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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 23 October 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 23 octobre 2018

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Todd Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to 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, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on second reading may not be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy; and

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet on Monday, October 29, 2018, and Tuesday, October 30, 2018, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. for public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 34:

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 2 p.m. on Thursday, October 25, 2018; and

—That the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee and their designate following the deadline for requests to appear by 5 p.m. on Thursday, October 25, 2018; and

—That each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk, by 12 p.m. on Friday, October 26, 2018; and

—That each witness will receive up to 10 minutes for their presentation followed by 10 minutes divided equally amongst the recognized parties for questioning; and

That the deadline for filing written submissions be 6 p.m. on Tuesday, October 30, 2018; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 p.m. on Monday, November 5, 2018; and

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy shall be authorized to meet on Monday, November 12, 2018, from

9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That on Monday, November 12, 2018, at 5:30 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Tuesday, November 13, 2018. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 81(c), the bill may be called for third reading more than once in the same sessional day; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, has moved government notice of motion number 13—**Interjection:** Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Dispense.

Would the minister care to lead off the debate?

Hon. Todd Smith: No.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not with great pleasure that we're yet again debating a time allocation motion. I'd like to divide my comments into two parts. I have other members of the caucus who want to speak to it. I want to talk a little bit about the bill, but I also want to talk about the time allocation motion at hand.

First of all, just a couple of things on the bill: As I got a chance to say the other day on a two-minute response to one of the government member's debates, I think we can all agree, New Democrats and Conservatives, that on the Green Energy Act the government could have done a much better job. The difference is that the government puts forward the idea that the reason the electricity prices went up was just because of green energy, and that's not what the problem was. That's not what caused electricity

prices to soar. What caused them to soar is that in the green energy development, and also with natural gas development and others, they negotiated contracts with the private sector that far exceeded what we pay public utilities for electricity.

At the time of these contracts being signed, we paid between six and 10 cents per kilowatt hour in the public system to generate electricity, depending on the mode. The government signed contracts for as much as 85 cents per kilowatt hour with the private sector to build solar, wind and other projects. Clearly, that was far in excess of what we were paying within the public utility, at that time OPG Ontario Hydro. So we ended up in this mess because the government was in a hurry to create lots of green energy at a time that demand was going down for electricity in Ontario.

Let me just put it into some context. At the time of the decision to go green energy, Ontario could produce around 25,000 megawatts; we had a demand of about 18,000 to 20,000 megawatts, depending on the day. There was a time in Ontario when it was thought that we were going to run short of electricity and run out of capacity because of the growth in the economy, but with everything that happened around free trade, around NAFTA, around technologies improving, around energy efficiency and everything else, the demand went down. As a result, we were generating more power than we needed within our public utilities system, and the Liberals decided that they were going to create almost 10,000 megawatts of new power, most of it green, in private sector contracts that ended up costing us far more than what we would have paid if we would have done just strict public utility contracts that made sense to Ontario and made sense to your hydro bill. As a result, the price went up. It wasn't because it was green energy; it was because they were private sector developments where we paid in excess of what it was worth.

The worst part is that once we generated that new 10,000 megawatts, we were then contracted to buy it even if we didn't need it. So here we have nuclear plants, we have falling water, we have all kinds of mechanisms for generation within the OPG system, and we had to idle our plants because there was no need, in order to buy the energy from private developers that we had no need for. We got the double whammy: We lost the advantage of the six to 10 cents per kilowatt hour generation that the public utility was generating and we had to buy the new contracts that were as much as 85 cents per kilowatt.

You wonder why your hydro bill went through the roof. It's because the Liberals decided to be in a hurry to develop what was a good idea around green energy but did it in such a way that, quite frankly, just busted the bank. We didn't need all of that hydro to start with, and if you were going to add to the system, you had to find a way to add to the system in a way that made sense.

Now let me give you an example. In my old riding of Timmins-James Bay, there are a number of solar projects that were built that got anywhere from 85 cents to 30-some-odd cents per kilowatt hour. Now, those are, you know, great opportunities for the people who are building them at that price.

0910

But at the same time, up in the town of Hearst, we had a consortium of local entrepreneurs, Claude Villeneuve being one of them, who said, "Listen, there's all of this wood waste"—the old Lecours sawmill that's still in operation, and the old one, all of their wood chips, all of the old XL wood chips, everything when it comes to wood chips at the Levesque plywood plant, all of those places. There is a huge stockpile of chips and sawdust that has been put into dumps that is leaching into the ground that eventually becomes a problem. What they were purporting was, "Why don't we mine that wood waste and then co-generate?" Make electricity and make steam, sell the steam to the municipality, sell the steam to the plywood plant in order to offset some of the cost of this new project, and then sell the excess power into the grid, developing electricity that we may need but really fulfilling a local demand that had to be dealt with, otherwise known as the wood chips.

The government said no because they had taken up all of the capacity. When we went to the IESO, the IESO said, "No, we cannot put this project online," because whatever capacity is left within the transmission system we've now taken up by way of the Mattagami River basin project. We doubled the generation on that particular project, and all of the private developing that happened when it came to new power dams and green energy, projects such as—not so much wind where I am but solar. So there would have been an opportunity here to allow municipalities an opportunity to get into the green energy business, generate some revenue for themselves—because they're harder and harder pressed all the time in order to be able to pay their bills—and deal with an environmental concern that had to do with the wood waste.

In other situations, you might have municipalities like Smooth Rock Falls, which was in my old riding—Tembec shut down their kraft plant there. There was a power generating station on the river that was there. They could have bought that and they could have used it to generate electricity in order to offset the loss of revenue they had when the mill shut down. That was about a million dollars a year they could have got, and they were used to getting about \$800,000 a year in taxes from the old Tembec plant. But no, they were never given the opportunity because the government was so intent on developing green energy for all kinds of reasons, everything from helping their well-connected friends get these contracts to the ideological, "Let's do green energy." They lost sight of what it meant to municipalities, what it meant to residents and what it meant to our hydro bills.

So that's the problem, and the difficulty we have with this legislation is—I don't have a problem insofar that you're trying to give municipalities back their authority to do their own planning when it comes to deciding should there or should there not be a particular project developed in their community. I think there's a really good argument to be made in some cases that that should be the case. I think the province can't absolve its responsibility in being able to go forward on a project of significant public interest, but certainly the municipality has to have some kind

of ability to have a say. But what this legislation doesn't do—it does nothing to stop, for example, a gas-fired plant from being built in your backyard. It does nothing when it comes to other types of energy projects that could be developed in your backyard, because all this bill does is it says no to green energy and is silent on everything else. So I think there's a problem with that particular approach. If you believe that the municipalities should have a role, well, then give them that role, but don't give them half of the role, because that's essentially what you're doing with this legislation.

On the question of the time allocation motion, I just have to say—and everybody has heard me say this before, and I'm not going to belabour the point for much more than about five or 10 minutes—that the government is utilizing time allocation when, quite frankly, they don't need to. This is the thing that I find really—especially on this bill, because now the government has put forward a time allocation motion that will allow the bill to have full time at third reading. The only thing they're time allocating is getting it out of second reading, which they can do themselves—I'm not going to tell them how to do it; they understand what the rules are—and they're time allocating the committee time.

And so first of all, you've got the government, in this particular case, moving a time allocation motion that is a time allocation motion on only part of the process, which tells me that either the government doesn't have enough bills to put before the House to keep us going—because there's only one other bill on the order paper, if memory serves me correctly, right? Once this thing is off the order paper, there's just a natural gas bill that's left to be debated. The government doesn't have legislation to bring into the House, so in order to slow things down a bit and give themselves a chance to be able to bring more legislation into the House, they're extending the amount of time for debate at third reading on this particular bill. That's one possible theory.

It might be a combination of another part, which is that this is a bill that the Tories, rightfully so, feel proud about. The Conservatives in the last election ran around saying, “We're going to get rid of green energy.” That's their right. That's what they ran on, they got elected and they can get rid of green energy. They will pay a price for this down the road, but that's a whole other story. Maybe the government wants that bill to stay in the House a little bit longer so more Hansards can be sent out by way of members of the government saying, “Promise made, promise kept. We're getting rid of green energy. We're the big fighters” type of thing. It's a little bit of overkill.

What that tells me is the government is either incompetent at managing its business through the House by not having other bills to call, or it's a question of whether the government is utilizing the House for political reasons and political gain. Both of those things are troubling in one way or another.

Now, I'm not going to pretend that any political party or individual member doesn't have political gain coming into this place. This is what this place is all about. But at

least call it for what it is. The government is using this as an opportunity for them to do those other things that I referred to.

The last point I want to speak to—and I'll just very quickly go through this—is the whole idea of what the government has done on the cancellation of cap-and-trade and the green energy project. We're the only jurisdiction in the world, as far as I know, that is running the opposite way when it comes to dealing with climate change. Governments are either doing nothing or they're trying to do something. Europe has established a carbon market. They have a system that is far superior to what Ontario had, proposed under the Liberals—because I'll agree with the government: The Liberal cap-and-trade program had to be changed. There was no question about that. There were parts of that cap-and-trade program that made no sense.

A carbon market should, as much as possible, leave the money within your local economy so that you can use it for the best good in your own jurisdiction. In other words, the money made from cap-and-trade that we charged polluters could have been used to better effect to reduce our carbon emissions by providing incentives for the private sector and for individuals to do things to reduce overutilizing carbon products.

The government, in this case, is running completely the other way. They have scrapped cap-and-trade. They're now going to scrap the Green Energy Act. The only project you're going to be able to approve is going to be the old-style gas-fired or nuclear or whatever it might be. And in the end, in doing all of this, they're putting Ontario in a position where it doesn't have a carbon plan. It doesn't have a plan to reduce emissions.

They're opposed to the carbon tax, as we are—because as New Democrats, we never thought a carbon tax is a good idea either. But you've got to do something. It's not as if climate change is not something we shouldn't be concerned about. Ontario produces emissions that add to the carbon being put in our atmosphere. Can Ontario solve the problem of North America on its own? Absolutely not. But we have to be a part of the solution. What this government is saying is, “Never mind. We don't want to be part of the solution.”

Here's the great irony, Mr. Speaker: China—you know, like Mr. Trump says, “China”? Well, China has now, as of yesterday, opened their own carbon market. Yes, China. China is doing more to deal with greenhouse gases than the province of Ontario. That's really shocking when you think about it. They opened up their carbon market yesterday. They are planning to have it up and running by February of this upcoming year. The effect of that is they are going to be reducing the amount of carbon over a period of time significantly within China, especially under electrical generation, because they use a lot of coal in China, as you know.

0920

So, they have chosen what? They've chosen a cap-and-trade system. What they have done is they have said, “Okay, the larger polluters are going to pay to invest in the technology to reduce carbon emissions, and not the average

consumer by way of a carbon tax.” I agree with the Conservative government: A carbon tax where you charge everybody sounds fairer as an idea, but what does that really do when it comes to helping us with reducing carbon emissions in the atmosphere?

You’ve got China, who is trying to do something with reducing their emissions. You’ve got Europe that are doing things in order to deal with their emissions. You’ve got India and Pakistan trying to do things that deal with their emissions. The only jurisdictions in the world that are running the other way are Donald Trump and Mr. Ford. Well, that isn’t very good company. If I’m going to align myself with anybody, I don’t want to align myself with Mr. Trump. Trump seems to think—especially, the American industry is far more polluting than Ontario; they’re a much larger economy by quite a bit. They’ve decided that this is not an issue anymore. Well, the reality is it is an issue.

I was saying to the House the other day—and my good friend from Nickel Belt will know this—when I was a boy, the Apollo astronauts used to go to Sudbury in order to mimic walking on the moon, because it was the one place in the world that you could go to that looked like the moon. It was completely without trees. It was devoid of vegetation. Most of the rocks were black. I remember as a kid driving through Sudbury on our way to visit family and friends, and it was just a moonscape. I guess I would have been about 10, 12 years old, and every time we’d go to Sudbury, we’d see if we could find a LEM or a spacesuit somewhere, because it was the closest thing you could see to the moon.

Well, the NDP at that time—it would have been under Donald MacDonald, I imagine, who was the leader at the time and maybe Stephen Lewis a bit later—started really pushing the Conservative governments in order to respond to the crisis that had developed in Sudbury. As a result, they decided by way of regulation through new legislation to limit the emissions that went out of the stacks at Inco and Falconbridge.

Go to Sudbury today. It’s not like going to the moon; it’s like going to Sudbury. Sudbury has come back to a great degree when it comes to the vegetation in and around the city. The acid rain that we used to have in the lakes downstream from where the emission was—the acid rain has gone down in those areas significantly, especially east of Sudbury, North Bay, into Quebec. Because, as we know, those emissions go up into the air, they travel a little bit further, it gets into clouds, it falls back into the ground, goes into our water system and you end up with acid rain.

Well, as a result of initiatives by this Legislature, we went a long way to cleaning up emissions in this province, not only in Sudbury, but in towns like Hamilton and Thunder Bay and places like Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins. The Timmins smelter refinery that was closed under the Liberal government was the cleanest smelter refinery we had in Canada—in North America, actually—because we built it with technology under those new regulations.

We now have—for the first time, I think, in Ontario’s history—a government that’s trying to turn the clock back

and then saying, “You know what? We’re not going to do this because we say this is a tax grab.” Well, it’s not a tax grab. Cap-and-trade was about making the polluters pay and utilizing the money from the polluters to invest in our economy in order to green our economy, both by allowing industry to invest in new technologies, having the funds necessary to do that and, at the same time, allowing individuals to do things in order to reduce their emissions.

This government is turning the clock back and I think that is a shame, because all you’re doing is you’re kicking the problem of climate change down the road to our grandchildren. Our grandchildren and their grandchildren are the ones who are going to have to pay for the decisions that are being made in this House today. That’s not a legacy that I think, as a legislator, as a parent, as a grandparent, I would want to pass on to my grandchildren.

I just say, when I hear the rhetoric on the other side, across the aisle saying, “Oh, this is all about making sure that the taxpayer is saved into the future and we take the debt off our grandchildren,” what you’re doing is you might be minimally taking some debt off grandchildren. At the end of the day, it’s going to cost us more money, but that’s a whole other thing. That’s for another debate. What you’re doing is passing the liability and the problems of climate change on to future generations, and I think that is very short-sighted.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I know other members would like to speak.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you to the member for Timmins for those articulate words on which to begin.

It’s an honour, actually, to rise to speak to this issue because I come from a place—the Ottawa area, Algonquin territory—where there have been a lot of environmental leaders. I feel a great responsibility, as someone who comes from that place, to offer my two cents.

I really like the fact that the member from Timmins ended on a note of thinking about this act of ripping up the Green Energy Act as something we need to take pause in doing not just from the perspective of being legislators, but from the perspective of being grandparents and parents, because while I know my friends on the opposite side are very, very cautious and vigilant about minimizing expenditures of government, what they are poised to do without a serious action plan to build renewable energy in this province is to pass on a massive climate debt to people 10, 20 and 30 years down the road.

So while I will understand, as the member from Timmins also said, the government’s reservation with the previous cap-and-trade regime, what I don’t like, as my friend the member from Sudbury often likes to say, is a scrap-and-evade regime. We don’t need that. You don’t get rid of something wholesale without proposing something meaningful first.

I’ve noticed this is a bit of a trend with my friends in government. I’ve noticed it with the sex ed curriculum. I’ve noticed it in this case. The government wants to dem-

onstrate conviction, wants to show its voters and, presumably, the province that it's moving forward with sincerity. The city of Toronto electoral boundaries, for example: that's another case. But it's dangerous to be moving radically and quickly without proposing an opposite plan first.

In the case of renewable energy, in the case of climate change, we've just all been given—as citizens of this planet, not just citizens of this province—a 12-year deadline by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The most esteemed body of international scientists has just told the world that we have 12 years to take serious measures to bring greenhouse gas emissions into check, and if we don't take that seriously, there are enormous consequences.

Speaker, I want to cite from a report given by the Toronto Environmental Alliance to the city of Toronto in 2012. They were describing what would happen to the city of Toronto's climate if action wasn't taken to reduce climate change. What they said was that by 2050, the city of Toronto can expect extreme rain, of up to a maximum of 166 millimetres daily, almost three times as much as we see now on a very rainy day today. And we'll get extreme heat temperatures—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member should be aware, if he is not, that you will not be reading from your BlackBerry, your tablet or your iPhone.

Mr. Joel Harden: Speaker, I apologize. The discrimination against the electrical world will hopefully one day end in this space. I'll resort back to my paper world.

What I was talking about is the fact that Toronto will experience extreme rain and that by 2050, average temperatures could reach as high as 44 degrees Celsius—if you factor in humidity, 50 degrees Celsius, which is great weather, Speaker, if you're a lizard. But it's not great weather if you're a regular person.

I want to say also, as the critic for seniors and pensions, that there are disproportionate impacts in our society on the elderly when we massively increase temperatures. We've seen this recently in heat waves, where it's disproportionately elderly living alone who suffer first. And they're suffering right now. But this Margaret Atwood-like apocalyptic vision is not irrational; it's rational. And we—we—as a planet, and as legislators in this province, have been put on a 12-year deadline.

My question to the government—and I'm a member of the social policy committee, so I look forward, when we get there, to hearing from other folks. I intend to be inviting a lot of folks from where I'm from to edify us with their perspectives on how we meet that 12-year deadline.

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What are the choices we can make to build renewable energy in this province?

Because you know what, Speaker? I spent a lot of time in the union movement as a researcher, as a local activist, and I had an opportunity to work for the Canadian Labour Congress. I got to travel the country and some of my favourite conversations and projects I worked on were with energy workers—energy workers in the oil sands, energy workers in northern Ontario, energy workers all over the

prairies—and what the member from Timmins mentioned about the transformation of Sudbury, given changes that we had made, is absolutely true across the country. It is absolutely the case that we don't have to pick between a good economy or a progressive approach to the environment. We can have both, but—and this is an important “but”—government isn't about making sure that the private sector is enabled to make the changes from which we all can benefit. That can't be the sole focus of our strategy, which was the Liberal plan: to create a voluntary renewable energy plan at a high feed-in cost. Government should be about making decisions that hold us all accountable.

What do I mean? Well, in the Netherlands, you're not going to be able to buy a fossil fuel car after 2025. It will not be on the market because the people in the Netherlands have read the climate science and they've realized—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Shame.

Mr. Joel Harden: Unfortunately, my friend from Niagara West has not. Congratulations, by the way. I hear you're about to be married.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you.

Mr. Joel Harden: But as my friend from Niagara West has perhaps not yet realized, one's freedom has to be circumscribed—circumscribed, excuse me.

Interjection: Whoa.

Mr. Joel Harden: Whoa. Excuse me: circumscribed. One's freedom has to be circumscribed—

Interjection: That's going in Hansard, Speaker.

Mr. Joel Harden: That's going to go down for the ages.

Our freedoms have to be checked by our collective well-being. It's why we can't store nuclear waste in our basements. It's why we can't drive whatever speed we want. It's why we can't do ill will to our neighbours.

In the Netherlands, they have made the enlightened choice to phase fossil fuel-powered cars out of the market. If we had a serious approach to our transportation industry, we would be giving people, on a large scale through public transit, a choice to avail themselves of options to get around their cities, to get around to their places of work at a low cost. We would be enabling ways in which people can take their kids to hockey, people can get to work on time, drop their kids off at school, without constantly driving up the climate debt that we will be passing on to future generations. But we're not doing that.

What the Liberals did is they created a voluntary regime that entrepreneurs could buy into that was extremely expensive, and unfortunately, in many parts of our province, the story that has been told to people is that renewable energy was the cause of their massive hydro bill increases. So for many people, unfortunately, they draw a connection between renewable energy and high utility costs. But if we made a decision as a society to provide renewable energy collectively, which is what happens in countries like Germany, which is what happens in countries like Norway and Sweden, we could solarize hospital rooms and school roofs.

It's funny, in the summertime—kids are prophetic—I was walking around with my son and it was a blazing day.

As a parent, I wanted to make sure he had enough sunscreen on him, because he is translucently skinned like me and I'm always worried about our kids' health. My son, Emery, looked up to me as we were walking up to where my partner works, at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. He saw the building and said, "Dad, have you ever thought about how much energy we're wasting?" I said, "What do you mean, Emery? By the fact that lights are left on or cars are idling in the parking lot?" He said, "No, it's so bright outside and there's nothing catching the sun on the roof." Seven years old, and he understands that so much of our province, so much of our country, particularly Alberta, exists in a sunbelt.

If you look south of our border to the much-maligned United States, they actually have, in many jurisdictions, including the state of Texas, the highest degree of collective innovation of renewable energy. And here we are in Ontario talking about scrapping a renewable energy strategy, which had its flaws, and replacing it with nothing—nothing. That is the biggest concern I have when I see this initiative rolling forward.

As I mentioned, I'm very lucky at home to live in a community with environmental leaders. One of those leaders is the Ottawa Renewable Energy Co-operative. The Ottawa Renewable Energy Co-operative is a group of citizens that has collectively pooled their assets to build renewable energy. They have \$17 million worth of projects that have been built and that are generating energy for all kinds of different folks, like area First Nations and businesses. They have done so by pooling their assets together, expecting a reasonable rate of return, and building renewable energy at a local scale.

They have recently told me, Speaker, that the FIT and microFIT programs—while useful to get some projects started up; which will be repealed if the government is successful—are not necessary anymore. Those subsidies to build renewable energy at the local level, according to the Ottawa Renewable Energy Co-operative, are not necessary anymore. They aren't necessary anymore because in 2015, the latest research—three years old—shows us that the cost of capitalizing renewable energy projects now is one sixth of what it cost in 2005. Over the course of a decade the costs of building renewable energy have dramatically dropped. What does that tell me?

That tells me that construction trade workers and skilled trades workers who are looking for work—we could put this province to work massively in retrofitting our community housing stock, our hospitals and schools by solarizing these institutions. It could be a complete benefit and a massive step forward if we did it in a collective way, to put Ontarians back to work, to conserve energy being used in our buildings, which is a growing source of greenhouse gas emission increases. We have an opportunity to do that and it doesn't require what my friends are criticizing in the Green Energy Act.

What it does require is help. What we know for a fact right now is that the province of Ontario and the government of Canada do subsidize the fossil fuel industry. They subsidize highly profitable corporations. At the federal

level, it's \$3.2 billion. The current government ran in its last election on a platform of taking those subsidies out and redirecting those revenues to renewable energy projects. It has yet to happen. As have many things with the federal Liberals, it is yet to happen. Here in Ontario, what researchers at the University of Ottawa told me is that we subsidize fossil fuel companies to the tune of almost a billion dollars—profitable companies, not start-ups.

So if my friends want to get rid of the Liberal cap-and-trade regime, don't replace it with a scrap-and-evade regime. Replace it with targets. Any project, any endeavour, is never met without prioritizing one's goals and setting targets. What is the plan?

Before I end, Speaker, I want to mention a few things, because often in this House, I pick up the name as the person who wants the highest gas prices in the world. Am I correct?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The universe.

Mr. Joel Harden: The universe; I'm forgetting the planets.

I just want to make something clear so my friends and I can speak a similar language. The World Bank keeps an index of carbon strategies worldwide. Ontario ranked in the bottom 32nd of those strategies with the cap-and-trade regime at the residential rate of 13 cents a tonne carbon price. It was pitifully low and you didn't like it, okay; but it was pitifully low.

Sweden, as a country, has a carbon tax price of \$139 a tonne. It is one of the most successful economies in the world. It has one of the greatest degrees of equality in the world. It has universal post-secondary education and child care, well-funded hospitals, and it has a significant carbon tax. Why? Because it has recognized that it has to transition from being a fossil-fuel-based economy to something else. The garbage that's processed in Stockholm, in Sweden, is actually used as an energy-generation source, so much so that other countries are actually emptying their landfills to Sweden so it can continue its energy generation. They're leading, at a high carbon price.

In a previous life, I was a researcher. I worked for the Canadian Labour Congress, as I already mentioned. I produced a document called the alternative federal budget because, as I said earlier, I don't just like to just criticize things I don't like; I like to also show what we could do.

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So with other researchers, some of the most leading economists across the country in the non-governmental world, we produced a document, year upon year. The energy part of that document documented that if we wanted to build sufficient revenues to make sure we could build a green economy here in Canada—like they've done in Sweden, like they've done elsewhere—we needed to think about an appropriate price. That appropriate price, in that document, was \$30 starting in 2018, increasing by \$10 a year until 2030. My friends have often said, "The cost of this is what it will cost in 2030. Therefore, it's going to drive up gas prices by 34 cents." But they're taking the end cost and not the initial cost.

I understand what you're doing, because you're trying to play to people's pocketbook concerns. But if you're going to criticize advocates of carbon pricing, do it fairly. Don't just do it on the year-end thing.

They have just done it again to the federal Liberals. Their carbon price—pitifully low, \$10 a tonne—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: “Pitifully low”?

Mr. Joel Harden: Pitifully low, by any measure.

They've criticized it not in its year of implementation, but in its last year of cost. I'm being honest—in its last year of cost.

The Conservatives who raised me—my grandparents Walter and Erma Davison—told my brother and I, when we were very young, “Never let housing be more than 20% of your budget.” These were discussions around the supper table for my brother and I when we were eight and 12. They taught us the necessity to manage our money appropriately. What they would not recognize in this government is an approach that says, “Let's completely get rid of the budget that we had, replace it with nothing and rebate the revenues of the cap-and-trade regime back to consumers directly. Let's give them each an average of 264 bucks. Aren't we fantastic?” But you know what, Speaker? If you look at major innovations Canada has made—and medicare is at the top of that list for me—we never got there by taking collective revenues and rebating them individually back to people, because we know that doesn't have the effect that we need.

Starting in Saskatchewan, starting at the work of women's co-operatives in rural Saskatchewan, people realized that if they pooled their monies together, they could attract doctors and nurses to their community. If they looked after each other and they made sure everybody was safe and everybody was healthy, reasonably speaking, they would be more prosperous as a province. That was the Saskatchewan model celebrated under Tommy Douglas and people who were there when it happened, lesser-known people who live in my riding—Eleanor Sutherland. That was a progressive step forward from the fend-for-yourself health care model that existed there beforehand.

If we want to transplant that to renewable energy, I think what's incumbent upon my friends in government—if you don't like the private sector-led, high buy-in price regime—fair—replace it with something better. Replace it with something better that will put the manufacturing sector in this province back to work, because people urgently need decent jobs. There are parts of our manufacturing sector in Ontario that have been hemorrhaged. As they often say in government, 300,000 jobs lost in 15 years of manufacturing—high-value-added jobs. So replace it with something—and don't replace it with something that Samsung likes or various individual boutique lobby industries want; replace it with something that puts our utilities at a local level back to work.

They're saying in Ottawa—Hydro Ottawa and other hydro authorities—“Let's get away from the big-box approach to energy generation, parking all of our interests with nuclear”—64% of our grid is now powered by

nuclear. “Let's start making sure there's more independence at a local level. Let's give local municipal electrical authorities the opportunity to partner with co-operatives to build renewable energy at a local level.” Energy independence, Speaker: Let's do that. Let's take a lead from OREC and other innovators who have shown us how to create decent jobs, rely less on fossil fuels and produce the kind of planet that we want, not at some point down the road but right now.

I think that's the enlightened approach to politics. The arrogant approach to politics is to think that if we just sweep something completely out of the way and rebate the proceeds back to consumers, the people will be satiated. But you know what, Speaker? The planet is not satiated. My city, the city of Ottawa, is not used to tornadoes, and we had three touch ground this summer. There will be more. Our friends across the river in Gatineau—many of those houses cannot get housing insurance anymore because of constant flooding.

There is a cost to kicking the can down the road, my friends. There is a cost, a financial cost. If we don't bear that collectively as a society now, we are telling our children and their children that it's up to them. I want to be part of an all-party consensus on climate change. I'm proud, in this place, that there was an all-party consensus to phase out coal. It was the best decision made under the previous Liberal government. But that was something every party in this House agreed to.

Let's agree to real targets on renewable energy here, let's empower innovators at a local level, let's create thousands of good-paying jobs in doing so, and let's make sure we can leave a legacy on renewable energy that we can all be proud of.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: I'm truly honoured to rise here this morning and speak in favour of the Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018.

I take immense pride in the fact that I am a member of a government that keeps its promises to the people of Ontario. Each Progressive Conservative candidate in this year's election promised relief for Ontarians—all Ontarians, not just well-connected insiders. We promised hard-working individuals, families and small businesses an accountable and trustworthy government that would listen and return affordability by putting money back into people's pockets.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thanks, Gilles, I appreciate that. I think that's—oh, no, it was Mr. Yarde. There you go.

Now in government, we are keeping that promise. The Green Energy Repeal Act will allow the government to ensure that only value-for-money energy contracts, which actually adhere to basic supply-and-demand principles, will move forward, and that renewable projects receive proper local consultation and support from affected communities. Imagine this: a government driven by the needs of rate and taxpayers, and not by ideological conviction and those special interests.

With Bill 34, our government is delivering on its promise to repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009. Our members, alongside the vast majority of the people of Ontario, all agree that the original Green Energy Act of 2009 led to the disastrous feed-in tariff program, caused skyrocketing electricity rates for families and took away power from municipalities to stop expensive and unneeded energy projects in their communities.

The proposed legislation to repeal the Green Energy Act would give the government the authority to make regulations to stop approvals for wasteful renewable energy projects where the need for electricity has not been demonstrated. This would put 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 coming down. The days of sweetheart deals for energy insiders and unpopular projects forced on local municipalities are over.

What was the ultimate effect of the Liberals' Green Energy Act? Generally, it was the largest transfer of money from the poor and middle class to the rich in Ontario's history. Liberal insiders, energy speculators and friends of the former government made fortunes putting up solar panels and wind farms that do nothing more than gouge families, businesses and ratepayers, all while generating energy that we don't even need. Manufacturing workers, small businesses, single mothers, struggling seniors and families—all of Ontario—everyone watched their hydro bills triple.

This was felt right across our great province. According to the Ontario Energy Board and the independent energy system operator, wind and solar projects added \$3.75 billion—that's billion with a "B"—in costs to electricity bills just in the last year alone. Wind and solar represent just 11% of the total generation in Ontario but reflect 30% of global adjustment costs that are borne by electricity customers. Again, in 2017, 26% of electricity generated from wind and solar was curtailed or wasted. This is electricity that Ontarians paid for but didn't need or use.

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For example, the province dumped a total of 7.6 terawatt hours of clean electricity in 2016, an amount equal to powering more than 760,000 homes, to a value in excess of \$1 billion. This represents a 58% increase in the amount of clean electricity that Ontario dumped in 2015, which was 4.8 terawatt hours.

In the Auditor General's 2015 annual report, she concluded that ratepayers forked out \$37 billion more than necessary from 2006 to 2014—that's a staggering number—and would have spent an additional \$133 billion by 2032 due to global adjustment electricity fees on hydro bills. The Green Energy Act was the main reason for these higher rates. She argued that hydro customers will pay a total of \$9.2 billion more for wind and solar projects under the Liberals' 20-year guaranteed price program for renewable energy than they would have paid under the previous program. As a result, Ontario's guaranteed prices for wind power generators are double that of the US average while

the province's solar power rates are three and a half times higher.

The rising costs diminished Ontario's economic competitiveness compared to American and other Canadian jurisdictions. As a result, high electricity prices are responsible for approximately 75,000 job losses in the manufacturing sector from 2008 to 2015. We felt that impact in Waterloo region.

When I knocked on thousands of doors in the recent election, no other issue caused more anger and resentment than hydro pricing. My Kitchener–Conestoga constituents saw decisions made in downtown Toronto that raised rates year after year despite individuals, families and businesses feeling the pain.

Last week, I listened to the member for Kenora–Rainy River discuss idle mills and lost mining opportunities in northwestern Ontario as similar operations in Manitoba were moving forward. Moreover, the member from Markham–Stouffville shared that the Green Energy Act meant multi-generational farming families being evicted from their lands. It's a shame, Mr. Speaker.

Like many of my colleagues from southwestern Ontario, I have a long list of local factories that have closed and businesses that have relocated out of our province over the last 15 years. In these and most other cases, operations were forced to move to more competitive jurisdictions south of the border or overseas because of rising costs, whether due to escalating hydro prices or the mounting regulatory burden of doing business in this province.

All in all, Waterloo region has lost nearly 12,000 manufacturing jobs in the last decade, including long-standing operations such as BFGoodrich's Kitchener tire plant, MTD Products Canada's Kitchener plant and Budd Canada. The harmful socio-economic impacts associated with such job losses cannot be overstated.

As I mentioned, such negative consequences associated with such losses were among those issues most discussed at the door by constituents during my election campaign. I spoke to those who felt the brunt end of the manufacturing downturn, and what they told me echoes what our government is saying here in support of Bill 34 today. They told me that the government of the day, the Liberal government, did not speak for them because that government's deficit in transparency was translating into a rapid erosion of opportunity in primary sectors of our local economy.

What lack of transparency am I speaking of, Mr. Speaker? It was clear for a long time, well before the previous government officially left office, that their policy was not a policy for the people. In fact, it was the exact opposite. In this case, for those implementing the previous government's green energy program, it wouldn't even take extensive consultations to discern that the green energy contracts being signed amidst its implementation, in comparison even to alternative approaches that existed under their framework, were bad for business in Ontario and bound to negatively impact the pocketbooks of all Ontarians.

To illustrate this point further, let me refer back to a news article by Brian Hill and Carolyn Jarvis of Global News. I can't believe I'm actually about to quote Global

News here. This was released May 30, 2018. This article is very telling of the negligence displayed by the previous government as it pertained to listening to sound policy input. For example, in this article, it is noted that “Global News obtained more than 4,000 pages of internal emails, ministerial briefings and other documents created by the OPA between January 2009 and August 2010—the months leading up to and after the FIT and microFIT programs were launched.

“The documents suggest ... that the government’s own experts, those employed to design and implement the province’s energy policies, were advising the government that technologies such as solar power needed to be developed ‘gradually’ to prevent a ‘potential flood’ of renewable-energy contracts from overwhelming the province’s electricity system and sending hydro bills skyrocketing.”

Clearly, the previous government did not listen to their own experts. Instead, they were wilfully blind at the expense of—who else?—the people of Ontario. In summarizing that article, “the lead engineer responsible for designing and implementing a key component of the plan—the FIT and microFIT programs that saw billions of dollars in green-energy contracts awarded to solar and wind companies....”

Continuing its summary, the article highlights, “Despite these concerns, the government pushed ahead with its green energy ‘agenda,’ against the better wisdom of its own policy advisers and to the detriment of Ontario electricity customers.”

This example of the Liberal government’s negligence speaks clearly to the choice that voters faced during the last election: a government that is for the people—i.e., our current government—versus a government that is for insiders, i.e., the previous Liberal government. And we all saw how that turned out: seven seats. I think they spoke pretty loud and clear.

One might ask, what about the current opposition? Who do they speak for? The answer, I’m sorry to say, is essentially that the opposition party’s track record speaks for itself. The opposition walked hand in hand with the Liberal government. Amidst the green energy debacle of the previous government’s tenure, including the signing of bad energy contracts and the escalation of hydro prices, PC MPPs were sounding the alarm and standing up against the bad Liberal energy policy. Where were the NDP? Did they stand with us? No. We saw time and time again over the last several years that the NDP joined forces with the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals to prop up and support their government and their decisions at every turn.

However, thankfully for Ontarians, the Liberal-NDP party with the taxpayers’ money is over. Our Premier promised that help is on the way and we are here today keeping that promise. I’m proud to be in this government and to be speaking on Bill 34 because this government and this legislation puts people first. It doesn’t bend the knee to special interests and it doesn’t further the needs of a few Liberal insiders. Rather, it puts money back into people’s

pockets, Ontario ratepayers, and makes Ontario open for business again.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation abolishes the worst elements of the Green Energy Act that hurt Ontario individuals, businesses and families while maintaining provisions that predated the 2009 legislation related to energy efficiency and conservation standards. It is all about giving people the information they need to make decisions to help lower their energy costs. Again, imagine, Mr. Speaker, an energy policy that puts the people of this province first.

This bill will make that a reality. This legislation includes provisions and amendments which ensure energy and water efficiency standards, customer access to energy data, energy and water reporting and benchmarking, and broader public service energy reporting. These common-sense measures we are retaining predate the Green Energy Act.

Let us be clear: The new measures introduced in that 2009 act, the measures that trampled on local communities and drove up hydro rates, are gone. Instead, the proposed legislation makes amendments to the Planning Act and the Environmental Protection Act which enable local communities and lower rates. These include restoring municipal planning authority related to the placement of renewable energy generating facilities and restricting appeals on municipal refusals and non-decisions, and enhancing the government’s authority to make regulations prohibiting the issuance of renewable energy approvals where the need for electricity has not been demonstrated.

All in all, we made a promise to lower the cost of living for hard-working Ontarians by reducing hydro costs.

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When it comes to putting more money in the pockets of Ontarians, we’re just getting started. After years of skyrocketing electricity rates, Ontario’s hydro bills will finally start to come down. We have been following through on our commitment to lowering hydro prices by 12% and, in doing so, putting ratepayers and taxpayers first from day one of this government. This includes swift action to remove the previous Hydro One CEO and board and establishing a new leadership team at Hydro One that will consider Ontario’s electricity customers in all of its planning.

We next cancelled 758 wasteful energy contracts that will result in \$790 million in savings for Ontario electricity customers—above all, nixing the White Pines Wind Project. The latter is a disastrous example of a previous government that shoved wind and solar farms into the backyards of communities that did not want them. Our government’s new policy direction is working to clean up the Liberal hydro mess while making sure that our electricity system is working for the people and putting more money back into people’s pockets.

We’ve been cleaning up quite a few messes and giving quite a few dollars back to the taxpayers of this province. Our government, so far, on natural gas is saving Ontario families about \$80 a year and small businesses roughly \$285 a year. Why? Because as of October 1, natural gas bills will no longer include the cap-and-trade carbon tax.

Moving forward, we have introduced legislation to expand natural gas, which, if passed, could save the average residential customer in Ontario who switched from electric heat, propane or oil to natural gas between \$800 and \$2,500 a year. That's a big number, Mr. Speaker.

Eliminating the cap-and-trade carbon tax will save the average family \$260 a year, it has reduced gas prices by four cents or five cents a litre, and it's the first step toward reducing gas prices by 10 cents per litre.

On top of that, Ontario is freezing the number of driver fees that were set to increase on September 1, 2018. The cancellation of the Drive Clean program will save Ontario taxpayers upwards of \$40 million annually.

Also, above and beyond what businesses will save by lower hydro, natural gas, fuel prices and vehicle fees, by eliminating the unfunded liability of the WSIB, we'll be able to save the average employer roughly 30% on their WSIB premiums, starting this January. This will help employers save money, increase investment and create more jobs, resulting in a \$1.45-billion—again, billion, with a “B”—injection into the Ontario economy.

At the same time, this government is making record investments in long-term care and mental health, increased social assistance funding and much-needed funds for life-saving equipment for front-line responders. The Green Energy Repeal Act will finally bring much-needed relief for Ontario individuals, families, small businesses and communities.

Before I touch one final time on how this will do this for the people of Ontario, let's consider once more all the ways in which the Liberal government's system was broken. It's shocking to reflect on the realities of the energy supply in this province. The previous Liberal government spent billions on the expansion of wind and solar energy supply. And today, where does that leave us? In response to that question, Mr. Speaker, I find one stat particularly telling: the fact that wind and solar represent just 11% of the total generation of Ontario energy but reflect 30% of the global adjustment costs that are borne by electricity consumers. Let that sink in for a minute: 11% of generation but it's costing us 30% on our hydro bills.

As a former business owner, the global adjustment cost and regulatory cost of my hydro bill when I was running my business in Waterloo made up almost 50% of my hydro bill. You can't sustain business like that. It's impossible.

Under the previous government, ratepayers were excessively burdened, with no real return in sight. In fact, to say that the return on investment for ratepayers has been poor is a drastic understatement. In 2017, 26% of electricity generated from wind and solar was curtailed or wasted. That electricity is electricity that Ontarians paid for. We didn't even use it. Twenty-six per cent: That is more than a quarter of the supply generated that we just literally let go down the tubes. In other words, the energy contracts being signed under the Liberal government were not being signed for the people, so why were they being signed off on? The short answer is insiders and corporate coffers.

Our government, thankfully, is taking a different approach—an approach that begins with listening to the

people and one which requires careful and decisive execution on the part of the government. Our mandate includes lowering hydro bills by 12% and allowing for local communities to save on future renewable energy projects.

The key measures enacted in Bill 34 to enable us to fulfill our mandate are simple in concept. To cite perhaps the most simple and important example: providing the government with the ability to renegotiate irrational wind and solar contracts. Yes, it is a simple enough concept, but one also that the previous government would never have thought of or dared to execute. This is because such a measure, as with all of the rest of the necessary reforms to be undertaken in the repealing of the Green Energy Act, 2009, requires a government that possesses the will to act in the name of the people, and our government does that; a government that is determined to develop policies representing the interest of the majority of Ontarians. In Bill 34, the Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018, I believe that we have accomplished this. We are making our electricity system work for the people once again.

In closing, I'd just like to say that Minister McNaughton captured the spirit of our government's policy well when he stated: “Well-connected energy insiders made fortunes putting up wind farms and solar panels that gouge hydro consumers in order to generate electricity that Ontario doesn't need. Today we are proud to say that the party with taxpayers' money is over.” Promise made, promise kept.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a pleasure to stand in my place and talk on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin this morning. I want to say good morning to Laurann Van Volkenburg. Good morning, Laurann. As you can see, my colleague the member from Nickel Belt is right in front of me and she's waving hi as well. I want to say thank you for your nice words and listening in last week while we were both debating in the House.

Speaker, we're talking about time allocation once again here this morning. Our two previous speakers that we had in the House—the member from Ottawa Centre had that opportunity to bring some of his issues forward, to talk about how it was going to be affecting him in his particular area of this province, about the engagement that he's had with his stakeholders, with his community members, with his family, with his neighbours. That's a good thing.

I listened to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, and he talked about some of the points that he wanted to raise. I don't agree with most of them, but he had that opportunity to come in. That's a good thing, you would think, right? We're having a discussion. We're talking about issues. We're hearing the other side and the other views. Well, guess what? Here we are, once again, another bill is in this House on time allocation and that opportunity, that privilege for each and every one of the members in this House is going to be taken away, because everything has to rush, everything has to get through. My friend the Minister of Transportation used to refer to it as the guillotine. He would just drop that hammer in the House and say,

“How dare you do that? You’re taking away our democratic right.” And that’s true, because I’ve got a lot of things that I would like to discuss, but unfortunately, I won’t be able to because the time that we have on this is very short.

I would have liked to have had the opportunity to raise the issues that I have in my riding across some of the engagement as a critic for northern development and mines, and how this bill will negatively impact individuals, businesses, small mom-and-pop shops, neighbours, corporations, employees. We won’t have that because now we’re stuck talking about time allocation on this particular bill.

The member brought up a couple of good points, and we’re going to agree on one thing: The green act, the implementation of it, the ideas—I will always stand in my place and say, “Do we need green initiatives? Yes, we do.”

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The idea of bringing in new ways of generating power, greener ways to getting away from our dependency on fossil fuels, is a good initiative. We have to do this. The rest of the world is doing it. We have to move towards it. How the Liberal government brought it in was wrong. How they provided those opportunities to the private sector—which I hear this government saying it, but would they have done it in a different way? Would they have done the same thing? I don’t know.

You look at some of the decisions that this government has done in regard to the green energy repeal and—let’s just look at what they’ve done. They’ve ripped up all these contracts. They have eliminated all these contracts that are there. They’re saying that’s going to save dollars for taxpayers. Well, I’m going to wait to see that because, at the end of the day, those contracts are going to be challenged, and that’s not going to come free. That’s going to be a cost.

It begs to ask the question—this government, at one time, made a decision to sell off the 407. That was under a different government, a different leadership. But I look at this government, and what is going to be your 407? What is going to be your 407? That’s something you guys are going to have to think about, really, and make that decision in regard to when you’re going to be faced with making that decision and justifying it within your own means.

Now the other thing that I just want to talk about is, again, when we look at other energy sources, green energy sources, I wanted to have the opportunity to talk about the Thunder Bay Generating Station, one that was removed from coal and that went to biomass. Great idea, right? Well, no, there’s a time limit that is going to be put on this biomass facility up in Thunder Bay. Where is one of the biggest sectors that we have the potential to grow through the mining sector and opportunities? The development—oh, my God—of the Ring of Fire, possibly, is in western northern Ontario. And we are shutting down these plants.

For NOMA and even AMO, it was one of the areas where these communities got together, came to the discussion and said, “Hey, when that east-west transmission line comes in, we’re ready to go. Let’s make the investments. We need that power. If we’re going to grow in these sectors in these areas, we’re ready to go.”

There’s another company that is up there. It’s called BioPower. They’re in Atikokan. They’re providing 40%

of their product to OPG; 20% of it is going to domestic markets and 40% of their product is also going to other markets. Great initiatives. We’re using our fibers. We’re using the winds that are there. Green initiatives—good stuff, right? Well, no, because if we shut down that plant, the OPG plant that is up in Thunder Bay, it’s going to make it very difficult for BioPower, to make it sustainable for them to continue.

Again, when we look at some of the decisions that this government is making, when they say, “This is part of our policy. This is what we’re doing. What the Liberals brought in is bad, bad, bad, bad”—wait a second. There is a white elephant here in the room which you have adopted as your own policy, and that’s the Fair Hydro Plan. You’ve adopted that. That’s the worst thing that you guys could have done, but you have adopted that. I don’t hear you talking about that one too much. You talk a lot about reducing prices. I hear the slogan “for the people.” Well, wait a second. I look at these pages who are here at the front, and I often look at who is here in our galleries. Let’s start making decisions for our children. Let’s start making decisions for our future.

If you want plans, we have plans. You’re always suggesting that we’re negative and we’re fearmongering. Well, here are a couple of good ideas. If you want to eliminate something on energy prices, look at the time of use. Start reducing and removing it. It doesn’t help, it doesn’t do anything, and it’s certainly going to help individuals, as far as determining what they want to do. Equalize the delivery charges across this province. I don’t know; those are ideas. You’re not listening to them, so I’m going to keep telling them. I’m just going to keep bringing them up.

But the biggest boondoggle that you guys have done is accepted and made it part of your DNA, as the sitting government, by adopting what we all know now, what we all knew then, which the Auditor General in this House brought forward a long time ago, and the Minister of Finance—it baffles my mind that he sits there and he goes, “Oh, my God. Look at what happened here.” Everybody knew it was going on.

Wake up, you guys. It’s time that we get to work and start doing the things that we really need to do—

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The time being such as it is, we are now going to recess until question period at 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I’d like to welcome my aunt Ivana Pivnicki and cousin Katie Carson to the Legislature for the first time.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to welcome one of my great friends, Attila Lorinc, to the House today. With him are some guests visiting from Budapest. We have his cousin Reka Lorincz and her husband, Balazs Jalcek. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I would like to introduce one of my assistants from my constituency of Flamborough–Glanbrook, Ryan Puviraj.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I would like to introduce and welcome Mr. Nick DeSanctis and the fabulous students from De La Salle College.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to introduce to the Legislature this morning Mr. Jim Hogan. Jim is the president and CEO of Entegrus energy, which represents not only Chatham-Kent and St. Thomas but Strathroy as well. Welcome, Jim.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Good morning, everyone. It's my pleasure to welcome, from Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Deputy Grand Chief Derek Fox, Theresa Ruth, and also Jocelyn Cheechoo.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: It's an honour for me this morning to rise and welcome the consul general of Hungary, Dr. Valér Palkovits; the deputy minister to the Prime Minister of Hungary, Mr. Balász Orbán; and the president of the Canadian Hungarian Heritage Council, Mr. Sandor Balla.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I want to introduce you to my new legislative assistant, Mauricio Suchowlansky. Welcome to our team, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to welcome several important stakeholders to the gallery today: Terrance Oakey, Walter Pamic, Phil Besseling, Tim Henhoeffter, Gordon Sproule, Michael Gallardo, Lynda Murphy, Krishna Ruszewicz, Patrick McManus, Giovanni Cautillo, Rick Martins, Pierre Dufresne, Bob Schickedanz, Chuck McShane, Suzanne Mammel, Joe Vaccaro, Stephen Hamilton, Frank Notte, Susan Gubasta, Sean Reid and John Meinen. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm absolutely pleased to share a welcome for two amazing teachers from the riding of Huron–Bruce who are participating in the teachers' forum here this week: Tracy McLennan and Laura Cressman.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the great privilege of introducing today in the Legislature a constituent from my riding of Niagara West, Phil Besseling, as well as a former candidate of ours from Niagara Falls, Chuck McShane. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce John Meinen, who is here from Stratford today. He's one of my constituents. It's good to see you, John.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I don't see them yet, but there are members from the Trudell Medical group, along with ProResp, who are here today. They invite everybody to join them in 228 for lunch from noon till 2 p.m.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Are there any more members who wish to introduce guests?

As Speaker, I'd like to call attention to the fact that we have a delegation from the Parliament of Ghana with us today: their business committee. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature. We're delighted to have you here.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Just quickly before I start, I want to congratulate everyone who participated in the municipal elections across the province yesterday, and to congratulate those who were victorious and thank those who put their names forward.

My question is to the Deputy Premier: Later today, the Minister of Labour will be making an announcement with the Minister of Economic Development, and we know that this government has been holding backroom meetings concerning Ontario's Employment Standards Act and their plans to take away some basic job benefits from everyday people. Can the Deputy Premier tell us what this government plans to take away?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: I, too, would like to congratulate everyone that participated in the municipal elections across the province last night. It's very humbling when you win an election, and everybody who puts their name on a ballot should be given credit for doing that and putting their name out there. Congratulations to everyone.

Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite: The people of Ontario gave us a very, very strong mandate on June 7 to make some difference in the province of Ontario, to make sure that we opened Ontario up for business. I can tell you that the Minister of Economic Development, the Minister of Labour and the other ministers who are making that announcement today have done province-wide consultations, meeting with employers, employees and other stakeholders, to ensure that we get this right.

The NDP can defend the status quo, which was driving jobs out of Ontario. I can tell you that Premier Ford and the Ontario PC government will be bringing good-paying jobs back to Ontario.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, currently in Ontario, a woman fleeing domestic violence is able to take a few days off of work to help organize her life and support her children without fear of losing her job. The Premier indicated that he's opposed to that. Will we hear a commitment to protect women hoping to take time away from work after fleeing domestic violence, or is that right a right that this government plans to take away from women fleeing domestic violence?

Hon. Todd Smith: The member opposite is completely wrong in making those assertions. As a matter of fact, the Premier of Ontario is standing up for women across the province. He's standing up for everyday people in Ontario.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, what you're going to hear today from those ministers is the key to unlocking Ontario's economic potential. There was a time not so long ago, before the Liberal era of darkness, that Ontario was the economic engine of Canada. We are committed to putting that big sign up at the border saying, "Ontario is open for

business.” Today’s announcement by those ministers is going to be the first step in ensuring that Ontario regains its proper place as the engine of Canada’s economy.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Currently in Ontario, a working person can actually take a sick day off without fear of losing their job. The Premier has indicated that he’s opposed to that. Is that a right that the government plans to take away?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, the member of the official opposition, the leader of the official opposition, continues day after day after day to make false assertions and make it up as she goes along. I can tell you—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’m going to ask the member to withdraw.

1040

Hon. Todd Smith: Happy to withdraw. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The disastrous Liberal policies of the past are being defended by the member opposite. We will not defend those disastrous Liberal policies that have driven good-paying jobs, jobs that had benefits, out of the province. We were given a strong mandate by the people of Ontario on June 7 and it’s our commitment to put Ontario back on track to create good-paying jobs with benefits in the province of Ontario. That’s what we’re going to go do, Mr. Speaker.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Deputy Premier. But I have to say, I will absolutely stand in this place and defend workers’ rights to earn a decent living, have a decent pay and a right to time off every chance I get, Speaker.

In January, the minimum wage was scheduled to rise by \$1 an hour. The Premier has indicated that he’s opposed to that, even though he has no problem handing a \$75,000 pay increase to one of his friends. Is the government planning to freeze the pay of workers earning minimum wage, Speaker?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that on June 7, the people of Ontario spoke loud and clear. They handed over the keys to the Premier’s office to Doug Ford to bring in big changes to Ontario’s workplace and our employment.

Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? We are committed to making Ontario open for business, and the NDP continue to defend the harmful policies of the Liberals that drove jobs out of Ontario. In the month after Bill 148 became law, we saw 60,000 jobs leave the province. The only jobs that were being created in Ontario after Bill 148 were part-time jobs. That’s what the NDP are defending here today.

We are going to defend workers. We are going to ensure that they have good-paying jobs with good benefits, better jobs than the part-time jobs that the NDP and the Liberals are standing up for, Mr. Speaker. We’re going to open Ontario for business.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, in August, two months after this government got elected, 80,000 jobs were lost in the province of Ontario.

Working women and men are worried that they’re about to lose their rights on the job: an increase in the minimum wage, the ability to actually take a vacation, and the right to take time off work to help their kids after leaving a situation of domestic violence. The Premier said he planned to take those rights away. Can the Acting Premier explain why working women and men don’t deserve those kinds of rights in a province like Ontario in the year 2018?

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the leader of the official opposition for making our points for us this morning. In the month after we became the government of Ontario, 80,000 jobs were lost. Do you know why? It was because of the harmful, disastrous policies of the Liberal government that you supported 97% of the time. You should be ashamed of yourself. Those lost jobs are on your backs, not ours.

We’re going to fix that problem, Mr. Speaker. I can tell that you what the ministers will be announcing today is going to go a long way to ensuring that we get Ontario back on track to make it the economic engine of Canada once again. After consultations from every corner of the province by our Minister of Economic Development and his parliamentary assistants, we’ve had great feedback from employers, employees, stakeholders and working families. We need to get Ontario back on track. We want you to support us.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It’s becoming more clear whose side this government is on. The worker on minimum wage doesn’t deserve—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government benches have to come to order. I have to be able to hear the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The worker on minimum wage in the province of Ontario doesn’t deserve a \$1 an hour raise but the Premier’s friends deserve patronage posts with six-figure salaries and \$75,000 raises, Speaker.

The protections the Premier is planning to scrap are not luxuries. They are basic necessities that provide people with a dignified, decent quality of life as workers in this province. In fact, they are basic dignities that every working person should have a right to expect.

Does the Deputy Premier truly believe that women who take time away from work to look after their kids after fleeing domestic violence should have to worry about losing their job?

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I wish the leader of the official opposition would at least wait until the announcement is made later today before she fearmongers, because I can tell you that she is so far off-base. But that's the character of what we've seen so far from the leader of the official opposition.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Todd Smith: Withdraw.

Speaker, after consultations with employers and employees and all kinds of stakeholders in the agriculture and small business sectors, we're standing up for the people of Ontario. We are here for the people. The people sent us here to ensure that we get Ontario back on track. People deserve good-paying jobs. All we've seen created over the last number of months are part-time jobs, thanks to you enabling the Liberal government for the last 15 years.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I'm going to remind the members that the debate need not be personal. Make your comments through the Chair.

Interjections.

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Minister of Health. Families who have been forced to watch loved ones suffer in hospital hallways while waiting for treatment or who have to scrape their savings together to pay for take-home cancer medication know that every cut to health care makes their lives a little bit harder. But since the election, the Minister of Health has already begun to warn hospitals that they will have to prepare for even more cuts.

People gathered on the lawn at Queen's Park today have a simple question for the Minister of Health: How does the minister think that cutting health care funding will actually clear crowded hospital hallways?

Hon. Christine Elliott: First of all, I have to say to the leader of the official opposition I disagree with your basic premise. What we're trying to do is augment health care. We got elected to end hallway health care. That is what we're working on. That's why we made the announcement two weeks ago that we're putting \$90 million more into creating 1,100 new spaces to get us through flu season while we create a health capacity plan, why we've created 6,000 long-term-care-bed spaces to try and alleviate the stress that hospitals are feeling because they have people in the hospitals, alternate level of care patients, who don't have anywhere else to go. We've got to work with hospitals and we have to work with long-term-care owners and facilitators to make sure that we can clear that.

We also made an announcement yesterday about consumption and treatment services. We want to make sure that people who have addiction problems are going to be able to get the help they need. That is what we are doing. We are building on our health care system.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On this side of the House, we believe the people of Ontario should own their health care system, Speaker, not private interests. Look, the minister is correct. They shorted Ontario hospitals by \$10 million less than what the Liberals invested in flu surge funding. We know that's the case.

Families want to know, though, that when a loved one needs to visit the hospital, they won't be stuck in a hallway, that their parents can find that long-term-care bed that they need and that they can afford the drugs they need when they're ill. Instead, the Premier is promising \$6 billion in cuts, and speaking warmly about the role that the private sector can play in our health care system where everyday people won't be able to afford to pay their way to the front of the line, although Conservative friends will make a lot of profits off of that and their friends will be able to afford to pay their way.

Will the minister reject those failed schemes of privatization and cuts, and commit to investing in a stronger public health care system for our province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Once again, I vigorously disagree with the premise of the question. We are building on our health care system. We are working to end hallway medicine. We've already taken steps in that direction. We are committing \$3.8 billion in order to create a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions system. We were elected by the people for the people. We want to make sure that the people of Ontario have great-quality health care services across the entire—

Interjections.

1050

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

I'm reluctant to interrupt a member who has the floor, but once the standing ovation starts and the member still has the floor and is still speaking, I cannot hear. That's why I stood up to interrupt her, just so you know.

Start the clock. Next question.

TAXATION

Mrs. Nina Tangri: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. The federal government has made it clear that they intend to impose an unwanted, unnecessary and unaffordable carbon tax on the people of Ontario. This intention shows that they have a complete disregard for what impact this carbon tax will have on the hard-working people of Ontario. When speaking with my constituents, it is clear that they are fearful of what this tax will mean to them and their families.

Can the minister explain to the people of Ontario what our government is doing to make their lives more affordable?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville: Thank you for that question. Of course, we await the Prime Minister's announcement later today. But the member is quite correct. The Financial Accountability Officer, last week, answered the question—\$648 per family by 2022. That's the cost of Justin Trudeau's tax. This is a cost that Ontario families simply cannot afford to pay. And it's a cost that our government was elected—unlike the opposition—to ensure didn't happen.

One of the first things that we did was bring forward Bill 4. That bill has now made its way through committee. That bill will get rid of the previous government's cap-and-trade program. That will put \$260 in the pockets of Ontarians. We've already seen a reduction in gas prices. That is the beginning of what will eventually be a 10-cent reduction in gas prices. But this government is—

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I thank the minister for his answer and, more importantly, the hard work he and his team are putting toward making life more affordable in Ontario.

I know my constituents are very pleased to finally have a government that is working for them and not simply acting in favour of their own agenda. However, the federal government threatens to impose a job-killing carbon tax in Ontario should we not present a plan that they believe meets their own objective. This threat makes the people of my riding wonder what's in store for them. They are concerned that the fight we've had to rid this province of the cap-and-trade carbon tax was all for nothing.

If the Trudeau carbon tax is imposed on our province, can the minister explain what the implications will be?

Hon. Rod Phillips: We wait to hear the Prime Minister's comments later today. But what seems to be clear is that, regardless of a plan—we have six provinces, with NDP governments, Liberal governments and Conservative governments. We have provinces that have had plans for a long time and our own plan coming forward. But regardless of a plan, this seems to be a government that is intent on putting a cost on Ontario families and Canadian families—\$648 a year by 2022. That's the equivalent of four hydro bills. Ontarians can't afford that. That's why this government will do everything in its power, along with other governments, to fight the Trudeau carbon tax, to make sure that we don't go back to the regressive, job-killing approach of the previous government.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is for the Acting Premier. For 13 years under the previous government, the minimum wage was stuck. But the minimum wage had been stagnant since the previous Conservative government froze it in 1995, creating generations of working poor in this province. Increasing the minimum wage is not only the right thing to do but has proven good for the economy.

Why is this government ignoring the mountain of evidence that increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour

puts money in the pockets of those who need it most, who in turn can afford to buy goods and services, which then feeds our economy?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: To the member opposite: There clearly is not a mountain of evidence. Actually, the mountain of evidence shows that we're losing jobs because of the increase. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said it was too much, too fast. That's why we're going to put a pause on an increase to the minimum wage.

I have quotes from all the members opposite here—not all of them, but a number of the members opposite who agreed. They said the same thing in this House, that if you are going to increase the minimum wage, it should be done gradually. It should be predictable. It should be sustainable so that we don't break the backs of small business and cost people their jobs, which is what we've seen over the last year that Bill 148 has been in place. I can quote a number of the members over there, but what we've seen are lost jobs and lost hours as a result of the increase.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Minimum wage workers don't need a job; they have a job. In fact, as members of this House have heard over and over again, they often have two or even three jobs, and they require those multiple jobs in order to survive.

Instead of \$2,000 more in the pockets of low-income workers through the minimum wage increase, the Premier promises less in a tax break that most minimum wage workers won't even qualify for. Why does this government insist on taking this province backwards? Why does this government not think that 1.7 million workers deserve a raise?

Hon. Todd Smith: Again to the member opposite: What we want to create in Ontario is an Ontario that creates good-paying jobs. What we've seen under the Liberals, supported by the NDP, is a huge increase in part-time jobs. The member opposite says that people are working one, two and three part-time jobs at minimum wage. We want those people to have one good job with good pay and good benefits.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that our government, in the 120 days that we've been government, has started to create the environment for real, positive, good-paying jobs. We've ended the cap-and-trade scheme. We've lowered electricity rates. Today, we're going to be creating an environment to bring good-paying manufacturing jobs back to Ontario, where they belong.

TAXATION

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Mr. Speaker, good morning. My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. The Liberal cap-and-trade carbon tax has hurt Ontario families and made life unaffordable. The people of Ontario need a government that listens to their concerns. Ontarians look forward to a time when they no longer have to worry about how long they can make their gas tanks last or if they'll be able to put food on the table.

The minister introduced legislation to remove this crippling cap-and-trade carbon tax. Can the minister update all taxpayers on how they will benefit from the elimination of Ontario's crippling cap-and-trade carbon tax?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member from Mississauga Centre for her question. Our government was elected on a commitment to make life more affordable for Ontario families. An important part of that commitment was eliminating the regressive, job-killing cap-and-trade carbon tax of the Liberal government. As the member notes, we have made another step through that process, through the committee process, to seeing the passing of Bill 4, which will eliminate that tax. We have already seen, however, a 4.6-cent reduction in the price of gasoline and a 5.7-cent reduction in the price of diesel fuel.

This is just the beginning of putting more money in people's pockets, making sure that Ontarians get the benefits of what they earn, and making sure that this kind of tax doesn't impose on Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I thank the minister for the answer. The people of this province have been held back for too long and deserve to have money put back into their pockets. With the continuous commentary from the federal government admitting that their carbon tax could lead to job losses, residents of my riding have raised their concerns about the unclear direction of the federal government's position on their own tax. They are unsettled by the possibility that the province rids itself of the carbon tax to simply have another one forced upon them.

1100

Mr. Speaker, can the minister assure us that actions are in place to do everything that can be done to avoid yet another regressive and job-killing tax to be imposed on hard-working Ontario families?

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the member for her question. Again, we were elected not just to get rid of the cap-and-trade program, but there was another commitment from our Premier. It was a commitment to use all the tools at our disposal to fight the imposition of Justin Trudeau's carbon tax.

Now we wait to hear the Prime Minister's announcement. But Mr. Speaker, we know that a majority of provinces oppose the federal plan. We've been asking since August to work with the federal government to have a conversation, to talk about a plan, to talk about a way of hitting the targets they want to hit, but to work together and not impose a job-killing tax. What have we heard? We've heard crickets.

So we'll wait to hear what the Prime Minister says this morning, but be assured that this province will use all the tools at its disposal to stand up against the federal government imposing an unconstitutional, job-killing, regressive carbon tax.

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. Later today, the

Prime Minister will be unveiling the federal plan to impose a new carbon price in Ontario. The Conservative government's actions on climate so far will increase the deficit by \$3 billion. It seems like the net result will be families paying more, no plan to combat climate change and handing control to the government in Ottawa.

Is this the government's idea of success?

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the member from Danforth for his question. Clearly, the opposition understands policy the same way that the Prime Minister understands it. They think it's good to take money out of the pockets of families. When we talk about \$3 billion less out of the pockets of families, that's what we're about. We're about putting money back into people's pockets. We are about trying to make sure that they can afford the things that they want in their life while we put forward a constructive and balanced climate plan.

If the opposition wants to line up with Justin Trudeau and take as much money as they can get away with to pay for their programs and big government, we're happy to let them do it. Doug Ford and this government will be fighting for families and fighting climate change.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members take their seats.

Restart the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Back to the minister—an interesting minister, who supports the expansion of the deficit, but let's set that aside for the moment.

Premier Ford has become an expert at losing lawsuits—an expert—and the people of Ontario are stuck paying the price, \$30 million in this case. He's increasing the deficit by \$3 billion not to have a climate plan. While Ontario families will be paying the same or even more, it's Ottawa that will now be in control of how that money is spent.

Does the minister believe that he is effectively standing up for Ontario?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Coming from a party that supported the previous government, that has created the tragic financial situation of a \$15-billion deficit—it is really hard to take financial advice from a party that has a \$7-million hole in their platform.

But Mr. Speaker, we'll stand in this House all day and talk about putting money back into families' pockets. That's because we're confident that the plan that we will bring forward, a plan that will balance the economy and the environment, will reduce greenhouse gases and will prepare Ontario for climate change, but will not punish Ontario families the way the NDP and the member opposite want to.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, is \$15 an hour—barely a living wage for the people of Toronto and the people in my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood—too much to ask? Are two paid leave days, if you or your child is sick, too much to

ask? Is counting on compensation when your shift is cancelled too much to ask? Is equal pay for equal work too much to ask?

What is your explanation to women who are fleeing violence or domestic abuse, who may use these protections to better their situation and to protect themselves and their children? If you had two paid sick days a year and the government was taking them away, how would you feel?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member opposite for the question this morning. What I would advise the member opposite to do is to wait until we announce our changes. I know that the Premier, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities have been working for the last four months to put together a comprehensive plan on how we can right the wrongs that were created by the member opposite and the Liberal government over the last 15 years: wrongs that have cost Ontario 300,000 manufacturing jobs, wrongs that have cost people on minimum wage hours at their jobs, wrongs that have actually cost people on minimum wage their jobs entirely.

What we are going to be unveiling today is a plan on how we can open Ontario for business so that everyone in Ontario can thrive and so that we can bring back a future for our kids and our grandkids.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, our kids and our grandkids need a government that takes their job seriously and grows Ontario's economy, not takes it backwards. I want the member opposite to know that since 2003, Ontario's economy has grown by \$338 billion. This economy that you have inherited is a robust economy. In fact, this economy has regained all the jobs that were lost since the Great Recession—almost 800,000 jobs, in fact.

But what exactly are you repealing today? We know a person's income is a key determinant of health. It's one of the social determinants of health. Your government is cutting: cutting social assistance rates, cancelling basic income, cutting wages and slashing employment protections that workers need. These people need government to provide—

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

Hon. Todd Smith: Oh, boy. Speaker, to the member opposite: She seems to think that everything is just fine in Ontario, but I can tell you that the people of Ontario strongly disagreed with that member and the policies of the government that she represented for the past 15 years in this province, a government that drove 300,000 manufacturing jobs out of the province, a Liberal government that gave up on manufacturing.

We believe that we can bring those jobs back to Ontario. We believe that we can create the environment again for good-paying jobs in Ontario, where people don't

have to go from job to job on minimum wage, where people can support their families with a real living wage, a living wage that includes benefits, that eliminates the debt and the deficit that this member and that government created over the last 15 years. We can do better. We're going to unlock Ontario's potential.

TAXATION

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. Every day, members of the opposition rise in this House with concerns on how the people of Ontario will provide for their families. We have heard countless arguments from all parties that lead to the same conclusion: The people of Ontario need life to be more affordable. Our government believes that the people of Ontario deserve to have an affordable province to live in. They should not have to worry about ineffective taxes and rising costs. They should not have to worry about jobs being pushed out of this province because business is cheaper elsewhere.

1110

Mr. Speaker, can the minister share with us what steps have been taken to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for that question. To be fair, all of the parties in this Legislature advocated for affordability, but unlike the opposition, our party is taking real action to put money into family pockets. We know what life in Ontario looks like under a carbon tax or under cap-and-trade. It's about families with less money. The Auditor General spoke about the regressive nature of this tax, that low- and middle-income families get hit the most because, of course, they spend the highest percentage of their income on energy and heating. We know that businesses have been leaving this province in part because of high energy costs and cap-and-trade, and a carbon tax will just put them further.

Our government remains committed to making sure that this is a good place to have a business, this is a good place to raise a family, that we put more money in families' pockets and that we support our job creators. We do that by standing in opposition to cap-and-trade, and we do that by standing in opposition to Justin Trudeau's carbon tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I thank the minister for the answer. In our efforts, we have one clear goal in mind: Under the leadership of our Premier, we intend to make life in Ontario more affordable.

The concern of affordability is not the only issue we hear in this House. In numerous instances, we have also heard concern about how our province is being impacted by climate change. The threat is real. This province faces the true possibility of the effects of climate change. Increased forest fires and storms that cause floods and loss of power are just some examples.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister share us with his plans to address these concerns and improve our environment for future generations?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member for the question. Climate change, as I've said and as the Premier says, does represent a serious threat. It's a threat to our way of life. It is a threat to our land, our water and our locally grown food, and let me be clear: The government is very committed to fighting it.

We are currently getting information, getting consultations. I'd encourage anyone who is interested to go to www.ontario.ca/climatechange to provide us with that feedback. We need a plan for climate change that will both prepare Ontarians and make sure that we reduce greenhouse gases, but we need one that doesn't punish Ontario families. We need a plan that is sensible and that Ontarians can buy into, not like the previous cap-and-trade program, not like Justin Trudeau's carbon tax, but a balanced plan that balances our economy and our environment, and is good for Ontario, good for its environment and good for Ontario families.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Burch: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I recently met with staff in the Hotel Dieu Shaver, a health and rehabilitation centre in my riding. For over a decade they've been fighting for a planning grant to expand the facility with 65 additional beds. Hotel Dieu Shaver was successful when the province announced a \$500,000 planning grant this past May. The Hotel Dieu Shaver has been in the dark on the status of this grant since the new government took office, and they need to know whether or not they can expect the money so they can begin planning for years to come.

Can the minister provide the people of Niagara with an update as to the status of the Hotel Dieu Shaver planning grant?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the question. As I'm sure the member can appreciate, there was a period of time before the election and shortly after the election when things were frozen. Nothing was able to happen. We are working right now with people on the capital side within the Ministry of Health. I've received a number of inquiries from a number of members. We are working very hard on getting that information to people so that they can continue with their planning and continue with their operations.

I'll be able to speak to you more specifically about the hospital within your riding, but I can assure all members that we are working on that with expediency as much as possible to get people the answers that they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Rehabilitation services like those offered at the Shaver are the solution to many problems that plague our health care system. Rehabilitation can optimize a patient's ability to live independently at home, keep patients out of long-term care, reduce their lengths of stay in our hospitals and increase the quality of life for

patients. Expanding investment into rehabilitation centres like the Shaver provides a multi-faceted policy solution that fits into this government's stated goals and objectives.

So will the minister review this file and complete the final steps in order to ensure that health care and patient needs are prioritized in Niagara by following through with this much-needed grant?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I can certainly assure you that I will be looking into this situation, and I do agree with you that rehabilitation services form an essential part of recovery for many people in Ontario. Occupational therapy, speech therapy, physiotherapy—all of these services are essential, but, of course, there's only so much one can do with the situation that we inherited, quite frankly, where very little was done over 15 years and we've got a bit of a difficult situation with hallway health care, with no real action on mental health and addictions, with no real action on rehabilitation services.

So there's a lot of work to be done, but absolutely, yes, I will look into your situation with respect to the Shaver and get back to you.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Our Minister of Health just talked about the situation we inherited. Yesterday, the Select Committee on Financial Transparency heard from the three commissioners of the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry. It was sobering to hear them review the findings of their report. They expressed shock, they expressed frustration and they expressed concern for the future of our province. As we continue to learn more about the previous Liberal government's practices, it's clear that accountability and trust were nowhere to be seen.

Could the minister please inform the House and my constituents in Durham of some of the key aspects of the commissioners' testimony yesterday?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Durham for the question. We thank Gordon Campbell, Dr. Al Rosen and Michael Horgan for their important work preparing the commission's report. They worked tirelessly to provide the people of Ontario a true accounting of the government's books, and what they found has concerned us all. The \$15-billion deficit that was stashed off the government's books puts our future in jeopardy. Former BC Premier Campbell put it best yesterday when he said, "You can't build a future off of deficits."

As the Select Committee on Financial Transparency continues to learn the extent of the Liberal waste and scandal, one message is clear: We need to take action. Restoring accountability and trust through the select committee is exactly the right place to start.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Lindsey Park: It's alarming to hear the evidence that the Liberals improperly mortgaged the future of our children and our grandchildren—and there's more. The select committee has heard how the Liberals shut out the Auditor General, how they ignored the warnings of senior

public servants and how they took steps to compromise the future prosperity of our province. And what do Ontarians have to show for it? Well, a massive deficit and skyrocketing debt. What a reward.

Could the minister please shed some light on what exactly the Liberals accomplished by trading the future of our province in exchange for short-term political gain?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: What the Liberals accomplished is trading away our future. Yesterday, the committee heard, “We’re in a worse situation now than we were in 2008.” Speaker, the Liberals have left us a worse financial footing than we had during the last recession. For 15 years, the Liberals’ tax-and-spend policies dug us into a financial hole. Former BC Premier Campbell gave the committee some advice yesterday. He said, “You can’t get out of the hole until you stop digging.” Referring to the Liberals, he said, “They used a backhoe in 2017.”

1120

Well, Speaker, it’s time to stop digging. It’s time to clean up this mess. It’s time to restore accountability and trust and put Ontario back on track as the economic engine of Canada.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The Assistive Devices Program helps people with long-term physical disabilities pay for customized equipment like wheelchairs. To access the program, the client must have an evaluation done by either an occupational therapist or a physiotherapist. Typically, right after the evaluation the device provider orders equipment, and as soon as it arrives provides it to the client.

Typically, the turnaround with the Ministry of Health is six weeks before the provider of the equipment gets the funds. Currently, it’s six months. A lot of the providers who are providing this equipment are at risk of going out of business. Instead of being open for business, in this case you’re actually closing the businesses that provide essential services to our people. What is the purpose of the lag, Minister?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the question. I am certainly aware of the issue. Of course, we want to make sure that the appropriate analysis is done to make sure that the equipment is required. If there is a longer period than what is usual, then it’s something that we are looking into and we’re going to try to reduce that time lag both for the person who needs the service as well as the person who is providing it to make sure they get paid for it.

There is work to be done. It is something that we’re aware of in the ministry, and we’re trying to lessen that time lag.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: I’d like to thank the minister for that answer. But one of the store owners in my riding got this response from the minister when he asked a question—they are saying it’s the store owner’s fault because they are pre-supplying, so they should just wait for

approval. And the service management in this program says, “It doesn’t make financial sense to pre-supply chairs and equipment. What if a client gets a new wheelchair from a supplier right away, and then in four weeks the client dies?”

My mother is in a wheelchair and I can pay for it, but there are millions of people or thousands of people in this province who can’t. So do you agree with that statement? “Who cares as long as the client doesn’t die in four weeks?” They need those chairs right away. The ministry used to be able to do it in six weeks. Why can’t the government for the people do it in six weeks? Why does it take six months?

Hon. Christine Elliott: As I indicated in an earlier answer, we got elected by the people for the people, so patient safety and patient needs are of utmost concern to us. We want to make sure that people are going to get the drugs that they need, the treatment they need and the equipment they need in a timely manner. That applies to whatever stage they are in their life. They deserve and expect to have that treatment, and we are going to deliver it to them.

Can we delay the time lag? Yes. Will people get the equipment, though? Absolutely yes, they will.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Residents in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook continue to raise concerns regarding the province’s ability to keep our communities and streets safe while convicted terrorists are waiting in foreign prisons to return to this province. The Trudeau government has failed to act.

The safety of the public is and has always been one of our government’s top priorities. Ontarians who choose to participate in acts of violence against their country and their province do not deserve to return and be welcomed with open arms.

Minister, could you please update the members of this Legislature on what our government for the people is doing to ensure that convicted terrorists are punished for their reprehensible crimes?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I want to thank the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for that question. I also want to wish her a happy birthday today.

I want, again, to thank and commend the member from Peterborough–Kawartha for his action and dedication to this file and for having taken the necessary steps to ensure that the Terrorist Activities Sanctions Act could be brought before the Legislature yesterday afternoon.

Those who have chosen to leave this great province to take up arms with terrorist organizations and commit barbaric acts of violence against our men and women in uniform—civilians and our allies need to know that we will not be welcoming them with open arms. The men and women of our armed forces and the great people of this province deserve to know that our government is listening and taking action.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Back to the minister: The people of this province need to know that our government is listening and is working hard to enhance and restore public safety.

The federal government is sitting on their hands while terrorists sit in foreign jails waiting to return to our province. The Trudeau government has failed to act and has failed to take this issue with the urgency it requires.

We have had numerous people approach our government wanting to know whether a convicted terrorist can walk freely in our communities without any real consequences.

To the minister: Could you please explain to the members of this Legislature the message our government for the people is sending to those terrorists who wish to return to Ontario?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: The Trudeau government has had numerous chances to address this issue but has continuously failed to do so. That's why our government for the people is taking the necessary steps to address this issue and ensure that convicted terrorists understand that we are not going to welcome them back to this province with open arms.

These convicted terrorists need to be charged for their barbaric acts upon their return to this province. No matter where in the world the act was committed, that is not what Canada, that is not what this province is all about. Once convicted, these terrorists do not deserve access to the privileges the great people of this province are entitled to.

Since Justin Trudeau doesn't seem to take this issue seriously, our government is taking real action to send a message that there are serious consequences for having committed indefensible—

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

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Minister of Education. The Ontario Physical and Health Education Association is a non-profit organization that provides training and resources to support health and wellness initiatives in Ontario schools. Since 1921, the association has supported healthier, safer school communities by providing important learning resources for parents and teachers. Sadly, as of last week, Ophea will no longer receive funding from the provincial government—another addition to this government's growing list of education cuts.

Will the minister please explain why her government is so intent on keeping up-to-date health and wellness information out of the hands of our students?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I just want to refresh the memory of the MPPs that were maybe not here in the last session. The fact of the matter is, that particular organization fought Ryan's Law. I just thought I'd share that with everyone, just to put things in perspective.

The fact of the matter is, we're making sure that we're making investments that are making a difference for the

learning environment in the classroom. As we move forward, we're going to be looking at every line item to make sure that we are absolutely informing and supporting the best learning environment possible in this province.

We look forward to having organizations like Ophea participate in the consultation that we have going on, because I love to speak about this organization that we have created in terms of creating a forum for people to exercise their voice. All the collective voices coming together through our comprehensive consultation are going to make a difference for years to come.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister of Education is talking about the consultation that they gave people four hours' notice to participate in. Yes, comprehensive. Yes, great communication over there.

Mr. Speaker, through you again to the Minister of Education: Just last week we also revealed that this government had quietly—without saying a word to parents; without saying a word to school boards—cut the parent engagement grants that so many of our schools, especially our low-income schools, depend upon.

This week, the government ended 16 years of support for Ophea. The latest cut means there will be fewer training opportunities for teachers, less availability of teaching resources, and a decrease in research and evidence-sharing, all of which have been proven to be critical in student safety, development and well-being.

Mr. Speaker, this government is slashing and cutting programs in our education system without letting anybody even know about it. When will this minister stop playing the blame game and start—

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

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I welcome every opportunity to stand up and talk about the consultation we have going on and reinforce the fact that the PC government of Ontario is standing up for teachers, standing up for parents, and most importantly, thinking about our students to make sure they're on the best path to success.

Speaker, I have to share with you that when we kicked off our latest phase of telephone town halls, do you know what was most important? No matter what the information is that is coming from across the aisle—which is wrong, as a matter of fact, most of the time—I have to tell you that people are starting off by saying thank you: "Thank you for giving us an opportunity to exercise our voice." We're committed to listening to every single individual and organization that wishes to have its voice heard. We are on the right track, and I look forward to sharing the results—

Interjections.

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

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Parm Gill: My question is for the Minister of Finance. The Select Committee on Financial Transparency has heard shocking testimony over the past two

weeks. We heard from the Auditor General, whom the Liberals shut out in creating their accounting schemes. We heard from senior public servants, whom the Liberals ignored when making risky decisions. And yesterday, we heard from the commissioners of the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry, whose hard work has put us on the path to ensure accountability and trust can be restored.

Could the minister please share his reflections on the witnesses the Select Committee on Financial Transparency has heard from so far?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Milton. Each day that the select committee meets provides another example of why we must restore accountability and trust.

Last week, the committee heard from senior public servants who told us just how reckless the Liberals' decisions were. In a Liberal cabinet document, the risks the Liberals were willing to take became very clear. They were told, "Borrowing money to defer" electricity "costs ... would lower costs in the short term but result in substantial debt and higher electricity prices in the future." They were also told that these "associated risks and fiscal costs could put pressure on the province's credit rating and overall borrowing capacity."

Speaker, the message is clear: The Liberals shut out the Auditor General, they ignored the warnings of the public servants, and now—

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

Mr. Parm Gill: Thank you to the minister for his response. Through the select committee's meetings, I have also come to the same conclusion: The Liberals' recklessness was risky and irresponsible. It's time to restore accountability and trust.

We've heard from those who tried to warn the previous Liberal government. We've heard from those who tried to hold them to account. Their efforts were ignored, and the people of Ontario are paying the price.

Could the minister explain the importance of restoring accountability and trust in the province's finances?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We must remember that we are in an unprecedented time in Ontario's history. The public's trust has been shattered. The previous government's accounting scheme was deliberately designed to keep the true cost of Liberal spending off of the books. The Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry said multiple times that the average person would need a PhD in economics to understand the Liberals' accounting schemes.

Yesterday, commissioner Dr. Al Rosen called the previous government's accounting "misleading." This is unacceptable.

We look forward to the select committee continuing their important work. We will learn more about the Liberals' reckless spending decisions and hold those responsible to account for this misleading work.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the minister to withdraw.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Withdraw.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Auto insurance premiums should not be based on your postal code, but yet they are. Residents from my Brampton North riding, for instance, are paying on average \$1,000 more in auto insurance premiums than residents in the member for Nipissing's riding. This, Mr. Speaker, is unfair. However, this government seems to be more focused on bolstering the insurance industry than on eliminating postal code discrimination in auto insurance rates.

Why is the minister more concerned with propping up the insurance industry than ensuring rates are affordable for drivers?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: It's clear that the Liberal-NDP system of failed stretch goals on auto insurance is broken. Our government continues to look at the regulatory environment surrounding auto insurance in Ontario, with the potential of allowing more competition in the marketplace.

Obviously, Speaker, this opens the door for me to yet again congratulate our PC member from Milton for his important work on this file. His proposed initiative is a great way to combat rate discrimination in our auto insurance system. Now that the member's legislation is tabled, we look forward to working with him and the industry stakeholders to ensure that our auto insurance system meets the needs of Ontario's 10 million drivers. Our member from Milton took the time to do it right. He consulted with stakeholders right across the province. He got it right.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I guess we have to read between the lines because the key word there was "potential"—"potential" for lowering auto insurance rates. So for people from Brampton and from Scarborough and other ridings, that's the answer we're getting.

Recently, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario approved yet another increase to auto insurance rates. While some Ontario drivers could see their rates increase almost 3%, others could see their rates go up as much as 11.6%. These increases will disproportionately impact residents in the Peel, Durham, Halton and York regions most. This is why we urgently need action, not potentially. GTA drivers are being targeted by insurance companies, and this government needs to take a stance.

Does this government believe that GTA drivers should be paying more auto insurance than the rest of Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, when I hear the member talk about insurance rates going up, I'm pretty sure he's speaking about his own NDP member from Brampton East, who wants the GTA to be considered a single geographic area when insurance companies set their rates. However, this will only serve to increase insurance costs across the entire GTA. Their member's plan would cause rates to rise right across the ridings of many of their own caucus colleagues. On the other hand, once again, the member from Milton—because he consulted, he got it right.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Government Services. After 15 years of Liberal reign, where we almost tripled the debt to \$335 billion, we were told it was going to be a \$6-billion deficit but it's actually a \$15-billion deficit; this all enabled by the NDP government.

Minister, can you tell us how the Ford PC government is going to open up Ontario for business?

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, I want to thank the government whip for that very well-thought-out and timely question this morning. As you may have heard, the Premier and a number of our ministers are in Scarborough this morning where they are announcing how we are going to get Ontario back on track, to make Ontario the economic engine of Canada once again.

Speaker, you may have heard this, but our Premier has said at least once or twice that Ontario is going to be open for business under a PC government, and you may have heard our Premier say this once or twice: A new day has dawned in Ontario. I can tell you, with today's announcement, a new day has dawned in Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. That concludes the time we have for question period this morning.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Orléans?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: A point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to welcome in the House a friend and also my former chief of staff, Shane Gonsalves. He's a proud new father of—I think, what, a couple of weeks, a month?—a month-old baby son, Sebastian, so we would like to welcome him and wish him the very best with the birth of his son.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of everyone in this House, I'd like congratulate the member from Flamborough-Glanbrook on her birthday today.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd just like to remind all members: Tomorrow is Child Abuse Prevention Month. I encourage all members of this assembly to wear purple in solidarity with children who are suffering child abuse.

LONG-SERVICE AWARDS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that later on I am going to be attending an event to recognize long-service employees of the Legislature with their awards, the long-service award reception, and I was hoping that you would join me in an ovation to celebrate and express our thanks to the long-serving members of the staff of the Ontario Legislature.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will be there to pass along everyone's best wishes.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands in recess until 3 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jamie West: As labour critic, it's my honour to introduce people fighting for working-class people. From the OFL, I have Rob Halpin and Patty Coates and, from the UFCW, Tim Deelstra.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We're delighted to welcome all guests to the chamber, but we can't be making political statements as we do the introductions.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I'd just like to welcome to the chamber my executive assistant and my constituency assistant, Shaida Maleki and Kai Nademi, to the House.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FOODSHARE TORONTO

Mr. Faisal Hassan: FoodShare Toronto is a non-profit organization based in my riding of York South-Weston, which does wonderful work across Toronto addressing the important issues of food insecurity. Their work includes supporting affordable produce markets, including a mobile produce market. In 2017, this program reached a staggering 262,000 Torontonians.

Food insecurity is a problem which affects Ontario's working families, including a growing number of people who work full-time but who still struggle to fill their fridge.

The people at FoodShare Toronto work every day doing what they can to help, but they know that they cannot solve food insecurity alone. Food security is a systemic problem, and it is our job in this Legislature to provide systemic solutions.

Unfortunately, the Conservative government is making the problem worse. The cancellation of the basic income pilot, and the minimum wage freeze, will hurt those Ontarians most in need of our help.

The executive director of FoodShare Toronto, Paul Taylor, has sent a letter to the Premier asking for compassion. His letter reads, in part: "Rolling back the planned increase to minimum wage is going to affect folks that saw

a glimmer of hope connected to the increase. To roll it back, especially as Ontarians prepare to enter the holiday season, is cruel and disappointing.”

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HALTON-MISSISSAUGA

Mr. Parm Gill: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our newly elected council members and re-elected council members in Milton.

I would also be remiss if I did not make a special mention of our mayor, Mayor Gord Krantz. Although he already holds the title of longest-serving mayor in the country ever, last night Miltonians reaffirmed their confidence in his ability to lead.

I would also like to recognize an organization that does great work in my riding of Milton. Last week, I met with John Gerrard, the CEO of Habitat for Humanity Halton-Mississauga. John runs his Habitat chapter like a business and really cares about ensuring that it is self-sufficient.

I was pleased to learn about the projects they're currently building and the partnerships that they have established with our local schools.

I was proud to share with him that Halton Habitat will be receiving over \$300,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to support their Habitat Handyman initiative. This initiative will help over 200 members of our community.

On behalf of our government, I'd like to thank and congratulate John and his team at Halton Habitat for Humanity for their commitment to helping members of our community who are in need. I look forward to working with them.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr. Chris Glover: Yesterday Ontario held its municipal elections, and I wish to thank all of those who ran. Whether you won or lost, you made a contribution to the democratic process.

I also wish to thank all of those who voted, because democracy only works when we participate.

Finally, I'd like to thank those candidates in Toronto who initially put their names forward but then decided not to run when the number of seats was changed from 47 to 25. The city lost many good potential councillors, and we lost the opportunity to have a city council that better reflects the diversity of our population. In my riding, one of the fastest-growing ridings in the country, by the time the next election rolls around, there will be 150,000 residents and one city councillor.

When this Legislature was debating changing the rules in the middle of the election, and whether to suspend the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of the people of Ontario, my mother wrote to me. She said that when she was young, she had many school friends who lost their fathers during the Second World War. She said that we needed to remember not only their sacrifice, but what they were

fighting for. They were fighting for the democracy that the people of Ontario enjoyed yesterday.

This House should never again vote to change the rules in the middle of an election, and never again should this House vote to suspend the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of the people of Ontario for any reason. To do so is not only disrespectful to the citizens of the province, but to the brave women and men who fought, died and sacrificed so much to ensure that we have those democratic rights and freedoms that we enjoyed yesterday.

PETERBOROUGH CARES

Mr. Dave Smith: Prior to entering politics, I was on the board of directors of a charitable organization in my riding called Peterborough Cares. We raised money for the homeless, for the sick, for a large number of underprivileged people.

We have an annual fundraiser called Stand With Tim. This past weekend, we held Stand With Tim. Tim, in particular, is Tim Farquharson, the deputy police chief. This past weekend, Stand With Tim was to raise money and awareness for our homeless. The proceeds from this event are going to Brock Mission for homeless men, the Youth Emergency Shelter and the Warming Room. The Warming Room is a place where those who are homeless can come to stay warm in the cold winter months.

I'd like to thank the organizers of the event: Donna MacKay, Darcy Bonner, Lindsay Mitchell, Tim Burke, Tim Farquharson, Camille Parent and Kelly Ingram.

I'm happy to say that this year we raised an outstanding amount, more than we ever have. Just slightly more than \$18,000 will be divided between those three groups.

And because the homeless have difficulty getting socks and underwear, we had asked for donations of those, and I'm happy to say that we had more than 150 pounds of clothing, including socks and underwear, that were donated for our homeless.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AGENCIES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Today I rise to speak about a growing issue in my riding. In Windsor, one in four women live below the low-income line, and there are 16,000 children growing up in low-income households. With so many people struggling to keep up, to simply get by, our community support agencies are becoming increasingly stretched thin.

House of Sophrosyne, which provides programs and services to women battling substance misuse, has been consistently running at capacity. They have a wait-list of seven months. Hiatus House, an agency supporting women and families experiencing domestic violence, has been running at 102% capacity since April of this year. The Welcome Centre Shelter for Women and Families has been operating at 130% for months. They've turned away 50 families this year alone.

There are two parts to this problem. The first piece is that these agencies are not being given the support that

they need to address the increase in demand for their services. The second piece is that this Conservative government doesn't understand the obstacles that working people and low-income people face. They don't get what it's like to be physically unable to work and to be told that you have to live in poverty, or to work full-time for minimum wage and be told that your wages shouldn't increase by another dollar because you get paid too much already. They don't understand that a voluntary panel on domestic violence is the least we can do to support victims, so they cut it.

It's our job in the official opposition to remind the government of their responsibilities. I hope they will hear this message, take it to heart and make some serious changes to actually support our vulnerable neighbours and the agencies that serve them.

1510

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to say a few words about the government's plan to unwind Bill 148. The government often talks about hitting the pause button. But in actual fact, especially today, they're hitting the rewind button. I say that because holding the minimum wage at \$14 an hour and not allowing it to increase to \$15 an hour is the wrong thing to do for families. Fifteen dollars is barely enough to get along in most cities in Ontario—especially not Toronto. It just allows people to do the kinds of things that most of us take for granted, for themselves and their families.

It's the wrong thing to do to eliminate the two paid days of personal leave if you're sick or your mum dies or your child is sick or you have a family emergency. And then, to move to eight days of unpaid leave and restrict those by category, again, is wrong as well.

In the province of Ontario, when they change this law, if your mum passes away or your uncle passes away, you get two days off unpaid. That's it. That's all you get. That's wrong. That is totally wrong. That change, in itself, is a reason to oppose what they're going to do. Also, eliminating equal pay for equal work is wrong.

It's a sad day for Ontario when they're taking those rights away from workers. The Premier can find jobs for his tour director and jobs for a former party president at \$350,000 a year, but he can't do enough to protect workers here in Ontario.

ABB BURLINGTON

Ms. Jane McKenna: Last week, I had the opportunity to tour and spend some time with the people who run ABB in Burlington. It was exhilarating to tour the facility and learn a tiny bit about the truly amazing and vital work that they do.

ABB is a Swedish-Swiss multinational headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland. They operate mainly in robotics, power, heavy electrical equipment and automation technology. It is the fifth-largest Swiss company by revenue.

This is the kind of company the world is talking about. ABB actually built a major portion of the power grid in Canada. As urban centres develop farther and farther away from power sources, we need to find new ways of efficiently transporting energy from where it is available to where it is needed.

ABB is a pioneer of high-voltage direct current transmission, enabling grids to transport greater levels of power over longer distances with minimal losses. ABB refers to this time in history as the fourth industrial revolution. As robotics and artificial intelligence applications continue to gather momentum, ABB is applying the pragmatic to the promise.

I was very impressed and immensely proud to have ABB operating in Burlington.

I want to extend my gratitude to Ark Kalinowski, Stephanie Medeiros, Trevor Butcher, Ravinder Basanti-Johal, Shelley Babin, Kevin deRee and Carolina Gallo for taking time out of their busy day to show me what they do and outline how it is done.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Joel Harden: Like a lot of my colleagues, today I want to rise on behalf of 1.7 million minimum wage workers in this province who need a raise. We've just had \$14 an hour, and as someone else has just said, the prospective wage increase for them to \$15 an hour won't happen in January.

But, Speaker, do you know what I find curious under this government? They managed to find a wage increase for Mayo Schmidt, the guy they fired from Hydro One, the six-million-dollar man, who will be cashing out stock options under rules this government has and enjoying \$11 million in compensation in this year. Shame on them.

They found an opportunity for Ian Todd, the new trade representative, to get a \$75,000 raise.

It offends their sensibilities when the very elites these people claim to be opposing are the ones they prop up, the ones they allow to lavish themselves at the taxpayers' expense.

I want to give you folks a message from Ottawa Centre. The outrage around this well exceeds my riding. In the neighbouring riding to mine, Ottawa West-Nepean, hundreds of citizens brought to me petitions on fighting for the \$15-an-hour minimum wage. They gave them to me to read into the record today.

I want every Conservative in this House to know, if you won your seat by a narrow margin and you decide to shaft minimum wage workers, you are living on borrowed time. It's time to make sure people making minimum wage in the province have respect.

WHITBY YOUTH COUNCIL

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to speak about the town of Whitby's youth council. The council includes 40 young men and women from local high schools and elementary schools. Together with adult advisers from the town, staff

and various community groups, the council's priorities are outreach programming for youth and the recruitment of new volunteers.

Among key events held this year was the Whitby Youth Fair where 800 students attended to see several exhibitors offering a variety of services to assist youth. The fourth annual Art Attack was also held in partnership with Whitby's Station Gallery. This event encouraged Whitby artists between the ages of 12 and 18 to submit works of art to be showcased during Youth Week.

I'd like to acknowledge the foresight of Whitby's newly elected mayor, Don Mitchell, and town staff for helping to provide opportunities for youth to contribute in a meaningful way, for encouraging their participation and for helping to make my riding such a great place to live and work for all age groups.

POLISH COMMUNITY

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I had the great pleasure of attending the annual gala hosted by the Canadian Polish Congress this past Saturday, bringing greetings on behalf of the Premier and our government, in celebration of 100 years of Polish independence, together with my colleagues from Mississauga and Etobicoke.

I would like to congratulate the newly elected directors of the national head executive board, led by president-elect Mr. Janusz Tomczak. As a former two-term director myself, I look forward to working closely with the Canadian Polish Congress on building relationships with the vibrant Polish diaspora in Ontario, as well as stronger economic ties between Ontario and Poland.

This year is very significant for Polish Canadians, as well as Poles around the world, including myself. With the conclusion of World War I, after 123 years of partitions and being wiped out from the map of Europe, Poland became an independent sovereign state on November 11, 1918.

I encourage all members to attend upcoming events hosted in their ridings to celebrate 100 years of Polish independence, including those hosted by my friends at the Canadian Polish Congress.

Canada and Poland share the same values of democracy, sovereignty and the rule of law. As allied nations, we stand together in the face of adversity and in the defence of our common values.

Remarks in Polish.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

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, as amended:

Bill 4, An Act respecting the preparation of a climate change plan, providing for the wind down of the cap and trade program and repealing the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016 / Projet de loi 4, Loi concernant l'élaboration d'un plan sur le changement climatique, prévoyant la liquidation du programme de plafonnement et d'échange et abrogeant la Loi de 2016 sur l'atténuation du changement climatique et une économie sobre en carbone.

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 3, 2018, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Randy Hillier: I beg leave to present the second report of 2018 from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Hillier presents the committee's report.

Report presented.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Not at this time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MAKING ONTARIO OPEN FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 POUR UN ONTARIO OUVERT AUX AFFAIRES

Mr. Wilson moved first 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1520 to 1525.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Wilson has moved that leave be given to introduce a bill entitled 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.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Ghamari, Goldie	Parsa, Michael
Baber, Roman	Gill, Parm	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Sabawy, Sheref
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Sandhu, Amarjot
Barrett, Toby	Hillier, Randy	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Kanapathi, Logan	Scott, Laurie
Bouma, Will	Karahalios, Belinda	Simard, Amanda
Calandra, Paul	Kramp, Daryl	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kusendova, Natalia	Smith, Dave
Cho, Stan	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Tangri, Nina
Crawford, Stephen	Martow, Gila	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McDonell, Jim	Tibollo, Michael A.
Downey, Doug	McKenna, Jane	Wai, Daisy
Dunlop, Jill	Miller, Norman	Walker, Bill
Elliott, Christine	Mulrone, Caroline	Wilson, Jim
Fee, Amy	Oosterhoff, Sam	Yurek, Jeff
Fullerton, Merrilee	Park, Lindsey	

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

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Monteith-Farrell, Judith
Arthur, Ian	Gretzky, Lisa	Morrison, Suze
Begum, Doly	Harden, Joel	Natyshak, Taras
Berns-McGown, Rima	Hassan, Faisal	Schreiner, Mike
Bourgouin, Guy	Hatfield, Percy	Shaw, Sandy
Burch, Jeff	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Sara
Coteau, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Karpoche, Bhutla	Stiles, Marit
Fife, Catherine	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Fraser, John	Lalonde, Marie-France	Taylor, Monique
French, Jennifer K.	Lindo, Laura Mae	Vanthof, John
Gates, Wayne	Mamakwa, Sol	West, Jamie
Gélinas, France	Mantha, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 38.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the minister care to give a brief statement explaining his bill?

1530

Hon. Jim Wilson: The Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018, will, if passed, remove job-killing regulatory burdens for businesses while continuing to maintain strong protections for workers.

This legislation will broadly repeal certain changes to employment standards and labour relations that the previous government made through Bill 148.

This act will also introduce measures to wind down the Ontario College of Trades and address regulations that

prevent businesses from hiring as many skilled trades-people as they need.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Will the members please take their seats.

Introduction of bills?

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Spadina–Fort York on a point of order.

Mr. Chris Glover: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce two people in the members' gallery. We have John Cartwright from the Toronto Labour Council and Susan MacPherson. Thank you for coming.

PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition 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 support this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Albert.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas students living in York region attending York University’s Keele campus will be affected by the two-fared system from York Region Transit (YRT) and the TTC; and

“Whereas students will pay \$3.75 with a Presto card or \$4 cash for a ride on the YRT and have to transfer to the subway contracted under the TTC at Pioneer Village station and pay an additional \$3 with a Presto card or \$3.25 cash fare; and

“Whereas many students would have to walk more than 20 minutes to get to some of their classes to avoid paying additional fares;

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

“To remove the two-fared system and allow students who ride the YRT to transfer to the TTC without paying an additional fare, regardless of if or whether or not they use a Presto card.”

Of course, I affix my signature and support this petition, and I give it to page Sophie S. There must be two Sophies.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled, “Don’t Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws,” which I’d like to remind you that 75% of Ontarians support.

“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.”

I fully support this petition. I will be signing it as well and giving it to page Honora.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

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

“Whereas students living in York region attending York University’s Keele campus will be affected by the two-fared system from York Region Transit (YRT) and the TTC; and

“Whereas students will pay \$3.75 with a Presto card or \$4 cash for a ride on the YRT and have to transfer to the subway contracted under the TTC at Pioneer Village station and pay an additional \$3 with a Presto card or \$3.25 cash fare; and

“Whereas many students would have to walk more than 20 minutes to get to some of their classes to avoid paying additional fares;

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

“To remove the two-fared system and allow students who ride the YRT to transfer to the TTC without paying an additional fare, regardless of if or whether or not they use a Presto card.”

I agree with this and will pass it off to Eilayah.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Jamie West: Like my colleagues, I have many petitions. This one is:

“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, 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.”

1540

I wholeheartedly support this, affix my signature and will give it to page Sophia.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Monique Lelièvre and Anne-Marie Higgs from Hanmer in my riding for collecting all these names on this petition, which reads as follows:

“Save the Breast Screening and Assessment Service....

“Whereas Premier Doug Ford promised that there would not be cuts to nurses’ positions; and

“Whereas in Sudbury we have already lost 70 nurses, and Health Sciences North is closing part of” their breast screening service; and

“Whereas cuts to the” breast screening and assessment service “will result in longer wait times, which is very stressful for women diagnosed with breast cancer; and

“Whereas cuts to the” breast screening program “will only take us backwards”;

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Provide adequate funding to Health Sciences North to ensure northerners have equitable access to life-saving programs such as the Breast Screening and Assessment Service.”

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I have a 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;

“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 that no worker is left without protection.”

I fully endorse this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Honora to bring to the Clerk.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Ian Arthur: I’d like to present this petition to the Legislature called “Fund Our Schools.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas too many children are going to school in buildings without proper heating or cooling, with leaky roofs or stairways overdue for repair;

“Whereas after years of Conservative and Liberal governments neglecting schools, the backlog of needed repairs has reached \$16 billion;

“Whereas during the 2018 election, numerous members of the Conservative Party, including the current Minister of Education, pledged to provide adequate, stable funding for Ontario’s schools;

“Whereas less than three weeks into the legislative session, Doug Ford and the Conservative government have already cut \$100 million in much-needed school repairs, leaving our children and educators to suffer in classrooms that are unsafe and unhealthy;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Education to immediately reverse the decision to cut \$100 million in school repair funding, and invest the \$16 billion needed to tackle the repair backlog in Ontario’s schools.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and hand it to page Rose.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jill Andrew: I present this on behalf of Toronto–St. Paul’s.

“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, 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.”

I sign and hand it to Sophie.

INJURED WORKERS

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition titled “Workers’ Comp is a Right.” It’s a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

“Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

“Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

“Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages, and protection from discrimination;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

“Eliminate the practice of ‘deeming’ or ‘determining,’ which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

“Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

“Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on ‘pre-existing conditions’ that never affected the worker’s ability to function prior to the work injury.”

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

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCESS TO NATURAL GAS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR L’ACCÈS AU GAZ NATUREL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 18, 2018, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to put a few words on this bill regarding access to natural gas. Let’s start by making it clear: I represent the riding of Nickel Belt. Nickel Belt is one of those big northern ridings that goes south to the French River, a beautiful area—

Hon. Todd Smith: Beautiful.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely.

Hon. Todd Smith: Good fishing there.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes—and north to Ivanhoe, Foleyet and Mattagami First Nation. It's about 450 kilometres south to north and about 250 kilometres east to west, so it's one of those big northern ridings. The city of Greater Sudbury has its own riding; it is the riding of Sudbury. But none of the 33 little communities that I represent are big enough to—none of them had an election yesterday. They're all too small for that.

What I can tell you is that for many of those 33 little communities, the only way to heat is using electricity. We all know what has happened to our electricity system. The privatization that was started under the Harris government and continued full blast under the Liberal government has brought our hydro bills through the roof. For the people that I represent, it's either you chop wood to heat your house or you crank up the baseboards, which means using more and more electricity.

Some of us actually have electric furnaces where it's forced air, but it is still based on electricity. For anybody in my riding who heats with electricity, I guarantee you every month the bill is over a thousand bucks, starting about now and all the way to the end of March.

1550

So when they look at some of the people who live within the city of Greater Sudbury—because a lot of my riding is around the city of Greater Sudbury—and they see people with natural gas, they say, “I want that.”

We have great big pipes that go through, I would say, not even a kilometre away from where my house is. We have the main pipe for the gas that goes straight through my riding, from one end to the next. They had to replace a nine-inch pipe with a 12-inch pipe. I'm not very knowledgeable about that kind of stuff, but I can see it happening, because the road has been blocked for, I don't know, a year and a half now, and we have to go around because they're replacing the pipes and everything else.

But none of us are connected. I live in the heart of the Canadian Shield. Remember when you learned about the geography of Ontario, and the Canadian Shield and everything? Well, you put a pin in the middle of the Canadian Shield, and this is where I live. What does that mean? That means that there's a lot of rock. That means that to bring natural gas to us means drill and blast. I'm talking drill and blast—you have to. There's no digging of the earth with a backhoe or an excavator. You're talking rocks. My house is on a chunk of rock and so are my neighbours', and this is how it is.

Would we like to have access to natural gas? Absolutely. I would cut my heating bills in half. Who wouldn't want to do that? But is it realistic? Apparently, it never was. It never was, until the government put forward this \$100 million that they were going to give to the company to make natural gas available to areas like us, where there is a high density of population. The people who live in Whitefish and Beaver Lake—there are a couple of thousand of us, a couple of thousand houses, that live there. We would all love to be connected to a natural gas line. We can all see it go by, but none of us can connect.

But now, all of this is sort of up in the air. We have Bill 32. Bill 32 makes it clear that the money that was available

to bring natural gas to people like me and the people I represent is no longer there. Now Bill 32, the Access to Natural Gas Act, leaves it up to the government to allow the natural gas company to charge all of you guys who are already connected a higher premium to bring gas to people like me—except that it never says that in the bill. This is what the Conservative government says when they talk about Bill 32. But I read Bill 32, and nowhere do you see “rural” in there. I am not in that bill, Speaker.

What are my fears with that bill? First of all, when I saw all of the construction and developers who were there at the press conference, I got a little bit worried. I know that there is a lot of suburban sprawl, they call it, around big urban areas. The people who live there want natural gas. Usually it would be the people who build a new neighbourhood who would be responsible for bringing the natural gas to those new homes that they want to build.

So a little flag goes up in the back of my mind that says, “This is not for me.” This is not for the good people of northern Ontario that I represent. This is not for rural Ontario. This is all for the urban sprawl, so that the people who build new neighbourhoods close to big urban areas will get to have all of this work subsidized by the rest of you who are already connected to the natural gas.

That's kind of a bit deceiving. I'm not sure if I'm allowed to say that, Mr. Speaker. You say that access to natural gas—the entire press conference talked about northern Ontario galore, they talked about rural Ontario galore, but none of that is in the bill. So if you say this is so that you can bring natural gas to northern and rural, why don't you say it?

Certainly, I see the Minister of Agriculture, who is there. The OFA, the association of farmers of Ontario, certainly have been wanting access to natural gas. It would be a whole lot cheaper for them to farm, to bring their products to market, to dry the hay and to do all of this if they had access to natural gas. But it doesn't say that in the bill. It doesn't say that at all.

You can read the entire bill, Speaker, and what you see is the Ontario Energy Board, which used to make sure that whenever we expanded natural gas, we did this for the good of the consumer. Let's face it: We have a great big monopoly in Ontario when it comes to natural gas companies. It's not like there's one on every corner. No, there's a great big monopoly. So whenever they wanted to expand, the Ontario Energy Board would review what they intended to do, to make sure that it was in the public interest. Not only would they be allowed to make money—there's nothing wrong with them staying in business—but it would be in the public interest.

Now we have kind of borrowed a page from the Liberals when they made decisions about our hydro system. Remember our hydro system that nobody can afford anymore? How did we get there? We got there because the Liberal government decided to privatize. They decided that it would not be planners and the OEB who would review expansion and who would make recommendations on decisions; the decisions would be based on basically political goals.

Yes, the Liberals were able to do a whole bunch of fundraising, and I'm sure it helped their party tremendously—their coffers, anyway—but the end result is that they stick us with the bill.

I could see this doing the exact same thing. You remove the oversight of the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, which makes sure that when a project is there, it is for the good of the community and for the good of the people of Ontario. You put the charge on the bills of the existing ratepayers, and you make sure that your friends and the well-connected—it won't be friends and well-connected Liberals anymore; it will be friends and well-connected Conservatives—get to have access to natural gas.

The good people of Nickel Belt, who have voted NDP for the last 51 years—there aren't too many well-connected. There are Conservatives; there probably are, but they're not on my radar. What are the chances that the good people of Nickel Belt, who are supposed to be targeted by that bill, actually get natural gas? If I was a betting person, Speaker, I wouldn't bet on that one. It doesn't look too good.

Here we have a program—so as you start to read the bill, you realize things, such as if a natural gas company incurred expenses to bring natural gas to a place where they didn't go, they incurred costs. Then the government, through an order in council, will decide how much money they're allowed to charge everyone to compensate them for that.

There is no transparency in that. It's not a far stretch to think that it will have cost them—and I'll invent that—\$1 million to bring natural gas to a new subdivision, but they will charge \$6 million back.

There is nothing in the bill that brings in transparency. There is nothing in the bill that brings in accountability.

What you have is, you have removed the accountability that comes from the Ontario Energy Board, and you've put all of this on the backs of politicians. I am sorry; as much as all of you guys are very good people with lots of knowledge and skills, none of you can do the job of the Ontario Energy Board. Those are people who are specializing in this and can make sure that we get value for taxpayers' money.

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The bill leaves the door wide open to, I would say, patronage decisions, where it's not where it makes the most sense, it's not where we would make greater value, but it is where a well-connected entrepreneur who wants to bring in a subdivision to an urban sprawl area and doesn't want to pay for the cost of natural gas will get the natural gas company to raise money by increasing everybody's bill and then do something that really should have never been paid by the ratepayer; it should have been paid by the entrepreneur who wants to develop this new subdivision. How is this supposed to help access to natural gas in rural and northern Ontario again? There's a huge disconnect, and that makes me nervous.

Do I want a more affordable heating source for the people I represent? Yes, absolutely. Do I see the opportunity to connect when I can see the pipe from my—not quite.

I don't see it from my house because there's a bit of a hill, but I could see it if the hill wasn't there. If I'm picking blueberries on the top of the hill, I can see the pipe. But this is not for me. None of that is ever going to help the people of Whitefish and Beaver Lake and Worthington ever get connected. We will continue to see, basically, natural gas being available to people to whom it would have been available anyway. The contractor who built that subdivision would have put in natural gas because it's pretty hard to sell a house in Ontario that heats with electricity right now. It doesn't matter how beautiful your house is. It doesn't matter how well located your house is. The first thing that people will ask you is, "How do you heat your house?" If the answer is with electricity, they put a big X and go visit the next house. So the person building that subdivision would have paid to have natural gas.

Now you have given them direct access to the pockets of hard-working Ontarians. You have given them direct access to their wallets with no accountability and no transparency. This is not good. This is not how you work for the people. When you say that you're going to give access to natural gas to the people of rural and northern Ontario, you don't only say it in a press release; you put it in your bill. Well, I'm not in the bill. "Rural" is not in that bill. You can say whatever you want. I'm able to read. I'm able to read a bill, and I'm able to say that what you have said and what you have written is not the same. How do you explain the disconnect? You have some accountability to do. This is why we talk about those bills.

There was some reaction, of course. Some of the communities, mainly First Nations, but other communities in the Far North of Ontario, still produce electricity with diesel. You can imagine how much pollution there is when you have those humongous diesel generators bringing electricity to a community. You can smell it from miles away.

They also often see the natural gas pipe go not that far away from where they live. When they see a bill that says "access to natural gas," they would like to have access to the grid. They would like to have access to natural gas. There are ways to have compressed natural gas brought in by big tankers and stuff and to make it available. This is what "access to natural gas" means to the people of northern Ontario. But this is not for us, Speaker. This bill is not to give us access. It is not for rural Ontario. It is not for northern Ontario. This bill has been written so that the urban sprawl that you guys all see down south can continue and that the developers won't have to pay for the installation of natural gas. They will go into the pockets of all of you lucky ones who are already connected to natural gas and they will raise up your bill so that their good friends don't have to pay to bring natural gas to those places. If this is not what your bill is supposed to do, then put it down in writing. It won't be a surprise to you that we will be bringing amendments to this bill.

Do I support the end goal: bringing access to natural gas? I would support anything that will help my constituents get rid of thousand-dollar hydro bills every single month. Because they can't afford this; because they are losing their houses; because chopping wood when you're

84 years old is too hard. They can't do that anymore. They need a source of heat to make it through the harsh winters of northern Ontario that they can afford, and right now, that means connecting to natural gas.

I love the title of Bill 32: the Access to Natural Gas Act. The people in my riding like that. But I don't like the bill, because as soon as you start to read the bill, you realize that it is a page taken right off of the Liberals. The Liberals have tried this before. They have made deals for the well-connected friends of the Liberals, and all of us will pay for it through our electricity bills for generations to come.

I can see this doing the exact same thing, where you give access to the big natural gas company to increase the rate, with the goal of increasing natural gas, and what you will do is, the rate of natural gas will be so expensive that it will not be worth it anymore for people to connect. Once you start to pay \$1,000 a month for your natural gas bill, you will do what we are doing right now: look at other sources of energy so that you can stay comfortable in your house in the winter.

So it's a good title, a good end goal, but not a good bill.

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: I applaud the member. She is obviously very passionate about her riding and her community, but she highlights some of the many troubles that we've been facing since we came to government, and that Ontarians have been facing.

When she talks about thousand-dollar energy bills for heating homes, it is unacceptable. It's not, of course, just in her riding; it's in vast parts of rural Ontario as well. The northern parts of my riding are not connected to gas. In fact, I had to spend \$4,500 to bring gas to my farm, which was quite in the middle of nowhere. I had to spend that.

The system that the previous government brought in place—I know the member would agree with me—was just not working. It just wasn't getting to people. Not many people were able to connect to natural gas. So we've brought in a new system that will allow the cost of connecting communities to be spread out over a larger grouping of people. This is something we heard in consultations, not only with industry but also with community groups that had gone through this, that had sought to be connected.

The member is also quite correct in the sense that we also have to look at other alternatives. She's right. The Canadian Shield—it is going to be difficult in a lot of areas to get connected. That's why, of course, it's part of a broader program. The Minister of Energy has brought forward a program to bring down the cost of energy. We're looking at connecting rural and remote communities. She talked about First Nations. There are 25 of them who are not connected to the grid. That will be down to five because we are connecting those communities.

So there is a lot of work to be done. I have absolutely no doubt about the member's sincerity on this—but this is what we want to do. It is unacceptable in a province as rich as we are that we have the debt that we have and that we have people in her community chopping wood to try and

get through the winter. It's unacceptable. This bill seeks to remedy that—

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

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Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I want to pick up on the comments of my colleague from Nickel Belt and speaking as the critic for poverty and homelessness.

I remember a few weeks ago when my colleague from Kiiwetinoong spoke about a young constituent, Karlena Kamenawatamin, who committed suicide at the age of 13. He spoke about some of the contributing factors to her death by suicide. He brought this Legislature to a standstill. People were very emotional. I think it's really important to remember that he was speaking about the extreme poverty in which her family was living, that she had lived for seven years in the cold of those northern Ontario winters without electricity and without heat.

I think that it's really important, that this is a moment to think about the importance of having reconciliation first and foremost in the government's mind as it goes about making legislation. Because if it isn't, then you end up with bills that do not have the substance that backs up these names, and then you end up with situations where you continue to perpetuate the lack—the lack of electricity, the lack of access—to what southern Ontarians have and the conditions of extreme poverty that allow for conditions in which young people continue to take their lives. I think it's important to keep this right in front of you as you're making legislation.

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

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt as well for her presentation, and of course my colleague from Markham–Stouffville.

I think we can all agree in this House that obviously there are Ontarians, especially the rural folks, who are really impacted by this. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, during the election and since, I've had the opportunity to speak to many, many residents in my riding who are living in rural parts of Milton and are impacted and don't have access to natural gas, either. A lot of these individuals are either small businesses, farmers or seniors, and they don't have the option of picking and choosing. Most are dependent to heat their home either through hydro or oil or other means. Allowing them the access—should this bill go through, there would be a lot of Ontarians that would benefit from this initiative. It will be a significant savings by switching to natural gas, savings in the neighbourhood of anywhere from \$800 to roughly \$2,500 per year. For some of these residents, farmers and small businesses, that would go a long, long way in terms of helping them and helping their families.

Our government got elected on the basis of putting money back in the pockets of Ontarians. That's exactly what we're doing with every single initiative. Every single piece of legislation that we're bringing forward is geared to put money in the pockets of Ontarians.

I would encourage the opposition to support the government on this important initiative, and I'm looking forward to it.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'd like to thank my colleague from Nickel Belt as well as the others who have spoken.

I find it quite interesting. It's as though we're speaking at cross purposes. Everybody in the House seems to agree that access to natural gas is what would help to bring bills down and the cost of heating down, and that's fantastic. But what I keep hearing, as well, is that there doesn't seem to be an understanding that if things aren't put into legislation, if actual words are just spoken in the House as opposed to included in the bill, then these options aren't going to be options for a large segments of Ontario. Our rural Ontarians, northern Ontarians and the Indigenous and first peoples will not have access. Part of that is because it's not just Ontarians as individual residents that we're talking about who need access, but it's also that this bill, without putting in this information, is giving more options for companies to choose to not actually service particular areas. I think that's actually where our colleague from Nickel Belt is trying to get the government to take a moment and think about it.

If we actually have the political will that is being stated when people are standing in this House that we do want northerners and we do want rural Ontarians to have access to natural gas, then there should be no problem with putting those words into the bill. So that leaves me with a question: Why? Why would we be having this debate over and over again? If it's this simple and we all agree on something, then hurray for us. Let's get it into the bill and move along to other things like affordable housing. Let's move along to other things like ensuring access to health care. Let's stop cutting our wages, etc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'll return to the member from Nickel Belt to wrap up this part of the debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Markham–Stouffville, Beaches–East York and Milton as well as Kitchener Centre for their comments.

I would say, it's clear that the end goal of the bill is something that everybody can support. I have put out difficulties with the bill, some of these having to do—the expansions of natural gas have make economic sense and they have to serve the public interest. This is what the OEB was there to do. By removing this, then you sort of leave it open to things such as a developer getting discounted natural gas installations that are funded by existing customers, which is not exactly what we want to do.

Let's make sure that the bill says that and prevents that. When the bill says a natural "gas distributor is entitled to be compensated for lost revenue," let's make sure that the actual compensation is determined and must be equal to the lost revenue. None of that is in the bill. You're opening the door to a natural gas company going into the pockets of the 2.5 million customers that they have in Ontario right now every single month without having strong oversight

and accountability to make sure that this money ends up supporting the end goal, which is to bring natural gas to people like me who live in northern and rural areas.

There is also this idea that you can advertise on the bill. I was not a big fan when the Liberals did it; I don't think it's a good idea for the Conservatives to do it either.

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: It's always an honour to be able to speak in this Legislature. I'd like to thank all of the members who have spoken today on this important issue but also thank those who have spoken over the last few weeks on this issue.

I agree with the member from Nickel Belt that this is a very important issue, and it affects many different people across this province, especially in rural and northern communities. It's important to me, and I think to every single person in this Legislature, that people have access to natural gas. That's why the previous government, the Liberal government, allocated \$100 million to look at supporting projects in municipalities in different parts of Ontario to make that process happen as quickly as possible and to make sure that all communities that were part of those projects had the ability to bring natural gas to their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I've always been a big supporter of natural gas. Anything that helps affordability issues for families but also adds to a cleaner grid in the system I think is good for Ontarians. And I often think about the fact that over the last decade we've had a significant shift in our electrical grid in this province, making it one of the cleanest jurisdictions in North America by moving to a cleaner energy production grid and distribution system in Ontario.

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I remember during the last campaign talking to someone at the door about electricity. It's obviously a very complex issue. When you look at the energy grid and the distribution in Ontario, and even within a municipality, you'll see that there are old legacy projects. It's really, in many ways, many different systems working together. But I was proud to be a Liberal that looked for ways to get rid of dirty energy production in this province. As a result, Mr. Speaker, we've seen a substantial decrease in respiratory issues when it comes to hospitalization here in Ontario.

I've heard a few of the members opposite talk about the power grid here in Ontario and that it is clean, so we're starting to hear some comments from the government that speak to them being proud of the system that they've inherited from the previous government. Of course, there are also some criticisms. But I think as Ontarians we should be very proud that we've been able to eliminate dirty energy production and look for ways to really expand energy and innovation to make it more affordable, and to ensure that people get the best possible options when it comes to electricity.

But, Mr. Speaker, this bill, Bill 32—the intention is a good intention. It's the same intention that the Liberal government had, and that was to increase access, which I

think everyone in this Legislature would agree to. But what they've done here, Mr. Speaker, if you take a good look at the bill—and anyone watching at home or anyone here can receive a copy, go online and get a copy of Bill 32. You'll notice, when you open up the bill, the actual information in relation to this proposed act—well, an amendment to the act. This is the French side and this is the English side. It's really one page. It's actually one and a half pages, if you look at both sides. Really, it doesn't tell us much in regard to what the government is going to do.

What it does say is that it's going to use regulation. It changes its regulatory ability to use regulation to make those changes. I think that's what a couple of the previous speakers—I know the member from Kitchener and also the member from Nickel Belt spoke to the fact that the legislation, the proposed legislation or amendment to the act, doesn't really speak to what those changes will look like long-term.

I know the minister responsible for the file has suggested that, rather than take the \$100 million that was allocated by the previous government—and they've cancelled that—they are now going to shift it to the tax base. Sorry, not the tax base, but the end user. So they're now going to ask customers of natural gas to chip in, to pay a little bit more, regardless if it's expanding in your territory or your region. But everyone is going to pay a dollar more per month.

I have no problem with that, but I think we need to recognize that there's a bit of a contradiction between what the government goes out and says, on the one hand, on one day—that they're going to put more money in your pocket; they're going to save people money; they're going to save taxpayers money. The next day, they say that they are actually going to make more money from you. I agree; I don't mind paying a little more to help other communities, personally. But the rhetoric that comes out of the Conservative side is always talking about how people's money should not be taken in order to fund things they don't benefit from.

So here we have a situation where a person is going to be charged about \$12 more—at least that's what we've been told so far—per year. When you take all of that money—it may not sound like a lot of money to some people, \$12 a year, but when you take that money and you collect it all and you add it up over 10 years, we're talking about half a billion dollars collected from the end user to help build expansion of natural gas in this province. I think we need to be very careful. We're not talking about a dollar a month. We're not talking about \$12 to the average family per year. We're talking about, over a 10-year period, half a billion dollars in investment.

My question, naturally, to the government would be: Well, what's the plan for that money? How long is the program going to last for? Is there an ability to cap it at a certain amount? Will all end users be billed that extra dollar per month? How does it actually relate back to that narrative that they keep pushing, that they're actually going to save you money? On the one hand, they're very

proud of saying that they're going to save you \$3 a year on beer, if you're a beer drinker; on the other hand, they say that you're going to get charged \$12 more. So there's a bit of a contradiction that keeps coming up from this government.

In three and a half years from now, there will be an election. People start getting ready three years from now. People think that that's a long time. I've been here; this is my third term now. People think that one term is a long time. It goes by very quickly. People do pay attention to what is taking place in this Legislature. The perception out there is that this government is moving fast. It's moving really fast. It's fast times in Ontario, like *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, if you remember that movie. These are fast times in Ontario, really fast times.

But here's the thing that people will start to determine: Are we moving fast in a forward direction or are we moving fast in a backwards direction? From what I've seen so far over the last four months, we are moving backwards in this province. To some Conservatives, that actually might be a good thing. It's back to the good old days, where people could make less an hour—not the \$15, but the \$14—or the curriculum is based on the 1970s and 1980s. It's like going back in time, and that's what the Conservatives would like to go back to: back to the good old days.

Let me get back to point, Mr. Speaker, because I've drifted off a bit and I'll admit it. The challenge with what they've done here—and I think this speaks to the confidence of businesses in this province, which have left a lot of projects in limbo. They don't know what's going to happen next. There's no clarity. This government is very good at cancelling contracts. They're so good at cancelling them, you can't even sue them because they made it illegal to sue them. So you can't sue them.

They talk about building confidence in this province, bringing business back into the province, even though we have our lowest unemployment rate in 40 years. We have the most direct foreign investment. We had more buildings being built in the GTA in 2012-13 than all of North America combined.

Mr. Paul Calandra: We also have the highest debt.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Even though none of that stuff is taking place—

Mr. Paul Calandra: We have the highest debt in the world.

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, can you ask the member opposite to really lower his voice? It's really hard to even hear my own voice on this side.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We will come to order. We do have a full afternoon in front of us. The member from Don Valley East was quiet when others were speaking and he would expect the same in return. So please come to order and allow the member to continue his dialogue this afternoon.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope the members listen to those wise words

from the Speaker, because this is a place where we need to be respectful of each other and really listen. I find that the policies today—talking about working with each other—seem to push so much on one side that it causes a reaction on the other side. We need to find way to come into the middle as MPPs and really do what's best for Ontarians.

The member from Markham–Stouffville—I think that's where he's from—just said that the people of Ontario spoke and that's why we've been reduced to a small size as Liberals; and we hear that a lot from the other side. But I have to remind the member opposite that there were 1.2 million Ontarians who voted for Liberals in the last election. We may be small, but 1.2 million—they got 2.2 million and the NDP got about 1.7 million. But 1.2 million Ontarians voted for the Liberals; they have a voice in this Legislature, and we need to listen to each other.

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But back to what I was saying about the confidence of Ontarians in the government today: by cancelling these types of projects without really giving any indication of where you're going—and again, back to Bill 32, it's just a bunch of regulations. It doesn't really give us details on what's happening next.

Mr. Speaker, I have a document in front of me that one of my colleagues prepared, with a list of different contracts. These are projects that, I believe, have been cancelled. Projects in Chatham-Kent—there's an \$8-million—

Applause.

Mr. Michael Coteau: They're clapping because they cancelled the projects to bring natural gas.

Mr. Paul Calandra: No, the wind project.

Mr. Michael Coteau: No, these are the natural gas projects.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I think the member from Markham–Stouffville wants to say something, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Markham–Stouffville will have his opportunity later in the afternoon, I am sure. The next time the member from Markham–Stouffville continues to interrupt I will warn him. I will warn him once and then I will name him, so please come to order. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, he's new here. I know he has had some political experience before, but when you get warned—I'll just let him know; the member from Markham–Stouffville should know. When you get warned and you keep doing that, the Speaker can throw you out of the building, so just be careful about what you do next.

Mr. Speaker, I have a list of the different projects that are going to be cancelled here in Ontario. There are so many projects that are being cancelled. It's really sad. Northshore and Peninsula Roads, an \$8-million project to bring natural gas into that community, is being cancelled. Cornwall Island, a \$3.4-million project that was part of the \$100 million, is being cancelled. South Bruce was up for \$27 million, apparently, for a project out there. On and on and on, there are all these different projects to bring natural

gas into Ontario that would have been paid through the tax base, but now they've moved that investment from the tax base, that \$100 million that was allocated, because they don't want it on their books. What they've done is that they've started to look for ways to bring it back to the end user.

This is an old Conservative trick. What they ended up doing—

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, I can't even hear myself. I thought you were getting up there to stop them from—oh, there you go, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Government members, please, please come to order. I get the sense that the member from Don Valley East is enjoying cranking you up this afternoon. He is entertaining himself, but you are responding in such a manner that you are disrupting the flow of the House, so please come to order. Chuckle as opposed to heckle. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope the House leader over there can let his colleagues know that there's a certain decorum that we have to maintain in this Legislature, and I would hope that the Conservatives would extend the courtesy to listen to some of the words that I'm bringing forward to speak on behalf of my constituents, who are very concerned about the tricks that the ND—sorry, that the Conservatives—

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Well, they've been working together, I see. They always accuse us of working together. I'm sure they'll work together over the next four years once or twice.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Probably not.

Mr. Michael Coteau: They say probably not.

But these are old tricks, Mr. Speaker. To actually take the investment from the tax base and move it to the end user—you know, it's the same person who's going to end up paying. These are hard-working families in Ontario who are going to end up paying the bill for these expansions. To move it off of their books and put it back to the end user is something that Conservatives usually do. They're called user fees. They have done this before where they cancelled programs that help subsidize young people or school projects, and they actually look for ways to make up for that by having the families pay those bills. I'm sure we're going to see more and more of that over the next few years here in the Legislature.

But one of the things I've noticed was that over the last few weeks the only indications we have got in regard to Bill 32 are from members on the other side who said some interesting things.

The Minister of Infrastructure said that the Liberal government banned private sector participation. It's hard to understand, because most of the sector out there that delivers natural gas is the private sector, so I don't know how that's possible.

They also said that the Liberals tried to get rid of natural gas here in the province. For a few weeks a few years ago, that was a big thing to them. They said that we were trying

to get rid of natural gas, even though we committed \$100 million to make sure that natural gas could be expanded. This was the first government in the history of Ontario, the first government in the history of this great, beautiful province, to actually make a major investment into natural gas, which is being cancelled by the Conservatives. Again, it really ends up compromising those projects that are out there.

The member from—I'll tell you where he's from—King—Vaughan—

Hon. Todd Smith: Oh, a good member. He's deputy House leader.

Mr. Michael Coteau: A very nice guy, I have to admit. Yes, a very nice guy. A lot of good people over there.

He said that this is a “no-cost solution.” But how is it a no-cost solution when it adds up to half a billion dollars over 10 years that's going to be billed back to the end user? How is that at no cost? I'll tell you why it's no-cost: Because it's not on their books. They do things in a different way. They'll say that they are going to get rid of the deficit and lower debt, and it's an easy way to do it if you just start charging people—the end user—for the services that they are receiving. It's quite easy. It's like saying in the health care system, Mr. Speaker, “Do you know what? We are going to now start charging a fee for this service, this service and this service, and we'll charge you less taxes.” But people know that you end up paying more. That's a Conservative trick that they've used many times in the past.

The Conservatives have said that it's a no-cost solution. Mr. Speaker, it's going to cost Ontarians a lot of money, and we just need to know what the details are. That's all we're asking for in this Legislature. This is the place where we can ask those questions and get the answers.

Over the next couple of minutes, you'll hear different responses from members. I would love the Conservatives to be able to tell us what the plan is for the next 10 years and why they believe this is not going to cost Ontarians.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the member for Don Valley East. Let us just begin by saying, Mr. Speaker, that revisionism is alive and well in the province of Ontario, in the Liberal Party of Ontario.

I happened to hear some of the banter back and forth between the member from Markham—Stouffville and the member for Don Valley East. He was talking about what would happen if the member was thrown out of the Legislature. I think everyone on this side of the House would feel that that was very sad, but I will tell you that there were very few tears shed when that member and his colleagues were thrown out of government, Mr. Speaker.

Let's be very, very clear. One of the things that I think has been so fascinating is the way he has managed to appear to walk through what he would say is “shuffling around some of the numbers” and his perspective on this. I would have to say that he appears to have a very, very intimate knowledge and an expertise in cooking the books.

The reality is—

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker.

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

Interjection: Niagara West.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Niagara West; I'm sorry. The member for Niagara West will withdraw that comment.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Withdrawn.

Thank you, Speaker, and I do apologize if that perhaps struck a nerve on the part of the member.

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I think it's important, though, that we look back at the Liberal record and we see billions of dollars, whether it's in the Fair Hydro Plan—\$43 billion more for the rate-payers here in Ontario. It's really so tragic when we look back at the last 15 years. The times that they moved around different amounts of money, that they played shell games with the taxpayers' money, are very, very concerning. So I understand why, because of that, the member is so suspicious. He doesn't understand what it's like to see a government that truly respects taxpayers and that is open and accountable with the books.

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

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank the member from Don Valley East and the member from Niagara West for their comments. I'm not sure who has done a worse job at governing the people, the Conservatives or the Liberals, but there's a reason that “Liberal, Tory, same old story” comes to mind.

I want to go back to the member for Nickel Belt earlier, who talked about wanting natural gas and how she could see the pipeline from her house but can't get natural gas, and how Bill 32 doesn't say the word “rural.” When it comes to northern ridings, Sudbury is relatively small. The member from Nickel Belt often will describe herself as the doughnut and I'm the Timbit in between. In terms of the Legislature, I'm the size of the Hansard desk and her riding is the size of this whole building.

It's easy for me to get gas—a large population in a small area—but in rural areas, it's not. The members from across the aisle—Markham—Stouffville, the member from Milton and members from the past from the Conservative Party from rural ridings—keep talking about how important it is, how beneficial it is. Again and again, I feel like we're talking to a brick wall because we keep saying that it doesn't say “rural,” and they keep saying, “Join us. Vote with us.” We want to. We think it's a great idea. We think it should be for northern communities and we think it should be for rural communities. It's a fantastic idea, but the devil is in the details.

What the government is missing in this is the word “rural.” You've got to do more than have it in the title. You have to spell out exactly what's going to happen. If you don't do that, this bill isn't worth the paper it's printed on. What we want is to get natural gas to rural and northern areas and if the bill doesn't say that, people will take advantage of that oversight. Either you change the title to reflect the bill to bring natural gas to our friends, or you

change the contents of the bill to bring it to rural and northern areas.

Where is the transparency? Where is the accountability? And where is the word “rural”?

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's always a privilege to rise here, especially to comment on the member from Don Valley East and some of the holes in the stories. Sometimes it's hard to remember back three months. Their previous project that he was bragging about was serving 10 communities. This project that we're looking at—and theirs was \$100 million. Yes, it's five times more, but we're serving almost eight times more customers. It's not costing the average rural person who is not getting natural gas. It's only charging the people who either have the benefit today or the ones who are going to get the benefit. We're talking about serving 80-some communities, 33,000 customers, a huge enhancement over what they were doing at a great cost. It was \$100 million of taxpayers' dollars.

I hear the term “rural.” I'm sitting in a rural area and the pipe is a couple of hundred feet away. I've tried for 20-some years and I can't get it, because the policy under the former Liberal government wouldn't allow them to bring the pipe up. Our farm that I live on—the main gas line, two of them run through it. They don't have natural gas either because they weren't allowed to extend it there under the current rules. We're enhancing those rules so that the companies can actually charge customers a little bit more money. All I asked was the price, and I couldn't get a price to extend it because they didn't do that under the former rules.

We're looking at having the private sector fund their own through additional payments, much like we've done based on our hydro system. It's based on the same idea; our telephone system was based on the same idea, where everybody in the built-up areas paid a little bit more so everybody got access to this huge economic benefit. That's what we're repeating here for natural gas.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Don Valley East for his comments and his speech. But I was a little taken aback when he talked about the significant shift in the electrical grid. It reminded me of a time when the Mike Harris government started to break apart the hydro system—that system of privatization that the Liberals were all too happy to continue with. And who is bearing the cost of that privatization? Well, it's ratepayers across the province. People are having a very difficult time. It's an absolute disgrace.

Again, as my colleague here from Sudbury said, “Liberal, Tory, same old story.” They may talk a different way, yet they all do the same thing.

The member from Don Valley East also mentioned that this bill doesn't tell us much about what the government is going to do, and I absolutely agree. It could lead to long-term instability, and that's something we should absolutely be concerned about.

The member across from Niagara West talked about revisionism. He mentioned shell games with money. I would posit that we've seen, from this government, the same sort of idea but instead with words. We've heard from this government that they're going to be compassionate, alongside making cuts to social assistance—two words that really don't belong in the same sentence—and, as well, the health and phys ed curriculum. They're going to go back to the one from 2014. Well, it doesn't exist.

Again, we have to really watch what's going on here. I hope the people at home are paying close attention to exactly what this government is saying as opposed to what it is doing.

Again, today, we have a bill that has been brought to the government that's claiming to—the government says it wants good-paying jobs, yet it's going to cut minimum wage. How does that make any sense, Speaker? I don't know.

However, the member from Don Valley East mentioned *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. I would suggest that we should also be talking about *Back to the Future*.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll return to the member from Don Valley East for his two-minute conclusion.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I want to thank all of the speakers, the MPPs in the Legislature, for their words on the comments that I made just a few minutes ago. Thank you so much.

I think that the most important message at the end of the day is—and I've always said this—I want the Conservative government to do well, because if it does well, that means that Ontario does well.

But the one thing that they are lacking at this point, and I think many would agree—there's no real strong vision or plan going forward when it comes to tackling important issues like energy, natural gas, power production, green energy and building a cleaner system. There's really no plan.

Ontarians did have an option. They did support the Conservative government in the last election, and that's the mandate of the people. But the failure to really lay down the foundations of a long-term plan could result in some really negative things happening in this province.

My advice back to the government: They're going to find it's very difficult governing. There are challenges that come up that are unexpected. There are different views that will come from within caucus. My hope is that they can come together and work with members in this Legislature, and experts, to develop a plan that really speaks to the challenges that we're going to encounter over the next few decades in this province.

The more they push to one side, the more the Conservatives push to the right, progressives push even further to the left, fighting those policies. We need to find a middle ground. We need to come together as Ontarians to look for a way to build those bold visions that will help us take on the challenges we're going to encounter over the next few decades in this province. Our environment and energy, without a question, is going to be one of those major issues.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd like to start off, first of all, by thanking the Minister of Infrastructure for introducing Bill 32. This is a piece of legislation that, if passed, would allow our government for the people to provide natural gas to more families and businesses in remote areas, particularly in rural Ontario—places like my riding of Carleton.

Natural gas is an affordable heating option for families and businesses. Approximately 3.5 million residential customers and 130,000 businesses across Ontario currently rely on natural gas. The demand for expanded natural gas access is high not just across Ontario but in my own riding of Carleton.

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I can only think of someone I know that I met back when I first started my campaign. His name is Earl Stanley, and he is the owner of Stanley's Olde Maple Lane Farm. Right when I started, Earl Stanley said to me, "Goldie, we need natural gas." And here we are today. So, Earl, if you're watching or if you're listening: I'm working on it.

Our government has heard from families, businesses and communities across Carleton and Ontario that natural gas expansion is important in order to grow businesses, to create jobs and to compete, not just domestically but internationally.

Switching to natural gas can save an average residential customer between \$80 and \$2,500 a year. Most Ontarians who lack access to natural gas live in rural, remote and First Nations communities—communities like Metcalfe in my riding of Carleton.

This bill would amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, "to provide rate protection for consumers or classes of consumers with respect to costs incurred by a gas distributor in making a qualifying investment for the purpose of providing access to a natural gas distribution system to those consumers. Gas distributors are entitled to be compensated for any resulting lost revenue and all consumers, or such classes of consumers as are prescribed, are required to contribute toward the compensation."

What this means, Mr. Speaker, is that more families can save money by heating their homes with natural gas, which is more cost-effective than the current alternatives; for example, electricity, oil or propane. We all know the story with electricity.

The increased cost to customers to fund this expansion project for natural gas would be much less than the savings that were recently provided by removing the cap-and-trade carbon tax line item from natural gas bills. What this means is that at the end of the day, we are still saving money. This is a net benefit for all Ontarians.

In far too many parts of rural Ontario, including communities such as Metcalfe, families and businesses still don't have access to natural gas. Earl Stanley doesn't let me forget this fact. In southwestern Ontario, it is estimated that as much as 40% of all households don't have access to natural gas.

People in Ontario are working hard, but many are still not able to get by. For the past 15 years, we've had a government in Ontario that has not been concerned with the needs of working-class individuals, let alone the needs of small business owners. With the highest hydro rates in North America, the previous government forced people to choose between heating and eating, and they severely damaged Ontario's rural economy as a result. This is not something that our government is prepared to accept. We can and will raise the bar when it comes to advancing affordability in this province.

Expanding access to natural gas for those living in remote and rural parts of northern Ontario and rural Ontario will put an end to the neglect shown by the previous government. Bill 32 will provide individuals with these cost savings, leaving more money in their pockets.

One of the major reasons that natural gas is so much cheaper than any other method for heating a home is its overabundant supply. According to Union Gas, new, massive deposits in North America, accessed through advanced technology, have translated into record low natural gas prices.

Natural gas is more affordable now than it was a decade ago, and experts agree that natural gas will continue to be competitively priced well into the future. This is important, especially when we look at the current state of international trade and international affairs. With what's going on south of the border, we need to ensure that our businesses can compete in a productive and efficient manner. Expanding access to natural gas will help with that goal.

Since day one, our government's message has been clear: Ontario is open for business. But this is more than just a slogan. Being open for business means putting people first. Being open for business means making life more affordable for families and businesses in this province.

How are we making Ontario open for business? First, we removed the carbon tax from natural gas bills. This provided families with savings of roughly \$80 a year, and small businesses with savings of roughly \$285 per year.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to turn to an announcement that our government for the people made on August 29, 2018: "Ontario's government for the people is acting to reduce the cost of natural gas for Ontario families and businesses," the Premier announced. "This is part of the Ford government's overall commitment to put more money in people's pockets and deliver immediate tax relief for lower and middle-class families."

What are we doing next? Now, we are working to make life more affordable once again. We need to undo 15 years of Liberal waste and mismanagement. We have introduced legislation that will allow the private sector to deliver natural gas to an additional 78 communities and 33,000 individuals across Ontario in the coming years. The proposed program would encourage more partnerships between private gas distributors and communities, to develop projects that provide more access to natural gas at a cheaper rate. We will work to foster a robust economic

climate in Ontario by leveraging the capacity of the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, our government doesn't believe in being a nanny state. We believe that there is a market solution—a private sector alternative, if you will—to providing the government's mandate of delivering all things.

We heard the concerns of thousands and thousands of people last year after documents were leaked which revealed that the previous government was considering a ban on natural gas. Our government for the people knows that access to natural gas makes life more affordable, and its use leaves more money in the pockets of those who earned it. More money in people's pockets also means they have more money to reinvest in our communities so we can further grow our economy.

Lowering the cost of heating by expanding natural gas will also make Ontario communities more attractive for job creation and new businesses. With lower costs associated with operating a business, more businesses will find it profitable to operate.

For example, this past week was Small Business Week. In my riding of Carleton, we had a new pharmacy open up in Richmond. This is what we need. After years of seeing convenience store after business after privately owned stores in homes shut down because people just can't afford to operate in Carleton, it was such a pleasure to see this new pharmacy being opened up, and it was such a pleasure to see that they're also planning on expanding and building more businesses in that same area.

This is what we need to do. And not only that; those businesses which are already operational will have more money to reinvest and grow the company. Both of these, Mr. Speaker, mean more economic activity and more local jobs.

The private sector came out overwhelmingly in support of this bill. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce wrote, "Premier Ford's plan to develop a new natural gas program ... will not only help to make life more affordable for Ontarians but boost job creation and economic growth in rural and northern Ontario communities."

Keith Currie, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, also said, "Natural gas is the single most important investment that will deliver a competitive edge to continue to drive growth in rural Ontario."

Mr. Speaker, if you're not familiar with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, I just want to let you know that the OFA is the largest general farm organization in Ontario, representing over 38,000 farm families across the province. As a dynamic farmer-led organization based in Guelph, the OFA works to represent and champion the interests of Ontario farmers through government relations, farm policy recommendations, research, lobby efforts, community representation, media relations and more. The OFA is the leading advocate for Ontario's farmers and is Ontario's voice of the farmer.

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This past September, I had the pleasure of attending the AGM of the local Ottawa Federation of Agriculture and speaking to the members there. It was such a pleasure to

talk to them about the plans that our government has to reduce hydro, to expand natural gas and everything else that we have planned and moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the many endorsements of this bill that have come from the private sector. These endorsements highlight the private sector's support of this bill, and they reassure us, as legislators, that we are doing the right thing.

For those listening who challenge my authority on this subject, here are the words of a man who works every day representing tens of thousands of businesses in this province. Mr. Rocco Rossi, the CEO and president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, has said this about our bill: "We have been consistently urging the Ontario government to expand natural gas access as it is a clean and affordable option for powering homes and businesses across the province. At a time when businesses are struggling to invest in and grow their operations, we will continue to advocate on behalf of our ... 60,000 members to make energy more affordable. The OCC is committed to working with the government of Ontario to create a prosperous province." Well, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to working with the OCC and all Ontarians to create a prosperous province.

There are many other stakeholders, other leaders in business and industry, who accept the premise of the president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and who agree with so many Ontarians who don't want to be punished for heating their homes.

The agri-food industry, which involves everything in bringing people food from the farm to the plate employs about one in eight workers in Ontario, with almost 50,000 farms and producing more than 200 commodities. Natural gas gives our farmers the opportunity to leverage modern technology in order to grow our food.

We also expect this bill to have positive effects elsewhere in the economy. Northern Ontario is a crucial part of our economy and expanding natural gas in the north could provide benefits to other industries such as transportation and even the mining sector. Establishing more natural gas fuelling stations would enable regional bus fleets, long-haul trucking fleets and more to switch from diesel to cleaner and more affordable compressed natural gas.

As for the mining industry, there are a few important statistics worth paying attention to. Mining is the second-largest private sector employer of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Some 25% of mining jobs in Canada are in Ontario and two thirds of those are in northern Ontario. That is a significant amount, Mr. Speaker, and it cannot be ignored.

More importantly, this bill is not a band-aid solution. Rather, it's here to create a long-term mechanism for the private sector to participate in the natural gas expansion across our province. If passed, it would encourage private distributors to partner with local communities. Once again, Mr. Speaker, this is the opposite of the approach that was taken by the previous government, who instead deliberately banned private sector participation and even considered banning the use of natural gas itself.

If enacted, this bill would amend the Ontario Energy Board Act in order to enable gas distributors to add a small charge to existing customers' natural gas bills to help cover the cost of expanding access. It's important to note that any charges for consumers would be very, very small compared to the savings that families and businesses have received through the government's decision to remove the cap-and-trade carbon tax from natural gas bills.

Mr. Speaker, we all rise by supporting each other. In this scenario, if we want to benefit our province, if we want to benefit our children, if we want to benefit our future, this is a small cost for all of us to bear collectively to improve Ontario's economy, to improve our jobs and to improve the future for everyone. This new program would keep gas costs low and provide benefits for families across Ontario with no additional cost to the taxpayer. By making a small investment today, we know we will be making a long-lasting impact in our communities for years to come.

This bill, ultimately, is a win-win. It allows us free access to natural gas without having to impose additional costs to the taxpayer. It's a win for an industry that wants a cheaper alternative to conventional methods of electricity. It is also a win for consumers, who can now heat their homes at a much lower cost, leaving them with more money in their pockets.

Our government, on June 7—our government for the people, I might say—was clearly elected on a mandate to put the people first and to show that Ontario is open for business. It is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, that the actions taken by the previous government left so many people, in my riding of Carleton and across this province, having to choose between eating and heating their homes.

By providing people with hydro relief and by providing sustainable, affordable natural gas, we are demonstrating that ours is a government for the people. In the last election, people voted not just for a political party; they voted for a vehicle for affordability. They voted for accountability. They voted for respect and trust, and this government for the people is doing just that.

We are making life more affordable in every single measurement, from income taxes to hydro rates, and now to natural gas, and at every opportunity we are trying to incite competition in the marketplace. We're creating an economy where businesses can compete and small business owners can thrive. We believe this legislation will stimulate growth. It will ensure prosperity in Ontario and create good, value-added jobs that people of all ages in all of our ridings aspire to have.

The previous government did not have a revenue problem, Mr. Speaker; they had a spending problem. The solution to all problems in government is not to add a tax. This province lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs, in large part due to the imposition of higher taxes, higher regulations and more red tape, creating a generally uncompetitive jurisdiction to invest in. This latest bill is designed to be part of the solution. It lowers the cost to consumers without the implementation of a new tax.

I want to thank everyone in Carleton—especially Earl Stanley—and across the province who has written in or

phoned our offices to thank us for introducing this legislation and for letting us know how important the expansion of natural gas is for their communities.

This bill is going to improve the quality of life for families, for businesses and for all those living in rural, remote or Indigenous communities. The savings of up to \$2,500 per family that result from this bill will have an enormous impact on the quality of life of families across Ontario. At the same time, it's going to grow our economy and create jobs in a marketplace that is becoming more and more competitive, especially when you're looking at the international trade sector.

I'm very proud that our government for the people is working to implement a no-cost solution for delivering a commodity that is so important in the day-to-day lives of so many people in this province. The fact that the private sector is involved in this solution serves to highlight the change that Ontarians voted for in the last election. This is a government that will leverage private capital, private ingenuity and people in the private sector working together with the public sector to deliver the goods and services Ontarians need at a price that they can afford.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, that delivering infrastructure is very important. However, we also believe in the vital importance of bringing down prices for consumers and businesses. With this act, Mr. Speaker, we will accomplish both of those goals.

Thank you for listening to me.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I listened carefully to the member from Carleton. I'm always tickled when I hear Conservatives talk about electricity prices, because, really, we all know it's the Conservatives that caused the rise in electricity prices. They dismantled Ontario Hydro into separate crown agencies: generation, transmission and systems management. They created the yellow brick road. And, of course, like my friend from Sudbury said, "Liberal, Tory, same old story."

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After the Conservatives created the situation where hydro could be privatized, the Liberals and Conservatives went hand in hand skipping down the yellow brick road of privatization. We had the phasing out of coal and the privatization around that, the sale of the majority of Hydro One, and that's why people in Ontario suffered from high electricity prices. It was the members on that side of the House that started it all by laying the groundwork for privatization and increased prices, so it's no wonder that no one trusts the Conservatives when they talk about handling any kind of utility.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, this bill does not require any consideration of the effect that the expansion will have on greenhouse gas emissions. Of course, this government has no environmental plan whatsoever—possibly the only government at any level in North America that has no environmental plan; absolutely incredible. I don't know how they go home to their kids and grandkids at night in the situation the world is in and say they're part of a government with no environmental plan. It's embarrassing.

We all know that Greenpeace sued the government for failing to abide by the law when Bill 4 was not posted. Time and time again, it's evident that this government doesn't have a plan. I've raised this issue many times in the House. It's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today and make some comments on the member for Carleton's remarks.

There are just a few points I'd like to raise. The legislation that we've introduced is a program that, if passed, would allow more consumers to have access to affordable natural gas. I think the member pointed out a number of residents, constituents in her riding, who could use natural gas. She used the number 40%, I think it was, of residents of Ontario who at this point in time don't have access to natural gas. They have to use other, more expensive methods of heating, cooking and looking after their homes or their industries. That's something that would be looked after by this legislation.

In my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, as well, I know there are people in the rural parts of the community who for a long time have talked about how they know natural gas is just down the road half a mile or a mile, and it's excessive, the cost, but they would certainly take opportunities to take part in that program.

She pointed out the savings that would be available to homes, anywhere from \$800 to up to \$2,500 per home depending on the size, the insulation etc. in the home. I know there are lots of farmers who would take opportunities to access this natural gas to dry their corn and other crops. Expanding natural gas into rural and other parts of Ontario is going to lead to job creation. It's going to lead to lower costs, of course, and nobody can spend that money any better than the individuals themselves.

Under the previous government's restrictions, private sector companies were limited from participating in some of these natural gas expansions. Now that limit is going to be taken off and we'll have the private sector involved in the expansion of natural gas. We'll make sure that people in rural Ontario and small-town Ontario get access to natural gas.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you to the member from Carleton for providing some more interesting thoughts and ideas on this particular bill. I, having had an opportunity to sit down and think through what people are saying and listen very carefully, did note that on the other side of the House there's a lot of talk of more families having access to natural gas. So my question is actually quite simple: Let's have even more families have access to natural gas by including the words that need to be in the bill in the bill so that we can make sure that they actually have access. It's not a matter of having an argument about it back and forth. We're all agreeing on the same thing. I think the only issue right now is that the words need to be in the bill in order to have the goals that my fellow colleague here

from Carleton would like to have happen. If we want the vision to become a reality, we have to write it down.

It's a difficult position that we find ourselves in. While I do agree that it would be wonderful to have strong co-operation between public and private organizations and the people and all of that wonderful stuff, the reason we're here is because when we have left it just to organizations, or even to individuals with small businesses and such, to do it on their own without any forethought of what would happen in different areas in Ontario—it's not that they don't want to help other people, it's just that they didn't know.

Now you have colleagues who are saying, "My area won't have access because the language isn't allowing for them to have access." So why not just put in the word "rural"? Why not actually include the information in the bill so that we can all have a wonderful day and move on to affordable housing, quality health care, helping our Indigenous people, all of the amazing things that everybody here is committed to do?

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Before I make my comments about the member for Carleton's debate, I just wanted to say that the member for Milton looked awfully good sitting in the Speaker's chair up there. I'm not sure if he's hearing me or not.

Mr. Speaker, you know what? I really want to thank the member from Carleton, my seat neighbour here. Unfortunately, I don't necessarily have a seatmate as the Speaker would be my seatmate. She touched on the fact that Carleton farmers are really, really pushing and needing natural gas expansion into her riding and that really echoes a lot of what I hear back home in Kitchener–Conestoga, and I'll use Wellesley for an example.

Wellesley township is in the northwest portion of my riding. It has around 11,000 inhabitants. If I'm reading this correctly, about 20% of people who live in Wellesley don't have access to natural gas, and this is largely a rural township. Wellesley village is a few thousand people, but then everyone is pretty well scattered out geographically from that point. Like I said, it's largely rural. Like the member from Sarnia–Lambton said, we've got a lot of corn that's grown in my riding. Farmers are now using diesel generators, they're using propane—different alternative sources of power to be able to use their grain dryers.

I met with the members of the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture, which is an offshoot of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and they echoed the same sentiments as farmers in Carleton. They need natural gas. This is going to be something that is going to save them a substantial amount of money—a substantial amount of money, Mr. Speaker. When we're talking about the average resident of Ontario can expect to save up to \$2,500 by switching to—

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): No. We'll return to the member from Carleton then to respond.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank all the members in the House today for their thoughtful comments, and I look forward to working with members opposite on their concerns with respect to this particular legislation.

I want to particularly thank my seatmate as well—I have two; I'm blessed with that privilege—the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, because he really put it in perspective and I think I want to do the same.

There's a farm in my riding of Carleton, Mr. Speaker, and for the sake of privacy I don't want to give out any more information on who or where this farm is, but it's located in Metcalfe, obviously. This farm spends well over \$150,000 a month on their hydro bills—\$150,000 a month. We're looking at roughly \$1.6 million, I think, in hydro bills every year. Not only that, they are one of the largest employers in Carleton.

So what are we doing, Mr. Speaker? We're here to help people grow. This is a family-owned farm. We're here to help people grow. We want to make life more affordable, and yet it seems like everything we've done these past 15 years has been counterproductive and we have been penalizing businesses, farms, employers. We've been penalizing them for expanding and we need to reverse that process. The way we do that, Mr. Speaker, is we start with the expansion of natural gas, because we need to make sure that our farmers are supported and our businesses are supported, because when we support them through smart, competitive policies, they can compete and create jobs—because it is not up to us to create jobs; it's up to the private sector.

Thank you again for everyone's comments, and I look forward to the rest of this debate.

1720

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I welcome the opportunity to rise today to speak to this bill, the Access to Natural Gas Act. When the government first announced they would be doing this—

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: I will get to that, absolutely. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member from Kingston and the Islands.

When the government first announced that they would be doing this, they said that the purpose was “to expand natural gas access to families and business throughout rural and northern Ontario.” That was the first paragraph of their news release on the day they released it. That in itself is certainly something that I can get behind and get on-board with as it's something that we in the NDP addressed in our platform during the last election, and we did so for good reason, because of the fact that people in rural and northern communities don't currently have the access to natural gas that those of us in the rest of the province enjoy.

The problem is that they forgot to put it in the bill. They forgot to use the actual wording of “rural and northern communities” in the bill. It will still put communities in

those northern and rural places in the position that they will have to rely on very costly heating elements like hydro, propane, heating oil and wood-burning stoves. That can be very costly, and also, for some, physically impossible.

My colleague the member from Oshawa, when she did her time on this, told us of a low-income family that had to pay about \$1,200 or \$1,300 every six months to heat their home. Over the Christmas holidays they ran out of propane because they couldn't afford a new tank and they spent four days with no heating—four days in the middle of winter with absolutely no heating. It's a time of year when people should be enjoying the holidays, but instead they were stuck freezing in the cold. That's just one experience of families from all across rural and northern Ontario. That, of course, includes many, many Indigenous communities.

It's an expensive proposition for someone to convert their home to natural gas, even in urban areas. But in rural areas and in the north, the costs are so extreme that it doesn't even come close to being an option. The family I mentioned earlier looked into the possibility of converting to natural gas. They have gas lines that are close by. Other homes in the area are connected to natural gas. Given the costs they were paying, they thought it would be worthwhile to look into the change. When they did, they were told by the gas company, and I believe it was Enbridge, that it would cost about \$30,000 to do the job. That was the end of that. There was no way this family could possibly come close to affording that type of expense.

In another situation, a group of businesses in the Earlton area wanted to get natural gas. They had been trying to do so for five years, but the nearest natural gas line was about a mile and a half away. They spoke to Union Gas, which looked into it and came back to them with a cost of \$208,000 to get the project even going, and the businesses would have to contribute over \$200,000 of that.

Speaker, those costs are impossible for families and businesses to take on, especially in rural and northern communities. They're held hostage by extremely expensive hydro bills or energy bills, unable to get natural gas. They are forced to use expensive and dirty fuels to heat their homes and premises, and that's absolutely just not right. That's why we in the NDP addressed it in our platform. For the new members on the government benches who might not be familiar with what a platform is, it's a document that parties put out through an election so that voters would know what we would do if we were elected.

What we said way back in May or in June was that we would invest in rural and northern infrastructure. We did that because we knew how badly rural and northern areas needed our attention. In addition to the need for investment in schools and hospitals, we made specific commitments to invest \$100 million to expand natural gas into rural Ontario.

We also committed to broadband services throughout Ontario, because connectivity through the Internet has become more and more a part of everyday life. It's crucial

that people all across Ontario have that adequate access. But as you know, Speaker, that is a debate for another time, because today we are speaking about access to natural gas.

Yes, we committed to funding access to natural gas in our platform. We did that because we believe Ontarians should be treated equitably. Just because someone lives in a rural area does not mean that they should be unduly denied the ability to access natural gas.

We believe the government has a role to play in this. We believe the government has a responsibility to provide the infrastructure that allows people to live comfortably at a reasonable cost. We believe businesses and farmers should have access to cheaper energy that will allow them to flourish.

Debra Pretty-Straathof, a director with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, said this in a blog post on her website: "Having no access to natural gas puts rural communities at a competitive disadvantage. It is difficult to attract new businesses to towns where basic energy expenses will be double, simply because the infrastructure is not there to access natural gas lines."

Yes, Speaker, in terms of how the government framed the announcement of the legislation expanding access to natural gas in rural and northern communities, in general that is something that I could get behind. Expanding natural gas services to more homes and communities is critical. No one should have to choose between paying the heating bill or paying other household expenses.

That is where the difficulty arises, because as written, the bill leaves many questions unanswered. First off is the fact that even though the announcement was presented in this Legislature as being for the good of rural communities, nowhere in the bill is the word "rural." There is a bit of a red flag there. Will rural and northern communities be the only or major beneficiaries of the legislation? The fact that the Ontario Home Builders' Association took part in the announcement suggests that they have a keen interest in this.

I'm not suggesting that builders of new homes have anything against rural Ontario, but they're hardly the most obvious spokespeople for rural Ontario. I think it's fair to be concerned that this legislation will greatly benefit home builders and perhaps contribute to urban sprawl. It's easy to see how this installation of natural gas infrastructure at discounted prices would be viewed favourably by those in that business.

I think we need to have the discussion to see what the impact of the legislation will be all across Ontario, and just how much it will actually benefit rural, northern and Indigenous communities.

The government has clearly taken a decision that puts the expansion of natural gas into private hands.

Back in 2014, the Liberals announced that they would put in place a \$230-million program to expand natural gas infrastructure in rural communities. Of course, that announcement was made just before the election—absolutely no surprise there. Some \$200 million of that would be loans, with the other \$300 million in grants.

That was one of the 2014 election goodies from the previous government. Two and a half years later, by January 2017, they hadn't spent a penny of that money. No loans had been made; no grants had been awarded.

They announced a new program to take its place, a program totalling \$100 million, with no loans; all of it would be grants. That was something that we in the NDP supported.

But this government has scrapped that program. On September 29, the day after the new legislation was announced, the government cancelled an already-approved project worth \$8.6 million in North Bay. I believe that's the Minister of Finance's riding. I wonder how the people of North Bay feel about that announcement. That was one of the casualties of scrapping the program.

That program, which saw the government taking some responsibility for natural gas infrastructure, is being replaced with this legislation that we are now debating—legislation that, in the words of the government, enables private sector participation. Well, we are quite familiar with the effect of private participation in the energy sector, aren't we? I would say we are.

1730

The privatization of hydro has brought us nothing but higher prices and loss of control. We know enough to tell us that enabling private sector participation should be of concern. This government talked about the high cost of hydro, they talked about the poor plan of the Liberals, but they have continued on with that same plan.

This legislation, Bill 32, will mean that the cost of new infrastructure will be borne by existing gas consumers. In other words, those who are already paying a monthly gas bill will now have an amount added to it to pay for the new infrastructure going in. Everyone who gets a gas bill will see an increase in their bill. Families have been paying more and more for hydro and this bill will see them paying more and more for natural gas as well. The government will tell us that they saved the taxpayer money by cutting the \$100-million program, but those same people will see an increase to their gas bills.

Speaker, as you see, we support the title, Access to Natural Gas. We know that it's important for rural and northern communities to have access to natural gas. But we have many questions as to what this legislation actually entails.

I thank you for the opportunity and will now pass it off to the member for Kingston and the Islands.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Hamilton Mountain did state at the beginning that she was going to share her time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I recognize the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

Affordability with home heating is a laudable goal, and it's something I can relate to. Until I owned the house that I'm in now, I was in a one-bedroom apartment. I had electric heat and could barely afford my bills. They would

often break \$400 or \$500 a month for just one person and one small apartment.

This was—I'll stray a little bit—around the same time of the Auditor General's report on the \$37 billion that had been wasted on hydro in Ontario. That was about the time that I actually decided to run. I had the Auditor General's report in one hand and the hydro bill in the other and that was enough. So thanks to Bonnie for that.

This speaks to the lasting repercussions of bad policy in this province. The unaffordability of electricity is something that started a long time ago under the Conservatives. It was expanded under the Liberals. Bad decision after bad decision has gotten us to this point where hydro is an unaffordable option to heat your home. That's something that I struggle with, because I know that we have to move towards that in the future. Burning fossil fuels cannot be a permanent answer for home heating, but I also recognize that families need that affordability.

The cost of delivering natural gas to these communities is tremendous—\$100 million. I think this bill is trying to address an issue which is actually a larger problem, and that's to do with the cost of electricity in this province. You can't patchwork-fix a problem with legislation that doesn't address the larger issue, and that is the burning of fossil fuels. And it's expensive.

These years of poor policy have pushed us into this corner where we need to invest this money to bring natural gas to rural and northern communities. Many of the members on this side have brought up that issue of the rural communities and the Indigenous communities and those in the north who most need access to this and brought up the fact that this is not part of this bill. It was part of the press release, but it is not part of this bill. So to me, that begs the question of what this bill is actually trying to accomplish in this province.

Natural gas—there's a county in California that had a natural gas power plant and it had a leak in it. It displaced millions and millions of people, and the county decided that they were actually going to move away from natural gas. To me, this should be the ultimate goal. We need affordable heating that is not based on fossil fuels.

Over a six-month period, they handed out contracts to build battery banks, so that they could eliminate the need for natural gas power plants. In six months, they completed all of these projects, and they were able to take all of the natural gas peak-power plants off-line in this county. Now that is dynamic leadership.

We are facing a tremendous task of trying to combat climate change, and by the necessity caused by poor policy on hydro, we are stuck expanding a sector of energy that actually contributes to this problem. That's something I just can't get behind.

There's a group in Kingston that meets called Switch Kingston. They're an alternative energy cluster, and every month they give a presentation. They gave this presentation about a community in northern Ontario that had decided to build a solar installation with batteries attached to it. This was a community that had previously relied on diesel to generate their power, and propane to generate

heat for many of their homes. Instead, they moved towards a renewable source. They built a solar system that works for most of the year in northern Ontario, and they kept the diesel generator as a backup for this, so 80% of their needs were now met by solar. It dramatically lowered the costs for this community.

This is where we need to go. We need to look to the future to see where the growth is going to be, to see where the technology is going to change and how we can tackle some of these problems. I'm not actually convinced that the long-term result should be the expansion of natural gas. I think we have to leverage these new, developing technologies. Incidentally, solar is the cheapest form of new energy on the planet. That's a fact. The most accessible oil, the most accessible natural gas—this doesn't even mention nuclear. Solar is now cheaper than all of them.

When we're looking at these northern and rural communities that have trouble accessing this infrastructure, that it costs a tremendous amount of money to bring this infrastructure to, I think we need to look beyond the scope of this bill. Affordability actually lies in innovating and making use of these new technologies that are developing every single day across the world.

The original plan was \$100 million for 12 communities. Now it's \$100 million and somehow that's 78 communities, which to me begs the question of how much easier it must be to get to these communities, which I guess would mean that they're probably not in the north and probably not in rural Ontario. But that's okay; I don't actually know the answer to that, so I am speculating. But \$100 million for natural gas expansion: That's good. It's not going to be enough. It's not going to do what the press release said it was going to do, and I think that it would be money better spent in finding innovative ways to solve these problems and finding innovative ways to address these issues in these communities across Ontario.

I love technology. I think technology is probably the only way we're going to find a way out of climate change and global warming and dealing with these repercussions. But I struggle with how slowly governments adopt some of this, and then I realize that actually, no: That's just in Ontario. Many governments across the world are adopting these technologies and moving in this direction, which will fundamentally solve problems in a more cost-effective and, I believe, more intelligent manner.

Australia is building the biggest battery banks in the entire world to deal with the demand for peak power. When you deal with the demand for peak power, you lower the cost of hydro across the board. You no longer need those peak-power natural gas plants. You no longer need those peak-power coal-fired plants. You're no longer bringing these plants up and bringing them down, which is incredibly expensive, and all those extra jobs. The future is in storage. It's in solar. It's in something different than burning gases that cause greenhouse gas emissions.

1740

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate being able to contribute to this. I would urge the government to look at where the puck is going and not where it is right now.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I really am encouraged to stand here to speak to Bill 32, which I can assure you will have a profound impact on the high cost of heating a home in the rural part of my riding.

I listened intently when the member from Nickel Belt spoke about the challenges facing homeowners in her riding, and I understand what that member was speaking about because I grew up—I was born in Capreol, which is a part of northern Ontario. Many families in northern Ontario, like many families in the rural part of my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook, simply cannot afford to heat their homes. That's why they were so hopeful when they heard that our government would be expanding natural gas into their communities.

Mr. Speaker, for the average residential consumer in Ontario, the switch from electric heat, propane or oil to natural gas would result in savings between \$800 to \$2,500 per year. That's a lot of money and just another example of how our government for the people is putting more money back into the pockets of Ontarians.

As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, I've travelled across this province to speak to businesses both large and small. In fact, my last trip was to the Soo. They all said that high hydro rates were a problem. Expanding natural gas would make Ontario communities more attractive for job creation. It will help send a clear message that Ontario is once again open for business.

I listened intently to the comments that were made today, and I can assure members across the floor that residents of northern Ontario, rural communities and my own riding—

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the members for Hamilton Mountain and Kingston and the Islands for speaking to this bill today.

No one should be forced to choose between heating their home and being able to pay for food. I've heard stories today of people who are paying \$1,000 a month for heating from November to March. Earlier this week and also earlier this month, we had the member from Kiiwetinoong talk about the young woman, 13, who committed suicide on a First Nations reserve, who had no electricity in her home for many years. They're not the kinds of conditions that people in Ontario, one of the richest provinces in the world, should be forced to live in.

This commitment to having affordable energy is the reason why the NDP has long been in support of energy that is publicly owned and controlled, and it's a commitment that we will continue to stand for.

I have two concerns with this bill that I urge the government to look into. One is that this bill does not require any consideration for the GHG emission impact of this bill. Given this time of climate crisis, it is important that is included.

The second concern I have is, there's no evidence that this bill has been posted on the Environmental Registry, which is required with the Environmental Bill of Rights. Greenpeace had moved forward on suing the provincial government for its failure to put the climate bill on the Environmental Bill of Rights—although you have turned around and done that now. It wouldn't make sense for you to be sued for this bill failing to go to the Environmental Registry as well.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Expanding natural gas would make Ontario communities more attractive for job creation and new business. This will help send a clear message that Ontario is open for business.

Under the previous government's restrictions, private sector companies were limited from participating in some natural gas expansion, a portion of which were instead managed by a taxpayer-funded grant program. The proposed natural gas expansion support program charge would be limited to a very low cost to consumers that is more than offset by the savings that families and businesses will receive from the cancellation of the cap-and-trade carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, we are proposing a program that, if the legislation is passed, would allow more consumers access to affordable natural gas. In too many parts of rural and northern Ontario, families and businesses still do not have access to natural gas. For the average residential consumer in Ontario, the switch from electrical heat, propane or oil to natural gas would result in savings of between \$800 and \$2,500 per year.

The Access to Natural Gas Act, if passed, will ensure agricultural competitiveness and a thriving rural economy. Ontario's agri-food sector is one of the world's most diverse, with almost 50,000 farms contributing \$106 billion to the province's GDP and supporting 1.2 million jobs. That is one in eight Ontario workers. We are committed to putting more money in people's pockets by removing the cost of cap-and-trade—

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Three words: "rural," "north," "Indigenous." Put them in the legislation. We hear about 78 communities that are somehow going to be magically served if we cross our fingers and hope for the best with private industry. Put the names of the 78 communities in the legislation. It's just that easy.

The member from Carleton mentioned that she's been speaking with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, as have I. They are in support of this bill but not at any cost. They're also concerned about school closures. We know the last Conservative government stripped a billion dollars out of the education system, and we've never recovered. They also, the OFA, would like to have broadband Internet. That's a major thing for them.

With this legislation as it currently stands, you could drive a truck through it, and that's a concern to us here in

the NDP. We support the idea of extending natural gas to northern, rural and Indigenous communities, not simply crossing our fingers and hoping that private industry will do its best. Private industry is great. They are looking to make a profit. That's absolutely their right, but in order to make sure that this best serves the people of Ontario's needs, the legislation needs to be specific and cannot be full of holes that, like I said, you could drive through.

I want to thank the members from Hamilton Mountain and Kingston and the Islands for their comments, and they're very wise.

The member from Nickel Belt also had a very good point in saying that this government is giving access to people's pockets, allowing private industry to raid people's pockets. We've heard the government say there will be a small raise to rates; specify what that small raise is. This has not been included in the legislation, so we need to see it. "Small" is a relative term and one that can be defined openly. You need to be specific in this government. You need to be responsible, and that means having concrete legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I return to the member from Kingston and the Islands for his two-minute response.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. This legislation's goal, as I began, is laudable, and that's making life more affordable for people living in Ontario, but I'm skeptical that this legislation is actually going to achieve that end. It's handing over more power to private companies. We know what the result is when private companies are put in charge of energy infrastructure. We hear about it from this government almost every day when they talk about the Liberal legacy. It's going to result in more cost to the consumer. That is the only outcome of private industry trying to run energy infrastructure in Ontario.

Natural gas distributors are entitled to be compensated for lost revenue, but what that compensation is is going to be determined by regulation at some future date. So we don't even know what this government is going to hand out to these private companies, if they happen to not to do a good job at what they're supposed to do and deliver natural gas in a cost-effective manner.

1750

There goes our risk. If I was in business, that would sound pretty good. I'm sure the parent company for Enbridge and Union Gas is pretty happy with that. That sounds ideal: "We're going to invest in this stuff and if it goes wrong, we're going to be compensated for it." If I was going into business, yes, I'd love that. This is a company that had an almost \$2.50 dividend per share in the last quarter. They don't need this help, but this government is standing up, saying, "We are going to help you if you don't get it right."

There's no risk associated with this. If the people are going to assume the risk for this bill and the expansion of natural gas, they should own the infrastructure. It should not be private.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: It's an honour to rise and speak about Bill 32, the Access to Natural Gas Act. On September 18, our Premier, the Honourable Minister Greg Rickford, who is the Minister of Energy, and the Honourable Minister Monte McNaughton, who is Minister of Infrastructure, made a statement that the "government for the people will take action to expand natural gas access."

Natural gas is considered the most cost-effective form of fuel used in operating our businesses and homes compared to electric, propane and oil. I must mention here, Mr. Speaker, that I was just speaking with my colleague from Milton, who lives in a rural area of Milton. He mentioned to me that, to date, they are using propane, and it's expensive. Just imagine how expensive it is to heat up their house.

It's not just him; all his constituents and the people living in rural Milton are buying propane. It's so expensive, at the end of the day—and it's happening today. On average, the saving from switching from electric heat, propane, diesel or oil forms of fuel to natural gas is estimated to save Ontario businesses and families somewhere around \$800 to \$2,500 a year. I would say let's just take a pause for a second. I would like to repeat myself: It's about \$800 to \$2,500 in savings a year.

Interjections.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: So one more time for—but I wouldn't do it.

But just imagine for people in the riding of Milton, the rural areas, how much money they can save. For the average Canadian family, Mr. Speaker, that's a lot of money, so I'm absolutely for it.

For some small businesses, this extra money can be the incentive for owners to reinvest and grow their business, or it can be the incentive they needed to hire another part-time or full-time staff member. It just gives you the opportunity to employ more people. For some businesses, this can mean keeping their doors open.

For families, these additional savings can be invested in their family's future, their child's education or a home repair. My colleague can invest that money in his children's education fund. Again, going back to my earlier point—\$800 to \$2,500 a year in savings. This might be the incentive for some parents to put their kids in after-school programs or other activities. In some areas, Mr. Speaker, these savings might even be directed to fostering and maintaining their community.

Not only is natural gas one of the cheapest forms of fuel, but clean-burning natural gas generates less solid waste and water pollution than other conventional energy sources such as diesel, propane and oil. Currently, natural gas supplies about three quarters of the primary heating in Ontario. That is about 3.5 million homes and 130,000 businesses that already use natural gas as their primary fuel source.

In our platform, we campaigned on rebuilding Ontario and that Ontario families deserve major infrastructure

investments in every town and every city. One of the ways to fulfill this promise is by expanding natural gas distribution to rural communities.

An added bonus: Taxpayers will not have to pay for this initiative, because we are enabling private sector participation. By enabling the private sector to expand natural gas, we are saving taxpayers up to \$100 million.

The previous government put aside \$100 million in grants. These grants only provided natural gas to 12 locations in Ontario. What we are currently proposing is using private partnerships to build this infrastructure, which will serve up to 78 communities, connecting up to 33,000 homes and multiple businesses. I think I should say this again: \$100 million in savings; approximately 78 communities served compared to 12. Mr. Speaker, which one sounds like a better plan?

What we saw under the previous government was 15 years of mismanaged spending, and now a \$15-billion deficit—a \$15-billion deficit.

In June 2016, a cabinet document was leaked that outlined the previous government's agenda to ban natural gas in Ontario. Why would the previous government want to ban one of the cheapest forms of fuel? Approximately 76% of Ontario homes rely on natural gas for home heating. If banned, affected families would have experienced a \$3,000 annual increase on their hydro bills. Again, I'm going to repeat this: If banned, affected families would have experienced a \$3,000 annual increase on their hydro bills.

The document also said that no Ontario home would be heated with natural gas by 2030, and by 2050, gas would be eliminated as the heating fuel source from all buildings in the province. If that is not bad enough, Mr. Speaker, the previous government would pay rebates of up to \$20,000 to people who purchased houses that didn't use natural gas as their heat source.

Alberta's gas shipment to Ontario started sharply decreasing under the previous government. In fact, the old government imported up to 95% of Ontario's natural gas from the United States. Preference should be given to fellow provinces.

The member opposite was not any better than the previous government. The member for Ottawa Centre has a reputation for being a carbon-tax crusader. The member opposite is openly crusading for a carbon tax that will increase gas taxes by 35%—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I'm sorry to cut you off. The next time this bill is called before the House, you'll have approximately—some time to finish; I forget.

1800

Hon. Todd Smith: It's 11 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Eleven minutes—something close, perhaps; perhaps not quite as many—to finish.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Toronto Centre has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. The member will have five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or her parliamentary assistant will have five minutes to respond.

I go to the member from Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: On Thursday, I stood in this chamber during question period to ask why survivors of gender-based violence are not a priority for this government.

Last week, Farrah Khan and Pamela Cross, the co-chairs of the non-partisan, stakeholder-led provincial Roundtable on Violence against Women, both resigned. They did so, stating that while they had made every effort to consult with the current Conservative government about the future of the round table and the status of committed funding for organizations in the sector, this government had not bothered to respond to any of their inquiries.

Simultaneously, the government announced that the round table itself would be dissolved.

Speaker, this round table was truly unique. It was a table that brought together stakeholders across the sector to address the issue of violence against women in a coordinated and effective way. The round table advised government on policy from a gender-based and trauma-informed lens and, quite frankly, often pushed the previous Liberal government further along in action on this file than they were necessarily ready to go.

It's also not lost on me, Speaker, that one of the actions the round table pushed the previous Liberal government for was the inclusion of the domestic violence leave in Bill 148, which just today the Conservative government has announced it is repealing.

On top of this, committed funding for sexual assault centres all across Ontario is currently being held hostage. This government had previously promised to honour the commitments made under the Gender-Based Violence Strategy. This included a 33% funding increase across the sector. Sexual assault centres, like the centre in Hamilton, have been anxiously awaiting funding that they were promised, to enhance their services to meet the increasing demand that they are experiencing.

The Hamilton sexual assault centre was going to use their funds to hire a full-time counsellor to address the seven-month-long wait-list for their services and to hire a part-time educator to do prevention work.

Sexual assault survivors in this province are waiting months for counselling services, and crisis lines are in a crisis themselves, being overwhelmed by demand. In the midst of the #MeToo movement, and as we see an increase in high-profile cases of sexual violence—cases like Ghomeshi, cases like Kavanaugh—survivors are finally finding the courage to seek the support that they need.

Speaker, this one might be off the cuff, but perhaps this crisis wouldn't be getting worse if children in schools were actually being taught about consent in our sex ed curriculum. It's almost like it might be helpful to teach our children about what informed consent is, and that you can't give consent if you are intoxicated, and that women's bodies are not in fact the property of the public realm. But organizations across Ontario are picking up the slack anyway and doing that prevention and education work where this government has failed to.

Speaker, this issue cannot be ignored any longer. It must become a priority for this government.

According to the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, 50% of all women killed in Canada have been killed right here in Ontario, and between January and August of this year, 53 women have been killed in femicides in this province—53, Speaker, and that's only within the first eight months of the year.

On Thursday I also spoke to my own experiences as a sexual assault survivor, and when I tell you that this government's heartless actions on this file are failing survivors across this province, it's because I have lived that failure first-hand.

This is not a partisan issue. I am asking my colleagues on the government bench to stand up for the women in this province and do the right thing.

Speaker, I will repeat my question from Thursday: Will this government honour the Gender-Based Violence Strategy, release the funding that was promised to sexual assault centres and immediately reinstate the provincial round table on ending violence against women?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We will turn to the minister's parliamentary assistant, the member for Don Valley North.

Mr. Vincent Ke: I am very glad to address this House on such an important issue. I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I know that her concern is sincere, and ours is as well.

To begin, I would like to make something very clear: Ontario's government for the people is 100% committed

to ending violence against women. Myself and all members of this government condemn violence against women in all forms and in all places. It is completely unacceptable.

I will say that we have made a change. We have decided not to reconvene a round table with a group of stakeholders brought together by the previous government. We are moving our focus beyond talk to listening and taking action to help women and girls across Ontario.

We cannot follow the path of the previous Liberal government. They ignored this issue for over a decade. Then, on the eve of the election, they promised to throw money at the problem and flowed none.

We thank the members of the round table for their hard work. I hope that similar work continues at their organizations.

Since taking office, Minister MacLeod has focused on women and children with lived experience and front-line service delivery on this important issue. She has visited shelters across the province. She has listened and re-affirmed our commitment to ending violence against women, as mentioned throughout our first 100 days.

This year, our government continues funding of \$160 million worth of services and supports to tackle gender-based violence, including emergency shelters, a 24-hour crisis line, counselling, safety planning, transitional housing and referral services, and court-based victim and witness assistance.

We will have more details on the government's plan to combat violence against women across the province in the months ahead.

I thank the member for the question and concern. And thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address the House on this important issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1810.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Downey, Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	
Dunlop, Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda (PC)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Orléans	
Lecce, Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurattan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts

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Stan Cho, Jill Dunlop
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Sol Mamakwa, David Piccini
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Chris Glover, Christine Hogarth
Logan Kanapathi, Daryl Kramp
Natalia Kusendova, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Dave Smith
Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
John Vanthof
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Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
Kevin Yarde
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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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

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Catherine Fife, Goldie Ghamari
Jim McDonnell, Norman Miller
Suze Morrison, Michael Parsa
Peggy Sattler, Kinga Surma
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
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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
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Catherine Fife, Robin Martin
Lindsey Park, Ross Romano
Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria, Sandy Shaw
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim