirements. Requirements will be focused on ensuring food safety outcomes instead of prescriptive construction regulations.

We know how important these processors are, especially in rural communities, and our government is committed to ensuring their businesses can be competitive while following—

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

ONTARIO PLACE

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is to the Premier. Ontario Place was built and paid for by the people of Ontario to celebrate this great province of ours. After a public consultation process, Ontario Place is being renewed with the Bill Davis trail, with green spaces, with regular events, and with a beach with what I've been told is the cleanest water to swim in in the city of Toronto. However, last week the Premier tabled legislation to formally dissolve the Ontario Place board, giving him full control of this public asset.

The last time the Premier set his sights on Toronto's waterfront was back when he was a city councillor. He met with developers to cook up a plan behind closed doors to sell off public land and to make way for a Ferris wheel and

a mega mall. The Premier's vision also included an NFL stadium on land controlled by Mario Cortellucci, who was the top fundraiser for Mayor Rob Ford.

Has the Premier or his staff had any discussion with developers or lobbyists about redeveloping Ontario Place, and, if so, what did they discuss?

Hon. Doug Ford: This is so dishonest. Minister of Tourism.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the Premier to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Hon. Doug Ford: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question.

The government, as has been stated before, is committed to making Ontario Place a spectacular, world-class destination. As you will recall, it was a PC government under John Robarts that created Ontario Place, and it will be a place that the PC government ensures is a great tourist space for decades to come.

We look forward to working with the city of Toronto and the CNE for the future redevelopment of Ontario Place, and the government will explore the full development potential of the Ontario Place site. We look forward to providing more details as plans develop. Ontario Place, as it is, remains open for the public.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Glover: Again to the Premier: When you say it's open to the public, does it mean that it will remain in public hands? In 2013, the city of Toronto voted 40-4 to oppose a downtown Toronto casino. Not only would a casino cannibalize economic activity and suck the lifeblood out of downtown neighbourhoods; it would also take business away from the Woodbine casino.

Will the Premier assure us that plans for Ontario Place will never include a casino? Will there be a robust public consultation process involving the Ontario taxpayers, who paid for and own Ontario Place, or will the Premier cook up his own plans for this public asset with his friends in backrooms?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you again for the supplementary question. Mr. Speaker, we're going to ensure Ontario Place is updated to once again make it a world-class tourist destination. Many Ontarians of a certain generation share nostalgic memories of Ontario Place, and we have an incredible opportunity that we need to be bold and creative with. I know citizens across the province are as excited as I am as we embark on the development of this project. We're exploring all opportunities, Mr. Speaker, to move forward with developing the site, including seeking bids globally. We look forward to providing more information as the plans develop.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

FRANCOPHONE AFFAIRS

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Ma question est pour la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Aujourd'hui,

j'aimerais m'adresser à la population francophone, francophile et anglophone de l'Ontario. Nous avons tellement fait du beau travail ensemble pour faire avancer la langue française au cours des dernières années : la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur les services en français, la création des entités de planification de services de santé en français, la création des conseils scolaires francophones, la création du Commissariat aux services en français et son indépendance, l'adhésion à l'OIF, un ministère à part entière des Affaires francophones, et finalement, la loi créant l'Université de l'Ontario français.

Malheureusement pour les conservateurs, on est en train de répéter le désastre fait par la proposition de la fermeture de Montfort. Comment la ministre peut-elle détruire tous ces acquis sous prétexte d'économies de bouts de chandelle et, en plus, particulièrement, avoir le front de proposer au commissaire, un officier indépendant de l'Assemblée législative, un poste d'adjoint à l'ombudsman?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of francophone affairs.

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L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: J'aimerais simplement rajouter quelques détails à la liste de choses que le gouvernement précédent a accomplies : une dette de 347 milliards de dollars, un déficit de 15 milliards de dollars et des paiements sur la dette de 12,5 milliards de dollars qu'on envoie aux créanciers.

M^{me} Robin Martin: C'est incroyable.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: C'est incroyable, monsieur le Président, que le gouvernement précédent est complètement confortable d'hypothéquer l'avenir de nos enfants et de nos petits-enfants.

Le bureau du commissaire a été intégré au sein du Bureau de l'Ombudsman. Et pour ce qui est de l'Université de l'Ontario français, le gouvernement précédent avait 15 ans pour bâtir l'université. Ils avaient 15 ans pour financer cette université, pour consacrer de l'argent de façon durable, mais ils ne l'ont pas fait. Ce n'était qu'en 2017 qu'ils ont décidé d'avancer ce projet tellement important pour les Franco-Ontariens.

Monsieur le Président, nous n'avons pas les moyens, grâce aux dégâts qu'ils nous ont laissés.

Interjections.

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

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Beaucoup d'émotions en Chambre aujourd'hui.

Les conservateurs prétendent qu'ils n'ont pas assez d'argent pour une université francophone ici à Toronto, ou pour un projet pilote portant sur le revenu de base, ou pour l'Intervenant en faveur des enfants de l'Ontario. Mais ils ont assez de revenu pour faire sûr que le premier ministre et son entourage auront des allègements fiscaux significatifs. Monsieur le Président, c'est complètement ridicule.

J'imagine que la campagne fédérale du premier ministre de l'Ontario est légèrement déraillée en ce moment. J'espère

que la ministre déléguée sait que lorsqu'on s'attaque à la francophonie en Ontario, on s'attaque non seulement à l'Ontario mais au Canada tout entier.

Ma question est simple : est-ce que la ministre peut nous dire aujourd'hui, dans nos yeux, quelles seront les autres coupures au niveau des services et des programmes en français ici en Ontario?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: J'aimerais demander à la députée opposée d'arrêter ces politiques de division. Nous ne sommes pas en train de nous attaquer à la francophonie ontarienne. Nous préservons les droits linguistiques en Ontario, et nous faisons exactement ce que les libéraux ne faisaient pas : on est honnête avec les Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariens. On leur dit qu'on ne peut pas financer cette université.

J'aimerais juste citer quelqu'un—et je vous demande pardon parce que j'ai la citation en anglais. Le député de Toronto-Danforth a dit l'année dernière :

"This government has been in power now, what, 14 years? When you bring something forward like this about six months before an election without the money really being in place—this is more exploratory than anything else—what you're" really "doing is engaging"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the minister. Stop the clock.

Once again, I had to cut off the minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjections.

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

I apologize to the minister for having to cut her off, but I had to cut her off because of the noise from her colleagues. I could not hear what she was saying.

Start the clock. Next question.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business reported that Ontario businesses in 2017 faced over \$15 billion in red-tape costs. That's more than twice as much as businesses in Quebec and three times as much as businesses in British Columbia.

Over the span of 15 years, the previous Liberal government strangled small businesses in Ontario with regulations, red tape and unnecessary burdens.

Last week, I was pleased to hear the Minister of Finance talk about the cost that overregulation has on Ontario's job creators and small businesses in his fall economic statement.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister please expand on the work that our government for the people is doing to reduce red tape?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks very much to the member from Carleton for the question this morning. This is a very important issue that we're dealing with in reducing strangling red tape in Ontario. This is a file that's been intriguing

to me because this is where I started in 2011 after the election, as the critic responsible for small businesses and red tape reduction.

I said last week that it's important to think of Bill 47 as just one part of the government's strategy to make Ontario open for business, and there's a lot more to come. Later today, we'll begin third reading debate on Bill 47 in the House.

I can tell you as well, Mr. Speaker, that the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis estimated that the reforms in Bill 148 added \$23 billion in costs over two years. It was a cinder block around the ankles of small businesses right across Ontario. We're going to take this one step to eliminate red tape to ensure that these businesses don't sink to the bottom.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Back to the minister: It's encouraging to hear what our government is doing for small businesses across the province. Over 15 years, the last government doubled the amount of regulations in Ontario, and it did everything it could to put small businesses out of business.

Our government for the people understands that red tape and overregulation cost the average Ontario small business \$33,000 per year. Mr. Speaker, through you: Can the minister please explain what our government is doing to reduce the more than 380,000 regulations plaguing small businesses in Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks again to the member from Carleton—another great question.

As our finance minister pointed out in his speech last week in the Plan for the People, there are approximately 331 statutes, including 380,000 regulations, in Ontario. That amount of regulation overwhelmingly kills small businesses. That's why we have a plan to reduce burdensome red tape and regulation by 25% by 2022.

We're going to get that done, but we're going to go even further than that. Last week, our government announced our intention to accelerate the depreciation of capital assets for small businesses. We're hoping that the members of the NDP will support us in spite of them calling businesses "spiteful" in committee yesterday.

We're also hoping that for once, we'll get help from Justin Trudeau and the federal government to make Ontario's small businesses work and make great businesses and good jobs here in Ontario.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a spiteful piece of legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. Will Bouma: Really? Spiteful?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor–Tecumseh will take down the sign. The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek will take down his sign. The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry will please come to order.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier. Today is Trans Day of Remembrance. This day memorializes those who have been murdered and who have died as a result of suicide and as a result of transphobia and anti-trans violence. Today is a sombre day, and we pay our deepest respects.

Speaker, will the Premier be at the Trans Day of Remembrance flag-raising this afternoon?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I really want to say thank you to the member opposite for bringing forward this important question. I will be there today along with many members of the government caucus.

I am proud that I was one of three co-sponsors of the bill that made sure that today is recognized in the province of Ontario as transgender remembrance day, along with my colleague Nathalie Des Rosiers from Ottawa–Vanier in the Liberal caucus and the former MPP for Parkdale–High Park, Cheri DiNovo, who is here today. I am really proud of the work that we've done as an assembly, as well as the Deputy Premier's role in bringing forward Toby's Law into the province of Ontario.

1130

We've come a long way. We have more to go. I look forward to standing with every single member in this Legislature today in condemning hate toward any group that is under-represented and any group that needs support. I'm happy to support the transgender community today and I will continue to support them as the minister responsible for LGBTQ issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: With all due respect to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, it's not about you. We want to hear from the Premier.

By proclaiming November 20 each year as the Trans Day of Remembrance, the province of Ontario publicly mourns and honours the lives of those who might otherwise be forgotten and gives trans people and their allies a chance to stand together in vigil.

In past comments, the Premier stated that gender identity is nothing more than "liberal ideology" that should not be taught in schools. Trans and LGBTQ2S students have been scrubbed from the Ontario curriculum—erased. The Premier's earlier language is not only hurtful; it's dangerous. Words matter. That sort of language encourages extreme views, even within the Premier's own party.

Will the Premier unequivocally renounce his earlier comments and send a clear message to trans people on this significant day?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much to the member from London North Centre for the question. I want to be very clear: The Premier yesterday stood unequivocally

in support of the trans community and said so in his own words that he stands by this.

Earlier today during question period, my ministry, on behalf of our government for the people, put out a press release ensuring that we support the trans community.

My colleague the Minister of Education stood here yesterday and told you to your face that we stand with the trans community and that we're proud to stand with the trans community and the LGBTQ community.

I will be very forceful in making sure that within my ministry we continue to place those supports as a priority for any under-represented group in the province of Ontario, particularly for the children that I represent.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. This past week, the minister travelled to Sault Ste. Marie and attended the first of many forestry round tables. I'm pleased to hear that our government for the people is committed to developing a sound, comprehensive forestry strategy that will help revitalize the forestry industry in Ontario. This is an initiative that northern Ontario needs and that hard-working forestry sector workers have been asking for. Thousands of people are employed in this industry, and it contributes \$15.3 billion to our economy every year.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to lessening the regulatory burdens imposed by the former Liberal government. Can the minister update the Legislature on his round table discussions about our plan, which prioritizes lifting regulatory burdens and cutting red tape?

Hon. John Yakubuski: I want to thank the member for his question. Yes, last week I had the opportunity to travel to Sault Ste. Marie for the first of many round tables that we're having with forestry stakeholders to ask them about how our government can help them reach their potential and secure the Ontario jobs that are available in the forestry economy after so many years of being stifled by the previous Liberal government. The insights gathered through those meetings and those round tables will assist us in developing our forestry strategy, one that employs thousands of people across this province.

I want to thank all of the industry leaders who attended the round tables to give us their thoughts. It was a very, very productive session. I also want to thank those who have participated through written submissions and electronically, and encourage them to continue to send us those submissions as well, because that's how we will make forestry the leader that it should be all across this great province under this Ford government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to thank the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry for that response. It's great to hear that the round table session in Sault Ste. Marie was a huge success. I look forward to hearing more about the forestry discussion in the coming months.

Unlike the former Liberal government, our government for the people knows the importance of the forestry

industry and that many families across Ontario depend on the forestry sector. I know that our government for the people will work hard to continue to grow this industry. This industry can create more jobs and more opportunities in northern Ontario and across our entire province.

Can the minister expand on our government's commitment to the forestry sector and the people of Ontario who are employed in it?

Hon. John Yakubuski: Let me be crystal clear: Our government stands with the forestry sector and the thousands of people who are employed in it. We will not be influenced by special interest groups that seem to be only satisfied when Ontarians lose their jobs. We are sending a message clearly that Ontario is open for business, and the forestry sector is a huge part of that.

We want to hear from the people on this issue. We want to hear from them about what we can do to maximize their success in this sector. Our government will support the needs of our job creators in the forestry industry so that Ontario can lead once again in this great country. Ontario is open for business.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

This is a question about the Premier's ethical standards for his cabinet ministers.

According to multiple reports, a female staffer working for the then opposition Conservatives came forward with a complaint of sexual misconduct concerning the Minister of Finance. Last Thursday, the Premier said that he would not be taking any action on these allegations because an investigation had already occurred. Yesterday, the Acting Premier said that "there was nothing there to be investigated," which indicates that there has been no investigation at all.

Can the Premier tell us who conducted the investigation and when the investigator's findings will be made public and available?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: We did a thorough third-party investigation. There was not one ounce of any evidence—zero evidence.

I have 1,000% confidence in my minister, and I stand behind him 1,000%.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The Premier says there was zero evidence. He should make that public for the people of the province and for the members of this House.

The Premier has stated that he has zero tolerance for sexual misconduct, but it's unclear what action, if any, has been taken here. If an independent investigation has happened, the government should be able to tell us who conducted the investigation and what exactly they found from that investigation. And if not, they must allow for an independent investigation into these allegations and ask the minister to step aside while it's being conducted. Which one is it going to be?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Again, there was a thorough third-party investigation with zero evidence.

I find it pretty disgusting that they would lower themselves to this level once again. If they have nothing productive to say, then don't say it at all.

ONTARIO HISTORY

Mr. Stephen Lecce: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

There is a campaign afoot to revise the history of our country and to attack Canada's father of Confederation. Yesterday, vandals, shamefully, defaced the statue of Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. In the words of his modern biographer, Richard Gwyn, "No Macdonald, no Canada."

Sir John A. Macdonald was, by instinct, a coalition builder. His vision is what made Confederation possible, bringing distinct entities and identities—English and French—and vast regions together to create one of the greatest, freest and most prosperous democracies in the world.

While Macdonald is far from perfect, we should reject what Jason Kenney has called a "campaign of historical vandalism."

Our founding Prime Minister was the first national democratic leader in the world to attempt to extend the right to vote to women. He welcomed eight provinces and territories into Confederation. He founded the now-RCMP and built a national railway to unite our country, from sea to sea.

Can the minister affirm our government's determination to stand up for our history and celebrate the contributions of this incredible Canadian?

1140

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I thank the member from King–Vaughan for that very important question. Mr. Speaker, let me be clear—

Hon. John Yakabuski: Crystal clear.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Let me be crystal clear: We will not let anti-Canadian agitators dictate who is good and bad. I stand in this House today to condone this act of vandalism. Acts like this degrade public discourse around the important issues facing our province today.

In regard to John A. Macdonald: John A. Macdonald's thought represented the common norms accepted during his time. It is foolish and, indeed, detrimental to Canadian society as a whole to view the very founders of our country without taking stock of the societal norms at the time. Every person in Canadian history would be evil—even the founder of the modern NDP would be seen as a boogeyman.

I want to condone this act, Mr. Speaker, and leave this House with the old saying: Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Sir John A. had a vision for this country, a vision of a prosperous Canada that provided refuge and economic opportunity to its citizens. He ad-

vanced a vision of prosperity by supporting the development and growth of our industry and our agriculture sector. He had a vision to connect our vast frontier and unite our people by building a railway from sea to sea. He was determined to strengthen our economy and to defend our sovereignty from American expansionism, and he promised, "One people, one in necessity, one in business, one in trade, one in prosperity, and one in our prospects for the future."

To the minister: How is our government, in our most recent economic update, realizing the vision of Sir John A., a province where the aspirations of opportunity can be achieved, a province that is the economic leader of our Confederation in a country strong and free?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks very much for the question. Sir John A. Macdonald certainly did forge a strong, independent nation, and his legacy as Prime Minister includes a belief that strong, independent nations need to be economically competitive and strong to ensure their survival.

In Sir John A.'s footsteps, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that our Ontario for the people is making sure that Ontario is open for business. Later this afternoon, the House will begin third reading on Bill 47 debate. We're making sure that manufacturing can grow and expand here in Ontario. Later this week I'll be meeting with my provincial counterparts from across Canada to break down interprovincial trade barriers, to ensure that business flows from province to province.

As I stated, I hope that this afternoon the federal government shows us something that's positive for businesses in Canada. We're doing it here in Ontario—

Interjections.

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

POVERTY

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Today, the Poverty Hurts Children And Families report was released, with startling statistics. One in five children under the age of 18 lives in poverty in Ontario. For a province as wealthy as ours, that is appalling. The report clearly states that child poverty is linked to things like precarious work, yet this government is freezing the minimum wage; incredibly unaffordable child care, yet this government has made changes that will allow big-box privatized child care providers to milk more out of parents; and inadequate social assistance benefits, but this government cut the planned increase to social assistance in half.

Speaker, will the minister commit to reading the report and working towards implementing its recommendations?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much for that important question. I think it's good that the NDP are finally starting to talk about some of the social issues in the province. I've been long waiting—in fact, last week I was

expecting them to bring some questions up, but they weren't.

Look, one in seven people in the province of Ontario right now lives in poverty. One in five children, as the member opposite stated, lives in poverty. That's unacceptable. She's right: We are a wealthy province and we can be doing better. But the problem is that for the past 15 years, we've had a patchwork, disjointed system that has not supported people being lifted out of poverty and into the workforce and into contributing to society.

So what we have said—and I'm excited for Thursday—is to announce our new plan that will lift more people up, provide wraparound supports and get people back into the workforce and supporting their families. I've often said in this House that the best social circumstances are when people are able to work, and the best social program is a job. That's what we're working together for in this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Speaker, poverty discriminates. Due to structural inequalities, racism and discrimination, poverty rates are higher among the most marginalized groups than among the rest of the population. Children whose families are Indigenous; Black and other racialized people; immigrants; people with disabilities; and lone-parent families are impacted the most.

Speaker, what systemic and equity-based approaches will this government take to address the higher poverty rates among marginalized groups, and can the minister please be specific about these systemic and equity-based approaches?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much. I appreciate the member opposite's passion. Again, I'm happy to address this, but I'll have more to say on Thursday as we outline some of our changes so that we can provide a holistic approach for the individual whom we want to support through social assistance reform.

I can tell you, she's talking about all of the people, the vulnerable people, who are within this large ministry, but we're not just stopping in this large ministry that used to be five ministers in the previous Liberal administration. I am working with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I am working with the Minister of Health, I am working with the Minister of Housing, I am working with the Minister of Finance and I am working with the Minister of Economic Development so that we can ensure that there are wraparound supports for the individuals so that they can lift themselves up out of poverty and so that we can support them better.

If the member opposite wants to continue to keep people in poverty, she won't support our initiatives. What we're trying to do is make sure that more people get to work and that they are more successful in society. That's how we're going to lift people out of poverty. That's what we're going to do.

Interjections.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Lisa for everything. Lisa can do it all.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order. Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, come to order.

I couldn't hear—if there's a loud din in the House, I can't hear everything that is being said. I wish I could. If the members would co-operate with me, I could.

Start the clock. Next question.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Speaker, the disastrous, job-killing Bill 148 has wreaked havoc on job creators and workers across the province of Ontario. New data shows that since Bill 148 came into effect, 56,100 workers from the ages of 15 to 24 have lost their jobs. I personally know peers and friends who have lost hours and jobs because of Bill 148. The Financial Accountability Officer warned the previous Liberal government that recklessly increasing the cost of doing business would result in job losses, but they of course chose to ignore the evidence.

Could the minister inform this House about what our government is doing to encourage job creators to hire more young people and to send the message that Ontario truly is open for business?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'd like to thank the member from Niagara West for the question and for the great work that he does in advocating for his constituents. As the members on this side of the House know, we have long advocated for Ontario to once again be the economic engine of Canada. As Minister of Labour, I had committed to carrying out a careful review of Bill 148 while consulting with job creators, workers and union leaders.

The figures that the member has cited show that creating an environment of endless regulations and higher costs for business results in fewer job opportunities, particularly for our young people. I am proud to say that the Making Ontario Open for Business Act is one of the things our government has done, and is doing, that will restore confidence in our economy. Mr. Speaker, the act provides pragmatic solutions while maintaining our commitment to ensuring that Ontario remains a safe place to work that protects the most vulnerable.

1150

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's clear that we can see that this government and Premier were elected with a strong mandate to return this province to its rightful place as the economic engine of Canada.

The report released today by the Montreal Economic Institute notes that after the passage of Bill 148 in Ontario, which included a 21% increase in the minimum wage, the price of meals in restaurants in our province increased three times faster than in other provinces. Many restaurants have reduced hours as a result of these impacts. Reduced hours of operation are resulting in fewer hours for their employees.

What is this minister's message to job creators and workers about how Bill 47 will finally end the NDP-Liberal attack on jobs?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I thank the member for the question again. We were elected to be a government for the people, and that means we have to ensure that more opportunities exist for job creators to invest in and grow their businesses. At the same time, we must ensure that all workers can be confident that they can find good-paying jobs.

At \$14 an hour, Ontario has one of the highest minimum wages in Canada. The previous government had imposed a massive 21% increase in employment costs on Ontario business just this year. Instead of helping, this rapid increase led to a reduction in hours for many workers, and for our younger workers, it led to a reduction in their job opportunities.

We are maintaining the minimum wage at its current level. In 2020, future increases will be determined by inflation, not how badly the government of the day wants to be re-elected.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Jeff Burch: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Recently, the living wage in Niagara rose to \$17.99 an hour, a 2.3% increase from last year. This is the basic wage required just to live.

With 72% of total wages going to essentials like housing, food, transportation and child care, the numbers are similar across Ontario. People are falling further and further behind, and this government has made things worse by freezing the minimum wage at \$14 an hour.

Will this minister admit that chasing a low-wage economy in a race to the bottom will be devastating for Ontario families as income inequality grows year by year?

Hon. Todd Smith: No, Mr. Speaker, I won't, because what we are doing now at the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade is creating good-paying jobs for the people of Ontario.

For some reason, the members of the NDP, the opposition party, want to embrace a minimum wage economy. We don't want to embrace a minimum wage economy. That's why we've set out to embark on creating good-paying jobs, jobs that have benefits so that people don't have to live in poverty.

I would like to say that with the passage of Bill 47—hopefully imminent later today or tomorrow—we'll take that first step toward ensuring that we're creating good-paying jobs in Ontario. We lost jobs when Bill 148 came in, and we knew that was going to happen because every job creator in Ontario told us what was going to happen if the Liberals brought in their election-buying scheme of Bill 148—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I'm going to ask the government House leader to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Hon. Todd Smith: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Start the clock. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Paying workers enough to live on should be a basic responsibility. We know that when working families at the low end of the income scale get an increase, that money goes immediately and directly back into the economy for basic consumer goods. This increases economic activity and is proven to be good for business.

Decent living wages are proven to increase worker productivity and decrease costs for our health care and social supports. When will this government drag itself out of this antiquated, backwards economic strategy and embrace a living wage economy like other modern economies around the world?

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, Bill 148, which was brought in by the previous Liberal government and then supported by the NDP, is a job-killing piece of legislation and it has proven to be just that. We went through a lengthy process in committee and travelling this bill across Ontario last year. We've heard loud and clear from job creators in Ontario that this was, indeed, going to be a job-killing piece of legislation, and that's what it was. In the first month it was implemented, we lost 50,000 jobs in Ontario. We want to create good-paying jobs and, to do that, we have to create the environment for businesses to expand.

Yesterday in committee, members of the NDP called job creators spiteful, and the member from Sudbury said that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, which represents businesses, were bottom-feeders. That's terrible. We won't stand for that. We're going to create—

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a very special guest in the visitors' gallery, along with his family: The member of provincial Parliament for Brant in the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments and Speaker of the Ontario Legislature in the 40th and 41st Parliaments, Dave Levac and his family are here with us today. Welcome.

I'd like to reiterate the invitation to all members to attend the celebration of Dave's career where we unveil his portrait this evening at 6:15 p.m. I look forward to seeing you all there.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I know that the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport has a point of order.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I just want to clarify: I may have used the word "condone" when I meant "condemn," so I just want to clarify that for the record.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is in order for members to correct their own record.

RECTIFICATION AU PROCÈS-VERBAL

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: The member for Thornhill.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je veux me corriger : c'est à deux heures, pas à une heure, de l'après-midi—it's at two o'clock this afternoon, not at one o'clock, for the transgender flag raising—pour la commémoration aux individus qui sont dans la communauté transgenre en Ontario.

VISITOR

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: I apologize to my friend Jane Scheel; I can't see without my glasses and she's up there. She's the executive director of Haldimand and Norfolk Women's Services. Thank you so much for being here today, Jane.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no deferred votes, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1158 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Todd Smith: I would like to welcome some people in my role as the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. As you know, Speaker, I have inherited a great group of employees who have been working at the ministry for the last four or five months on a very important piece of legislation, Bill 47, and I just would like to acknowledge the hard work of these individuals here this afternoon. With us, we have Mark Lawson, Christine Wood, Mykyta Drakokhrust, Tyler Lively, Miroslaw Surma, Cody Kukay, Simone Simpson, Patrick Osland, Jim Wielgosz, Alex Ainley, and Sarah Letersky. I just want to thank them for all the work that they've done on making Ontario open for business. Thank you very much, folks.

Mr. Jamie West: I would like to introduce Tim Deelstra from the UFCW, who is here in our gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sara Singh: I would like to welcome to the House here today members from the Unifor National Council 4000, and Local 4003, CNTL workers. I'm going to name them off because I think it's important that we do that. We have joining us here today Kirandeep Gill, Satinder Singh, Wesley Gajda, Dilpreet Singh, Perminder Singh, Mukhtiar Garcha, Gurpal Singh, Amarjit Kalikat, Amritpal Singh, Inderjit Singh, and Jagroop Singh. Thank you so much for joining us here today.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I would like to join in welcoming the members from CNTL to this House. They are doing amazing work in their community and they are strong, strong advocates.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Ms. Suze Morrison: I rise in this House today to recognize this day as the Trans Day of Remembrance

across Ontario. Just moments ago, I had the honour of joining the Toronto Trans Alliance to raise the trans flag here at the Legislature.

In Ontario, 47%—half—of the trans youth in this province have seriously considered suicide in the past year. Meanwhile, we have a Conservative government that has turned back the clock on a modern sex ed curriculum and removed any reference to gender identity or expression or consent from that curriculum. While trans students face disproportionate amounts of violence in our schools, they now don't even have a curriculum to turn to that affirms their identities and teaches their peers to treat them with respect and with humanity.

Speaker, today is a day that calls on all of us to not just reflect on the harm that has been done to the trans community, but to be better allies and to take action to support the trans community to heal and to thrive. We need actual, concrete action from this government, and that includes a modernized sex ed curriculum that affirms the identities of trans students and the complete and unequivocal denunciation by the Premier of a motion passed by the Conservative Party of Ontario undermining and denying the existence of trans people. My Conservative colleagues should be ashamed of the party they represent.

NATIONAL CHILD DAY

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Today marks National Child Day, a day to celebrate our children and to recommit ourselves to protecting them. We mark this day in Canada in recognition of our country's commitment and obligation to uphold the rights of children. It's a day to celebrate the family and think about how adults affect the development of children close to them.

Children have the same basic rights and freedoms that we all enjoy: among others, a right to life, liberty and security of person—rights belonging to them regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion or any other quality; rights belonging to them because, as the inimitable Dr. Seuss puts it, "A person's a person, no matter how small."

Unlike us, children cannot defend their rights, cannot give voice to their desires. That is why, in the words of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, "The child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth."

This is what we are celebrating today. We are recommitting ourselves to the protection of some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Therefore, always striving to protect our children, supporting their parents and enabling them to raise their children, let us never be deaf to those whose voices we cannot hear.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Recently, I received an email from Dan Howard, principal of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School in London West. He told me that this September, St. Thomas Aquinas and its six elementary

feeder schools partnered on a parent engagement event to build resiliency in children—a high priority for all of the schools. Well-known psychologist Dr. Alex Russell was invited to speak at two evening sessions, with child care provided by the secondary students and a pasta dinner held beforehand.

The event was an unprecedented success. Some 400 parents attended. They learned new strategies and strengthened their connections with each other and with their children's schools.

To fund the event, the seven schools planned to pool their \$1,000 Parents Reaching Out Grants, and St. Thomas Aquinas covered the costs up front. Then came the announcement that the PRO grants were being paused, blindsiding the schools and creating an almost insurmountable \$7,000 hole in the St. Thomas Aquinas school budget.

In his email to me, Principal Howard expressed concern about the impact of this reckless decision, asking, "Does this government care about all of the people of Ontario and not just about saving a few bucks? Do they value education?" Speaker, I wish I could say yes.

With the crisis in children's mental health and rising violence in our schools, isn't supporting parents to develop resilient children exactly what our education system should be doing? It defies explanation to understand why this government is cancelling a program that does exactly that.

ATTACK IN EGYPT

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Exactly three weeks ago, I stood in here to celebrate International Religious Freedom Day.

Unfortunately, yet another incident has been carried out on Coptic Christians in upper Egypt. In the city of Minya, a family was happily visiting a monastery to celebrate a baptism of a newborn when they were stopped by ISIL militants who opened fire on them, killing seven and injuring more than 18.

The Coptic community in Egypt has been a target of persecution, attacks and discrimination for decades. It is impossible to understand how someone can justify, let alone carry out, such heinous and barbaric attacks against peaceful people.

I ask the Egyptian government to do everything in its power to ensure that justice is served and enforce the maximum power of law.

I strongly condemn all acts of discrimination and violence on anyone based on their religion, anywhere in the world.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Sara Singh: I'd like to take my time here today to recognize again the members from Unifor National Council 4000 and Local 4003, CNTL Brampton workers, who are here with us in the gallery today. Thank you for all of the advocacy that you have done to make sure that your rights and the voices of the workers are heard.

1510

My colleagues and I from Brampton North and Brampton East visited the workers on their information picket just a few weeks ago, and we were appalled to learn that the CNTL workers in Brampton have had to endure horrifying working conditions for so long with absolutely no resolve. The members are on the information picket line trying to secure some of the most basic human rights in their workplace, including safe and dignified working conditions, like access to bathrooms for women who are working on the lines with them. The conditions they are facing every day range from unhygienic washrooms to unsafe environments, even to harassment and bullying in their workplace.

Workers across this province are continuing to stand up and fight back, to demand better, because they deserve more. I am proud as a member of the New Democratic Party to stand in solidarity with them all. An attack on one worker is an attack on all workers, and New Democrats will always make sure that we use our days here in the Legislature to fight for fair and dignified workplaces for all members of our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Don Valley West, I think on a point of order?

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask for unanimous consent to make a member's statement in place of one of my colleague's.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Don Valley West is seeking unanimous consent of the House to have permission to present a member's statement on behalf of one of her colleagues. Agreed? Agreed.

SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

SERVICES POUR LES VICTIMES DE VIOLENCE

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, today in this House most of us are wearing purple scarves to show support for abused women and children across Ontario. These are very important gestures that acknowledge that there is more work to be done to eradicate the abuse suffered by so many.

Even more important are the actions that have been taken and the supports that have been put in place over years here in Ontario. Some of those supports include the office of the child advocate and services in French to francophone women and children. And yet, while the government has decided to wear the scarves and express their support for women and children, their actions speak louder and more clearly. Removing the child advocate and French language commissioner, as they have done in their fall economic statement, ensure that these supports will be weakened. A child at risk or a francophone woman experiencing violence and looking for help may not find the supports that they need and will have less recourse.

Monsieur le Président, si nos enfants sont sûres ici en Ontario et si la francophonie est forte, notre société et notre province sont plus fortes. Ces décisions sont de

mauvaises politiques et sont dangereuses. And they should be reversed.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Mike Harris: I rise today to commend the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for their commitment to expand long-term-care beds in the region of Waterloo. Our Progressive Conservative Party made a clear campaign promise to finally end hallway health care and now, in government, we are keeping that promise to the people of Ontario.

Last month, our Premier and the honourable minister announced 6,000 new long-term-care beds throughout the province—a rapid development; 100 days in office—to meet our campaign commitment for 15,000 new beds in five years and 30,000 new beds in 10 years.

For the great region of Waterloo, this recent announcement will see 147 new long-term-care beds coming online. This includes 51 new beds for Saint Luke's Place in Cambridge and 97 new beds for the Schlegel Villages in Winston Park in Kitchener. The latter represents a doubling of capacity, which will begin to alleviate the growing demand for long-term care in the region. This is incredible news, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of the month, I will be visiting at Winston Park to meet the Schlegel health team to discuss this expansion and to hear from them what is needed moving forward.

Earlier in this legislative session, I had the privilege to stand here and congratulate our government's \$2-million commitment towards a new hospice in Waterloo, the Gies Family Centre.

Our government was, is and will be forever clear that help is on the way to expand long-term care and end hallway health care in this province. In the coming weeks, months, and years, I will continue to work with the ministry, the local LHIN and health care providers to expand long-term-care beds in my region.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Five years ago, on June 30, 2013, there was a horrific boat accident on Lake Wanapitei in my riding. In that boat accident, three people—Matt Humeniuk, Michael Kritz and Stephanie Bertrand—died.

It took a very long time, but we had a coroner's inquest into that boating accident, and the recommendations are out as to how we make sure that the types of responses to that accident that failed those people miserably do not happen again. The coroners came to my community five years later, they held the inquest, and finally people could see exactly where our first response system had failed.

There was one survivor of the boat accident, who was able to call 911. The 911 call was answered, and they dispatched an ambulance. Unfortunately, the ambulance had no way to get on a lake. It took many hours before somebody clued in that the fire department has a huge

rescue boat on Lake Wanapitei and is able to help, as well as the police.

Those failings of our 911 system are there for everybody to see, but the point of it is that I want to make sure that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services follows up on the important recommendations of this coroner's inquest.

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, November, as you know, is also known as Movember, a month when we raise money and shed light on men's health issues. Prostate cancer is one of those. Looking at the data in Canada, one in seven men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer, a rate pretty similar to breast cancer, which is one in eight. Research suggests that the cancer rate is even higher among those of African and Caribbean descent, and these are hard statistics. In Ontario alone, 8,500 men were diagnosed with prostate cancer, and 1,600 died.

When detected early, the five-year survival rate is close to 100%. The survival rate drops drastically to just 28% when diagnosed at stage 3 and 4. The price that we pay for late diagnosis is steep, too: Early diagnosis costs \$17,000; with late diagnosis, it is \$83,000.

Mr. Speaker, prevention is better than cure. There is a blood test available on the market with proven results in screening for PSA. It costs \$30 out of pocket and is recommended every three to five years. Combined with regular checks, it can increase survival, the odds of early detection and a better prospect for our fellow citizens.

I'd like to thank Larissa Moniz and Maria Glidden from Prostate Cancer Canada for your presence today. This month, let's support the Movember movement and talk about prostate cancer and other men's health issues.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Vincent Ke: On Friday, November 9, during constituency week, I visited North York General Hospital in my riding of Don Valley North. I met with new CEO Joshua Tepper and Vice-President Karyn Popovich.

North York General is regularly at full capacity. It is one of the five busiest hospitals in Ontario. It is rated top-two for births.

It has an incredible volunteer network. In one year, North York General logs more than 90,000 volunteer hours. I want to thank all the staff and volunteers at North York General for their service to our community. As MPP for Don Valley North, I will be working hard to make sure this important hospital gets the support it needs.

Our government is committed to ending hallway health care. We are taking action fast. We have dedicated \$90 million in new funding for hospitals this flu season, and announced 6,000 new long-term-care beds. We have committed to building 15,000 new long-term-care beds in five years and 30,000 beds in 10 years.

We will work to ensure Ontario has a health care system that is sustainable for years to come.

1520

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 20, 2018, from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 47, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009 and make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 47, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi, la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail et la Loi de 2009 sur l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario et l'apprentissage et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted. Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 12, 2018, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Dave Smith: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill, without amendment:

Bill 32, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 32, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 25, 2018, the bill is ordered for third reading.

FAMILY CAREGIVER DAY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018
SUR LES AIDANTS NATURELS

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to proclaim Family Caregiver Day / Projet de loi 58, Loi proclamant le Jour des aidants naturels.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The bill is extremely simple. It proclaims the first Tuesday in April of each year as Family Caregiver Day.

CAREGIVER RECOGNITION ACT, 2018
LOI DE 2018 SUR LA RECONNAISSANCE
DE L'APPORT DES AIDANTS NATURELS

Mr. Roberts moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 59, An Act to enact the Caregiver Recognition Act, 2018 / Projet de loi 59, Loi édictant la Loi de 2018 sur la reconnaissance de l'apport des aidants naturels.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Ottawa West–Nepean like to explain his bill briefly?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: This act will enact the Caregiver Recognition Act, 2018. It sets out some general principles relating to caregivers. It proclaims the first Tuesday in each April as Caregiver Recognition Day and encourages ministries and government agencies that they may take steps to promote the general principles and support caregivers across the province.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSESNATIONAL CHILD DAY
AND TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise today to mark two very important occasions in the province of Ontario. Both are in place to honour and acknowledge some of the most vulnerable people in our province.

The first we are recognizing today is National Child Day, an opportunity to celebrate children as active participants in their communities who offer meaningful voices to all of us as we learn from them. By supporting children in our province, ensuring that they are protected from harm, that they are provided with their basic needs,

have access to education and every opportunity to reach their full potential, we are building a better and stronger Ontario that benefits everyone.

Today is also a reminder of our duty to ensure that every child is treated with dignity and respect and protected from abuse and sexual exploitation.

After a recent coroner's report, it became very clear to me that we have a lot more work to do in the province of Ontario to protect Ontario's most vulnerable children, and those are children in care and in custody. The recent coroner's report provided evidence that children in care are likely to be trafficked if they're in a group home, and those who commit suicide or take their life by suicide often did so in the last number of years because of sex trafficking.

Earlier last month, I had an opportunity to speak to the Canadian Club of Canada. I had the opportunity to speak about what I consider to be Ontario's dirty little secret, and that's sex trafficking. Sex trafficking is happening in every single corner of Ontario. It's happening in progressive cities, like right here in the city of Toronto, and other urban centres, like the nation's capital where I reside, and as far away as rural communities and remote Indigenous communities, and it's happening to children as young as 11 years old. Over 90% of those who are trafficked are either women or girls.

We have a lot more to do, and that's why in our ministry—and not just in the children's ministry, but also in the women's ministry—we're going to continue the work of my colleague the Honourable Laurie Scott, Minister of Labour, who brought in the Saving the Girl Next Door Act. I believe it was one of the most profound pieces of child protection legislation this province has seen. We are going to continue to build on that piece of legislation so that we can ensure that girls as young as the age of 11 are protected, and that we make sure that they're spoken to about this issue at an early age. We'll continue to appeal to those across Ontario who are working with children to make sure that if they see something wrong, they understand that they have a duty to report it—and that includes in our group homes and in our foster homes.

That's why after the coroner's report and after I learned about the issues of sex trafficking in our group homes, I sent directives swiftly and decisively to those in the children's aid societies across Ontario and those operating group homes. I want to make that commitment that we will continue to follow up with the coroner and ensure that these issues are addressed rapidly and quickly.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to talk about the expanded powers of the Ombudsman in Ontario and his investigative powers. As I said earlier in the Legislature today, last year alone the Ombudsman, on average, received one complaint a day on children's aid societies; 367 complaints that he was not able to investigate and had to refer. Therefore, we have made a conscious decision in this government to encourage him to have more powers and have armed him with more tools so that he can make those investigations readily apparent at each turn, whenever a request is made. We will continue to support him in his efforts. Unlike the previous government that fought

with the Ombudsman and fought with the Auditor General, we embrace the work of the independent officers of this assembly. We will ensure that when they provide us with recommendations, we will act, as I did with the coroner's report, swiftly and decisively.

Speaker, children in this province deserve to have a step up, and this includes helping address the unique challenges that exist, particularly for lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited and transgender children and youth, so that all children across this great province are treated fairly and are treated equally. We need to have those tough conversations. We need to break down those barriers so that these special children and youth, and those who support them, can speak openly and without fear of reprisal about violence or discrimination.

1530

Child abuse is one of the most sinister practices that can happen in our province. We are duty-bound to protect against child abuse, to fight sex trafficking and to prevent bullying. We're required by law to report these terrible acts, as I said earlier. If I may, I know that the Minister of Education will be speaking a little bit more at length about ending bullying in the province of Ontario. I think she and I have a real desire to make sure that our two ministries work closely in hand so we can prevent cyberbullying and other acts of bullying across the province.

We've seen some egregious examples of that. Speaker, you've been in this House long enough to remember when I was speaking on suicide prevention because of a young man named Jamie Hubley. Jamie was 15 years old, and on his 16th birthday I gave his eulogy because he had been bullied so badly as a young gay man that he took his own life. That has profoundly impacted me over the years.

I was pleased to work across party lines, when I was in opposition, to strengthen anti-bullying legislation. I make my commitment to the Minister of Education that I continue to support those efforts and I will continue to support the efforts that she makes in order to make sure that we are protecting our young and our students.

It's my honour to serve as Ontario's minister responsible for children and youth. Each and every day, I am dedicated to being their strongest and fiercest advocate. I was pleased earlier today to meet with a number of children with lived experience in care, and to support them as we move forward. We know we have work to do, and I am committed to working with partners across our government to ensure that children prosper.

Speaker, I think that today is also an important day for us to recognize that I am also the minister who has responsibility for LGBTQ issues in the province of Ontario. As I've mentioned before in this House, I was proud to stand with the former member for Parkdale–High Park, Cheri DiNovo, as well as with the current member from Ottawa–Vanier, Nathalie Des Rosiers, as the three of us worked hard last year to come together to ensure that we have Trans Day of Remembrance in the province of Ontario on November 20. It coincides with Universal Children's Day.

Today I was pleased to join my colleague from Thornhill, Gila Martow, at the flag-raising ceremony so that we

can send a strong message as an Ontario government, as an Ontario Legislature, that we condemn hate in any of its forms, including and in particular to those with lived experience in the trans community, who have been so brave and have been so persecuted in so many places throughout the world. Today, Speaker, we remember and we recognize members of Ontario's transgender community who have tragically lost their lives and those who continue to suffer from violence and prejudice.

As Ontarians, we are lucky to belong to a fair and a just society. Together, we can uphold our shared values of respect, equality and fairness.

Today is about solidarity. It's about reflection and sadness for those who have been lost and victimized in the trans community. I encourage those in the trans community to live their lives to the fullest. Be proud Ontarians. No one can tell them who they are.

Speaker, our government will respect and will continue to work hard for everyone in the trans community. We will stand up to those who would seek to divide this united province and this united government. We will stand up for all people of this province: children, youth, women, girls, those in the trans community, and those in the LGBT community. We are standing with you today, and I can make this commitment as the minister responsible for those issues that Premier Ford and this entire Progressive Conservative government will continue to stand up for what is right. We will continue to stand up for those who are vulnerable in our society. We will continue to stand up for the values that we cherish so dearly.

BULLYING AWARENESS AND PREVENTION WEEK

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to start off by thanking the minister. Minister MacLeod is always so eloquent and passionate about the matters that really matter here in Ontario. I thank her for leading with her heart, and thank her for all the initiative and passion that she throws into everything she does.

It's nice to be able to stand in the House today to talk about a topic that actually dovetails into the message that Minister MacLeod just shared. I am sincerely motivated today to stand up on behalf of Ontario's two million students to recognize Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.

We know that a safe school and a positive learning environment are essential for student achievement and well-being. Again, I would like to thank all of the students, families, educators and school staff across the province for working hard to ensure that our schools are places where everyone can feel welcomed and respected this week, but most importantly, throughout the entire year.

In 2018, we know that bullying can be in many different forms, including physical, verbal, social, and also through social media. Today, with the popularity of social media—we all feel it in this House—we see that cyberbullying or online bullying has become prevalent, unfortunately. This type of bullying is often unseen and can occur both in

schools and outside of schools specifically. It can be extremely harmful to the mental health, self-esteem and overall well-being of students.

Research and experience show that bullying is a serious issue with far-reaching consequences for the students involved, their families, their peers and the community around them. Everyone involved—the bullies and their victims—is at risk for challenges in life, such as emotional, behavioural and relationship problems.

I would like to note, though, that schools are doing a fantastic job on a daily basis to promote positive learning and teaching environments. Now more than ever, educators are involved and students are stepping up to promote kindness, respect and caring within their schools. That caring heart is something we just saw in Minister MacLeod, and I can tell you that this government, the PC government of Ontario, is leading by example as well.

But honestly, Speaker, there is so much more work to do. I'm consistently encouraged by some of the efforts that we see put forward by our students, who have undertaken to support their peers who may be facing acts of bullying or loneliness. I came across an article a couple of days ago and I'd like to share it with everyone in the House. I hope sincerely that it's as motivating for everyone else listening as it was for me.

"Andrew ... was used to sitting alone at lunch. The high school sophomore was never especially social and making friends hasn't been easy. He was born with a neurological disorder and has undergone several major surgeries over his life.

"A lot of times at lunch I'll text Andrew," explained his mom.... "I said, 'Are you eating with anyone?'" And he said "No." And I sat at my desk ... and I just prayed ... "Lord, please send somebody to eat with him."

"But that changed on the first day of school this year when members of the student council noticed that Andrew was eating alone and invited him to join them.

"If we were sitting by ourselves we would want someone to sit with us so we didn't want kids to have to sit by themselves," one student said. Added another, "Everyone needs to have someone and anyone can be a help with that." Isn't that encouraging? Students are leading by example.

Applause.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Absolutely.

The article went on to say, "It's very encouraging to know that there are teenagers out there that took their time" to recognize that somebody could use a friend. "They weren't being in their own clique, they weren't being selfish, they took their time to reach out to somebody who might be different. And you know, you never know what a child is going through—maybe they've got a bad home life, maybe they're depressed, and there's a kid sitting by themselves," and thankfully, students noticed that.

So I say to the pages, notice people. Take time to share around this House to please notice people. Check in with them. See if they're okay.

1540

Going back to Andrew's mom, she says, "The peace I have now at lunch" because "I don't feel like I need to text him and check on him."

"What started as a small act of kindness has even gone beyond the lunchroom. The group invited Andrew to go to the movies with them a couple weeks ago.

"What's more, he's been eating lunch with them every day since."

Speaker, that's what we need to be encouraging in this House, in our schools, throughout the province. We shouldn't be demonstrating and projecting fear onto others. We have such an insurmountable hill to climb. We should be figuring out how to best work together.

There's one thing I want to share with everyone: that there are initiatives around the province that try and do just that. I'd now like to highlight the Kids Help Phone today as a partner during Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, and what they do throughout the year. Kids Help Phone supports children and youth with resources and counselling 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Speaker, I also applaud all initiatives and people throughout this province who are standing up and supporting our students, be it in urban or rural Ontario. I think of WES for Youth. I think of #GetInTouchForHutch. I think of Kendra Fisher. I think about the Tanner Steffler Foundation. The list could go on and on, and I'm sure every MPP in this House can think about their own riding and think about the initiatives that are out there, supporting their students and their local riding. I encourage you to support them. Take time, get to know what they are offering to our students and support them to the best of your ability.

Every day, communities—school communities, specifically—across Ontario take action to create positive learning environments where every student matters, where they can thrive and succeed. This week, specifically, is a very important reminder to us that we all have to play a part to raise awareness and prevent bullying, not just this week but 365 days a year.

I encourage every member in this House and in school communities to take this opportunity to, again, stand up, say no to bullying, and take time to recognize the people around you who may just need to have a shoulder to lean on, an ear to listen or just a friendly smile. That is so, so important, because research shows that sometimes it's the littlest act that can make a huge difference for an individual who is struggling through the day.

When it comes to bullying, I think we all could lead by example—also, going back out into our communities, working with our organizations that are standing up.

Again, it's very poignant that Minister MacLeod and I are standing up, albeit on different issues, but there's a root cause there. There's something that drives individuals to feel like they need to bully or that violence against women is okay. Well, Speaker, I stand here before you and say that it's not okay. We all need to team together, shout that out and stand up against violence against women and bullying. We need to increase awareness that it's not okay. By coming together, ladies and gentlemen, we can make a

difference in the lives of women, Ontario children, students, families and educators.

I really want to give a shout-out to our educators as well, and all of the efforts that principals and vice-principals put forward as well. Some of the schools in my riding have a buddy bench. If somebody is not feeling the greatest, they'll go and sit on that bench, and somebody will notice and go and take time to spend with that individual sitting on that buddy bench. It can be the tiniest of things. Again, I encourage everyone in this House to think about what their schools do and what their communities do.

There is something else that's coming down the pipeline in the riding of Huron—Bruce, and that is safe zones. Kendra Fisher, in particular, talked about the importance of storefronts on the main street recognizing, just with a mere sticker, that they're a safe zone. If somebody does not feel comfortable, if they feel they're being bullied or just have to step away from it all, stores with a safe-zone sign would be an area for that person to step into and know somebody has got their back.

Again, it doesn't have to be a grandiose effort; it can be the littlest things that make a difference in somebody's life one day. That gives them hope and that gives them confidence to get through to the next day.

The other thing I want to share with you is, be mindful of devices. We have a consultation going on right now wanting to evaluate distractions in the classroom, but let's also remember how devices can be used to bully people. We all are better—we all know we shouldn't be using devices. Experts are saying that children at night get bullied over their devices.

Let's stand up against bullying and raise awareness this week and every day of the year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. It is time for responses.

NATIONAL CHILD DAY AND TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: I had hoped to rise today in celebration of Universal Children's Day. Instead, I rise with great sadness over the recent announcement by the Ford government to abolish the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

My career in this place up to this point has been bookended by two events. The first Queen's Park event I attended as an MPP was in 2011, the Youth Leaving Care Hearings. At those hearings, I heard powerful stories from youth in and from care. I went through a rollercoaster of emotions as I listened to their testimonies of their experiences. Some spoke of great successes, but more spoke about the devastating impact of a dysfunctional system that leaves them feeling isolated and unwanted. It was a heart-wrenching experience for me. No one who heard those young people could fail to be affected.

Two weeks ago, I attended a listening table in Thunder Bay where I heard from Indigenous youth participating in the Feathers of Hope initiative. Again, I heard powerful,

heart-breaking stories that only they could tell. The unacceptable overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth in the system must be addressed, and they themselves can help us greatly there. The voices of those children and youth are crucial if we are ever to find the change we need, and they would never, never have been heard if it were not for the advocate of children and youth.

Those are just two initiatives of the advocate's ongoing work to listen and amplify their voices, voices that we must hear. In recognition of Universal Children's Day, I make this plea: Reverse the decision to cut the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

NATIONAL CHILD DAY AND TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It was a very powerful moment as we raised the flag for the Trans Day of Remembrance here on the grounds of Queen's Park.

Trans people are some of the strongest and most amazing people I have ever met. As an educator, I have had the good fortune to have taught some students who identify as trans, and they've given me a much better understanding of what it is like to face these challenges.

I remember how difficult it was for myself to come out of the closet, but for trans people it is far more difficult. There is so much misunderstanding and judgment for the trans community. However, in looking at this, it makes us focus on our own privilege. We take so much for granted. Trans people face challenges with family, with their employment, with health care. They are subject to violence and harassment, much of it unseen and invisible to others. The suicide rates in the trans community are astronomical, and the poverty rate is out of control.

On this day, I'd like to commend Cheri DiNovo, former MPP for Parkdale-High Park, for her tireless advocacy for the trans community. Toby's Law, which she sponsored, enshrines gender identity and gender expression in the Ontario Human Rights Code as protected grounds against discrimination, as well as the Trans Day of Remembrance.

With the NDP, we're still committed to affirmative and inclusive health care, expanding access to referrals for transition-related surgeries, as well as gender-conforming surgeries, and covering these procedures under OHIP. These procedures need to be available in Ontario, Speaker.

We are also committed to covering the cost of transition drugs and medications, as well as the pre-exposure prophylaxis drug. Further, we are committed to ensuring gender identity and expression and LGBTQ2 voices and families are returned to Ontario's health curriculum.

To the trans community, you will not be erased. On this day, we honour you. Trans rights are human rights.

1550

BULLYING AWARENESS AND PREVENTION WEEK

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, I've only got about 45 seconds, so I'm just going to be quick. I am very pleased

to rise in the House today on behalf of the official opposition in recognition of Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.

Across this province, schools and community leaders have been working hard to create an environment that fosters inclusivity and the well-being of children in Ontario wherever they are. Here in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to lead by example. That means recognizing that far too many children face bullying simply because of who they are and because of systemic racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia.

I urge the government to now properly fund the supports that students and families need in the classrooms and to bring back the sex ed curriculum, which would have saved so many lives. Please act now. Move forward, not backward, on the sex ed curriculum.

NATIONAL CHILD DAY AND TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE JOURNÉE NATIONALE DE L'ENFANT ET JOURNÉE DU SOUVENIR TRANS

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Avec mes collègues de l'Assemblée législative, notre caucus libéral a participé à la levée du drapeau of Trans Day of Remembrance.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share some stats with you, to start my allocution: 43% of trans folks attempt to take their own lives; about 25% experience sexual or some other form of violence; 97% of our children who are trans in school get bullied and are threatened; and about 50% of trans folks live in poverty. It is completely unacceptable that these terrible acts of violence continue to occur.

I have a quotation from Susan Gapka, chair of Egale's trans issues committee: "I am a human being and I am simply seeking to lead a happy life, free from discrimination and violence."

Trans people are here, and I would say you are valued and you are loved. It was very emotional for all of us today, I'm sure, to be remembering those who unfortunately ended their life or were victims of violence.

You may not know—or you may know because we've been sitting together for a little while—that I started my career as a social worker.

Durant mes études, j'ai fait mon placement au sein du conseil scolaire catholique du Centre-Est. J'ai eu le plaisir de participer activement à la vie éducative des enseignants et des jeunes de nos écoles.

It's been a few years, Mr. Speaker. I then went to work for the children's aid society on a small, very short-term contract, which was enormously important for me to learn some of the realities of the children in our society. I also worked at CHEO, where we see very vulnerable and sick children.

Children are our future. I usually say this many, many times when I talk to a group of students. We need to help them and we need to support them. It is so important as we remember and we talk about this today.

Years back, le Canada s'est engagé à veiller à ce que tous les enfants soient traités avec dignité et respect. Cet

engagement sous-tend que les enfants doivent avoir la possibilité de se faire entendre, d'être protégés contre les dangers, de voir leurs besoins fondamentaux comblés et de réaliser leur plein potentiel.

Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned that the new government, a few months ago, made a decision to hold back on the new health and physical education. Today, we're talking about bullying. I'm going to share a story because my daughter, years ago, before the updated curriculum, was bullied in elementary school. It was very difficult for us to deal with this in our house, as a parent, and with the school. I would say that no child should be bullied in the school. They should feel safe.

Also, we heard Stella today, as we were raising the flag. Stella talked to us about the importance of teaching gender identity in school. So I found it very unfortunate that, currently, children don't have those spaces, those abilities, to reflect.

I'm going to close, Mr. Speaker, by saying how concerned I am by the fact that this government is removing a very important role in Ontario: the role of our child advocate.

PETITIONS

CURRICULUM

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm very fortunate to have Brock University in my riding of Niagara Centre. Over 300 students there signed this petition. I want to thank Curtis Fric and Noah Nickel for hand-delivering it today and for being here in the gallery. The petition is: "Protecting Children: Forward, Not Backward, on Sex Ed.

"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 cyberbullying; 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, cyberbullying 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 proudly affix my signature and hand it to page Lillian.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I proudly table this petition on behalf of constituents of Parkdale–High Park. This petition is titled "Don't Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws."

"Whereas the vast majority of Ontarians support a \$15 minimum wage and better laws to protect workers; and

"Whereas last year, in response to overwhelming popular demand by the people of Ontario, the provincial government brought in legislation and regulations that:

"Deliver 10 personal emergency leave days for all workers, the first two of which are paid;

"Make it illegal to pay part-time, temporary, casual or contract workers less than their full-time or directly hired co-workers, including equal public holiday pay and vacation pay;

"Raised the adult general minimum wage to \$14 per hour and further raises it to a \$15 minimum wage on January 1, 2019, with annual adjustments by Ontario's consumer price index;

"Make it easier to join unions, especially for workers in the temporary help, home care, community services and building services sectors;

"Make client companies responsible for workplace health and safety for temporary agency employees;

"Provide strong enforcement through the hiring of an additional 175 employment standards officers;

"Will ensure workers have modest improvements in the scheduling of their hours, including:

"—three hours' pay when workers are expected to be on call all day, but are not called into work;

"—three hours' pay for any employee whose shift is cancelled with less than two days' notice; and

"—the right to refuse shifts without penalty if the shift is scheduled with fewer than four days' notice;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour these commitments, including the \$15 minimum wage and fairer scheduling rules set to take effect on January 1, 2019. We further call on the assembly to take all necessary steps to enforce these laws and extend them to ensure no worker is left without protection."

I fully support this petition and will be affixing my signature to it as well.

1600

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. David Piccini: I'm pleased to table a petition supporting Sarnia's permanent residential withdrawal management facility.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, like many Ontario communities, the toll that drugs and alcohol have taken on Sarnia–Lambton is tremendous, but we have hope and importantly, we have a plan;

“Whereas a proposal for a permanent withdrawal management facility has been developed with input from many organizations in our community using the most current research available on withdrawal management;

“Whereas our plan is a vision of teamwork: a one-stop hub for addictions services, improving access to services and bringing care partners together for a team approach to caring for our community;

“Whereas a permanent facility would provide day, community and residential withdrawal management services, stabilization services and wraparound services for people who are battling their addictions;

“Whereas there is currently a temporary location providing some of these much-needed services but together we can provide better care and improve access to treatment for clients;

“Whereas our need is urgent, our plan is in place;

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

“That members of the Legislature please help us save lives and support our community members by supporting permanent withdrawal management services in Sarnia–Lambton.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Jack.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Joel Harden: Like my friend from Parkdale–High Park, it’s a great honour to rise today to present this petition entitled “Don’t Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws.”

“Whereas the vast majority of Ontarians support a \$15 minimum wage and better laws to protect workers; and

“Whereas last year, in response to overwhelming popular demand by the people of Ontario, the provincial government brought in legislation and regulations that:

“Deliver 10 personal emergency leave days for all workers, the first two of which are paid;

“Make it illegal to pay part-time, temporary, casual or contract workers less than their full-time or directly hired co-workers, including equal public holiday pay and vacation pay;

“Raised the adult general minimum wage to \$14 per hour and further raises it to a \$15 minimum wage on January 1, 2019, with annual adjustments by Ontario’s consumer price index;

“Make it easier to join unions, especially for workers in the temporary help, home care, community services and building services sectors;

“Protect workers’ employment status, pay and benefits when contracts are flipped or businesses are sold in the building services sector;

“Make client companies responsible for workplace health and safety for temporary agency employees;

“Provide strong enforcement through the hiring of an additional 175 employment standards officers; and

“Will ensure workers have modest improvements in the scheduling of their hours, including:

“—three hours’ pay when workers are expected to be on call all day, but are not called into work;

“—three hours’ pay for any employee whose shift is cancelled with less than two days’ notice; and

“—the right to refuse shifts without penalty if the shift is scheduled with fewer than four days’ notice;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour these commitments, including the \$15 minimum wage and fairer scheduling rules set to take effect on January 1, 2019. We further call on the assembly to take all necessary steps to enforce these laws and extend them to ensure no worker is left without protection.”

Speaker, it’s a great honour to sign this petition and give it to page Rham for the Clerks’ table.

CURRICULUM

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Actually, this is interesting; it comes from Kitchener. I want to read this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ford government’s decision to cancel the province’s updated 2015 health and physical education curriculum and replacing it with an undeniably out-of-date curriculum from the last century does not inform, serve or keep students safe in a modern world;

“Whereas Ford government officials have stated they scrapped the new curriculum in order to consult with the public—ignoring the fact that 4,000 parents, teachers, experts and students were already consulted by the previous Liberal government as it developed and brought forward the updated curriculum;

“Whereas the new curriculum addresses present-day issues not included in the old curriculum, including consent, sexting, cyberbullying and the acceptance of diversity, and that reverting back to the 1998 curriculum leaves children vulnerable and ill informed;

“Whereas the majority of Ontarians support the updated curriculum and oppose yielding to small special-interest groups which are now denying our children sound information;

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

“That the Ford government immediately reinstate the updated 2015 health and physical curriculum brought forward by the previous Liberal government, which it developed in consultation with over 4,000 parents, teachers and students.”

I will sign this petition and give it to page Alex.

WEST LINCOLN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by some 20,000 of my constituents—over 20,000 now—that says:

“Whereas:

“—The West Lincoln Memorial Hospital has served West Niagara very well since it was first opened in 1948, but since then has become dated and in desperate need of upgrades and redevelopment to serve the growing health care needs of the region;

“—The former Liberal government called redevelopment of WLMH a priority, promising that construction would begin by 2009, and after subsequent broken promises, the government’s 2012 budget cancelled the project entirely; and

“Whereas:

“—Hamilton Health Sciences has announced the temporary move of some important services from the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital;

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

“—Maintain all services in the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital;

“—Expedite the process of rebuilding the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Sarah to bring to the table.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Jamie West: These were collected on Labour Day 2018 by the North Bay District Labour Council. They asked me to submit them.

“Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Don’t Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws.

“Whereas the vast majority of Ontarians support a \$15 minimum wage and better laws to protect workers; and

“Whereas last year, in response to overwhelming popular demand by the people of Ontario, the provincial government brought in legislation and regulations that:

“Deliver 10 personal emergency leave days for all workers, the first two of which are paid;

“Make it illegal to pay part-time, temporary, casual or contract workers less than their full-time or directly hired co-workers, including equal public holiday pay and vacation pay;

“Raised the adult general minimum wage to \$14 per hour and further raises it to a \$15 minimum wage on January 1, 2019...;

“Make it easier to join unions, especially for workers in the temporary help, home care, community services and building services sectors;

“Protect workers’ employment status, pay and benefits when contracts are flipped...;

“Make client companies responsible for workplace health and safety for temporary agency employees;

“Provide strong enforcement through the hiring of an additional 175 employment standards officers; and

“Will ensure workers have modest improvements in the scheduling of their hours, including:

“—three hours’ pay when workers are expected to be on call all day, but are not called into work;

“—three hours’ pay for any employee whose shift is cancelled with less than two days’ notice; and

“—the right to refuse shifts without penalty if the shift is scheduled with fewer than four days’ notice;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour these commitments, including the \$15 minimum wage and fairer scheduling rules set to take effect on January 1, 2019. We further call on the assembly to take all necessary steps to enforce these laws and extend them to ensure no worker is left without protection.”

I happily affix my signature. I will give it to page Aditya.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: This petition is “Don’t Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws.

“Whereas the vast majority of Ontarians support a \$15 minimum wage and better laws to protect workers; and

“Whereas last year, in response to overwhelming popular demand by the people of Ontario, the provincial government brought in legislation and regulations that:

“Deliver 10 personal emergency leave days for all workers, the first two of which are paid;

“Make it illegal to pay part-time, temporary, casual or contract workers less than their full-time or directly hired co-workers, including equal public holiday pay and vacation pay;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour these commitments, including the \$15 minimum wage and fairer scheduling rules set to take effect on January 1, 2019. We further call on the assembly to take all necessary steps to enforce these laws and extend them to ensure no worker is left without protection.”

I completely endorse this petition, will sign it and give it to page Emily to take to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Don’t Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws.

“Whereas the vast majority of Ontarians support a \$15 minimum wage and better laws to protect workers; and

“Whereas last year, in response to overwhelming popular demand by the people of Ontario, the provincial government brought in legislation and regulations that:

“Deliver 10 personal emergency leave days for all workers, the first two of which are paid;

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“Make it illegal to pay part-time, temporary, casual or contract workers less than their full-time or directly hired co-workers, including equal public holiday pay and vacation pay;

“Raised the adult general minimum wage to \$14 per hour and further raises it to a \$15 minimum wage on January 1, 2019....

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour these commitments, including the \$15 minimum wage and fairer scheduling rules set to take effect on January 1, 2019....”

I fully support this petition. I will be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Ethan.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It’s my honour to rise in this House today and present 685 signatures from the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario—over the summer—who are upset with the repeal-without-replacement of the health and physical education curriculum. The petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the 2015 health and physical education curriculum was based on extensive province-wide consultation with parents, caregivers, educators, health and education experts;

“Whereas cancellation of the sexual health component of the 2015 health and physical education curriculum would place students at risk by withdrawing instructions on naming body parts and learning about responsible decision-making and consent, gender expression and gender identity, sexuality, sexual health, growth and development, LGBTQ issues and healthy views of body image;

“Whereas repealing the 2015 curriculum would not stop classroom issues arising for which students need factual, evidence-based and age-appropriate answers to support their understanding of healthy behaviour and healthy decision-making;

“Whereas the majority of parents support the 2015 health and physical education curriculum;

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

“That the Minister of Education not repeal the sexual health component of the 2015 health and physical education curriculum.”

I fully support this petition. I’ll be affixing my signature and giving it to page Emily.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The time for petitions has ended.

VISITORS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I believe we have a point of order from the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South.

Mr. David Piccini: Before we debate this afternoon, I just wanted to make special acknowledgement of a number of people in the Legislature today from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. We have a fantastic staff at MTCU, who worked very hard to work with members of government to ensure we had a viable solution to the destructive Bill 148. We have Cameron Wood. We have Devon Cuddihy. We have Paul Newcombe, a fellow Trek lover who has taken us to boldly go where no one has gone before—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): It’s not exactly a point of order, but we are always ready to welcome visitors to the House.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MAKING ONTARIO OPEN FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 POUR UN ONTARIO OUVERT AUX AFFAIRES

Mr. Todd Smith moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 47, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009 and make complementary amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 47, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d’emploi, la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail et la Loi de 2009 sur l’Ordre des métiers de l’Ontario et l’apprentissage et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d’autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We now turn to the member from Bay of Quinte to kick off the debate.

Hon. Todd Smith: It’s an honour to rise and lead off the debate on Bill 47, the Making Ontario Open for Business Act.

Before I start, I want to thank the hard-working staff who have spent months working on this since we were elected the government of Ontario on June 7 and since we had our cabinet formed on June 29. They’re joining us here today. Mark Lawson, Christine Wood, Mykyta Drakokhrust, Tyler Lively, Miroslaw Surma, Cody Kukay, Simone Simpson, Patrick Osland, Jim Wielgosz, Alex Ainley, Sarah Letersky and many others have worked extremely hard.

I’d also like to welcome my daughter, who is joining us today. Payton Smith is here in the Legislature. She has just had her braces removed after many, many years of braces. She has a whole new outlook on life. She’s shining like a new dime over there.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, it is my pleasure that the Making Ontario Open for Business Act is this close to becoming law. As I said this morning in question period, I have a special connection to this file, because when I started in this place as a backbencher in opposition in 2011, I was the critic for small business and red tape. Tim Hudak was our leader at that time.

It really is an honour to rise and speak to this bill, because last year, when Bill 148 passed, I heard from an endless lineup of small businesses across my riding and across this province that told me they felt like they were under attack. They felt under attack by the previous government, which didn’t understand the hopes and dreams and aspirations that go into building a small business in Ontario.

If you've ever worked at a small business, or if you've ever run one, you know that one of the most rewarding feelings that small business owners feel every day comes when they turn over the sign or turn on the sign that says, "Open—we're open," because it means that they made it, Mr. Speaker. It means that they made it to another day to turn the lights on. They made it to another day when they could post a schedule for their employees. They made it to another day when they could help and greet one of their valued customers.

Nobody goes into business to attack their workers, despite many of the comments made by both members opposite and some of the presenters at committee. For too many businesses in Ontario, Bill 148 was the greatest threat to the "Open" sign that they'd seen in a generation. It was the greatest threat to achievement and aspiration that most of those small business owners could ever remember.

I'm not sure if my friends opposite realize this, so it's probably important to stress it: Capital is more mobile now than it has been in human history. The C.D. Howe Institute reports that business investment in Ontario will be \$9,100 per worker in 2018. In the United States, it's forecast to average \$23,000 per worker. That's a big difference: \$9,100 to \$23,000. That means that for every dollar American companies are investing, Canadian companies are only investing 39 cents. And that's a big deal.

The absolute biggest reason for that is the additional overhead costs that government is imposing on businesses. It didn't start with Bill 148, but it got thrown into overdrive with Bill 148.

We have no choice but to be competitive. We have no choice any longer. You don't get to opt out of the global economy.

There's a reason why, when Bill 148 was announced, several major companies announced that they were accelerating their plans for automation. We saw it happen at businesses across Ontario. If you run a theatre, you're now competing with Netflix. If you run a grocery store, you learn pretty quick that Amazon is a competitor now. These are problems that we didn't have a generation ago. The answer to them that was envisioned by Bill 148 was based on the assumption that the businesses themselves were at fault.

But that's a wrong assumption. Stats showed in 2016 that economic output in Ontario, per person, was 1% below the national average. This is Ontario, Speaker. This used to be the engine of Canada. Over only the last decade, 600,000 fewer engines rolled off assembly lines. We went from producing 2.8 million cars per year to 2.2 million cars per year. At the same time, investment in machines and equipment fell by 24% in Ontario.

For too long, we've thought that more burdensome regulation, more overhead and more taxes created a competitive business environment. But members on this side of the House, and members opposite in the government, know that that's not true. When your mom-and-pop music store is competing with an online retailer that can get a guitar from Nashville to Newmarket in two days—

with free shipping, I might add—making it more expensive to do business puts people in Ontario out of business.

It has been said that there were two schools of thought as to how the previous government viewed business in Ontario. I don't need to go into a lot of detail about them, but they can be summarized pretty simply: One is that the Liberals didn't understand; the other is that they didn't care. You can pick whichever one you think is closer to the truth.

But after days of debate and committee hearings, and hearing how members opposite have said that they regard Bill 148 as only a half measure, I'm inclined to think that neither the Liberals nor the NDP actually care. I don't think they care because one of the groups they chose to present before the committee said basically that they didn't care if small business owners went out of business because of the measures in Bill 148. That was a comment that was made in committee yesterday.

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I don't think they cared because we've had statement after statement, both in the House and in committee, telling us how awful sick notes are. Everyone has pretended this bill makes them mandatory, but this bill doesn't make them mandatory; it doesn't. If you run a good business, your employees work hard. When one of them happens to get sick, you're not asking them for a sick note.

At the same time, the Super Bowl flu is a real phenomenon in terms of productivity rates. I've heard it in every part of Ontario.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Really?

Hon. Todd Smith: Yes, really. The number of employees who took sick time the day after the Super Bowl last year exploded. Bill 148 made this happen, Speaker. One company in Trenton, which is in my riding of Bay of Quinte, did a study of it. Seventy-five employees over the months of January and February in each of the last three years—okay? So for each of the last three years.

In 2016, employee absences totalled 350 hours. In 2017, they totalled 275 hours. In 2018, they totalled 750 hours. Employee absences accounted for more hours lost in 2018 after the passage of Bill 148 than they did in the previous two years combined—the previous two years combined, Speaker.

It's worth keeping in mind that a company with 75 employees, while it may no longer be a small business, is hardly a big one, and it's important in all of our communities, particularly in rural Ontario. So, losing 10 hours per month per employee represents a significant loss in productivity for that company. That loss in productivity makes you less competitive, regardless of what industry you're in. If you run just-in-time delivery because you're in the auto manufacturing sector, then a more than 100% increase in lost man-hours has an effect on your ability to service your customers.

David Worts, of the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association of Canada, said of Bill 47, "Our members believe that all employees deserve the benefit of a safe and

fair working environment that balances rights, ensures respect and provides competitive compensation.

“JAMA Canada supports the government of Ontario’s bill entitled the Making Ontario Open for Business Act, as it will make important changes to the Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations Act that will support the province’s economic competitiveness.

“Our members continue to look forward to working with the government to foster an environment that promotes respect and fairness while allowing us to compete on a global stage.”

This is an association that represents manufacturing facilities right here in Ontario but also represents manufacturing facilities across the United States. They know what a competitive jurisdiction looks like.

This is a global atmosphere where the Toyota you buy is as likely to have been made in Georgetown, Kentucky, as it is to have been made in Cambridge, Ontario. We want to keep making cars in Cambridge, we want to keep making cars in Woodstock and we want to keep making cars in Alliston, but we need to compete. Bill 47 makes us competitive.

Some members opposite have called this a race to the bottom. It’s more like a hard dose of reality. For 15 years, the previous government felt it could pretend it didn’t need to compete with the rest of the world, and eventually the rest of the world realized that it didn’t need to compete with the previous Ontario government.

Before I wrap up, Speaker, I just want to say a quick word about the wind-down of the College of Trades.

When I first got here, I sat in a meeting with a group representing a number of my local tradespeople. Some of the statistics they presented me with were simply staggering when it came to trades in Ontario. The average age of a stonemason was north of 70. That was the average age of a stonemason: north of 70. The average age of a carpenter had him already collecting a CPP cheque. That’s only acceptable if you’re a province that literally never wants to build another house. But because our population is still growing and because our immigration targets as a nation are creeping steadily upward, we’re going to need new homes, which means we’re going to need skilled tradespeople. But because our population is still growing and because our immigration targets as a nation are creeping steadily upward, we’re going to need those new homes. That means we’re going need carpenters, we’re going to need stonemasons and we’re going to need electricians.

The problem is that the decade of darkness that we’ve had with the College of Trades has resulted in fewer apprentices and more journeymen turning in their tools. Speaker, those are good-paying jobs, as you know. Those skilled trades are good-paying jobs. Not having those tradespeople increases the cost of everything, including building a new home. If you can only call one electrician, then there’s only one price you can pay when you need work done. That’s the same with the plumber. It’s the same with steel work. The increases in cost for every home

and every home repair are going to go up unless we have people entering the skilled trades.

A trade isn’t a job; a trade is a future for a lot of people. Just a couple of weeks ago, we had an event in Belleville where we announced our plans to end the College of Trades with the Quinte Home Builders’ Association. The president of Hilden Homes was there—a well-respected builder in the Quinte region. He builds homes in Belleville, Prince Edward county, Quinte West and other parts of the Quinte region. His name is Eric DenOuden. As I walked through the door, he introduced me to a young guy named Eric McIntosh, 19 years old, and he said, “Thank you for doing this.” He’d been trying to get a spot as an apprentice, but he just couldn’t do it because of the ratios that existed with the College of Trades. Now, as a result of this and a 1-to-1 journey-person-to-apprentice ratio, Eric McIntosh of the Stirling area is going to be able to live his dream, become an apprentice and then have a skilled trade. He’s going to have a future so that he can build a family, so that he can build a home, so that we can continue to build Ontario, which we need to do. We need these homes, Mr. Speaker.

I’m very happy to say, as one of the sponsors of Bill 47—and I’d like to credit my colleagues the Minister of Labour, Laurie Scott, from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, and also the member from Kanata–Carleton, I believe, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Merrilee Fullerton, for the job that they have done, along with their staff, in making sure that we put together a comprehensive bill that speaks to our government’s mandate.

Our government’s mandate is to make Ontario open for business. This is one step in ensuring that Ontario is open for business. There’s a lot more to come. There’s a lot more that needs to be done. But the previous government, the Liberal government, made Ontario an uncompetitive jurisdiction for a lot of people to work in. Increased taxes, soaring hydro costs, a carbon tax, cap-and-trade: These are all ideas that were brought forward by Kathleen Wynne’s Liberal government in Ontario, supported by the now official opposition, the New Democratic Party. Those changes that were made to legislation drove more than 300,000 manufacturing jobs out of this province, and those jobs went to southern jurisdictions, they went east and west to Quebec and Manitoba or they went somewhere else in the world.

But I’m happy to say that we are going to pass the Making Ontario Open for Business Act. We are turning over the “Open” sign. We are turning on the “Open” sign. We are punching the clock. Ontario is ready to go to work, and this bill, Bill 47, is going to help ensure that that happens. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Before I call for further debate, I’ll remind the member from Niagara Falls that if you wish to chirp during somebody else’s debate, you will return to your chair.

Further debate?

Mr. Jamie West: Bill 47 is a clear indication that this government believes that Ontario workers have it too

good. Let's be 100% clear: This is a repeal of Bill 148, and Bill 148 is already a law. Those wages, those protections, already exist for workers. The government doesn't have the ability to repeal that law, but what they have the power to do and what they've chosen to do is to write new legislation telling workers, "You have it too good. You're not struggling enough."

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The government wants to make life harder for you. The government wants you to work sick. The government wants you to struggle with two to three precarious jobs. The government wants you to spend less time with your family. The government wants to prevent you from your constitutional right to join a union. The government wants you to have an endless, precarious career. The government wants you to be paid less for doing the same work as your co-worker. The government wants you to have less money in your pocket. This is a government that wants to make life harder for workers.

The government says that they want to grow good-paying jobs, but they write legislation eliminating the tools that would cause this to happen—economic tools like equal pay for equal work, growing the minimum wage towards a livable wage, and organizing or joining a union.

Bill 47 will make it harder for Ontario's workers to exercise their constitutionally protected right to unionize. First, workers will be denied access to the contact information of co-workers. Speaker, workplaces have changed, so many workers no longer work in centralized locations. If a worker wants to discuss unionization with their co-workers, they have no way to access them, no way to reach them, identify them or even know who they are. This isn't about privacy, because privacy is already addressed in this. What this is about is creating an unfair playing field where workers can't communicate and employers can.

Second, Bill 47 removes the extension of card-based certification. Card-based certification recognizes that when a worker signs a union card, they're expressing their desire to join a union. Having a vote following a card-based vote creates a double voting process. Every single member here was voted into their position with one vote. Why would we expect that a second vote equals more democracy if we accept one vote for our roles here?

Third, Bill 47 removes the right to speedy first-contract arbitration. The first collective agreement creates the foundation and sets the precedent for the relationship moving forward for the workers in the workplace and the employers. It creates a predictable environment for business, and it creates certainty for employers and employees because the rules are clear and outlined.

Finally, Bill 47 removes protections against contract flipping. Unionized contract workers for employers that subcontract services, such as home care, housekeeping and school bus services, are vulnerable to contract flipping. They lose their collective agreement and they lose their bargaining rights if the service contract covering their work site changes hands. This is the case even if the new contract provider hires the same employees to perform the same work in the same location. Imagine this: You show

up in the same location doing the same work that you've always done before. You're wearing a different logo on your shirt. There's a different sign on the front of the door, but you've lost your contract because there's a new employer.

This government wants workers to believe that fewer emergency days are better. No wonder the government keeps talking about math; apparently, they can't even count to 10. Let me take you back in history. In 2016, there were 10 personal emergency days—PEL, personal emergency leave days—all of them unpaid. In 2017: 10 personal emergency leave days, eight unpaid and two paid; eight plus two is 10. Bill 47: eight PL days, all unpaid. We're going even further back than before.

Not only are there fewer personal emergency leave days, but the government has decided to categorize them. So now you get eight days, but they had better fit into these categories: You get three if you're sick; you get three for your family; you get two for bereavement.

And let's not forget that the legislation also says that any part of that day constitutes an entire day. Let's say it's an hour before the end of work and you get a phone call that your grandparent has died, so you rush home to console your parents. That's a day even though it's one hour. You stay home the next day to help plan the funeral and grieve with your family? That's your second day. Too bad you can't go to the funeral. And God forbid anybody else dies that year, because you've used your two days.

This is a government that wants to make it harder for good businesses to compete with bottom-feeder businesses that cut corners and take advantage of their workers. As the government is fond of saying, the majority of employers treat their employees fairly, and I agree with this. However, legislation isn't written for the best employers, those that go above and beyond. Legislation is written for the worst employers. Legislation creates boundaries and prevents shortcuts from those who will take advantage of them.

The government admitted they didn't really look at the data collected during the two years of the Bill 148 province-wide consultations, but fortunately, New Democrats did, and here's what was reported in the interim report. This is something everyone already knew, Speaker. Workers were often so afraid of losing their jobs that they rarely made complaints around workplace violations. Workplaces that violated the law were rarely fined, and when they were fined, those penalties were rarely collected.

This government's solution, with Bill 47: the planned increase in the number of ESA inspectors—gone; the higher penalties for workplaces that violated the law—gone. They even released an internal memo to ESA inspectors ordering them to stop proactively inspecting unscrupulous workplaces, because they had too much work already.

Cameron is a toddler who lives next door to me, and even he knows that things don't disappear if you simply close your eyes. This isn't rhetoric, Speaker; it's reality.

Anthony Nootchtaï, a Sudbury constituent, told me he doesn't have a high school diploma and almost all the jobs

require one. His employer's respect for workers' rights and responsibilities aren't his highest priority. He wants the government to set that bar for him. His highest priority is putting food on the table, paying his bills and holding on to his job any way he can, and he takes abuse because of that.

This is a government that is closed to vulnerable workers and open for bad, unscrupulous business.

Let me read you Sudbury constituent Mark Browning of Tucos Taco Lounge's Facebook post that everybody was talking about one year ago:

"At Tucos our staff are our family, they are Tucos. There has been a lot of controversy recently about businesses reacting to the minimum wage increase. For our part, we believe that people are worth it—that owners have a responsibility to make sure we do everything we can to make their workplace a positive space, and to pay as much as we can. We never have been focused on profit at Tucos—our goal has always been to make great fresh food and show people that you don't need to eat animals to have a delicious meal—and further, that this little step can help the world around us. Tucos and Beards—and Cosmic Dave's for that matter—are labours of love.

"Money doesn't make the world go round, life does. The fact is, all people have a right to a living wage, and we're totally behind the minimum wage increase. Can we survive? Absolutely. If you keep coming to Tucos we'll do fine. And our staff will too. To that end, at Tucos and Beards, effective January 1, 2018, we have instituted profit sharing for our staff—to monetize the spirit of 'ownership' we see them apply every shift. When Tucos and Beards succeed, we do so collectively. So, there's another reason you can eat with a good conscience!"

Speaker, since they increased their staff wages and implemented the new model, their sales have gone up and they didn't have to bring the cost of their menu up at all.

Better Way Alliance is an informal network of business owners, small and medium, who are willing to speak out to defend employees across the province, because "we're more than a little bit tired of businesses being blamed for regressive policies."

The opposition of small business to these improvements that were made to workers' rights last year was vastly overstated by the industry association heads.

Neal Brothers Foods had this to say about Bill 47: "We think it's really the largest corporations—the same ones creating precarious jobs and profiting off subpar treatment of their employees—driving business lobby efforts.

"We are a family-run business. We've been operating in Ontario for 30 years, employing 60 staff. In many ways a typical small business, we are, as the OCC would put it, among 'the wealth generators, job creators and risk takers.'...

"And we are for workers' rights and the long overdue improvements to our labour laws last year....

"The big business lobby does not represent the views of most small and medium businesses.

"Consider:

"—This analysis of Statistics Canada data that shows large firms—companies with more than 500 employees—are five times more likely to pay minimum wage than small or medium-sized businesses." That's why the government only talks about small business.

"—Surveys by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business found that more than 80% of Ontario's small business employees earn above the minimum wage, and are offered flexibility in the workplace to deal with personal issues.

"—More than 60% of small and medium business owners agree with a \$15 minimum wage or higher....

"When will the government admit that it has taken a completely one-sided look at the business community and is painting us all—inaccurately—with the same brush?"

"The push-back on workers' rights from large lobby groups and our current government has left a bad taste in our mouths. There are companies out there that care about their people."

Finally, Speaker, this is a government that wants to make life harder for workers and they can't wait for that to start.

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The previous consultation on improving workers' rights took nearly three years. The government of the day consulted across Ontario for nearly two years.

This bill, Bill 47, was released 28 days ago. It has been time-allocated. The government voted to rush it through legislation as quickly as possible. The public consultation on Bill 47: five hours, total. Bill 47 is an omnibus bill with a brick on the gas pedal, because this is a government that believes that workers have it too good.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today to debate Bill 47. I believe that most of us in this House recognize the position that labour organizations and social and community groups have on Bill 47, but we have not fully appreciated the diverse voices in the business community and their opinion on Bill 47.

I've had many small business owners reach out to me with serious concerns about this legislation. A number of small business owners in particular have told me that Bill 47 swings too far in the wrong direction. They told me that while there were things wrong with Bill 148—and I would say that the thing I heard the most from small business owners was that the calculation for statutory holiday pay was not fair and was flawed—they've also told me that Bill 47 goes far too far in the opposite direction.

Many business owners have already spent time complying with the requirements of Bill 148, and now the government is throwing all that away, wasting the time, the money, the energy and the work they've put into complying with Bill 148.

We need a more balanced approach to wage and labour laws, an approach that puts people first. But instead of conducting consultations with people across the province, with the diverse voices of people around Ontario, and even

with the diverse voices within the small business community, the government held one day of public hearings for people to come in and talk about this issue.

Wage and labour laws are very complicated. There's a lot at stake here, and I believe the people of Ontario deserve more than one day of public hearings on Bill 47.

Instead of taking the time to listen to people, to think through the issues, to figure out what we can do to make Bill 148 better, or Bill 47 better, for that matter, this bill has been rammed through the Legislature, and I don't think that's right. How can the government put forward an effective bill on such an important and complex issue with one day of public hearings?

As one Guelph business owner put it to me: "I want to pay my employees more than \$15 an hour. They are my customers and my neighbours. I want them to have a decent life and to have money to spend at local businesses like mine. I didn't think the statutory holiday pay calculation was fair, but" tell the government to "fix that. Don't throw out two paid sick days; don't freeze the minimum wage."

Mr. Speaker, Ontario needs a balanced approach to wage and labour laws. People's lives and livelihoods are at stake. People's businesses and investments are at stake. Going from one extreme to the other puts our economy at risk, and it puts businesses at risk. It puts people's livelihoods at risk.

If there was ever an example of extreme policy swings brought about by our outdated first-past-the-post voting system, Bill 47 is it, and it is why we need more balance here. We need wage and labour reforms that work for the 21st century, not the 20th century, and that recognize we live in a new world with increasing levels of precarious work, with new forms of businesses forming and growing. So let's fix Bill 148, not throw it away.

I'm worried that what this legislation tells the people of Ontario is that the Premier's vision for Ontario is a race to the bottom. Free pollution and low wages is the agenda that this government is putting forward, and I don't think that is the way to open Ontario for business. We need wage and labour reforms that work for people, an approach that supports businesses and the people who work for them. Mr. Speaker, we need win-win solutions.

Let me just share one with you. I know some small business owners have said that the rate of increase to the minimum wage may have been a little too fast for them. But we've offered a solution that can work for small businesses and that can work for minimum wage workers. Raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and lower payroll taxes on small businesses by increasing the employer health tax exemption. That provides immediate cash flow relief to small businesses, puts more money in their pocket, gives them the ability to hire more workers and pay them a higher wage.

What it also does is it benefits our local economies, because here's the reality: When minimum wage workers have more money in their pocket, they spend it locally. They buy things from local businesses. They put more revenue into the local economy, helping those local

businesses create more jobs and put more money into the local economy. When we support local businesses, they hire locally. They support local accountants, advertising and other supports. So it's a win-win for the entire local economy.

I'm tired of both the previous government and the new government creating a wedge issue between minimum wage workers and small business owners. It's completely unnecessary. We need win-win solutions—solutions that work for everybody in our community, minimum wage workers and small businesses.

Surveys by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business found that more than 80% of Ontario small business employees earn above minimum wage—80%. In another CFIB survey, 84% of Ontario small business owners said they already offer their employees flexibility to deal with personal issues. In a recent CFIB study on the state of the Canadian workforce, two thirds of Ontario employers identified their employees as the most important element of their success.

So let's be clear: When we're talking about who is pushing for these changes, it's not the majority of small business owners. It may be big businesses, but it's not small businesses. So let's not use small businesses as the excuse to take away labour rights from workers, to freeze the minimum wage, and to take holiday and benefit pay away. As a matter of fact, I met with a number of small businesses in my riding who say the new formula for leave days actually may increase their costs because it's more complicated. Now you get 10 days and two of those are paid—I don't think it's too much to ask for two paid sick days. But now there's a formula where it's three for this, three for this and two for that, which is actually even more complicated.

I'm saying this as somebody who ran a small business for two decades. Our business employed 10 to 15 people, so when one person wasn't there, that was like 10% of our workforce. I understand how challenging that is for a small business. But I also know that the success of a business is to pay your employees well, treat them well. And by all means, I don't want sick workers coming into my workplace, getting other workers sick. I don't want them to have to go to a doctor's office to get a note saying they can miss work, and getting other people sick and putting an additional burden on our health care system.

I think it's reasonable to provide people with two paid days off. It's reasonable to provide people with 10 days to care for an aging parent or a sick child or to go to the doctor or to deal with other personal and family emergencies. Mr. Speaker, it's reasonable for people to be paid equally for the equal work they provide. It's reasonable to start attacking the precarity in our workforce, to support those workers who are in precarious positions so they can provide for their families.

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I obviously will be voting against Bill 47. But I encourage the government to listen to those small business owners. I want to talk about three of them in my riding in Guelph, and I want to talk about them because they're in

the food sector. Oftentimes, it's the food sector that has the lowest margins. Sometimes, it's cited as the sector that maybe can't afford to pay higher wages.

The first one is the Woolwich Arms. They run a number of restaurants—Borealis, actually in your riding, member opposite—a pub in Guelph and a few other restaurants. They've been named Canada's Restaurateur of the Year. They told me, "Mike, keep pushing for a higher minimum wage, because we know that paying people well in the restaurant sector actually leads to better service and better business returns, and we know that we can sell that to our customers."

Polestar Hearth, a local bakery in my community, said to me, "Mike, keep pushing for a higher minimum wage." Do you know why? And they also said, "Keep pushing for lowering our taxes too, when it comes to the employer health tax." But the reason being is they recognize that if people have more money in their pocket, they're going to support their local bakery.

The third one is GROSCHÉ, an international firm that sells coffee, teas and other products. They've said, "You know, in our work around the world, it's those countries that pay their workers well that have strong economies that support business growth and development and investment, and it's those countries that don't pay their workers well that have economies that don't perform well. So keep pushing for people to be paid a living wage."

Before I finish my time today, Mr. Speaker, there are two things I want to talk about for my constituents, given how I'm going to be voting on this bill. The first is in skilled trades. I believe the College of Trades does need to be completely overhauled. I've had far too many people—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Ah, there you go. We agree on trades. We'll work together on skilled trades, absolutely. In fact, I've already told a person of my riding that she should meet with the member opposite.

The reason being is we have a backlog of young people who want to access the skilled trades, and we need to make sure we have ratios that reflect international and provincial best standards to open apprenticeships up.

But the one thing that I want to say to the members opposite—and I know it's not contained in this bill—is that support for the trades also means supporting pre-apprenticeship programs and apprenticeship programs at all levels of education, including starting in the secondary schools. We have to elevate the prestige of the trades. We have to support young people moving into the trades. If we're going to remove the barriers to the ratios of apprenticeships, then let's support those young people moving into apprenticeships, let's support the businesses that are going to be hiring them, and let's support the educational institutions—both at the secondary and post-secondary levels—that will be supporting those workers.

The final one, which hasn't been talked about a lot in the debate on Bill 47, is the reopening of the sheltered workshops. I have a number of people in my riding who are either adults with developmental disabilities or parents of adults with developmental disabilities, and they've

asked for choice. They've asked for places for their adult children to go and have a meaningful place where they feel that their work is valued. So I support the portion of the bill that reopens the sheltered workshops.

But I also want to say to the members opposite that in addition to doing that, we need to provide supports for people with developmental disabilities to access the workforce, to access the mainstreaming of the workforce.

I know that in my own company, we always had at least one of our employees, which represented about 10% of our staff, who had developmental disabilities. Community Living provided a support worker for that person.

We need to not only open the sheltered workshops but also provide support for people with developmental disabilities, and for employers who are hiring those folks.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): A point of order.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to note that Zach Potashner, the EA to the PA—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry. With all due respect, you can raise a point of order if you're in your chair. You're not in your chair.

Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I follow the rules. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll introduce Zach Potashner, from the Ministry of Labour, who is the EA for the MPP for Thornhill, my parliamentary assistant.

I'm happy to rise in the House today to salute my colleagues and to take stock of how far we've come in the past five months. I'd like to acknowledge and thank my colleagues who helped make Bill 47 happen and who helped guide it through Parliament and committee. We couldn't have done it without all of you.

I'm proud to have worked with Minister Fullerton and Minister Smith. We are part of a team that got right down to work after the election. To Minister Smith and Minister Fullerton: Congratulations, and thanks. They were certainly big parts of Bill 47.

The parliamentary assistant from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, Michael Parsa, held business round tables throughout Ontario. He heard from hundreds of businesses and people who identified unnecessary regulations, so a big shout-out to him.

Also, the parliamentary assistants from Northumberland–Peterborough South and Flamborough–Glanbrook contributed smart ideas gathered from students, workers and small business owners across Ontario. Again, thank you.

Of course, to my friend and colleague the MPP from Thornhill, my parliamentary assistant for the Ministry of Labour—she contributed strong support to my office. She shepherded Bill 47 through the standing committee. I'm very grateful and will always be grateful for the support and advice from the member from Thornhill. Thank you very much.

To my other parliamentary colleagues: I appreciate all of your ideas to help reduce red tape and make Ontario open for business. You are listening to the needs of businesses in your ridings. You listen, and together, we all take action.

To the members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs on both sides of the aisle here: I am thankful that you considered deputations and amendments.

We might as well finish off with thank-yous to all of the staff at my Ministry of Labour. I thank them greatly for all the time they spent on this piece of legislation, Bill 47.

Together, we have been very efficient and energetic.

Ontarians finally have a government that works for them. Government should make it easy to work, and easy for businesses to employ people. We need to keep regulations and payroll taxes reasonable and manageable, and we need to let common sense inform good policy.

Our PC government understands that regulatory burdens make it harder to do business and harder to employ workers. Bill 47 improves both the Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations Act. Under our government, these acts will provide a lighter framework that encourages business to create and maintain good jobs.

The previous government and their NDP allies had fundamentally different ideas. Government intrusion into the lives of workers and entrepreneurs was their only economic instinct. Higher taxes, onerous regulation and suspicion of business seemed to be the guiding principles of everything they did. The last government thought it could legislate Ontario into prosperity. They were mistaken.

The clearest example of the Liberal vision came in the dying days of the last government, when they passed Bill 148. That rushed in a sudden 21% increase in the minimum wage, which caught businesses off guard. The ideological approach to the minimum wage placed a massive new burden on small businesses, particularly in the service industry and in small-town and rural Ontario.

1700

The Liberal government ignored our PC caucus requests. We requested a cost-benefit analysis. How bad would that have been? A cost-benefit analysis on Bill 148. Do you know what happened when we didn't do that? The result was staggering job losses. Philip Cross, former chief economic analyst at Statistics Canada, observed in a recent report that the minimum wage increase "had the inevitable effect of slowing job growth," and the number of people in Ontario holding a job fell in the first half of the year.

Let me reiterate that Ontario's government for the people will be keeping our promise to hold the hourly minimum wage at \$14 an hour in order to allow businesses time to adjust, before allowing the minimum wage to rise with inflation beginning in 2020. As I keep repeating, Mr. Speaker, workers and businesses deserve a minimum wage determined by economics, not politics.

But the minimum wage hike wasn't the only burdensome part of Bill 148. For months, MPPs' offices have

been inundated with complaints about Bill 148 and its negative effects on businesses and workers. As the new Minister of Labour in the Ford PC government, I launched an immediate review of Bill 148. I met with unions, employers and everyday workers. I reviewed each section of Bill 148 and asked the three critical questions: What was the impact on Ontario's economy? Does this provide a real benefit for the people? How do we ensure that Ontario is open for business? Bill 47 is the result of my review.

Bill 148 included rigid and prescriptive scheduling rules. These rules prevented employers from calling in workers for shifts unless they were given four days' notice.

The original Bill 148 required 10 days of so-called personal emergency leave for almost any reason after only five days at a new job. Most employers want to be generous, but the Liberals' emergency leave provisions created an unpredictable work environment and invited abuse. Instead, we are proposing a practical package of eight annual leave days: three days of sick leave, three days of family responsibility leave and two bereavement days for every worker in Ontario after two weeks of work.

Bill 47 preserves the right of every Ontario worker to receive three weeks of paid vacation after five years of employment. Bill 47 protects 15 days of leave for domestic or sexual violence. Bill 47 reduces onerous burdens on our job creators while preserving real benefits for Ontario workers.

As a former nurse, I understand collective bargaining, and I respect that process. But the reforms to the Labour Relations Act in Bill 148 threatened the creation of new and better jobs for Ontario. Under Bill 148, if only 20% of a workforce expressed interest in joining a union, the employer was required to hand over the employees' personal information to the union. Similarly, card-based certification, which is common in the building trades, was extended to home care, building services and temporary help agencies. Those changes were not justified. Our reforms will respect Ontarians' personal information, and instead of card-based certification, we plan to revert to a vote by democratic secret ballot.

To all stakeholders who made written submissions and to all deputants at the standing committee, I want to thank you. I know I speak for the whole government when I say that we're grateful for your insight and we're glad you were able to take the time to appear in person.

Over the past 15 years, there was a growing chasm between elite Liberal opinion and the reality facing working people every day. Instead of listening to the real-life experience of working Ontarians, the previous government tried to convince people that they misunderstood their own lives. Input based on the experience of real people must form the basis of sound policy, Mr. Speaker, and I think we heard that loud and clear on June 7. Overall, the purpose of our reforms is to simplify, harmonize and reduce the regulatory burden for anyone willing to create jobs in Ontario.

The reforms we are introducing are deliberate and thoughtful, unlike the last-minute changes imposed on

Ontario through Bill 148. The Making Ontario Open for Business Act is only the beginning, Mr. Speaker. Our government for the people recognizes that lower-income workers and their families do deserve a break, which is why we are committed to ensure that minimum wage earners pay no provincial income tax. That's why my colleague Minister Fedeli introduced the LIFT credit. If you want minimum wage workers to have more money in their pockets, the answer is simple: Stop taxing them. Mr. Speaker, I know I'll never hear that from that side of the Legislature.

Workers across all trades and professions treat their hard-earned money with respect, and they want their government to do the same. Ontario's entrepreneurs and small business owners understand that cutting red tape and leaving more money in people's pockets is a way to get Ontario's economy growing again. This package of reforms will help unlock the job-creating potential in Ontario's economy. Our government wants Ontario to be the engine of job creation in Canada by replacing ideology with economic sense. We're helping to ensure that more people, in particular young people, can enter the workforce and start their careers.

Our proposed legislation sends a message to the world that Ontario is open for business. Businesses should have the confidence in reasonable and predictable regulations, and everyone who works should have the confidence of a good job and a safe workplace. We have a vision of a more prosperous Ontario, Mr. Speaker, and in a prosperous society people are free to choose their work arrangements and businesses are motivated to reward their workers. We want Ontario to be the best place in North America to recruit, hire and reward workers for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Small labour market policy should set the rules of the game. If we provide the right rules, Ontario's workers will win. That's what we're here to do, Mr. Speaker: make sure that Ontario workers will win.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is my pleasure to correct the record on Bill 47, if you will. I have been part of this legislative process since October 23, where this government has rammed through this regressive piece of legislation which will hurt the workers of this province. It will hurt the economy in this province. It will further damage the health care in this province.

The real costs of Bill 47 and the potential health impact of the Employment Standards Act changes—please remember that the only thing that workers have in the province of Ontario is the Employment Standards Act. What this government has done has weakened it, has reduced the protections that workers have and has targeted some of the most vulnerable workers in the province of Ontario, particularly women. How progressive of the Progressive Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker.

The minimum wage: I want to correct the record. StatsCan has shown that since the minimum wage has come in year over year, the province of Ontario is up

90,000 jobs, and 63,000 of them are full-time jobs. But what has this government done? This government has decided that they are going to allow employers to pay part-time employees less money. Do you know what you are going to do? You are going to create a part-time employment province by allowing employers to pay less money.

Some 64% of the part-time employees in this province are women. They are marginalized workers. They are service people who perform important services. This government is going to systemically embed inequity in the province of Ontario. You should be ashamed of yourselves for doing this.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: The insinuations that you're making—you should be ashamed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Niagara West will come to order, please. Thank you.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I can't believe that in the province of Ontario, we are debating equal pay for equal work. It is astounding to me that in 2018, any government that has any sense of their responsibility as a government would increase the opportunity for employers to pay women less money. How is this possible?

1710

Scheduling rights: I will say, Mr. Speaker, that it is incredible to me that this government does not recognize that an employee has the right to determine when they come to work or not. It is incredible to me that you have done that.

Two thirds of Ontarians will not qualify for your poverty reduction tax because you have frozen the minimum wage at \$14. In what world is a \$15 minimum wage acceptable? And it's going to reach that at 2025, so not only are you embedding systemic inequity in the province of Ontario; you are making sure that poverty is a reality in this province of Ontario, which will reduce the economic benefit of this entire legislation. Unbelievable.

The fact that you are allowing employers to ask for a doctor's note in a health care system—I should note, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 47 was not even run through the Ministry of Health. The negative impact of Bill 47 on health care on the province of Ontario—poverty kills people. I will say that to the Minister of Health, honestly and openly: Your ministry should have been consulted on this piece of legislation, because when people cannot earn a living they cannot buy nutritious food. When their employer says, “You have to come to work sick,” they contaminate the entire workplace. When people who are sick go to the hospital, where there are people in the hallways, more people get sick.

This province will be damaged by Bill 47 for a long time in the history of this province. But I guarantee you, Mr. Speaker: As soon as New Democrats get a chance to correct the wrongs that are embedded in this legislation, we will take care of this right now.

I want to tell you one last story. By reducing the Ministry of Labour's ability to inspect workplaces, you are also—and this is part-time employees; this is temporary

employees; these are the precarious contract workers which this legislation will guarantee is now the new economy in the province of Ontario—by reducing the Ministry of Labour's ability to do proactive inspections, you are making sure that workers will be less safe in the province of Ontario. You should be ashamed of yourself.

We will vote against this legislation. We will fight this legislation every single day for the next three years, five months and 11 days.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Before I call for further debate, the member for Niagara West will come to order. The next time, you will be warned, and after that you will be named.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): To our friends in the gallery: This is your Legislature, but while you're here, you are not to applaud. You're not to disrupt the proceedings. Thank you.

We will continue with the debate with the member from Simcoe North.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise here today in the House, along with the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade and the Minister of Labour, and address our government's Bill 47, the Making Ontario Open for Business Act.

Our government for the people has been working hard during the past four months to clean up the mess the Liberals left behind. We committed to restore accountability and trust, to put more money back in the process of Ontarians and to create better jobs. For the first time in 15 years, Ontario has a government that understands small businesses and working people. That, Mr. Speaker, is why we're proud to announce that Ontario's government will introduce legislation that, if passed, will reduce stifling regulatory burdens. The proposed Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018 will cut burdensome red tape and pave the way for job creation.

Bill 47 sends a message to the world that Ontario is open for business by bringing quality jobs back to Ontario, by lowering taxes, reducing hydro bills and cutting job-killing red tape. We need to reduce the regulatory burden to ensure that the businesses we count on to grow and create jobs in Ontario are competitive across the country, North America and the world. The purpose of Bill 47 is to reduce burdens on our job creators while preserving real benefits for Ontario workers.

We have begun work on a system that will support jobs in trades. There are many tremendous and vibrant opportunities available in the skilled trades in Ontario. In fact, one in five new jobs in the next five years will be trades-related. But there's a problem: Employers can't find apprentices, and apprentices can't find jobs. Business owners and employers are telling us that there are not enough people on the skilled trades path and that there's a mismatch of skills and employment opportunities. Yet despite this labour shortage, we have young people who want careers in the skilled trades who are actually forced to leave the province to find work. They deserve a shot at

a job here in Ontario. This is a clear sign that the current Ontario apprenticeship system is broken. With our modern economy, we need an apprenticeship system built for today and one that makes Ontario open for business.

We have heard first-hand about the difficulties in the skilled trades: the inability to find jobs, the barriers to entering the trades and the burdens placed on our employers. In Ontario, our ratios are amongst the highest in the country and are a major deterrent for employers looking to hire apprentices. The current ratio regime limits the number of apprentices an employer can train. This makes no sense, especially when employers need apprentices and apprentices need employers. This ultimately limits our growth and the number of jobs available here in Ontario.

Patrick McManus of the Ontario Skilled Trades Alliance explained to us in detail how the Ontario College of Trades was stifling job creation:

"In the six years that the college was formally in place, despite bringing in tens of millions of dollars every year in membership fees, the number of apprentices entering into and completing their apprenticeships declined despite increased demand for tradespeople and despite the sizable investments being made in the training and apprenticeship system by the government.

"Our system has been paralyzed and absolutely focused in the wrong places. Rather than focusing on how to increase training and apprenticeship opportunities and to help direct young people into good, viable careers—not just jobs—the Ontario College of Trades "chose to focus on an incredibly small component of its mandate, regulatory enforcement, while ignoring the most critical components of its mandate, which were skills promotion and development. It missed the forest for the trees on this issue.

"Rather than allowing our trades in the province to evolve into modern times in lockstep with our provincial counterparts to the west, we have spent years now squabbling over scopes of practice, enforcement strategies and trade jurisdictions. All of this put tradespeople in Ontario and employers that employ tradespeople in Ontario behind the eight ball. Winding down the college is the right call because its notoriety has made the institution irreparably damaged.

"We have collectively been calling for bold measures to turn things around in the trades, to jump-start them. We believe that this bill is the first step in the right direction. We need to be making it easier, not more difficult, to get into the skilled trades. This is why the reduction of ratios to 1 to 1 is the right call. We need to give employers the opportunity to start training the next generation of skilled workers in the trades. This gives employers the opportunity to hire more people, to give more young people work, and to those seeking a second career or those new to the country, the opportunity to put their skills to work in a viable career. It's an important change, and one that will see a lot of job opportunities created across the province. Opening up training opportunities right away and getting workers up to speed is going to go a long way to start closing the skills gap.

1720

“The moratorium on trade classifications is going to bring a lot of stability back to the trades. The classification review process that the college had in place involved an out-of-date scope-of-practice regulation that would have limited what certain tradespeople could do on various job sites. The result was more barriers to entry and more people required to do the same amount of work being done today and at higher cost. The moratorium will provide greater clarity and certainty moving forward about who can do what, which is critical to industries that employ tradespeople.

“OCOT was a polarizing distraction. It’s too broken and too far gone to rein back in. Too much time has been wasted with the college and its red tape, [its] enforcement activities and how it was spending money. It took away from the needed discussions of strategizing on how to actually close the skills gaps. Now we’re stuck here, almost a decade later, playing catch-up. The baby boom exodus is happening right now in the skilled trades, and the college winding down gives us the opportunity to refocus on what really matters: bridging the skills gap, promoting careers in the trades as a career of first choice, and creating a straightforward way of helping people find careers in the trades for that next generation of worker coming in. Now we as employers get to do what we’ve been asking for all along: to be able to hire, train and mentor the next generation of workers with fewer roadblocks in place.”

Mr. Speaker, this condemnation of the Ontario College of Trades highlights exactly why we are proposing to move away from this broken system.

Since the Ontario College of Trades began accepting members in 2013, we have continued to hear concerns like those regarding numerous membership fees, inefficiencies and red tape, and obstacles to addressing the skills gap. We can no longer ignore these issues. We need to make skilled labour a competitive advantage for Ontario.

Under the previous government, skilled trades workers were ignored. This is no longer the case with our government for the people. We are working to help employers and workers to better fill the demand for skilled trades and apprenticeship jobs and to bring quality jobs back to Ontario by cutting red tape. I am already hearing from skilled trade business owners and labourers across my riding of Simcoe North about how excited they are with the changes our government is beginning to implement.

I have seen first-hand the important work our skilled trades professionals do. Growing up in a family of skilled labourers, I was always taught the value and significance of their work. Unfortunately, under 15 years of Liberal government, the negative stigma attached to the skilled trades sector has become more ingrained. We need to replace the negative stigma around skilled trades and represent skilled trades as a viable and respectable career path.

I know how financially sound and stable a career path in the skilled trades can be as I’ve seen my family successfully operate a skilled trades business for over 60

years in Simcoe North. Glen Dunlop Plumbing and Heating was founded by my grandparents Glen and Marie Dunlop in my hometown of Coldwater, Ontario. Over time, they have hired nearly 200 employees, and they continue to successfully operate to this day. We need to see more success stories like this one for small businesses across our great province.

As the executive director of Merit, Michael Gallardo, has said, “We need to promote the trades as careers, as a plan A, not a plan B.... Cutting red tape will mean less bureaucracy, making it easier for people to find work.”

I hear from many small businesses and skilled trade workers across Simcoe North about how thrilled they are with our government’s commitment to making Ontario open for business and to making our province the great economic engine it once was.

A constituent from my riding and a resident of the city of Orillia stated that he has been building homes in Orillia for almost 30 years and has seen a steady decline in young tradespeople entering the workforce. While he would actively work with local high school students on build sites to give them first-hand knowledge of what a career in the trades could provide, he said that the interest in the field has drastically declined. He said that he was happy that our government was finally doing something to create opportunities in the trades and reduce barriers in training and apprenticeships.

Another constituent from Orillia has also reached out to me to share his personal story of working in the skilled trades sector. He has been working as a journeyman electrician for 36 years, has enjoyed a lengthy and successful career, making over \$90,000 a year, and has always worked in a clean, safe and reputable environment. Despite his own personal success, he stated that he has noticed a severe shortage of tradespeople and apprenticeship training, and that it can take up to six months for his company to find a journeyman electrician, millwright or machinist. This is because the current apprenticeship program, designed by the Liberal government, has become outdated, complex and restrictive.

Our government recognizes the need for more flexibility within the apprenticeship system framework, and we are working to provide better opportunities for our apprentices.

Unnecessary regulations are squeezing businesses in every economic sector, driving jobs and investments out of Ontario. Unnecessary red tape and regulations are job killers. They actually discourage businesses from hiring, and block unemployed people from finding work and supporting their families.

We cannot continue to drive companies away. Ontario is open for business, and we will continue to remove stifling burdens from job creators, and lower business costs, and make Ontario more competitive.

During constituency week, I met with the owners of a local manufacturing company, JessEm tools: Darrin Smith and Laura Smith. They said, “The one thing I feel as a business here in Ontario is that the government of Ontario, under Kathleen Wynne, was a government that was

against me as a business owner. I look at my staff as family and the most important aspect of the business is that we work as a team. I look at our business, which exports 90% to other markets, as a small but valuable part of the economy in Ontario and we should be part of that team. With the Ford government, I feel like we are finally all working together as we should be and that as a business owner I am part of the solution and not the enemy.”

Our government will always support small businesses. We are committed to creating the conditions that make it easier to start and grow a business or invest in Ontario, including cutting red tape and regulatory burdens.

“Open for business” means open for everyone, including workers across all trades. We believe that if you are prepared to do the work, then you deserve a shot at the job.

We’ll target unnecessary regulations while taking care to safeguard the health and safety of Ontarians. We’ll make it easier and faster for companies to do business with the government. Our government is delivering on our promise to cut red tape and make Ontario open for business. We are committed to creating better-paying jobs and making it easier for apprentices to join the workforce.

In response to the issues raised, our government intends to transform and modernize the apprenticeship system, starting by proposing amendments to the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009. If passed, the amendments would immediately lower journeyman-to-apprenticeship ratios to a simple 1-to-1 ratio, making us more competitive with other provinces.

We will also establish a moratorium on trades re-classification and de-prescribe 24 low-volume trades where apprenticeships are not in demand.

Further, if the legislation is passed, we would move toward the repeal of the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009, and have a mechanism for interim governance structure, and provide for an orderly transition to be completed in 2019.

Defenders of the College of Trades like to pretend that it has a role in protecting labour standards, but they ignore the fact that Ontario is alone among all the provinces in clinging to this kind of model—and the other provinces are doing just fine. As far as we’re concerned, if you are prepared to do the job, then you deserve a shot at the job, and that means the status quo has to be fixed.

While these are big changes, they are necessary in order to respond to the needs of apprentices and employers, and to address the skills gap and help people reach their full potential.

During this time of transition, the government intends to maintain the essential system functions and ensure certainty as we move forward.

1730

We need to look at post-secondary education and training in the broader context of what is best for Ontario’s economy. That means making sure that it is efficient, cost-effective, financially sustainable and is providing the skilled workforce we need to restore Ontario to its rightful place as the economic engine of Canada. We have a plan.

Skilled trades play an essential role in our economy, our society and our everyday lives. They will continue to do so as part of the backbone of our economy.

We also face an aging workforce in Ontario, particularly in the skilled trades. We must ensure that we have the workforce on hand to meet this growing demand. But what business owners and employers are telling us is that these days, not enough people are on that path.

We want the world to know that Ontario is open for business. We want businesses and industry to know that we are cutting red tape and reducing burdens. We want post-secondary institutions to know that their training is creating skilled workers who are needed and desired in their trades. We want current and potential skilled trade workers to know that we are working to make their system better and stronger. We want to make sure that the tax dollars we invest in post-secondary education and training get the people in our province a good return.

We will do this by reviewing and curtailing unnecessary investments, by reducing the regulatory burden on businesses, apprentices and journeypersons, and by bringing accountability back to government spending by making the responsible, financially sound decisions that the people of Ontario elected us with a strong mandate to make.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to participate in this debate today because I’m one of those in my caucus who gets to speak. I know all of us would like to speak because this bill is so fundamentally important to the people in our province, now and in the future.

We heard the government across the way talk about this bill being guided by economics, not politics. Really, Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. This is an ideological bill. It is mean-spirited, it is reckless and it will do nothing to grow the economy. It takes Ontario on a race to the bottom.

It treats workers as exclusively a cost to business, a drag on the bottom line, people who will cheat the system whenever they can. It equates competitiveness with keeping payroll as low as possible. It views employment standards and Ministry of Labour inspections as unnecessary red tape, an onerous regulatory burden that is reducing the profit margins of business and especially the largest corporations in this province, which are the most likely to employ minimum wage workers.

Well, Speaker, economists know better. Economists understand that low-wage countries remain low-wage, that it’s the high-wage nations of Europe and Scandinavia that are excelling in global competitiveness. This was shown in a report recently from the World Economic Forum.

Fifty-three Canadian economists wrote a letter to the Ontario government last summer, urging the government to move forward with the \$15-an-hour minimum wage. They know that household purchases account for 57% of Canada’s GDP, and that when you have more disposable income in people’s pockets, they will buy more goods and services; they will jump-start the economy.

Speaker, one of the most important ways we can support our economy is to engage more women in the workforce and enable women to participate fully in economic activities. But let's look at the characteristics of women who are currently in the workforce. We know that women are much more likely than men to be minimum wage earners. They are the majority of minimum wage earners. They are much more likely than men to work part-time rather than full-time, often involuntarily, because they can't get child care. They are much more likely to care for children and aging parents, to work in low-wage industries like home care and hospitality.

What does Bill 47 do? Before I get to talking about what Bill 47 does, I wanted to say that we understand that there is going to be a motion to adjourn the House in order not to have the vote on Bill 47 today, when people in the gallery are here to hear what people have to say, and instead move the vote to tomorrow. That is shameful.

But I want to just touch on what Bill 47 actually does and the impact of the bill on women. It freezes the minimum wage at \$14 an hour. It will be, at the earliest, 2025 before the minimum wage increases to \$15 an hour, which will keep women in poverty. That will make it much more likely that women will stay in abusive relationships because they can't afford to leave. They know they can't find a job that will enable them to support their family.

It removes the equal pay provisions by ending requirements for employers to pay part-time, contract and temporary workers the same wage, the same rate they pay their full-time co-workers. This incentivizes employers to hire part-time because they can get cheaper labour when they hire part-time workers.

It allows employers to fire workers who can't do a shift with less than 96 hours' notice. We know women have the primary responsibility for child care and may not be able to arrange care for their child to go in at the whim of an employer to do a shift.

It creates barriers to unionization, which we know, along with child care, is one of the single most effective strategies to close the gender wage gap for women.

Most concerning, Speaker, is that this bill replaces the current 10 personal emergency leave days, two of which are paid, with eight personal emergency leave days, all of which are unpaid, and which can only be taken for specific purposes: three sick days, three family days, two bereavement days. We know women carry the burden of caregiving for children or aging parents. They have much greater need than men for family leave, and they will be severely disadvantaged by this new requirement.

I heard—we all heard—as some PC members across the way talked about the leave provisions in Bill 47 as being more progressive than what is currently in place. I'd like to know, in what universe does reducing personal emergency leave days from 10 to eight, taking away those two paid sick days, mean more progressive?

Speaker, I'm going to allow another member to speak. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay.

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: Thank you, Speaker. I want to share with you today my concern about section 63.5.1 of schedule 3 of this bill. Specifically, if it passes, this section would freeze the classification and reclassification of compulsory trades or, to put it bluntly, it will lead to deregulation of the current compulsory trades.

The Ford government's decision to implement a moratorium—it has been said that a moratorium would act as a competitive advantage for employers, who eventually would take on more apprentices. The Conservatives intend to put a halt to the classification of trades because—so it says—it would help employers to be more competitive and would-be workers to enrol in trades.

Let me explain why I think this is bogus. I want to point out one particular case. The government of British Columbia abolished the compulsory trades and created the Industry Training Authority, ITA, back in 2003. I want to draw parallels between what happened in BC and what we may end up seeing in Ontario, should this bill pass.

Compulsory trades are standard across the country, though it is fair to say that provinces have taken various avenues when it comes to regulating skilled trades. Of all provinces, BC is the only outlier. Having scrapped mandatory certification for trades, such as electricians, sheet metal workers and plumbers, with the creation of the Industry Training Authority, ITA, BC sought to offer a more flexible approach to trades that was responsive to the needs of employers and market changes. Sound familiar?

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Here's the problem: A recent study by the BC Federation of Labour has shown that deregulation of the trades in BC has had multiple negative effects. Among other things, the study found:

- the overall completion rates of apprenticeships actually declined;

- the increase in registrations and certifications was attributed to a small number of trades which are not recognized as Red Seal trades—that is, as nationally accepted certifications;

- a so-called narrowing and shallowing of trades—the workforce's lack of depth and breadth of skills; and

- much higher rates of injury in the workplace.

These are far from being positive outcomes, as expected from schedule 3 of Bill 47. Leaving the industry and the market to operate at will does not lead to economic efficiency and labour safety.

Let me add a couple of details to point this out.

The moratorium puts the health and safety of those in the workplace at risk. In the case of BC, the federation's report notes that while injury rates had been on a downward trend, they suddenly increased right after the elimination of compulsory trades.

The report states, "The injury rate for BC tradespeople is nearly four times"—four times—"that of their counterparts in Ontario."

Then it adds that "injury rates have been consistently and significantly higher in BC than in other provinces and have not changed substantially since 2010."

So we put workers at risk. The College of Trades needs to be fixed. The ratio needs to stay, and we need to have provincial standards for trades. I was a tradesman. I've seen stuff happen. We are going to put young workers and workers at risk.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I want to begin by putting on the record that a vast majority of Ontarians support the \$15 minimum wage, support paid sick days and support equal pay for equal work. My office has heard from hundreds of constituents, including small businesses and faith leaders, who oppose your regressive move with Bill 47. I know that the Premier, the Minister of Labour and all PC MPPs' offices have also heard the same.

Two paid sick days—less than what health experts recommend—do not seem like much to people with workplace benefits, like all of us here today. But to someone who is working part-time, contract or minimum wage, two paid sick days mean that workers don't have to fear losing their job just for staying home sick.

By taking away the paid sick days, this government is forcing people to choose between getting well or losing a day's pay. We all know the public health risks that that poses. People who work in the hospitality industry, people who are handling our food: Do you want them to be working when they are sick?

In addition to taking away the two paid sick days, the government is also bringing back the sick notes, which even doctors themselves say are unnecessary and bureaucratic. Those who are sick should be staying at home and resting, not visiting doctors' offices and hospitals for sick notes and putting an unnecessary burden on our already strained health care system. Those who are sick should be staying at home and not putting the public, especially our vulnerable, our seniors and those with compromised immune systems, at risk. It is an important and an integral part of public health.

Today, we learned that the Minister of Health, who is also the Deputy Premier, was not consulted on this bill that cuts two paid sick days. It makes me wonder: Does the Minister of Health not understand the negative health impacts of cutting sick days, to intervene on this bill, or does she understand it really well but simply refuse to take action because the health of the working people of Ontario does not matter to her?

It's not just the paid sick days that will impact health. We know that freezing the minimum wage also will impact people's health. The government is ripping the lowest-paid workers by nearly \$2,000. That's less money to spend on prescription medicines, less money for nutritious, healthy food, less money for rent—all of the things that contribute to good health.

We've heard from this government time and time again that workers earning under \$30,000 won't pay taxes. But, Speaker, I want to let all of them know that we know it's a scam. It's a scam, because two thirds of workers under \$30,000 are not earning enough to pay taxes in the first place. A single worker who might get \$850 in a tax cut on the one hand is losing \$2,000 in income on the other.

The government claims that they're doing all of this for small businesses, but I have heard from small businesses in my riding too, Mr. Speaker, and they support a \$15 minimum wage. Take, for example, Coco Beauty Bar at Jane and Bloor. They told me they were ready to pay \$15 an hour come January because they know that when workers receive a wage increase it's going to boost the local economy. They know that paid sick days will keep their workplaces healthy. They know it's good for productivity. It reduces turnover, it lowers training costs, and it's all going to boost their local business.

This government needs to stop pitting small business owners against workers and using small business owners as an excuse to line the pockets of big business. We know that it's the big businesses that are paying poverty wages and are hurting small businesses at the same time.

Workers, health care professionals, small business owners, people of Ontario—we all know that this bill is bad for workers, it's bad for health and it's bad for business. Speaker, 77% of Ontarians, including 64% of PC voters, do not support this government's decision. This bill is also removing equal pay for equal work. We know. We've seen the growing trend of companies hiring through temp agencies. They do so in order to avoid paying full-time wages and benefits. Why should any worker doing the exact same work, often on the same assembly line right next to each other, be paid less? Temporary, part-time and casual employees should be paid the same wages as anybody else doing the same work.

This bill was at committee last week. Speaker, there were 2,277 submissions from people across the province who were against this bill. From the 208 written submissions, again, an overwhelming majority were against this bill. The numbers tell us that the people of Ontario do not support this bill, but this government does not want to hear from the people of Ontario, because they limited the hearings to just two days. They are shutting out the voices of Ontarians.

Speaker, this government should withdraw Bill 47. Why is it that you are ramming this bill through? Who is it designed to benefit? Certainly not the hard-working people of this province. It only helps the big businesses. This bill is nothing short of a favour to Ford's big business friends, and I stand here today on behalf of my constituents of Parkdale–High Park to vote against this bill that is going to take Ontario backwards.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It is a real honour to be here today to speak to this bill but, honestly, I wish I didn't have to. I wish we weren't dealing with this legislation today because this is a very sad day for a lot of people in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is a mean-spirited bill. You can't call it anything else. When this government puts a bill like this forward, as I said, it's a dark day for our province. But as we conclude this debate on Bill 47, I want to remind the House how very detrimental these changes are for the hard-working people of this province. As some of my

colleagues have already mentioned today and on other days when we've been debating this bill, it not only repeals a number of new labour laws that were introduced after many, many years of advocacy by many, many people, but in some places it goes beyond those reforms and restricts workers' rights even further.

Along with cancelling the scheduled increase to the minimum wage, Bill 47 repeals many of the much-needed protections like paid sick days, vacation pay, equal pay for work of equal value, and the ability to organize in work-places. Ontario workers have been fighting long and hard for these changes, and they have a right to fair, safe and better working conditions.

Some of those very people are here today in the galleries. I want to say to all of them: Thank you for your efforts and for your fight for better working conditions and a better quality of life, not just for yourselves but for all Ontarians.

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I know that the people in the community that I represent, Davenport, are really committed to keeping those gains for workers. In fact, you don't have to go very far in my riding to see lawn signs from \$15 and Fairness. So thank you, \$15 and Fairness, for all you have done for workers in this province.

As others already mentioned, there are also many local businesses that actually supported these reforms. Many local businesses supported them and were willing to stand alongside \$15 and Fairness and alongside the members here for those reforms. It's one of the things that makes my community so great. We look out for one another. We know that everyone benefits when neighbours are paid a decent wage and are able to take a sick day when they need it and not worry about losing their job.

I know that that's the case all across Ontario. You only have to look at the thousands and thousands of signatures that have been tabled on petition after petition in this place by my colleagues, from Thunder Bay to Windsor and all points in between.

Mr. Speaker, Ontarians are fair-minded people. They know that taking nearly \$2,000 a year out of the pockets of the lowest-income workers in this province is simply wrong. As the member for Parkdale–High Park pointed out, two thirds of the workers who earn under \$30,000 in this province will not see a dime from that government's so-called tax cut.

Mr. Jamie West: Shame.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's shameful.

Mr. Speaker, because I think I'm the last speaker today for our side, I want to share with you just one story from a worker in my community who shared her story with me, because I think it's important we remember who we are talking about. Her name is Erin. She's a note-taker for deaf students at George Brown College. She received two paid sick days because of the recent labour changes. Now she stands to lose both those sick days if Bill 47 passes.

Erin mostly worked contracts up until this point in her life, and has basically never in her life had a paid sick day

prior to this. I wonder if any of the members opposite have had such an experience—never being able to take a paid sick day. She has had to worry about losing precious wages by taking off even just one day, or the threat of losing a job entirely. She is just one of countless people who stand to lose from this short-sighted bill.

I also want to share the words of somebody who works in HR, in human resources, and lives in my riding. Her name is Sarah. She says this: "The proposed changes not only dictate exactly how sick leave can be taken—right now, it's 10 days for all across the board—but reduces it by three days. From my experience, employees with kids or elderly family members to care for can barely get along with 10 days, let alone reducing this dramatically. Getting into the weeds of exactly how days can be allotted seems like an unnecessary overstep for the government to take." An overstep; I'll say. I think that's maybe—

Mr. Jamie West: Red tape.

Ms. Marit Stiles: That's the red tape we were talking about over there.

"It also doesn't address the situation where an employer may have separate bereavement policies in place." This is, again, Sarah, an HR professional: "I honestly don't see how the current policies are hindering employers in any way."

I want to end by talking about the removal of the equal pay provisions that exist in this legislation. Today, we're all wearing these scarves. We're all wearing these scarves because we're talking about the importance of recognizing that women sometimes have to flee their abusers. As my colleague mentioned previously, one of the main reasons women do not leave their abusers in a domestic situation is economic. It's economic. If you have no good job to look forward to, if you have no benefits, if you wonder, "I can't even take a sick day off in that job to take care of my kids," you have no option. You may see another door close and you may see that you have no option. That's a very, very sad thing to talk about because none of us here want to make it more difficult for women to leave their abusers. That's why we all wore these scarves today.

But this government wants to do away with those equal pay provisions and they want to make it harder for part-time workers, most of whom, as we've already heard here today, are women. They want to make it harder for people working in precarious employment and contract employment.

The people who are going to pay that price—the members opposite talk a lot about reducing red tape and regulation. Well, that's what keeps people healthy and safe and able to feed their families. If this government wants to cut their red tape and their regulations on the backs of the most vulnerable, I can tell you we will vote against this bill every step of the way. When we are elected government in three and a half years, you can be darn sure we're going to bring it back.

Interruption.

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

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please. The gallery will come to order.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The gallery will come to order. The Legislature will recess until the gallery is cleared.

The House recessed from 1757 to 1800.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Colleagues, this House is adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Doug Downey
Sol Mamakwa, David Piccini
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Dave Smith
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Lorne Coe
Chris Glover, Christine Hogarth
Logan Kanapathi, Daryl Kramp
Natalia Kusendova, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Dave Smith
Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Roman Baber, Rudy Cuzzetto
Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
Andrea Khanjin, Marie-France Lalonde
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Parm Gill
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Présidente: Jane McKenna
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Michael Coteau, Mike Harris
Faisal Hassan, Jane McKenna
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff
Amanda Simard, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Catherine Fife, Goldie Ghamari
Jim McDonnell, Norman Miller
Suze Morrison, Michael Parsa
Peggy Sattler, Kinga Surma
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Randy Hillier
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kaleed Rasheed
Toby Barrett, Will Bouma
Mike Harris, Randy Hillier
Mitzi Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Paul Miller, Billy Pang
Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Nina Tangri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Deepak Anand
Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Select Committee on Financial Transparency / Comité spécial
de la transparence financière**

Chair / Président: Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Doug Downey
Roman Baber, Doug Downey
Catherine Fife, Robin Martin
Lindsey Park, Ross Romano
Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria, Sandy Shaw
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim