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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 13 November 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 13 novembre 2018

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE
CLASSROOMS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 POUR DES ÉCOLES SÛRES
ET AXÉES SUR LE SOUTIEN

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 12, 2018, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 48, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to education and child care / Projet de loi 48, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'éducation et la garde d'enfants.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's a pleasure to continue debate of Bill 48 this morning. I'll just recap a little of what we talked about yesterday. As you may recall, I was reviewing the bill and some concerns that we have regarding the bill. I want to continue where I left off: in a conversation about the problem with the rollback to the sex education curriculum and how at odds that is with the purpose of this bill, which is supposed to be about keeping our students safe and in supportive classrooms.

As I was saying yesterday, I'm not worried about my own daughters learning about consent. I will teach my daughters about consent. I'm sure many of the members opposite will also have those conversations with their children—or have already—on how it works and why consent is expected and why it matters.

What we're worried about are the young people whose parents won't have talked to them about consent. I think that's why it's so crucial that the public education system provides those students with all the best and most modern tools, including an understanding of consent, in order to make sure that we, as a society, are taking responsibility to ensure that our young people and our children have the tools they need to understand what consent means. We can't rely on YouTube videos about consent to teach this. We can't rely on teachers to come up with this themselves. It's not fair; it's not appropriate. We owe it to our children, to our neighbours' children and to future generations to end the cycle of abuse, rape and violence, to end the guilt and the torment experienced by so many, and to teach these lessons based on the best knowledge and research. We cannot leave it to social conservatives or anyone else who has a different agenda.

I want to tell you a little bit about Lyra Evans. The member from Ottawa Centre knows Lyra well. She is a 26-year-old who was just elected to be a school trustee in Ottawa. You may have heard about her. She actually garnered 55% of the vote—not too shabby. I think all of us would be pleased with that. She says she felt compelled to run for trustee after this government decided to revert to the 1998 curriculum.

I'm going to quote her here. She said, "I was outraged. I was disappointed they were going to be doing this to students who, I think, should be learning the things the 2015 curriculum teaches.... So I got engaged because I wanted to be a voice for people who didn't feel like their voices were being heard."

One thing I haven't mentioned is that Lyra's journey has not been easy. She is a young trans woman. She became homeless while she was still in high school and struggled for many years. She has spoken publicly about this, Mr. Speaker. She couch-surfed and lived on the streets. She experienced transitional housing. All of those things—the volunteers and the advocacy work and the transitional housing—helped to bring Lyra onto this other path, even as she continued to face discrimination by coming out first as gay and later as transgender.

Lyra says that a big part of what made her life difficult was the lack of education, understanding and nuanced language regarding LGBTQ issues in the school system and the community at the time. That's why this matters so much to her. It is a major reason why she decided to run for school board trustee. She wants to see schools continue with the sex ed curriculum that was developed in Ontario in 2015. She wants it to be a more inclusive education system with inclusive conversation about gender identity, relationships and consent in our schools. It's so important.

We know that people from the trans community suffer disproportionate suicide rates, disproportionate homelessness, poverty, depression. All you have to do in my community is take a walk through a wonderful organization called Sistering to see how many of the people who are using that service are from the trans community.

It doesn't have to be this way, but we know that many students and workers in our school system have suffered, and there are solutions. I want to talk for a minute about some of the other safety issues that are not addressed in this bill, like the chronic underfunding of our school system—chronic underfunding that has led to issues with classroom violence. Education workers report that some of the highest levels of lost work time are due to injuries in the workplace, and parents are growing uneasy about their children's safety at school. School boards are legally

responsible for both student achievement and well-being, but are not being given sufficient resources to ensure the well-being of all learners within the classroom.

We know that special education services for children are simply not there when many families need them. We know that many students are waiting for years for the specialized education they need to thrive, and many simply don't receive it at all. Some 61% of elementary schools and 50% of secondary schools report that they do not have sufficient access to a psychologist to adequately support students. I think many of us with children in high school can appreciate that, can identify with that. Then 47% of elementary and 36% of secondary schools report that child and youth worker services are not available.

During the election, our party made addressing mental health a centrepiece of our education platform. We committed to hiring more mental health care workers specifically to support high school students and pledged to fix the patchwork of mental health and addiction supports by giving these services their own ministry. Members on the government side didn't release a platform at all during the campaign. In fact, they've already cut \$330 million per year in planned mental health funding that is so desperately needed.

But it's not too late to take action. They could help make our schools safe and supportive by changing course and providing resources immediately. I want to reach out to the other side, to the government side, and ask them to join us, to work with us to find solutions.

Chronic underfunding—I mean, it has been chronic. We've been looking at 20 years of underfunding for our schools. The previous government had 15 years to fix this—15 years—and the situation only got worse. We've seen that drastic under-resourcing of our schools, that lack of funding to support teachers and educational assistants. We've seen class sizes grow, and we haven't seen the support our vulnerable students need.

0910

The government could address these issues of classroom violence, which I want to say is, without question, the number one issue I hear from stakeholders in our education system, from parents, from the teachers' unions, from associations, from the principals' council. Classroom violence, the number one issue. Quite striking.

I'm very proud of what our school boards have managed to accomplish over the last 20 years, despite that underfunding and that under-resourcing, particularly in terms of bringing gender equity to the classrooms. But I believe much of this has been done in spite of the provincial government instead of because of it.

We've had 20 years, again, of refusing to address the fundamental issues that affect all of our schools. Let's just say it: It's the broken funding formula. That's the issue. It was imposed by the Conservatives and then it was reinforced under the Liberal government. Many of us were hopeful; we were hopeful. They talked the talk, but they did not walk the walk. We did not see a change to the funding formula, which so desperately needs to be changed. Without even addressing the overall state of the

economy and the government left by previous administrations, their refusal to address the fundamental issues in how our public education system was funded missed a tremendous opportunity.

I cannot tell you, Mr. Speaker, how many present and former civil servants I've had the pleasure of getting to know over the last few years told me they could no longer stand to stay employed in the Ministry of Education under the previous government and now under this government. It's quite exceptional, because they care about education; that's why they are there. I have the utmost respect for the civil service. I've told them repeatedly, the people who talk to me, "Don't leave. Stay, because we need you there." But they just can't deal with the state of affairs, it is such a mess.

You know, it wasn't that the sex ed curriculum, going back to that again, was faulty. It was that the government, in the first place, back in 2015—it wasn't that it was faulty. The other side likes to say that there wasn't enough consultation. As a school board trustee, I want to share my experience, which was that they should have introduced it back when the former Premier was originally going to introduce it. They should have brought it in then. In fact, when it was finally introduced in 2015, school boards and others were basically told: "Let's not talk about it. Let's just keep it quiet. Let's not make a fuss. We don't want to draw too much attention. People are walking out. Don't draw too much attention."

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, I think that was a massive failure on the part of the Liberal government, because we should have been talking about it. We should have been answering those questions as school board trustees and others. We should have been talking about those issues from day one.

I've lost all my notes, but that's okay.

I want to talk for a few minutes about some of the changes that are being proposed by this government. Yesterday, we heard the minister and the parliamentary assistant speak at quite great length about the bill and what they were hoping to achieve with this. Frankly, it's a bit mystifying. It's a bit mystifying because we don't know exactly what they have planned. There's very little information in the bill, and even in our technical briefings, there was not a lot of detail available. What is the government trying to achieve here?

What the government, I think, made very clear yesterday is that one of the major reasons why they're bringing forward this legislation right now is to change the College of Teachers and to take teachers off the board of the College of Teachers. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education actually said that yesterday. It was the first time we've heard that. It has certainly been something we've suspected. The fact that there haven't been any conversations with the teachers, that we still haven't seen the governance review report that the College of Teachers has initiated, that we haven't seen that yet, is concerning, and that the government would feel the need to move forward without that information—again, it's kind of like the so-called massive, biggest consultation ever, I think it is, the biggest consultation ever that's under

way, where people don't find out about the consultation until they've only got a few hours to register during a weekday, where calls are being screened and where the government now is moving forward on a bunch of issues, including this math proficiency test, without actually waiting for the results of this so-called biggest, most important consultation ever. So I feel that there is something missing here.

I guess the message the government is sending pretty clearly to everybody who cares about public education in this province is that they have an agenda. They have their own agenda on the sex ed curriculum. They have their own agenda on the College of Teachers. Let's just say it: They're heading into the bargaining with the teachers next year, and I can tell you that this is causing a lot of anxiety among many of our educators.

In the midst of all of this, they have repeatedly undermined that relationship of trust that I spoke about yesterday between teachers and parents. That relationship—for those of us who have children in the public education system or have had children in the public education system, you'll know how crucial and important that is, that we have a great relationship with our teachers and that we have a relationship of trust. When that is broken, that affects our students' education.

That's why things like the Parents Reaching Out Grants are so important, because they're specifically aimed at strengthening the ability of parents to engage with teachers. The whole point is to give parents the tools they need to be able to have conversations, and sometimes they're difficult. Some parents go into the public education system and meet a teacher and feel a little out of their realm. Maybe English is not their first language and they have to converse in English. Maybe they themselves had not a pleasant experience, as I mentioned yesterday. For many people in our school system, unfortunately, especially Indigenous people in our country, education equals depression, and we have to be conscious of what that means.

Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, I want to close here by saying, again, I appreciate the opportunity to have this important conversation about these issues, about what it means to have a truly safe and supportive classroom and education system. I am looking forward to having some conversations, to bringing forward some amendments to this bill in committee and having some important debate continue. I'm looking forward to working with the government. I hope the government will be open to listening to some of our ideas, based on some of our consultations, to improve and strengthen this bill.

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you to the member for her speech. I was in the House yesterday and today. It's obvious that there is a passion for the topic that she has; she was a school trustee. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, there was so much that was missing in that, and so much that she didn't reflect on.

First and foremost, the minister and the parliamentary secretary have been working very, very hard, since the

government was sworn in, to get out there and to meet with parents and meet with educators. I know myself and many of the members of my caucus have been doing the same. I've met with dozens of teachers, I've met with dozens of parents, both during the election and since the election. I have two daughters who are in elementary school in Stouffville. One of the things that a lot of the teachers have said to me is that one of the problems with the previous health education was that it divided parents. A lot of the teachers said that they didn't want to have to teach something that was so divisive, and that it was the government's responsibility to come forward with something that actually brought people together. That's what this government is trying to do.

She also mentioned—incorrectly, of course—that we were making cuts to mental health. This is absolutely, categorically false. In fact, the Minister of Health is working with the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and the Minister of Community Safety, and working closely with the Minister of Education. They're bringing in a complete package to reassess how we deliver mental health services to all Ontarians, not just to students.

I'm encouraged, on the one hand, because the member has said that she is consulting with a lot of people. So I ask her to bring those consultations over to us, meet with the minister, meet with the parliamentary secretary and share those consultations, but really take a thorough look and speak to parents from across the province and ask them what it was that they were so concerned with, with the previous health education, and how we can make our schools safer, and how we can deal with, as the member from Kitchener South—Hespeler has suggested, making our schools more accessible to those who need service animals.

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

0920

Mr. Joel Harden: It's an honour to rise in this discussion today. I want to begin just from a simple premise, because I don't have a lot of time. I think there is a fundamental disagreement here that my colleague from Davenport laid out very clearly in what she said: We believe, on this side of the House, that you do not consult on people's core, fundamental human rights. That is not something you consult about, and queer and trans kids in our schools need to know that.

I want my friends in government to know that we have folks back home whom I've talked to who may feel similar to you, who believe they should have a right to decide if a queer or a trans kid should find out that their gender identity or their parents' gender identity matters in grade 5. Because let's be honest: That's what we're talking about in the curriculum that my friends don't like. On this side of the House, we believe that it's not only appropriate; it's necessary.

I want to give you an anecdote from your own party's history that I hope will reinforce this. The parliamentarian who has taught me a lot in my life is Svend Robinson, our country's first queer parliamentarian. What Svend did in

the 1980s was to go to then-Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and work with him to make sure that the charter had written into it the necessity against discrimination for queer people.

Brian Mulroney got up in front of his cabinet in Ottawa and told them in no uncertain terms that they were to be voting in favour of that whipped vote to ensure that queer rights were written into the Charter of Rights and Freedoms—a Conservative Prime Minister of this country, who has a queer brother in the city of Montreal, who understands very well as a brother, as a friend and as somebody knowledgeable about human rights that you either stand for something or we fall for everything.

So I'm asking this government to stop the dog-whistle politics around consultation and to ensure that human rights for queer and trans kids matter and that they are written into our schools.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today and have a few comments on Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act.

The health and safety and well-being of all our children and students is this government's number one priority. The government has said numerous times that we have zero tolerance for sexual abuse of Ontario students and children. At the end of the day, we want to make our schools and early years child care settings safer than they've ever been before.

We're taking action to ensure that students and children who have alleged that they were subjected to sexual abuse or acts of child pornography committed by educators have access to the services that they need.

The Ontario College of Teachers council: We are prepared to make changes to the Ontario College of Teachers council size and composition to better serve and protect the public interest in regulating Ontario's teaching profession. Also, there's a group called the Public Interest Committee, and it's unable to make decisions or vote on those matters. They haven't met since January 2017. Any future changes to the composition of the council would be expected to enhance the OCT's ability to meet and protect the public interest. Accordingly, the Public Interest Committee would be dissolved if Bill 48 is passed.

It's expected that, as a result of the Ontario College of Teachers governance review, the government would be in a position to make changes to that governance structure that would ultimately remove the need for that group.

The Minister of Education also has the power to strike a committee at any time to mandate issues of public interest.

I look forward to the rest of the debate. I agree with our colleagues on other side of the House in the opposition party that the sooner we get this bill to committee, have recommendations made and debate the bill will all be for the better.

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

M^{me} France G elinas: I want to start by congratulating my colleague from Davenport. I was here last night when

she started her one-hour lead; I'm here this morning when she finished it off. Congratulations to you. It was very interesting—she's fairly new, newly elected in June of this year—to see her go through the bill and really show genuine interest to work with the government on issues.

Some of the parts of the bill we can truly support, and we will work with you. Some of the other parts of the bill, where we have issues: We have to be willing to listen.

I want to bring a little anecdote. We were all, I suppose, at Remembrance Day ceremonies on Sunday. I had many in my riding. I was in Onaping Falls and, for the first time ever, Rita OLink and Darlyn Hansen, who are two trans women from my riding, laid a wreath for all the LGBTQ who served in the Armed Forces. It was the first time that it was done, that a wreath was laid for LGBTQ members, and it was very heartwarming to see the support of the community. There were over 200 people. This one was indoors. Most of them in Nickel Belt are outside; this ceremony was indoors.

The number of people who took their picture with the wreath after, and with Rita and Darlyn, for what they have done—I'm bringing this forward because in Nickel Belt, we don't have a gay village. We don't have very many opportunities to learn about LGBTQ. The people of Nickel Belt learn it through the schools. If you take that opportunity to learn away from us, we will go back to where most trans people are at risk of taking their own lives, because they feel so ostracized. Give those kids a chance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I return to the member from Davenport for her two-minute summation.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to thank everyone—the member from Markham–Stouffville, the member from Ottawa Centre, the member from Sarnia–Lambton and the member from Nickel Belt—for your responses and your thoughtful comments. I appreciate it.

As I mentioned, we do look forward to continued debate and discussion of this bill. At the end of the day, I don't doubt that we all want to ensure that our children and youth are supported and safe in our schools. As someone who personally witnessed teachers who had abused students moved from school to school, when I was growing up in Newfoundland, I can honestly say that we all want that practice to end. We want to see that change.

We will be looking forward to the government working with us to make this policy even stronger, to ensure that the laws and the policy that we make are the best they can be and that they serve all of our students, that they strengthen and don't undermine that essential relationship I've spoken of between parents and teachers, and that they give our school boards the tools they need to make real and meaningful change.

Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid of what's coming overall in our public education system in this province under the current administration. I worry that those who sit opposite, along with their friends in the south and across the country, don't really want to see our public education system prosper. I believe we all want to keep our children and youth safe, but I'm not convinced yet that that means strengthening our public education system, from the other side.

I want to say that what we really need to be focusing on is not taking away the tools that our teachers have to create a more inclusive and diverse community and country. We need to focus on revising the funding formula. That is absolutely crucial. We need to focus on repairing our schools. We need to concentrate on bringing in the Indigenous curriculum, so that we can meet the requirements of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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

Mr. Parm Gill: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak about Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, 2018, brought forward by my colleague the Minister of Education.

This is a bill geared towards keeping our children and students safe and ensuring they're better supported in their day-to-day learning environment. This legislation is the first step in closing three of the many gaps that exist in Ontario's education system. This bill touches on topics that concern families in Ontario sending their children to schools and daycare.

This should never be the case, as students should feel safe and supported while at an institution that builds their character and provides them the education needed to succeed in their life.

The first issue the bill relates to is teachers, in some instances, sexually abusing their students without facing any sort of serious consequences. I say "in some instances," because there are many, many teachers who go above and beyond in terms of what they do to educate our kids, and the time and effort that they spend on this. I want to thank all of those teachers around the province.

0930

We know that sometimes students are, obviously, taught by individuals who are guilty of sexual abuse towards children; however, due to the current laws in place, these individuals are able to escape legal trials and consequences for their actions. As a government that puts student safety as one of our top priorities, we're now looking to fix this major issue concerning our children and students. Our PC government has zero tolerance for any form of sexual abuse within the school environment. That is why this bill is proposing a mandatory revocation of teacher and early childhood educator certificates of registration for all acts of proven sexual abuse. As per the law today, that certificate can only be revoked if the type of sexual abuse is listed on a defined list within the Ontario College of Teachers Act or the Early Childhood Educators Act. Under this legislation brought forward by the previous Liberal government in 2016, the certificate can only be revoked should a teacher commit an offence listed on this defined list. However, if a teacher performs any other type of sexual act towards a student, they are able to keep their teacher's certificate as well as transfer to another institution and continue teaching.

An investigation by the Toronto Star found that the previous Liberal bill does not prevent teachers who might abuse their students from transferring to a different school. If a teacher gropes a student or makes sexual comments

towards a student, their licence isn't automatically revoked. It is revoked only when the sexual abuse falls under this list of offences laid out by the previous Liberal government.

Having been part of the federal government, Mr. Speaker, there were many, many times when I would not see my kids for weeks at a time. There are many parents in Ontario who have to work away from their children or have multiple jobs and have little time to spend with their children. In such a situation, as a parent, it is important to feel at peace sending your kids to school and not having to worry about them potentially being in the midst of a teacher who is capable of abusing them sexually. I was lucky to have a wife who was able to take care of our children so well during the time I had to be away from them, and I am forever grateful to her. But every family is different, and it is important that all children are kept safe.

It is difficult to stop these types of offences from happening altogether. However, we can work towards minimizing these by eliminating the teachers and caretakers who have been identified as sexual abusers from the schools and daycares that our children attend. Through this bill, we're proposing that if a member of the Ontario College of Teachers or the College of Early Childhood Educators is found guilty by their disciplinary committee of committing any form of sexual abuse, their certificate will be revoked immediately. We're going to fix the poorly worded legislation of the former Liberals, which has created loopholes for child abusers. We will ensure that children are kept safe from individuals who pose a threat. This is all about restoring trust in our education system.

It gives me goosebumps, Mr. Speaker, just thinking about any of my three children having been taught by someone who might have committed such a crime. Sexual abusers do not belong in our schools, teaching and taking care of our children. These teachers deserve to have their certificate to teach revoked as soon as they're found guilty of sexually abusing a child, regardless of how minor the offence may be. Parents should not have to worry about sending their kids to school or a child care facility, worrying about their child being sexually abused. It is important that, once identified, these offenders lose their licence to be around our children. If a teacher is able to commit a minor sexual act toward a child they're supposed to be teaching or taking care of, who is to say they won't commit an act much worse?

Teachers are looked up to by students and they are their first mentors. There is no place for sexual abusers in our schools, and it is about time we put our children and our students first.

As was mentioned in the House yesterday by my colleague Minister Thompson, every sexual act under the Criminal Code of Canada should be sufficient to revoke the certificate of a teacher or early childhood educator upon committing the act. Bill 48 will help achieve that goal.

Another pressing issue concerning Ontario students is proficiency in mathematics. Our students have been falling behind in math, and the previous Liberal government

just made things worse with an unproven and experimental curriculum called discovery math. We can conclude that this curriculum has failed our children.

The bill presented by the Minister of Education proposes to resolve this issue and help students in Ontario succeed in this essential subject. Our plan is to work with teachers to ensure they're prepared to teach the fundamentals of math, in order to improve the success of Ontario's students. The Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act would require any new teacher seeking to be registered with the Ontario College of Teachers to successfully complete a math knowledge test.

Mr. Speaker, I'm blessed with three bright children, two of which are still in school and going through the current education system. My youngest son is in grade 8, and I can see how the current math curriculum has failed him. My children, along with every child in this province, deserve a good education system that helps them lead a life of success, one they can be proud of. Having a solid foundation is essential for children for furthering their education. However, if we're seeing a fall in students' math literacy scores in grades 3 and 6, how are these children meant to build on skills they do not possess to begin with?

Our government is going to revitalize the education system for students and parents across this province. When it comes to math, in particular, we're going to continue to focus on getting back to the basics. We will ensure teachers are supported and have the tools necessary to teach math. In turn, parents will be able to have confidence that students are learning the fundamentals that they and employers across this province are looking for.

The schools in Ontario should focus on teaching students the skills that matter: reading, writing and math. This approach will help to prepare our kids for the challenges of work and life. By ignoring parents and focusing on a narrow agenda, or providing our kids with experimental curriculum like discovery math, the Liberals' failed policies are leaving our children unprepared to compete with other students from across Canada and around the world.

Instead of helping our kids pass their tests, the NDP want to cancel the tests altogether. The stats provided by the Education Quality and Accountability Office, also known as EQAO, show that the success numbers have decreased each year that EQAO assessments were completed since 2013. Just over half, 51%, of Ontario's grade 6 students and 38% of grade 3 students failed to meet the provincial standards in math in 2018. The EQAO data showed that 21% of students who met provincial standards in grade 3 failed to do so in grade 6.

As a father, this is hard for me to wrap my head around, as I think of my youngest son having to struggle because of an education system that fails to provide proper resources for him to succeed. I'm sure the parents in Ontario would agree with me on this, Mr. Speaker.

0940

Math has become a troublesome issue across the country as test scores drop in every province except

Quebec and PEI. Because EQAO is only implemented in Ontario, Mr. Speaker, it is hard to compare the results to other provinces'. However, according to a recent Global News article, the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program released a report in April that examined the test results of eighth graders across the country between 2010 and 2016. The report found that Ontario students' performance in math remains stagnant, while Quebec, which had the highest scores in the country, watched its results climb significantly. Math scores are going up in Quebec and Prince Edward Island; however, our students in Ontario are failing their tests because the Liberals have failed our kids. We can agree that this early achievement in math is a strong predictor of one's academic success in the future.

Starting in September 2018, our government has held consultations with parents, educators and interested individuals from across our province to allow them to contribute their thoughts and suggestions on the Ontario curriculum. The consultations focused on the following topics:

- improving math scores and standardized testing;
- the inclusion of important life skills such as financial literacy and coding, to help our students succeed in the future; and
- the steps schools should take to remove distracting cellphones from the classrooms.

This government for the people will review input from everyone who participates, and we're going to fulfill our election promise because we're focused on creating the best environment for students to achieve.

An article in the Globe and Mail about math standards in Ontario references a report by Professor Anna Stokke from the department of math and statistics at the University of Winnipeg. She gave the example that if a student hasn't memorized the times tables by grade 4, they will struggle with topics that rely on basic math, Mr. Speaker. Her report also mentioned that math is very cumulative in nature, and that's why it's important to get it right when students are young. She mentions that important concepts be included in elementary and middle-years curriculum. If not, that would result in a packed high school curriculum and also students who are not prepared for success at that level. She is not surprised to see Ontario's math scores stagnate or tumble, because the focus has been on discovery-based learning as opposed to mastering basic math skills before moving on to the more complex equations.

We promised in our campaign to focus on the fundamentals and make mathematics mandatory in teachers' college programs, and we're delivering on that mandate with Minister Thompson's bill.

We also aim to address the current EQAO testing regime that is failing our kids and implement a standardized testing program that works. We believe this is the first step to achieving the bigger goal for students and parents, as well as the future of our province. It is important, Mr. Speaker, that we stop trying to hide the problem, but rather, fix it, and that is exactly what this bill will address.

The struggles that families face due to their children struggling in math have forced them to turn to private tutors and after-school math classes. Mr. Speaker, in my

riding of Milton, families are having to enrol their children in out-of-school math classes to help their children get the same math skills they are meant to obtain through going to school. Parents should not have to look for substitutes to try to fix an issue that was created by the Liberals. Parents should feel comfortable sending their kids to schools and having trust that the education system allows their children to succeed rather than set them up for failure. It is evident that this is a significant problem hindering families in Ontario, and our PC government is taking measures to address and fix this issue. We're supporting teachers to be better prepared to teach the fundamentals of math. These changes would provide more confidence to parents that the government is working to ensure that Ontario continues to have one of the best education systems in the world.

Lastly, through this bill, the Education Act will be amended to provide that the minister may establish policies and guidelines respecting service animals in schools, and require boards to comply with the policies and guidelines and to develop policies in accordance with those policies and guidelines.

Currently, Ontario's Education Act permits boards to bar service animals from school premises if they wish. It is important to have clear legislation in regard to such an important topic rather than leaving the decision to the board members' discretion. Our PC government is working towards addressing this issue, as we know how important it is, and we're supporting our families and getting it right once and for all.

To ensure that the number one priority is the health, safety and well-being of children and students, we are taking action now to make our schools and early years child care settings safer. These changes would improve the quality of education for Ontario students and children and put parents' rights and voices first. This would provide more confidence to parents that the government is working to keep our kids safe.

We are taking action to help ensure that students and children who have been the subject of alleged sexual abuse or acts of child pornography by educators have access to the support they need. This government has zero tolerance for sexual abuse of Ontario students and children.

The government is also committed to improving the success of Ontario students overall but specifically related to mathematics. It is time we get back to the basics, respect parents and work with our teachers to ensure our kids have the skills they need to succeed in their lives.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I've sat here and listened to our Conservative government talk about Bill 48 and their safe and supportive classrooms. It's rather insulting that the member who recently spoke on the government side never mentioned LGBT or trans students or educators. If you really want to make schools safe and supportive, we've got to identify the students who are actually in these schools, and also the educators. Many of us, myself included, are queer or from the trans community.

The next thing I'd like to say is: You talk about respecting parents, and I agree with you on that. We've got to respect parents, but I also feel we need to respect our teachers. We need to respect our child and youth workers, our student equity program advisers and our mental health workers. If we want to create safe and supportive schools, let's invest in the human capital. Let's invest in the talented souls we have who give their time and energy every day to educate our kids, as opposed to the EQAO test. Researchers, doctors and scholars have said time and time again that teaching kids a standardized test—essentially teaching them to the test—is not really teaching. We're not respecting our teachers, we're not respecting their intellect, when we're just telling them to prepare a kid to a test.

Every student is unique. They're not standardized; they're not a cookie-cutter model. So why are we enforcing and propping up the EQAO as opposed to propping up more educators, more parents—of course—and giving them the tools they need to engage with their schools in a way that can create a safe and supportive classroom?

0950

Hey, I agree with you: Sexual abuse is a no-tolerance zone. You should lose every licence if you are a person found guilty of this. However, what are sexual abuse and math tests doing in the same bill? Why don't we talk about—

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

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I'd like to start off by thanking my colleague from Milton for his comments, especially in support of our excellent teachers in Ontario, and also for respecting the parents.

Our school environments should be safe and accepting spaces where students can achieve academic success. Safe and accepting learning environments are essential for the well-being of students, and we have a role to play in making our schools secure and supportive. Our government is focused on keeping children and students safe and ensuring that they're being set up for success. We must make clear what behaviour is unacceptable in a classroom setting, and ensure that there are measures in place to respond to all incidents in order to protect our children and youth from harm.

There were holes throughout the previous legislation that caused concern and led to many asking for better protection for Ontario students from abuse by teachers. The Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, 2018, will expand the definition of sexual abuse and require mandatory revocation for any acts of sexual abuse. This is imperative, as expanding the definition of sexual abuse acts will result in mandatory revocation of a member's licence and ensure they are not able to remain in a classroom setting and hurt vulnerable students.

Schools must provide support for all students, and our government is going to ensure that this is the case, if the legislation passes. We are committed to keeping our students safe. We want them to learn in a positive environment that supports their unique abilities. Teachers are an

integral part of our children's learning, and we must ensure that they are properly preparing our students with the necessary life skills they need to thrive.

As the Minister of Education stated, by making these changes, we are sending out a clear message: The government has zero tolerance for sexual abuse of Ontario students and children. We are taking action now to make our schools and early years and child care centres safe learning environments. Thank you.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I just want to focus on one little area: the quote that we keep hearing, that there's respect for parents. I'm going to stand up as a parent of three children and also as the former director of diversity and equity at Wilfrid Laurier University.

When I was in that capacity, working to support my own kids, I was also responsible for overseeing the gendered violence prevention portfolio. In that portfolio, I had the honour of working with a number of amazing experts from the sexual assault support centre at the hospital in my riding, St. Mary's. One of the biggest stats that people often forget is that students who identify as queer or trans—and, in fact, trans more than any other within that group—are often sexually assaulted more often than our straight students. So if we have a curriculum that is focused on removing consent, removing the tools that these students need to (a) see themselves reflected in the curriculum, and (b) be able to know how to see what's happening to them as unacceptable, then our schools will never be safe.

I just want, as a parent of a queer daughter who has gone to the school board in my riding and spoken to the trustees there—she is petrified. She has been staying at home, anxious, because she's not reflected in the curriculum, and she's not able to be given the tools to be able to express to anybody that somebody has hurt her.

As a parent, and knowing from what is being told on the opposite side that you respect me because I'm a parent, please insert actual content into the curriculum so that my child knows how to say she has been harmed.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an honour to be able to stand and address and respond to the comments from the member from Milton. I really appreciated his contributions to the debate today on Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. It's a piece of legislation that is truly monumental and one that will make an enormous amount of difference in the lives of students across Ontario. I have to begin by saying, though, that I rebut and I refute the allegations levelled by the opposition on a number of different fronts.

Let me begin by saying that all those on the Progressive Conservative benches believe that everyone should be treated equally, with dignity and respect, regardless of background or who they are—100%. Every single one of my colleagues will stand by that.

Second, let me say that their accusation that this is not being comprehensively consulted on, whether it's with teachers or with students, is completely false.

We saw the former Liberal government. We saw their failed ideological experiments. We saw them reach out to, what, 1,600 people across the province? We are reaching out to tens of thousands of students, organizations, parents and teachers, allowing every single Ontarian to have their voice heard.

Speaker, that is what democracy looks like. That is about making sure that we truly are reaching out, that we're having an open and transparent dialogue—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:—about what legislation should look like going forward, and also what curriculum development should look like. We're really pleased to see that.

I know the member from Milton spoke about that. He spoke about the importance of recognizing the contributions of our teachers as well. I want to take this opportunity to thank our teachers for their contributions.

I look forward to continuing debate on this legislation, but I wish that the opposition, instead of only presenting criticism, would provide constructive options and solutions, as they have yet to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Milton has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues from both sides of the House, of course: the members for Toronto—St. Paul's, Simcoe North, Kitchener Centre and Niagara West.

As I pointed out in my remarks earlier, our government, during the campaign, communicated very, very clearly, as this was one of the main topics that concerned most Ontario parents. I can tell you that in my riding of Milton, we heard loud and clear in terms of how the policies put forward by the previous Liberal government were failing our students and our children.

As a proud parent of three—and for, I'm sure, my colleagues here who have children and grandchildren—there's nothing more in any of our lives but to see our children and our grandchildren succeed in their lives. But when they are not getting the education they deserve, some of the basic skills that we send our kids to school to achieve, there's nothing more frustrating. I know families in my riding of Milton are spending hundreds of dollars, and in some cases thousands, in after-school programs to send their kids to learn math skills, English and other subjects. They expect an education system, they expect the schools, to provide these basic skills if we're going to have our kids succeed, not only in their personal life but also in their work life. That's really what not only the future of Ontario but the future of our country relies on.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a great pleasure for me to rise today, as the member for London West, to participate in

this very important debate on Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act.

I'm particularly pleased to be able to offer some comments in this debate because of my experience as a school board trustee for 13 years. I was chair of the Thames Valley District School Board for two terms and also served on the executive of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. I had the honour of serving as the education critic for the Ontario NDP caucus in the last Parliament.

I want to begin by commending my colleague the member for Davenport, the current education critic for the Ontario NDP, for her very insightful lead speech starting off the debate on behalf of this side of the Legislature. I think it would be worthwhile to remind MPPs of some of the context that the member for Davenport provided in her remarks.

1000

She highlighted the fact that, surprisingly, this is the first time that MPPs in this Legislature are debating education legislation. That is surprising, Speaker, because we have seen significant change in education in Ontario since the election of this new government.

In fact, before the throne speech, before most of us were even sworn in as MPPs, we heard that this government was cancelling curriculum-writing sessions to respond to the call for action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We heard that this government was going to completely scrap the sexual health curriculum that had been put in place in 2015 to deal with the realities of society, of the changes in society, since 1998, when the previous health and physical education curriculum had been developed.

In the deal that it had made with social conservatives who had supported their leader and had supported their party, this government announced that the new, up-to-date, modern sexual health curriculum was going to be completely scrapped. Now, they backtracked somewhat and they have now announced that it is only currently scrapped in elementary schools.

The reality is that we have students attending schools across this province who come from queer families, whose parents are gay or lesbian or trans. We have students who are identifying as queer or trans themselves. They are discovering their own sexual identity from a very, very early age. We need a curriculum in our classrooms that will make those children see themselves reflected, that will make them feel that they are valued, that they have rights and that their needs have to be honoured in Ontario schools.

But we also saw, more recently, some other sweeping changes in education. We saw \$100 million that has been cut from school maintenance and repair budgets. That has meant that many schools across this province are unable to proceed with some of those very important maintenance items that were planned: window repairs, window replacements etc. This funding was critical because there has been a \$16-billion backlog in school maintenance and repairs accumulated over the time of the last government.

We saw a very quiet announcement, a sudden announcement, that the Parents Reaching Out Grants were

going to be "paused," as the government likes to say. These are very modest sums of money that really made a huge difference to school communities and to parents in schools across the province.

All of that has happened, Speaker, up to this point that we have reached, with a debate on Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act.

Now, Speaker, it's interesting. This really is an omnibus bill. The title of it is An Act to amend various Acts in relation to education and child care. I don't know how many times in the last Legislature I heard the members on that side, who were on this side, complaining about the Liberals' penchant for bringing forward omnibus pieces of legislation, because they knew then, as they should know now, that omnibus bills are problematic.

Omnibus bills undermine democracy, because they bundle together sometimes and often unrelated—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha will come to order, please.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: They bundle together sometimes and often unrelated pieces of legislation. What that does is, it prevents the kind of fulsome debate that Ontarians expect us to have on issues of vital public importance.

In the case of this omnibus bill, Bill 48, there are three main legislative initiatives that are bundled together. The first is to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act to expand the definition of "sexual misconduct." This would allow the College of Teachers to mandatorily revoke a member's certificate when that member has been found guilty of sexual misconduct. This, of course, arose from our knowledge of some of the gaps in the previous legislation that had been in place to deal with sexual misconduct of teachers.

I want to commend the Toronto Star for the excellent in-depth reporting that was done. We learned that some teachers were not having their certificates revoked after they had been found guilty by a discipline committee of the College of Teachers for sexual misconduct. They were being moved to other schools or other school boards because the kind of misconduct that they had engaged in was not captured by the legislation. This legislation is a very important move forward to fix that gap because it is absolutely non-negotiable: Any teacher who has been engaged in any kind of sexual misconduct has to have their licence revoked. That is a very important legislative initiative, and it deserves a fulsome discussion in this Legislature.

The other piece related to that, Speaker, is that in the last session of the Legislature, there was an all-party Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment. Members who participated in that committee—there were members from all sides of the House—heard horrifying stories of sexual abuse of children and how frequently sexual abuse of children occurs when there is a trusted adult—a coach, a teacher or a minister—and the devastating impacts of experiencing that sexual harm for a child going forward. The one thing that we heard almost unanimously from—I think there were 150 presenters who came before that

committee. Almost unanimously, every single presenter said that the most important thing that we can do to prevent sexual abuse of children is to move forward with the changes to the sexual health curriculum in schools from kindergarten to grade 12. They emphasized the need for that sexual health curriculum.

One of the things that that curriculum does, from a very young age, is it teaches kindergartners the proper names of body parts so that they can communicate what has happened to them to an adult, and then that can start an investigation moving forward, as it should. This has been something that child psychologists, police officers, child development experts and people across the board have recommended: that this remain in the school curriculum because it is so important to prevent childhood sexual abuse.

Speaker, we are 100% supportive of the changes that have been made in this legislation to deal with childhood sexual abuse, but we believe that the sexual health curriculum is equally important. It is just as vital that those changes be in place in order to prevent the sexual abuse of children.

1010

Another piece of this omnibus bill deals with service animals in schools. I want to acknowledge my colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain for the work that she has done on children with autism to raise awareness of their needs.

It is interesting that we are debating Bill 48 and the changes that are proposed to require school boards to have policies on service animals in schools, but we're having this debate just a month after the Ontario Human Rights Commission released comprehensive recommendations on the needs of children who have special learning needs in Ontario schools. There is a wide-ranging package of recommendations that the Human Rights Commission identified that need to be addressed in our education system. That should have been part of the changes that were included in this omnibus bill.

We also know that, just a couple of weeks ago, it was the 20th anniversary of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Twenty years ago, this Legislature came together to agree that we were going to move forward with that legislation. It is telling that in this momentous year, this 20th-anniversary year, this new government has put a freeze on the work of the education accessibility standards committee.

The Education Standards Development Committee: Its work has been frozen. The government said at the time that they needed a chance to brief the new minister for accessibility. Well, the government has had—what is it? What are we now?—140 days to brief that new minister of accessibility. Why is that Education Standards Development Committee not moving forward, doing the work on identifying barriers to students with special needs, and then bringing forward legislation to address those barriers?

The third part of this legislation deals with a mandatory math test for new teachers entering the system. The government brings this forward without any evidence to say that testing teachers improves math scores. I just heard

the member opposite compare Ontario's results to math scores in other provinces. Well, no other province has a mandatory math test for teachers. It's like this government believes that this is some miracle solution that's all of a sudden going to raise math scores, but has brought forward no evidence to say that this is the fix that we are looking for.

I realize that my time is rapidly passing, but I did want to go back to the Parents Reaching Out Grants that I had mentioned at the beginning of my remarks. I recently received an email from the principal of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School in my riding of London West. I asked the principal if I could read his remarks into the record. He said that he would be honoured to have me do so.

He begins his email by saying, "I recently found out that the current government of Ontario has cancelled the funding for OPHEA and has 'paused' the funding of the Parents Reaching Out Grants. As a secondary school principal and school administrator for the past 18 years, I have witnessed many callous acts of governments that have hurt students and degraded education. Unfortunately, I have not witnessed anything more callous than the onslaught of cancelled/paused/delayed funding to education from any other government in my time in education."

He goes on to describe the impact of the pause on the Parents Reaching Out Grants on his school community. He says that in April of this year, the school council of his school and the six school councils from the elementary feeder schools combined their Parents Reaching Out Grants funding to hold a conference. All of the six feeder schools and the secondary school were unanimously agreed that one of the most important issues that they saw was to build resiliency in their children.

Oh, and I think I'm out of time. Okay. Thank you, Speaker.
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before we call for introduction of visitors, I wish to call attention to the fact that I have a good friend in the Speaker's gallery today: one of Ontario's 24 senators, the Honourable Rob Black, senator representing the province of Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Today I would like to welcome the new team from St. Catharines: legislative assistant Mickey Calder and constituency assistants Taylor Downs and Francesca Delano. Thank you for coming, and welcome.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce His Worship Trevor Birtch, the mayor of Woodstock, visiting Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park, Trevor.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm so excited to welcome Julie, my new community office assistant, to Queen's Park. Thank you, Julie.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to also add my warm welcome to Senator Rob Black. We go way back to OMAFRA days and 4-H Ontario.

Mr. Jamie West: I would like to welcome Team Sudbury to Queen's Park: Nicole Ayotte and Nick Higgins from our constituency office, and Alison Blagden from our office here at Queen's Park.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: C'est avec plaisir ce matin que j'ai eu le plaisir de partager une belle discussion avec des gens d'Ottawa.

Some people from OCUFA whom I had the pleasure of meeting this morning: Susan Spronk, associate professor of the University of Ottawa; Root Gorelick, Carleton University Academic Staff Association; Stéphanie Yamin, Professors' Association of Saint Paul University; and Michael Conlon, OCUFA incoming executive director. Welcome, to all of them, to our Legislature. Thank you for the work you do.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the privilege of introducing today, in the public gallery, the students and teachers of Hawthorn School. Thank you very much for coming in to the Legislature today.

Mr. Chris Glover: It's my pleasure to welcome today the members of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations: Rahul Sapra, Danielle Sirianni Molnar, Michelle Webber, Catherine Anderson, Susan Cadell, Shannon Dea, Bryan Tolson, Kimberly Ellis-Hale, David Monod, John Ciriello, Benjamin Muller and Jeff Tennant.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It is my absolute pleasure to introduce a former MPP from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Mr. Morley Kells, who is here with us today. I also want to thank him for all his guidance and help. He's just a really great man.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to welcome Sydney Piatkowski, my constituent assistant from Waterloo, to Queen's Park. Welcome, Sydney.

Mr. David Piccini: I just wanted to quickly welcome the members of OCUFA as well this morning on behalf of the government. Thank you for that very informative breakfast this morning and for taking the time out of your day to meet with us.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I would like to welcome visitors from the Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre: Camille Evans, Kathleen Brutto, Lelisa Mesadi, Jofin Lorange and Grisilda Bast. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joel Harden: I also wanted to welcome our friends from OCUFA, continuing on the list: Glenna Knutson, Nathan Kozuskanich, Nicole Bessette, Geoffrey Hudson, Gyllian Phillips, Stéphanie Yamin, Susan Spronk from the great city of Ottawa, Jordan Morelli, Marcus Harvey, Mike Eklund, Root Gorelick from Carleton University in the great city of Ottawa, Roy Gillis, and my good old friend Mike Conlon, who is coming in to be OCUFA ED as of January 2019.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome my constituency assistant from Essex, the person who is responsible for keeping my life in order for the last seven years. Patti Hayes is here. Welcome, Patti, to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to add my own words of welcome to two members from the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association, John Ciriello and Benjamin Muller. I'd like to thank them for their hard work, bargaining into the wee hours last Friday to reach an agreement. Welcome.

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to welcome grade 5 students from Bruce Trail Public School, from my great riding of Milton. They'll be joining us a little later in the gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I, too, would like to welcome the former member of provincial Parliament for the riding of Humber in the 32nd Parliament and Etobicoke-Lakeshore in the 36th and 37th Parliaments, Mr. Morley Kells. Once again, welcome back to the Ontario Legislature.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a new group of legislative pages, and I would ask them to assemble now for their introductions.

From the riding of Huron-Bruce, Aditya Pandya; from the riding of Newmarket-Aurora, Alex Zhao; from the riding of Willowdale, Andrew Mao; from Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas, Ella Jazvac; from the riding of Durham, Emily Collicutt; from Mississauga East-Cooksville, Emily Hall; from Brantford-Brant, Ethan Russell; from Beaches-East York, Georgia Looman; from the riding of Oxford, Hannah Van Boekel; from Niagara West, Imran Gulamhussein; from Toronto Centre, Isabel Chant; from Timmins, Jack Heikkila; from Etobicoke Centre, Kejsi Mustajir; from Bay of Quinte, Kidan Singer; from Richmond Hill, Lillian Liu; from Brampton South, Nidhi Sanjeev Kumar; from Scarborough Southwest, Samara Nolan; from York Centre, Sarah Carnat; from Whitby, Shlok Panchal; from Parkdale-High Park, Vincent Doval-L'Heureux; and from Nepean, Zoe Smith.

I want to also welcome, from the riding of Oakville North-Burlington, Rham Anpalagan.

Welcome to this group of legislative pages.

Applause.

1040

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for oral questions, I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Crawford assumes ballot item number 37 and Mr. Roberts assumes ballot item number 42.

REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: the

2018 environmental protection report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. There is a memorandum of agreement between the Ontario government and Ontario Power Generation. Basically, the government appoints the directors, and then the directors, who are appointed by the government, run the company. They do the hiring, the firing and the managing.

Does the Premier agree with that memorandum of agreement?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Ontario Power Generation is responsible for their own hiring.

But let me tell you what we did with the energy act. We cancelled the Green Energy Act. We saved 7,500 jobs at Pickering that the Leader of the Opposition wanted to cancel. We saved \$790 million in contracts. We got rid of Hydro One's board and the CEO—they're gone, they're done. Home heating costs are actually going down. Energy costs are going down.

That's what we did for the energy file. That's what we're going to continue to do.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Premier: I think I heard that he said that the board is responsible for the hiring; I didn't hear firing.

I was surprised that, according to media reports, Alykhan Velshi was fired from his executive position at OPG after a single day on the job, thanks to a call from the Premier's office. Yesterday, when Ontario Power Generation was asked for comment, they refused to give any details about Mr. Velshi's severance package, but some are already suggesting that it could be as high as \$500,000—half a million dollars.

Can the Premier tell us how much of the public's money Mr. Velshi will be taking home for his 24 hours on the job?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again through you, Mr. Speaker: The OPG is responsible for doing their own hiring.

I'm going to repeat: The opposition wanted to fire 7,500 people out of Pickering. They wanted to get rid of 7,500 people who were relying on good-paying jobs to pay their mortgage, to put food on their table. You didn't worry about the 7,500 people in Pickering; we cared about the 7,500 people in Pickering. That's why they're still employed there.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: To the Premier: Once again, it looks like the people of this province are going to be stuck with the bill for one of Premier Ford's decisions and paying the price for settling his political scores.

If a Tory insider is getting paid half a million dollars for one day's work, people have a right to some answers. The question that needs to be answered is, did the Premier direct or request that Mr. Velshi be fired? If he did, how much will his severance cost the people of Ontario?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Ontario Power Generation is responsible for their own staffing decisions. OPG is a crown corporation that is responsible for their own staffing decisions. All staffing decisions at OPG are made by OPG. Thank you.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is to the Premier, and this question is about the Premier's standards for cabinet and his senior staff and how he communicates those standards.

Over the last week, we've seen the Premier say that a minister was leaving for one reason, only to learn later on that that wasn't the reason at all. Now senior staff are being dismissed in the middle of the night, and we've just learned that they're hiring their own legal counsel for representation.

Can the Premier tell us who on his senior team has been let go this past week, and what were the reasons for their dismissal?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I think I answered this yesterday. When it comes to staffing, we don't comment about our internal staffing. That is up to the PC Party, and that's the way it's going to be.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Sara Singh: Leadership is about setting a standard and communicating that very clearly. If the Premier has any standards at all, it's not clear what they are, because he's not telling anyone.

The Premier says he has 10,000% confidence in his new Minister of Tourism, even though he felt the need to move him just days after the revelations about his role in a Ponzi scheme that bilked 800 families out of their life savings. Were you aware of this when you welcomed your new minister into cabinet?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: You want to talk leadership? At least the leader is here from the PC Party and not running away—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order. I will remind all members, who know better, that it's totally inappropriate to make reference to the absence of another member in this House. We all know that, from time to time, individual members will have to be away for good reasons. That's why it's totally inappropriate, and I'm going to ask the Premier to withdraw.

Hon. Doug Ford: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier can respond.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: You're going after our team personally, day in and day out. I'll tell you about our team. Our team is a strong team for the people. Our team is there representing the people and the taxpayers of this province. We're there for the people. We're there to reduce taxes and reduce hydro rates, making sure the people have a voice and empowering the people of this province instead of empowering the government.

The opposition wants to just raise taxes and lay off 7,500 people at Pickering. They want to make sure that it's unaffordable to live in Ontario. We want to make sure it's affordable to live in Ontario and create good-paying jobs. That's what our—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: People send us here in the hopes of seeing an open government that they can trust, a government that will be transparent with the actions that it has taken. Instead, the Premier is announcing cabinet changes in the dead of night and swearing in a cabinet behind closed, locked doors.

Earlier this week, the media reported that the former Minister of Transportation was related to the head of a lobby group seeking to influence that very same ministry. Was the Premier aware of this when he appointed that minister to his position?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: When Mr. Yakabuski was appointed Minister of Transportation, he took immediate steps to declare a conflict with the Integrity Commissioner. So he is clean, okay? You don't have to worry about someone with integrity like Mr. Yakabuski. He's one of the most credible ministers who are down here right now. He has integrity. He has honesty. He has accountability. That's what our team is made of.

1050

POLICE INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: This is a question for the Premier and to the Premier about ensuring confidence in the transparency of police investigations.

Ontario Provincial Police are investigating the governing party, and that should raise serious concerns. There's an ongoing police investigation into a data breach at the 407 which forced the resignation of a PC candidate, and another ongoing investigation into potential fraud in a nomination in Hamilton West.

What steps is the Premier taking to assure the public that the provincial police are able to conduct these investigations into the governing party in an impartial manner?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As a legislator and a long-serving member of this Parliament, I would have hoped that a member of the NDP would understand and appreciate that we cannot and will not comment on ongoing police investigations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: People need assurance that investigations are conducted without any interference from the government. It's a serious matter of public policy. In the ongoing investigation into the Hamilton West PC nomination, court affidavits indicate that police are unwilling to release more information because it could bias people against the Ford government, and that numerous witnesses were uncooperative and tried to control interviews with police.

To ensure that there is independence and transparency at every stage of this investigation, previous governments have appointed special prosecutors from outside of the province. Will the Premier do that today?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, with the greatest of respect, the member opposite is making my argument: We cannot interfere with these investigations. The only way that police are going to be able to do the important work they need to do to investigate and lay charges when appropriate is for us to stay out of the way.

SMALL BUSINESS

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

A week ago Saturday, the minister's parliamentary assistant and I met with a dozen small business owners in my riding to discuss the challenges they face every day in building their businesses and our economy and creating meaningful employment for the people of Willowdale. These hard-working entrepreneurs from a variety of sectors applauded the work this government is doing to make Ontario open for business, and are anxiously waiting for the steps being proposed in Bill 47 that will stop punishing small business owners for the important work that they do.

Can the minister provide an update to this House on those measures and on our government's larger strategy for making Ontario open for business?

Hon. Todd Smith: A great question from the member from Willowdale. It's very helpful to have two great parliamentary assistants in Donna Skelly and Michael Parsa, who have been doing outstanding work across the province, hearing first-hand from business owners and operators right across Ontario.

Good news, Speaker: Yesterday, Bill 47 passed second reading. It's heading to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs here at Queen's Park. I just want to remind everyone that the deadline to request to present at the committee is noon today.

Bill 47 is a key piece of our government's plan to reverse 15 years of Liberal policy that attacked small business. I'd like to read one of the many quotes that say we're on the right track with this bill:

"We are very supportive that the Ford administration is listening to Ontario's hospitality industry as we were considered among all other sectors in a one-size-fits-all approach to all labour reforms"—Tony Elenis, CEO, Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, I'd like to thank the minister, on behalf of the small business owners in my community, for this very, very important work.

One of the entrepreneurs I spoke with runs a restaurant in Willowdale, with very humble beginnings. With some hard work, he had some success, and planned on opening a second location, creating new jobs and opportunities. But he put those plans on pause because he could not justify the cost and the risk with his wage expenses. They were to jump 32% in 18 months under the Liberals' Bill 148.

Increased red tape and out-of-date apprenticeship ratios are not just a barrier to business, Mr. Speaker; they're a hidden tax on employment.

Can the minister expand on how the measures of Bill 47 will help business owners like those in my riding to expand, be successful and create more meaningful employment?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks again to the member from Willowdale for another great question. Think of Bill 47 as one stop on the train to success on this particular rail line here in Ontario. We've got a long way to go to make this province the best place to open a business, expand a business and have a job in the whole country.

Here's another quote: "The repeal of Bill 148 is a major step toward reducing costs and restoring business competitiveness for Ontario manufacturers.... We applaud the government's action to eliminate these barriers to doing business in the province." That's from Dennis Darby, from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association.

Mr. Speaker, we've got a great team and we're on the right track over here with this PC government. The Tories like to work day and night to make sure that we are open for business. We've unlocked the door. We're turning on the lights. We're flipping over the "Open" sign. We're making—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday the Premier refused to answer a simple question, one that the public has a right to know, so I'll ask it again today, hoping for a straight answer this time. Will the Premier disclose what private company is running our cannabis warehouse operations? And how were they able to land such a lucrative contract?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Well, the Ontario Cannabis Store has a number of contracts and agreements with different businesses and entities to provide recreational cannabis to

its customers. Let's just run through this, Speaker, once and for all.

The Ontario Cannabis Store has signed supply agreements with 32 federally licensed producers who provide the Ontario Cannabis Store warehouse with its product, so there are several of these 32 out there that are well-known names.

Shopify was awarded a contract under the previous government to power the infrastructure of the OCS website, where customers order their products.

Orders are fulfilled at the Ontario Cannabis Store warehouse in a competitively tendered and negotiated contract under the previous government. Canada Post then delivers the orders.

Those are the people who are involved in the Ontario cannabis supply.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you, Speaker, but we still haven't heard who is running the actual warehouse. We've heard about all the others, but perhaps we can get an answer this time.

With at least a thousand complaints to the Ontario Ombudsman in just a few weeks, with problems with the OCS's deliveries, issues with the website, mislabeled products, and botched shipping and packaging, Ontarians want answers. But we're not getting straight answers from this Premier; instead, he's just blowing smoke.

Now, to make matters worse, the government is unwilling to disclose who exactly is running our cannabis warehouses. Why won't the Premier tell us who is running those warehouses and how they landed those contracts?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Again, I'll repeat myself: The Ontario cannabis warehouse was competitively tendered and negotiated under the previous government.

Many of us on the government side came here in the same way: We serve the people today provincially; many of us served the people locally and many of us were in business for ourselves beforehand. We understand how business works.

Now, I can appreciate very much that the NDP don't quite understand how business works, but as the security of the OCS warehouse is a top priority, we will not be sharing further information on the day-to-day operation. That's how business works. Idiot.

1100

FISHING LICENCES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

This past week during Remembrance Day, millions of Canadians participated in Remembrance Day ceremonies across the country to pay their respects and recognize the many service members for their sacrifices, continued service, and for putting their lives on the line every day to defend our freedom and values. I want to thank all the veterans and military personnel for their outstanding courage and tremendous sacrifices for our country. Many made the ultimate sacrifice to keep our country safe. We,

as Canadians, will be forever grateful to them and their families.

Minister, can you inform the House of the changes that our government is making as our way of giving back to the men and women who have served and those who continue to serve our country?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I would like to thank the member for the question. I would also like to extend my thanks to all our service members, active and veterans, for their bravery and sacrifice to defend our freedom and our values in this great country and province.

Last week, I had the honour to announce that work was under way to amend fishing regulations so veterans and active Canadian Armed Forces members can enjoy free recreational fishing by early 2019. As all members in this House know, recreational fishing is an important part of the lives of many Ontarians. Fishing is a memorable way to experience the outdoors, relax, de-stress and get involved in their local community. We are blessed to live in a province that has a great diversity of freshwater fish and is recognized worldwide for its recreational fishing. By allowing veterans and active Canadian Armed Forces to fish for free, Ontario is making life a little easier for those who gave and continue to give so honourably with their service.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's nice to know, Minister, that our veterans will be hooked on fishing.

Thank you for that response. It's great to hear that our government for the people is giving back to veterans and the Canadian Armed Forces and their families by giving free recreational fishing licences.

But in addition to this great announcement, our government also announced during Remembrance Week that the Royal Canadian Legion branches in the province will be exempt from paying property tax, and that consultations will start on a new hotline for military families moving to Ontario, making it easier to find information on health care, schools, job opportunities, child care, licensing for drivers and vehicles, and other programs and services.

As well, the government has also announced plans to build a memorial that honours the heroes of the war in Afghanistan right here on the legislative grounds.

Can the minister provide more details on the 40,000 veterans and 25,000 active service members in the Canadian Armed Forces who will be able to fish for free in early 2019?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the member for his question. In early 2019, all veterans and active Canadian Armed Forces members residing in Ontario will no longer need to purchase a fishing licence in this province. Valid military and veteran identification will be legally recognized as a fishing licence, and for those who have already purchased their three-year permit, they will be refunded on a pro-rated basis starting on the effective date of this change. More information will be available once this change becomes effective in early 2019.

We are excited to be able to give back to the 40,000 veterans and 25,000 active service members in the Canadian Armed Forces who live here in Ontario. Your government for the people is giving back to those who have given so much to our country and province. This announcement is a small but tangible step to show our veterans and members of the Armed Forces that we celebrate their courage and are grateful for their service. Thank you.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Oji-Cree.*

This question is to the Premier. In May, a new tripartite agreement for improved police services was signed between Ontario, Canada and Nishnawbe Aski Nation. This legally binding agreement marked a new era in policing in the Far North where, after decades of chronic underfunding, Nishnawbe Aski Nation communities would finally benefit from a level of police services available to all other citizens in Ontario.

However, in a letter to the Premier, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation police services and the NAN leadership sought confirmation within seven days that this agreement would continue to be honoured, citing a significant breach in payments of over \$4 million. That response is due today, Mr. Speaker. The letter noted that without adequate funding, this government would be putting children, families and communities in the Far North at risk again.

Does the Premier not believe First Nations in northern Ontario communities deserve police services that meet the same policing standards as those in the rest of Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you so much for the question. As I hope you can appreciate, I just came to this file. There was a letter sent on November 3 with a very short seven-day time frame. I am actively engaged in making sure that the excellent work that is happening with our First Nations policing continues, but I do respectfully ask that you give me the time to assess and review those files thoroughly. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. Again, a question to the Premier: The Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service patrols an area the size of France, often without backup or proper basic equipment such as working radios. If this government is serious about honouring its treaty and legal obligations, it would not withhold payments that are essential for the very existence of these police services and the safety of the people in my riding and also in the Far North.

When will the Premier be providing the promised funding to the Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service, as per the agreement the government of Ontario signed?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I appreciate the honourable member's question. Of course, we celebrate the great police work that they do up in the Far North. I've been involved with those police officers as a front-line worker working in nursing stations. I've been involved in supporting those resources in the past in previous capacities in the other place. We're very excited about the work they do, the level of community engagement that they have, and the assets that they have, not just to enforce the law but to engage the community on their own terms.

With respect to the radios, Mr. Speaker, just a couple of weeks ago we made a great announcement that we're going to be having a world-class PSRN network of communications that will fit all front-line workers: police, ambulance and fire. That member should be very pleased with that—if he even knows what it's about.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: My question is for the Premier. Last night, the Globe and Mail reported that Mr. Ford's top staffer intervened to have a Patrick Brown Tory fired from his position as vice-president of Ontario Power Generation. Speaker, to everyone here, I can tell you this really looks sketchy.

Not one, not two, but three PC sources told the media that this would cost Ontario taxpayers \$500,000.

Through you, Speaker: Will the Premier tell the House if he thinks it's appropriate to use resources meddling in internal staffing matters instead of funding affordable housing, education, seniors, health care, transportation and infrastructure?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I just love it when the independent members, once the Liberal government, list off all the different files that they fundamentally failed Ontarians at. It's a bit rich, Mr. Speaker.

But with respect to the question, OPG is responsible for their own staffing decisions. OPG is a crown corporation and they make their own staffing decisions. All staffing decisions are made by the OPG.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, again for the Premier: For a government that says that they care so much about respecting taxpayers, this just doesn't seem right. Combined with the \$3-billion cancellation of cap-and-trade and their fated lawsuit against the feds costing the province \$30 million, this seems more like a government for the lawyers, for the insiders and for the Premier himself.

Can the Premier tell us how much more of Ontarians' money he is going to waste fighting old battles as he prepares for his federal leadership campaign?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Well, there it is, Mr. Speaker. We've finally heard it from the independent Liberal Party. A waste of taxpayers' money is when a government actually tries to put it back in their pockets. Their philosophy is it's a waste when they can't actually waste it, when

billions of dollars go out the door to projects that people didn't want and communities didn't need. They stripped municipalities of their powers of decision-making, Mr. Speaker, and threw up the kinds of projects that have cost the families and businesses who are having difficulty paying those monthly bills a lot of money.

We're out to reduce hydro rates. We're out to reduce tax rates. We're opening Ontario for business. After a decade and a half of darkness, the people of Ontario are going to be able to turn the lights on, Mr. Speaker, to a brighter future.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Ma question est pour le ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales.

This past summer, farmers across Ontario and in my riding faced dry conditions from severe rainfall shortages. This drought has reduced their pasture yields that are vital for their livestock. Farmers have had to make tough herd-management decisions following the drought, including selling a portion of their livestock, in some cases, due to not having enough feed for them in the winter months.

Farmers already experienced enough red tape and regulatory burden hurdles under the previous government and are counting on this government to help them when they need it the most.

Can the minister please let us know what he is doing to help livestock farmers as a result of this drought?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for the question. I've written to the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to ask that he designate areas severely impacted by the dry weather as eligible for the livestock tax deferral program. The ability to use this program was a request from the Beef Farmers of Ontario, and I want to commend them for standing up for their members and working towards finding a solution for those impacted. This program would allow cattle producers who have to sell at least 15% of their breeding herd to defer a portion of the sale proceeds to the following year when they have to replenish their herd.

Our government is committed to standing up for our farmers and putting money back in their pockets so they can continue to produce the best-quality food in the world and keep Ontario open for business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Thank you to the minister for his answer and for his quick action on this important issue that has impacted many areas across the province. Our government is committed to making life more affordable for our farmers, and this includes putting more money in their pockets through temporary assistance programs like the federal livestock tax deferral program.

Certain areas across the province, including parts of eastern Ontario near my riding, have been affected by

these droughts proportionally higher than other areas. Can the minister please tell us which areas are most impacted by these droughts and what type of assistance they can expect from this program?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for her supplementary question and her leadership on this issue. The federal livestock tax deferral program will greatly help farmers across the province if they sold a portion of their livestock due to experiencing a reduction in their forage yields of at least 50% of their long-term average. Some of these areas with the highest forage reduction are in Manitoulin, Grey county and Leeds-Grenville. I recognize the challenges and tough decisions that farmers in these areas have had to make, and I want to reassure them that our government is committed to making life more affordable for our farmers.

The request I sent to the federal government about this program will activate a process that examines which areas of the province are eligible for assistance. I look forward to hearing from the federal minister and working with the federal government to provide our hard-working farmers with timely and effective solutions.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. As we just heard, it has been a tough year for farmers. They've experienced drought. Grain farmers experienced a really tough spring, and they're experiencing a really tough fall to get their crops off.

They're experiencing record yields, which should be great, but once the crops started coming off—they've been impacted by something called mycotoxin. You thought you were having a record yield, and you could sell. It's a very low price, but you have the record yield to compensate. All of a sudden, part or a majority or all of your corn crop is unsaleable. Now, that should be covered by production insurance, but this is an emergency for farmers. If you have a crop and you thought you could sell it and now you can't—they need help now.

My question to the minister: How is he expediting that process?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for the question. I'm aware that this year's pre-harvest grain corn survey revealed higher vomitoxin concentrations than previous years. This year's results were likely largely due to the wet and humid growing weather, as he would know. I understand that these findings are concerning to some farmers. As they're taking their crop off, they can be very disruptive. These vomitoxins are very hazardous in some areas to the livestock feed.

I spoke with the Grain Farmers of Ontario immediately following the issue and went to work with them to find solutions to the problem. Ministry staff are monitoring this issue and working with the Grain Farmers of Ontario, the Ontario Agri Business Association and the livestock sector to notify farmers about the findings, as well as what steps can be taken to reduce the risks to their operation. We look forward to continuing that work as we go forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you once again to the minister, and to everyone else. To understand the severity of this issue: If you have part of your crop infected with vomitoxin, you can't store it with the rest of your crop. So if you have a storing facility or you take it to the elevator and they don't want it, so what do you do with it? Unless you know you're going to get compensated, what do you do with it?

This isn't something we can take a lot of time to study, because, for certain farmers, they might not have much. If the majority of your crop is impacted by vomitoxin, it could be the end of your farm. This isn't something that they can control.

So again, I urge the minister to act as quickly as possible to make sure that the farmers who have put everything in actually are, somehow, compensated under their production insurance so that they're still there to farm in the next year.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much again to the member for the question. I want to say, we are working with the farmers, recognizing that all the things that the member put forward in these questions are, in fact, happening on the ground as we speak.

We have farmers taking their crop off. We have been advised by the ministry to make sure that they harvest the most acceptable crop in the marketplace first, to make sure that the problem doesn't get worse as we collectively work to find a solution as to what we're going to do with that which cannot be used. Now, some of it can be used, mixing it with others that have less vomitoxin on it. If you mix it properly, it can be used in certain cases. In ethanol they can use it, but we have to worry about the effluent that comes off of the process. They can't use that for livestock feed.

There are a lot of questions. That's why, this coming Thursday, we're having a meeting with all the players involved, including Agricorp, as to how the insurance is dealt with. We're going to meet with all the people to come up with solutions to deal with the issues that are left over after we have dealt with harvesting that crop which is still harvestable.

I want everybody to understand that we have a lot of good corn coming off the fields in Ontario. We have to make sure we deal with that, and then we have to make sure of what we do with the product we can't use for its originally intended purpose. Thank you very much again for the question.

1120

TREATIES RECOGNITION

Mrs. Nina Tangri: My question is for the Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I know that our government is committed to making the right decisions that create economic prosperity for all the people in Ontario. This is a promise that our government for the people takes very seriously, and it includes creating the conditions for prosperity in

Ontario's Indigenous communities. Together, we can create mutually beneficial partnerships with community leaders that deliver economic prosperity to Indigenous peoples across Ontario.

While we are developing these partnerships, we must always respect the treaty rights of Indigenous communities. Can the Minister of Indigenous Affairs tell the members of this House about an important week that highlights the significance of our treaties in this province?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member for Mississauga–Streetsville for the question. Last week, from November 4 to 10, the province of Ontario celebrated treaties in Ontario during Treaties Recognition Week.

I want to do a special shout-out to my very capable parliamentary assistant, who was over at Nipissing University and Canadore College while I was at Beaver Brae Secondary School. We put a particular emphasis on having these celebrations in our schools. It's a chance to gain a better understanding of the importance of the treaties to the history of Ontario and how they gave shape to it. We have more than 46 historical treaties, Mr. Speaker, and last week was a great sharing opportunity.

I've had the unique opportunity of living in Kenora for a great deal of my life, where we're covered by Treaty 3—most of the riding. We had a chance to, again, celebrate the history of these treaties. We look forward to a renewed relationship with Indigenous communities and their treaties moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Back to the minister: Ontarians can be confident that this government is working hard to ensure that we create economic prosperity right across Ontario. The members of this House are well aware of the important investments our government has continued to make to support the goal.

Mr. Speaker, many of the members know how much beauty northern Ontario has to offer. It's important that our government for the people continues to make investments that will help northern communities become even more vibrant destinations for tourists. Can the minister please tell the members of this House about how our government is supporting tourism in the north?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Thank you for that question. There's no doubt that it's high time that we're able to celebrate the rich history and contributions of treaties and the Indigenous communities—and the opportunities and level of interest, frankly, that people have when they come and visit our vast region of northern Ontario and, in particular, northwestern Ontario. I'm speaking, of course, of the numerous pow wows. Eagle Lake First Nation, for example, is known around the world as a great place to come in the middle of summer and celebrate Indigenous culture.

I just want to finish this answer by celebrating something that happened in Kenora–Rainy River during that week. I had a chance to take part in a Living Library event at Beaver Brae Secondary School. Go, Broncos! I want to thank Principal Benoit and Elder Bert Landon for leading our opening prayer. Robert Greene gave a compelling

story of the history of Treaty 3 and how it shaped northwestern Ontario.

We're very proud of our heritage, Mr. Speaker. A common understanding is important for us all moving together, and I appreciate the respect and candour that I've drawn—

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

Interjections.

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

Next question.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is to the Minister of Health. Four people died from a drug overdose in Windsor within a 24-hour period last weekend—four. Some say that as many as 30 other users overdosed, but their lives were saved. Fentanyl is one of the suspected causes.

Speaker, the government has put an arbitrary cap on the number of overdose prevention sites that are allowed to operate in the province, pitting community against community, while the opioid crisis continues to claim lives. With four fatal overdoses in just one day and 30 more close calls, how can the minister justify an arbitrary cap on overdose prevention sites that will leave Windsor without this important life-saving resource?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I do thank the member very much for the question. This is a tragic situation. I understand that it is being investigated at several levels and that they're particularly concerned because the four deaths did not happen together, which sometimes happens. They happened separately.

I do understand that the coroner's office is investigating, as is my office. We want to understand exactly what happened here to make sure that we put procedures in place to make sure it doesn't happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: With an escalating opioid crisis, we need more sanctioned overdose prevention sites, not fewer. The new application guidelines the ministry has put forward will make it next to impossible for some overdose prevention sites to continue, and the arbitrary cap will make it next to impossible for new sites to open.

In Windsor, we need a sanctioned site where people can test their street drugs for fentanyl and other toxic chemicals to avoid more horrific fatalities. We need to fill the gaps in harm-reduction-based treatments. We need more outreach workers and we need more mental health and addiction supports. Most of all, we need the government to recognize these needs and to take action on all fronts.

Will the minister commit today to answer our needs in Windsor and to do more to address the opioid crisis in every corner of our province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I can certainly assure the member that we do take the opioid situation very seriously in Ontario, and in all parts of Ontario. In actual fact, as we announced several weeks ago, it is possible for any

organization to apply to become a consumption and treatment service operations site. That is open to organizations in Windsor as it is open to other organizations across the province.

It's also really important to remember that while we do have the consumption and treatment service sites available, we also need to make sure that we have appropriate mental health and addiction treatment across the province. That is what we're working on now. That is one of our primary election promises to the people of Ontario. That is why we have committed to spending \$3.8 billion over the next 10 years to expand our services, to make sure that we have the detox beds, to make sure that we can help provide housing and to make sure that we can provide the treatment services that people need.

The consumption and treatment service sites are important, of course, but they are only one part of the bigger picture that we are working on—

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: My question is for the Minister of Education. Yesterday, the minister and parliamentary assistant stood in the House to debate the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. This bill is designed to put students, families and educators first by making our schools safer and more supportive environments for everyone.

Part of this bill focuses on ensuring more consistency and transparency for families that request permission for service animals in the classroom, an initiative championed by my seatmate, the fantastic member for Kitchener South–Hespeler.

Today, only half of Ontario school boards have service animal policies in place, meaning half the school boards' families are left unsupported, without answers, and sometimes forced to move to another school board district.

Minister, what will this government do to provide consistency across the province when it comes to student access to service animals?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: First of all, I would like to thank the member from Cambridge for this very timely question. I, too, appreciate the fact that I have a team that's working very, very hard at the Ministry of Education to make sure that students who require special supports have every opportunity to have success in the classroom. Also, with the member for Cambridge, I add my appreciation not only to my amazing parliamentary assistant, the member from Niagara West, but also to the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler's family. They have been tirelessly advocating for the proper approach to addressing the need for support dogs.

1130

That said, it is because we know some students in this province rely on the assistance of service animals in their

school environment. This includes students with special education needs, such as students with autism spectrum disorder and mental health needs.

We know, unfortunately, that school boards don't have a consistent approach. What this bill, Bill 48, will do is make sure all school boards will be directed to have clear and fair policies regarding service animals.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Thank you to the minister for that response. Thank you especially to your team for all the hard work you're doing for such a fulsome consultation.

My constituents have been participating in consultations via fortheparents.ca. What I'm hearing as a member and as a mother is that our classrooms are safe and welcoming learning environments.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Will you commit today to continuing to listen to parents, educators and students in my riding of Cambridge and in our great province of Ontario?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: To the member from Cambridge: Absolutely, yes, we are going to continue to listen and we have been listening. That is why it's so nice to be bringing forward a piece of legislation that demonstrates that parents in Ontario matter to the PC government.

All members of the public will also have an opportunity to provide input on the policy directive that will be issued to the boards. That includes families, education partners, advocacy groups and community agencies. It will help us form the best possible guidelines for school boards to develop policies that work for families of students with special needs.

Speaker, I can't stress this enough: After 15 years of absolute mismanagement in this sector, parents deserve a clear and transparent process for requesting service animals, no matter where they live.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. The Hurontario LRT is a transit project that has a lot of community support. During the election, the Premier promised to build it, yet when we met with Ministry of Transportation staff, they refused to say whether this government is moving ahead with the Hurontario LRT.

People are fed up with being stuck in traffic for hours or crammed like sardines in sweaty, overcrowded subways, buses and streetcars.

Since I can't get a straight answer from the ministry staff, I'll ask the Premier directly: Is this government going to build the Hurontario LRT and provide transit relief to residents?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As has been said in this House many times, our Premier and our government's commitment to transit is second to none. We're going to continue to work with our partners.

I appreciate the input that the honourable member has put on the floor today. I look forward to engaging her and the minister further on this matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the Premier: Residents across the GTA are feeling the pain of transit construction that is required to expand and electrify GO service. From Davenport to the St. Lawrence Market area to the Beaches, residents are grappling with round-the-clock noise, dust and increased pollution.

Their one consolation in the face of this disruption is the provincial promise to electrify GO, which will reduce air pollution and noise once the trains are running. But when we met with Ministry of Transportation staff, they would not confirm whether the electrification of GO is going ahead.

Ontarians deserve the electrification that was promised. My question is to the Premier: Is this government cancelling the electrification of GO service?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I know I speak on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Transportation: This is a very important item for us.

We look forward to dealing with that new streamlined council when they get sworn in in December, because we want to work with them. We want to work with the people of Toronto, their new council and our agencies to make sure that we build transit, that we build housing, that we build infrastructure in this community.

I look forward to continuing that conversation with this member and the agencies and council further.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. I know our government for the people is committed to supporting northern Ontario's agricultural system. Investing in the agriculture sector sends a clear message that northern Ontario is open for business. This is especially important in the agriculture sector because of increasing need for locally grown and produced food.

I'm proud that our government for the people, through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., is supporting agricultural projects. We are taking real action to support strong and vibrant communities across northern Ontario. Can the minister please tell us about recent investments that are helping northern Ontario's agriculture sector?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I appreciate the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville's question. In fact, I like the way Mississauga is trending this morning, Mr. Speaker: an appreciation for Indigenous culture, tourism in northern Ontario and now this burgeoning agricultural sector that we have across northern Ontario, but particularly in northwestern Ontario. They know that farmers feed cities.

I spent a great deal of time in the southern portion of the great Kenora-Rainy River. We have an awesome agriculture sector. I was happy to announce that our government for the people is investing in four agriculture

projects. The four applicants included Delton Martin, Allen Jolicoeur, Cornell Farms and AG's Produce. We're going to be helping them purchase necessary farming equipment, building grain storage capacity and increasing greenhouse capacity. Cloverbelt Country Meats, later on in the week in Dryden, building a great abattoir to support the processing of meat—we're very excited about agriculture in northwestern Ontario and being open for business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the minister for the great answer, and yes, we do respect our farmers.

There is no doubt that our government is doing everything it can to ensure that we create economic prosperity right across Ontario. The members of this House are well aware of the important investments our government has continued to make to support this goal. Many of the members know how much beauty northern Ontario has to offer. It's important that our government for the people continues to make investments that will help northern communities become even more vibrant destinations for tourists.

Can the minister outline our government's plan to grow our tourism sector and create better jobs in northern Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I'll talk about a particular investment in a very special town, and make a shout-out for the media, which I'm not reputed to do.

I did a great announcement in Ignace, Ontario, last week. Dennis Smyk, who ran the Ignace Driftwood for several decades, passed away with cancer last week. He was an honourable man with integrity. He kept the Ignace Driftwood alive and well, informing those constituents of important events that were going on in his town and across the region, and I appreciate him very much.

Mr. Speaker, I was in Ignace to celebrate a business development plan, a master plan to help a town historically hard hit with economic hardship over the course of time, way out there on the eastern side of my riding. But they're fighting back. Resolute Forest Products has put a mill not too far away. They've got some other activities they're focusing on: a beautiful golf course and some opportunities for kids to do things in their communities. We're investing in those small towns. Ignace wants to stand with northwestern Ontario and the province of Ontario, and be open—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. This government is stripping away basic security for part-time temporary workers and creating conditions that encourage employers to hire people on contract rather than creating full-time permanent positions.

Last week, Professor Kimberly Ellis-Hale came to Queen's Park. She has been teaching in Ontario's community colleges for 21 years as a part-time temporary contract employee, and every three months over those 21 years, she has had to reapply for her job. She says, "Despite having taught thousands of students in over 100 courses, spanning two decades of front-line experience, I am paid substantially less than a full-time counterpart teaching for the very first time."

Is this what a good job looks like in Doug Ford's Ontario?

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll remind members that we refer to each other either by our riding or our ministerial title, if applicable.

Response?

Hon. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to take this question from the member opposite. We were elected with a strong mandate, as he would know and we all know, on June 7 to make Ontario open for business. That requires us to change the environment for business in the province that the Liberals had created over the past 15 years. That was an environment that led to over 300,000 manufacturing jobs leaving this jurisdiction for other jurisdictions south of the border or other provinces within our country.

We've already started to get Ontario back on track and make Ontario open for business by lowering the cost of electricity, by eliminating the very costly cap-and-trade carbon tax and by taking on the very harmful Bill 148, which was brought forward by the previous Liberal government. Speaker, we're doing everything we can to make Ontario open for business.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. Chris Glover: Does "open for business" mean that you're going to do it on the backs of the staff and students at Ontario's colleges and universities? Does it mean that we're in a race to the bottom?

One of the professors, Hamish Russell, said of his students at Ontario's universities, "They juggle multiple jobs, high rent, rising tuition and severe course loads. Bill 47 punishes them further by stripping them of paid sick days and allowing their employer to reschedule shifts without notice or with little notice. I as an educator have seen first-hand how this jeopardizes studies and causes stress and anxiety."

Can the minister explain how this is setting students up for success?

Hon. Todd Smith: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. As the member knows, Bill 47 preserves equal pay protections based on gender and other Human Rights Code characteristics. Our government strongly supports equal pay and strongly supports fairness and human rights. The so-called equal pay provisions in the previous government's Bill 148 were impractical and burdensome for our job creators.

Ontario's job creators know best how to recruit, retain and reward their employees. The Making Ontario Open for Business Act will give our job creators the ability to hire workers, invest back into their business and attract new businesses to come to Ontario and invest.

TAXATION

Mr. Stephen Lecce: To the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks: While I see that the minister has moved to the right in this House, I seek clarity from him if our opposition to Prime Minister Trudeau's job-killing carbon tax remains on the right side of history, following the federal Liberal announcement to circumvent the province and the people of Ontario by imposing a carbon tax on workers, commuters and job creators in this province.

Mr. Speaker, Conservatives say no. We say no to a carbon tax which disproportionately affects lower-income Canadians and increases the cost of everything. We say no to a carbon tax that undermines our competitive advantage and our future prosperity, and we say no to a carbon tax that raises the prices of everything from groceries to gas at the pumps.

While the NDP seems to defend the federal Liberal increases on families, the Liberals do not have an environmental plan; they have a tax plan supported by the New Democratic Party of this province.

Minister, will you commit today to send a message to our Prime Minister that this government is going to fight this tax every step of the way?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member from King-Vaughan: This government was elected with a mandate, a mandate to make life more affordable for families. That's why we repealed the regressive, job-killing cap-and-trade program: \$264 in the pocket of every family. That's \$264 that they can use and the government can do without.

The federal carbon tax is going to add \$648 to the price of a family's life. When the Prime Minister talks about taxing polluters, he's talking about taxing commuters. That's why, under the leadership of our Premier, we will use every tool that we have to fight this carbon tax, to protect Ontario families, to improve competitiveness and to continue to ensure Ontario is open for business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time that we have today for question period.

APOLOGY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Finance has a point of order.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I rise on a point of order. After an answer, I made an unparliamentary comment that I would like to withdraw, and I unreservedly apologize.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I thank the Minister of Finance for showing respect for the House and withdrawing his unparliamentary remark unprompted. Thank you.

HATE CRIMES

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I rise on a point of order this morning to call on the House to condemn the recent news of a hate-motivated crime against two Jewish youth in north Toronto. These youth were singled out for wearing attire denoting their faith, and I call on all of us MPPs to denounce this specific act of anti-Semitism, similar discrimination, and hate-based action against people solely because they are wearing articles of their faith.

I encourage any witnesses in the Dell Park area of Toronto to come forward and help the investigation in their pursuit of the second suspect.

It’s up to all of us to ensure that no one in Ontario worries about hate-based crimes in their own neighbourhood.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the member for Toronto–St. Paul’s for that important comment.

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

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Aris Babikian: It is my great honour to introduce four individuals who are the children and grandchildren of Sirvard Kurdian, who was a survivor of the Armenian genocide and passed recently. I’m going to read a statement paying tribute to her later.

I would like to introduce first of all Zaven Kurdian, child of the survivor; Ani Kurdian, daughter-in-law; Vasken Altounian, grandchild; and Ani Altounian, grandchild.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

NON-PROFIT VETERINARY CLINICS

Ms. Catherine Fife: Last week I had the pleasure of visiting East Village Animal Hospital’s Kitchener location. They provide an essential service in my community: low-cost veterinary services for pets cared for by low-income individuals and non-profit animal rescue groups.

East Village is a business corporation that operates under non-profit principles, yet for nearly two decades, veterinary clinics across the province have been unable to register as non-profits due to regulations in the Business Corporations Act and the Veterinarians Act. East Village and organizations like it want to change that. They’re asking the government to be allowed to register as non-profits under these two acts.

This is a solution that will not financially impact the province; it’s just the right thing to do. But it will help animal hospitals like East Village, who care for the pets of

individuals who are living in poverty, those coping with mental illness and with disabilities, and, of course, seniors.

Pet ownership has been shown to reduce strain on the health care system by reducing physician visits and reducing the prevalence of mental illness.

A team lead at the Canadian Mental Health Association shared this about a client who required in-patient treatment: When the client found out that East Village Animal Hospital could help, it “gave her an incredible amount of hope when she needed it the most.”

As legislators, we should be doing all that we can to assist groups like the East Village Animal Hospital to be the best that they can be, and I look forward to supporting East Village Animal Hospital in their journey of receiving non-profit status in the province of Ontario. It’s just the right thing to do.

JOHN MACFIE

Mr. Norman Miller: I rise in the House today to recognize the life of John Macfie, a passionate historian from Dunchurch in the Parry Sound area, who, sadly, passed away on October 26 at age 93.

John is best known for his dedication to writing about colonization and the history of forestry and logging in Ontario. As it happens, I have one of his books here in Toronto, in which he recorded the stories of the people who worked in logging camps and steam-powered mills in the 1800s and early 1900s. These stories would have been lost to the annals of history, but because of John’s efforts, their stories live on so that we can read what life was like for the people who helped build this country.

John’s love of history started quite young, listening enthralled as old-timers yarned about their adventures. In his wisdom, he began to collect the stories and photographs. He went on to write 13 books and more than 1,000 newspaper and magazine articles.

Though he is most known for his work as a historian, his own life was one well worth recording. He was trained as a pilot for the Royal Canadian Air Force. He dabbled in meteorology and weather mapping before ending up at the Department of Lands and Forests. He worked in Sioux Lookout as a trap management officer, and spent a decade in the woods engaging with Indigenous trappers between Lake Superior and Hudson Bay. Eventually, he ended up as fish and wildlife supervisor in Parry Sound.

Though I cannot do justice to John’s life in the time allowed, I feel it’s important to recognize him here and thank him for his efforts to preserve the stories that would otherwise have been lost.

LOU BATTOCHIO

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise in order to remember somebody who was an icon in our community and who passed away about a week ago, and that’s Lou Battocchio.

Lou Battocchio was known as the mayor of Schumacher. He was always to be seen at the McIntyre Coffee Shop

holding court in the morning, debating with his Conservative friends—because he was a New Democrat—the issues of the day. It was quite something to watch Lou in action. He would be sitting at the coffee shop, everybody around the table, and Lou would do what Lou did best, and that was to advance those issues that were important to him.

He was known as Mr. Hockey. Lou was an avid sportsman who played hockey as a young man, played hockey with some of the greats who went through the NHL and the OHA, and was an instrumental part of the hockey association across northeastern Ontario. He is a person who was quite involved in our community.

Plus, Lou served as a councillor for Schumacher in the city of Timmins, and was an advocate for not only the people of Schumacher but I think for issues of justice and what was fair to all people in our community.

Lou will be missed. His wife, Cecile, is a good friend of mine and a good friend of many people, along with her sons. Lou was certainly somebody that we respected, we loved and that we will miss. We wish Lou, as he goes up to where he's going, to continue those debates, because there is always a Conservative to be changed, and he can do that in heaven as well.

YELLOW BRICK HOUSE

Mr. Billy Pang: Recently, I have had the honour of helping local volunteers collecting empty containers at a Beer Store in my riding of Markham–Unionville. After a day of collecting, and with the support of local residents, we managed to raise a total of \$721 for charity.

When I was asked which charity I would like the proceeds to be donated to, I chose Yellow Brick House, which is a women's and children's shelter for those who are fleeing from domestic abuse. This organization serves as a viable component of the Markham–Unionville community and delivers invaluable services to affected parties. I had the opportunity to visit and tour this shelter as it is located in my riding, and was humbled by and grateful for all the work that this organization does.

Mr. Speaker, community initiatives like the fall bottle drive remind me of the reason why I first got involved in politics, which is to help serve my community, making it a better place to live for all. I am proud to be a supporter of Yellow Brick House, and I look forward to continued years of friendship and collaboration with this organization.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jeff Burch: Last week, I had the privilege to join foodservice students from Welland Centennial Secondary School for the Let's Cook Together program. This program works in collaboration with Royal Rose Place retirement centre, Centennial High, and the Welland McMaster Family Health Team.

Let's Cook Together pairs students with seniors who have varying degrees of dementia to prepare food and

learn valuable information on diet and health. It was heartwarming to see the relationships that had grown between the students and the seniors. Together, they learned new skills, refreshed old ones and gained valuable perspectives.

However, Speaker, what I heard from everyone was the need for improvements to long-term care. Much like the seniors I joined, 90% of Ontario's seniors living in long-term care suffer from cognitive impairment. It's clear that long-term-care homes need more funding. Staff face new challenges with the increasing prevalence of cognitive impairments among our seniors, and many homes are not suited to the complex needs of these residents. It is vital that long-term-care homes receive additional funding in order to support specialized mental health teams and to modernize homes to ensure safe, quality care that meets the needs of our seniors.

I would like to thank Centennial Secondary School, the Welland McMaster Family Health Team and Royal Rose Place for allowing me to join in on this learning experience and for continuing to advocate for our seniors to ensure they receive the care they deserve.

1510

MUSLIMS FOR REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the eighth annual Muslims for Remembrance Day campaign, launched by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at of Canada. This campaign, which was launched in 2011, recognizes and honours Canada's men and women in uniform, who have sacrificed in the defence of our freedom. It seeks to bring together people of all ages and backgrounds, all heritages and faiths, to instill the importance of honouring our veterans.

I recently co-hosted our government's Muslim heritage month reception with my colleague from Mississauga, where the campaign was endorsed by the Premier for the inspiring and positive message it sends to all Canadians, from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud to attend the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at's Remembrance Day ceremony in my riding on Friday. It was a moving tribute to Canada's men and women in uniform, who served our country valiantly in every part of this world.

Over the weekend, I also had the opportunity to stand in remembrance with my fellow Canadians at ceremonies across King–Vaughan, honouring the sacrifices of Canadians on land, sea and in the air, in the trenches of France, the beaches of Normandy, the plains of Afghanistan and the hills of Korea.

To those who are currently serving and have served, we are eternally grateful for your service.

I would like to conclude by quoting the national president, Lal Khan Malik, who said, "We feel honoured to live in this country and as such we feel that it is our duty as loyal citizens to remember the brave soldiers who made and make the ultimate sacrifice." Mr. Speaker, we will remember them.

DIABETES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Today students at Sir Frederick Banting Secondary School in London West wore blue to walk for diabetes. They walked to honour the legacy of Sir Frederick Banting, who first conceived the research that would lead to the discovery of insulin at Banting House in London.

Since Banting's groundbreaking discovery, London continues to be a leader in diabetes research and innovation. Last week, St. Joseph's Health Care launched a new screening tool for diabetic foot ulcers, developed in partnership with the South West LHIN. The tool will allow primary care providers to identify patients at risk of foot ulcers, helping to prevent infection and reducing the number of diabetes-related amputations across the region.

About half of all limbs amputated in Ontario are diabetes-related, and up to 85% of those are preceded by a foot ulcer. It goes without saying that the costs of amputation are high, both human and economic. Tragically, almost 70% of diabetic limb amputees do not survive past five years, and the overall cost of diabetes to the provincial health care system is approximately \$1.5 billion every year. An estimated one in three Ontarians already has diabetes or pre-diabetes, and the incidence is increasing rapidly, especially among vulnerable and marginalized communities, who often cannot afford to manage their disease.

Speaker, this November, for Diabetes Awareness Month, I call upon the government to renew the provincial diabetes strategy and move Ontario forward with aggressive targets for diabetes prevention, treatment and awareness.

REMEMBRANCE DAY JOUR DU SOUVENIR

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: This past weekend was a very special weekend for all of us. Not only did we celebrate Remembrance Day, but this year in particular we celebrated the 100th anniversary of Canada's Hundred Days and the armistice. During this time, we remembered our country's greatest contributions and sacrifices in the First World War, and so many of the brave women and men who fought to defend our safety and our freedom.

Over this past weekend, my community of Orléans, which is home to so many veterans and members of our navy, army and air force, came together in two wonderful celebrations of remembrance.

Le Mouvement d'implication francophone d'Orléans, le MIFO, a organisé, pour une deuxième année, une cérémonie du Souvenir très émotionnelle, réunissant dignitaires et vétérans accompagnés d'une prestation émouvante de leur chorale.

I then attended two other ceremonies, Mr. Speaker: the Ron Phillips Sr. Memorial Remembrance Day Breakfast with the Ottawa Professional Fire Fighters Association and the Orléans Royal Canadian Legion Branch 632's ceremony and parade. I also had the great pleasure of laying a wreath.

I want to say thank you to the organizers, to all of our veterans and also our active individuals who are protecting our freedom every single day.

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS OF NORTH SIMCOE

Ms. Jill Dunlop: During constituency week, I had the pleasure to attend the North Simcoe Boys and Girls Clubs celebration in recognition of their Ontario Trillium Foundation grant. This evening was titled, "Pizza and Politics." I had a wonderful time learning more about the club's programs while touring the centre, and I spent the evening making homemade pizzas, answering questions, sharing stories and, of course, playing broken telephone with their tween group.

In 2015, the North Simcoe Boys and Girls Clubs received a grow grant to put forward its vision of creating programs for children and youth that reduce and remove barriers and help foster strong emotional and social skills.

I was very pleased to hear that with this grant the number of youth participating in these programs has grown significantly from an original 10 youth participating to now over 20 youth participating in a range of programs that work to build knowledge and confidence—programs such as Torch Club, which teaches youth different ways to be leaders in the community and in the club; Y-E Shift, which helps to get youth excited about becoming entrepreneurs; and of course, my personal favourite, Skilled4Success, which teaches youth about careers in the skilled trades. These are all important programs to have in our communities. They help build resiliency and equip youth with essential life skills needed to achieve their dreams and become healthy and successful individuals in their future personal and professional lives.

I look forward to hearing more about the positive work that the North Simcoe Boys and Girls Clubs is doing in their communities, and I want to thank Amanda, Kelsi, Peter, Lilly and all of the youth for inviting me to take part in the celebration and giving me the chance to learn more about the impact they're having as a result of the work being done with their grant.

SIRVARD KURDIAN

Mr. Aris Babikian: I rise this afternoon to commemorate the memory of Sirvard Kurdian, who passed away on October 27 at the age of 106.

Born in 1912, she was only three years old when the Armenian genocide and the systemic mass killings under the Young Turk regime struck her family. Her father was rounded up and viciously murdered alongside 1.5 million other Armenians. Those who were lucky to survive lived with the trauma and the consequences.

Sirvard and her only surviving sister, alongside their newly widowed mother, were forced into exile from their home and made the long, treacherous journey alongside thousands of Armenians, Assyrians, Syriac, Chaldeans and Greeks to Mosul in what is now Iraq. However,

finding harsh living conditions and miserable refugee camps not a place for young children, her mother had to make the unimaginable decision to send her daughters to an orphanage in what is now Syria.

After a long life in Syria, she married another survivor of the Armenian genocide. She finally moved to Canada in 1991.

The passing of Sirvard is not only a loss for her family; rather, it is a loss for the entire Canadian Armenian community. Sirvard was the last direct connection to the genocide that almost decimated Armenians. She was a testament to the resilience of those who survived. Despite the lack of atonement from the perpetrators, the survivors helped the Armenian diaspora flourish.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I hope that one day soon the perpetrators of these crimes come forward and acknowledge their crimes. The Armenian nation needs to heal. The denial of the genocide after 103 years is victimizing the third and fourth generations of descendants. Without the acknowledgement and repentance of these crimes, there is no reconciliation.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our members' statements for this afternoon.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 13, 2018, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

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PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's my pleasure to present a petition as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas education is a right, not a privilege;

"Whereas not everyone is ready to leave high school right after graduation and needs more time to develop and figure out what they want to do;

"Whereas many students in the past have benefited tremendously from the extra year in high school. Without the extra year, those students would have had a harder time to excel in the future. It is not fair to deny current students this opportunity;

"Whereas the best investment is to invest in our youth, as the youth is our future;

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

"Direct the Ministry of Education to allocate funds toward those students who take a victory lap in high school and to eliminate the 34-cap limit."

I'm pleased to present this on behalf of Gurdeep Singh Jagpal, who met with me recently and asked me to present this petition. I support the petition and will be affixing my signature and handing it to Rham to table with the Clerk.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Aris Babikian: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas unnecessary regulations are squeezing businesses in every economic sector and driving jobs and investment out of Ontario;

"Whereas red tape is costing employers time, money and resources that they would rather invest in growing their business, creating good jobs and launching innovative products and services that will improve people's lives;

"Whereas the real cost of red tape is in the businesses that are forced to close their doors, the job-creating investments that we scare away or in the workers who are forced to leave Ontario in order to find work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to pass the Making Ontario Open for Business Act to build prosperity, put Ontario back on track as a growth leader in North America and restore our province to its rightful place as the economic engine of Canada."

I endorse this petition, I will affix my signature to it and I will give it to page Emily.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Sylvie Montpellier from Azilda in my riding for collecting names on this petition, which reads as follows:

"Save the Breast Screening and Assessment Service.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"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 the Breast Screening and Assessment Service; and

"Whereas cuts to the Sudbury 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 Sudbury Breast Screening and Assessment Service 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 support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask new page Alex to bring it to the Clerk.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: “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,” the Premier “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 agree with this petition and will be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Shlok to take to the Clerk.

WEST LINCOLN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario about a very important subject in my home riding of Niagara West. I’m very pleased to read it into the Hansard today.

“Whereas:

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

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

“Whereas:

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

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

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

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

I have to say, Speaker, over 20,000 of my constituents have signed this petition. I support this petition, and I will keep fighting for the new hospital.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Jeff Burch: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Doug Ford eliminated the Basic Income Pilot project and slashed the new social assistance rates by 1.5%, and did so without warning;

“Whereas cuts to already-meagre social assistance rates will disproportionately impact children, those with mental health challenges, persons with disabilities, and people struggling in poverty;

“Whereas the decision to cancel the Basic Income Pilot project was made without any evidence, and leaves thousands of Ontarians without details about whether they will be able to access other forms of income assistance;

“Whereas the independently authored Income Security: A Roadmap for Change report, presented to the government last fall, recommends both increases to rates and the continuation of the Basic Income Pilot project as key steps towards income adequacy and poverty reduction;

“Whereas the failure to address poverty—and the homelessness, hunger, health crises, and desperation that can result from poverty—hurts people, families and Ontario’s communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse Doug Ford’s callous decision to slash increases to social assistance rates by 50%, and reverse his decision to cancel the Basic Income Pilot project, decisions that will undoubtedly hurt thousands of vulnerable people and drag Ontario backwards when it comes to homelessness reduction and anti-poverty efforts.”

I affix my signature and hand this to page Rham.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

“Amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours of hands-on care per resident adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Ian Arthur: This petition is 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;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition. I will be affixing my name to it and giving it to page Emily to hand in.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Marit Stiles: I’m pleased to present the following petition that was provided to me by my constituent Brendan Machado.

“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 am very pleased to affix my signature, as I support this petition. I’m going to hand it off to Alex to table the petition for me.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mr. Arthur Schmitt, who lives in Lively, for his support for this petition.

“Gas prices.

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price

volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

“Amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours of hands-on care per resident adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

I fully support this petition, sign it and give it to page Kidan to deliver.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREEN ENERGY REPEAL ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 ABROGEANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉNERGIE VERTE

Mr. Rickford moved third reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We return to the minister to kick off the debate.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just listening to these petitions, I really wished I would have gotten a record of the tens of thousands of people—many of them who came to colleagues who are around me today—who are in support of repealing this act and all that it represents.

I want to talk at third reading here about Bill 34, the Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018. I am very pleased to be here today to speak to another promise on which this government is delivering. I'll be splitting my time with the member from Markham–Stouffville, my parliamentary assistant for energy. I appreciate his work very much.

When our government took office, we made a commitment to the people of Ontario. We promised to be reliable and accountable to the people. We promised to keep more of their hard-earned money in their pockets. We promised to respect the people who pay the bills—those bills at the end of the month. It's not a very good experience, especially when energy bills are using up a disproportionate amount of your disposable income—businesses deciding how many people they might hire or can't hire; families deciding between which activities, which holidays they'll take, which sports or musical instruments their child may or may not take; and, in the most desperate of situations, ones that I have heard about, especially out in northwestern Ontario, the harder choices, Mr. Speaker: the choices between heating and eating.

This is a very important issue, and we have an opportunity. We promised to respect the people who pay those bills. We promised to drive efficiency in the electricity sector and push energy costs down. Most importantly, we promised to restore the public's faith in our electricity system. Since day 1, we have been working to keep those promises. We listened to what people told us was wrong with Ontario's electricity system. That's a pretty novel idea, colleagues, I would say: actually listen to the people and have them tell you what's wrong—the ones who pay the bills—and respond.

We took immediate action to start to correct this. Everyone here is familiar with the steps that our government has taken in the past five months. They are celebrated province-wide. Speaking last night before a crowd at APPrO, they were delighted to hear that a government had come forward with a plan to make our electricity sector competitive and transparent, to lead the beautiful province that we grew up in that led this country and that has an opportunity to lead this continent and, I believe, the world in many sectors.

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Let's talk about some of these accomplishments. I'll touch on some of the highlights here. We renewed the leadership at Hydro One. We passed the Hydro One Accountability Act. This requires Hydro One's board to establish a new compensation framework, to publish a record of executive compensation, its C-suite etc. on its website annually, along with any proposed changes to its compensation policies to at least 30 days prior to seeking approval from the Management Board of Cabinet for these changes. We cancelled the cap-and-trade program, put an end to the job-killing carbon tax, which puts a tax on everything—

Interjections.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Now we're rolling, Mr. Speaker.

Prohibiting the purchase, sale and trading of emissions allowances: We did this to remove a cost burden from Ontario businesses, allowing them to grow and allowing them to be able to be competitive and create jobs in our towns, in our cities and in our Indigenous communities. Ending the cap-and-trade carbon tax took 4.3 cents off a litre of gasoline. It reduced the average household natural gas by over \$6 a month, putting money back into the pockets of Ontario drivers and homeowners.

These sound like small steps, Mr. Speaker, but they add up, and families here in Ontario today keep a watchful eye on their budget. They have to, because during the decade and a half of darkness, somebody wasn't keeping a watchful eye on our budget. Imagine if small businesses and families ran—including our friends across the way in the official opposition: Imagine if you ran your household or your business like that on our modest incomes. I don't think, respectfully, there's a person over across the way who would manage their private affairs as that government in the decade and a half of darkness had.

These are incremental steps; patience is a virtue. But we feel like we're taking the right steps and are headed in the right direction.

We wound down renewable energy contracts that had not yet reached advanced development milestones. These were contracts for power we don't need right now, and in many instances, communities didn't want. When Ontario needs more supply in the future, we can secure it at a better price by having suppliers compete through Ontario's energy markets—imagine competition.

We introduced the Access to Natural Gas Act. If passed, it would allow us to create a new program to support the expansion of natural gas service to communities currently without access. Now, we're touching home here, Mr. Speaker. Coming out from northwestern Ontario, we have seen places—well, it's actually in Kiiwetinoong. There, Goldcorp needed a natural gas pipeline expansion when I was an MP, for the survivability of one of the highest-yielding gold mines in the world. We were able to parse that together and expand that pipeline so that homeowners could have a more affordable source of energy—at least a competitive one. It turned out to be more affordable—half price in many instances—and Goldcorp had a more efficient and effective way to energize their gold mine. A lot of good union member workers there, Mr. Speaker, and they're big supporters of mine because they know that when their jobs were on the line, it was that Conservative government that stood up with pragmatic, good, old-fashioned Tory solutions to warm their homes and make sure that that job-creating gold mine was going to have the energy it had to keep them and their families in that beautiful community of Red Lake.

We introduced the Access to Natural Gas Act, and if it's passed, it will allow us to create a new program to support the expansion of natural gas services to communities that don't have that access. I know some of my friends out in eastern Ontario and the deep, rural pockets of southwestern Ontario—farmers are looking for the same kinds of alternatives, the same kinds of opportunities. Let's stop talking about issues, colleagues; let's talk about the opportunities.

Most of these are rural and remote communities, many of them isolated in remote First Nations communities that I've had the great privilege of spending a considerable amount of time living in. I have a deep appreciation for the opportunities that they have. They're now relying on more costly sources of electricity, oil and propane.

Mr. Speaker, we know there's much more work to be done, and that's why we're here today. With Bill 34, the Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018, we're taking another significant step forward in our commitment to the people of Ontario.

For many people in Ontario, the Green Energy Act became synonymous with the green monster—no, I've got to put my reading glasses on here—with an inefficient energy economy. I'm sorry. With the other legislative changes made when it passed, it led to huge energy increases for Ontario, a considerable burden on those people—and I don't call them ratepayers. Nobody knows what a ratepayer is. We all know what a person is who pays their bill at the end of the month, that hydro bill or that gas bill. It discouraged families, it discouraged small businesses, it discouraged large job creators, and it started to chip away at our economic competitiveness. It made Ontarians angry, and it was palpable, colleagues. As a former nurse, in that 28-day campaign, you could almost put your finger on their pulse when you started to talk about energy and watch it rise, Mr. Speaker. It was incredible, because they were just so frustrated with the high prices and so frustrated with the bungled projects that ended up costing significant money. So we needed to take action.

The Green Energy Act became a symbol of a failed energy policy of the past, with no regard for people who actually pay hydro bills month in and month out. I referred to it earlier today as the decade of darkness. We want to turn the light on; we want to flip the switch. We want to brighten the horizons of families and small businesses who are making choices, looking at their options to be competitive. We'd like to take the costs of energy out of the equation to the extent that they affect their ability to be competitive, to the extent that they can make healthier and better family choices with reduced energy costs.

That's why I am repealing the Green Energy Act with the full support of my colleagues here today. We've identified this as a key priority for our government from the very beginning, and it has been well received. Let me tell you, I would just, through you, Mr. Speaker, want to sample my colleagues—by way of, oh, say, applause—if they got lots of support from their constituents.

Applause.

Hon. Greg Rickford: There's no other way to gauge that.

Let me be frank, Mr. Speaker. Our primary motive in repealing the Green Energy Act was to reverse a monumental mistake made by a previous government. It was the actions of the previous government that led to the disastrous feed-in tariff program, causing skyrocketing electricity rates for Ontario families and taking away the ability for municipalities to stop unsupported energy projects in communities.

As I always like to say, the only thing green about this act was the green that lined the pockets of the Liberal backroom elites who benefited the most significantly from this piece of legislation. It was their actions that forced wasteful projects on unwilling communities—do we know

a few? I think so—and drove up the costs of hydro bills for families and businesses across the province, with some of them that were constructed frustrating communities currently today.

In 2017 alone, wind and solar projects added \$3.75 billion in costs to hydro bills. Even worse, 26% of this expensive electricity—wait for it; this is a good one, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad you're sitting down—wasn't even used.

Interjections.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Oui, c'est vrai, là.

Whatever inspired the previous government to do the things that they did is a reflection of a party that had lost its way. Maybe the costs of energy had truly made it as dark as we're describing it. Maybe they couldn't find their way, because it was their actions that forced wasteful projects on unwilling communities. It drove up the costs of those hydro bills for families and businesses across the province.

I want to talk a little bit about what we could do to make this process more competitive, especially given the fact that the previous government knew that it could have been through a more competitive process.

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It's simply not responsible for a government, and it cannot be allowed to continue, when we don't create an environment where we have a competitive, transparent framework for families and businesses to understand the nuances in their respective regions of what constitutes a really good energy solution: something that's affordable, and something that's reasonably accessible.

Repealing the Green Energy Act is not about choosing what our sources of energy supply in Ontario should be. It's about choosing the path that's most responsible to the average Ontarian who has to pay the bill, whether they live in the far corners of eastern Ontario, in the deeper pockets of southwestern Ontario and its rural parts, or in the vastness of northern Ontario. And the opportunities in the mining sector—we need solutions that are localized, ones that make sense for the homes and the businesses and the industries that surround it. It's about choosing the most responsible way.

Can Ontario have clean energy, reliable energy and affordable energy at the same time? I ask myself this question. The answer is, "Of course it can." But the previous government was more than happy to sacrifice cost in the interest of ideology.

The other egregious error of the previous government that we seek to correct is the removal of municipal authority over the siting of renewable energy projects. In short, "Power to the municipalities" is our refrain. We want to ensure that they have the choice. We'll work with them as full partners when they establish the local energy solutions that they need, and can make determinations on projects.

Their actions essentially gave the provincial government the legislated ability to ignore the concerns and objections of communities regarding local renewable energy projects. We heard it at AMO, loud and clear. As the

energy minister, I'm a bit biased, but every single meeting I took dealt with this subject matter and, ultimately, with this particular bill. In doing so, it was clear that it trampled over the rights of families, businesses and our beloved municipalities that make up this great province.

Taking away municipal authority over the siting of renewable energy projects simply doesn't make any sense, actually. If a municipality can make its own decisions about the locations of all other infrastructure, be it a road or a dump or a quarry, why should it not have the same authority over a major piece of energy infrastructure? Imagine that. Our government believes the people of Ontario should have the final say about what gets built in their communities. We believe in being consistent in the authorities granted to the municipalities.

With this legislation, our government is taking action to restore siting approval back to the municipalities—"Power to the municipalities," I say, in a similar refrain—by amending the Planning Act. This would resolve a long-standing concern of many communities across Ontario. It would ensure that any future renewable energy projects have the support of the local communities they are intended to serve.

By introducing the Green Energy Repeal Act, we are seeking to correct the wrong that has been done to the people of Ontario, and to put the province on a more prosperous path, one that is responsible to the average Ontarian who has to pay that bill at the end of the month, who can go to an opposition NDP member and say, "These actions are responsible, because they're reducing my bills, and you need to support repealing this act. You need to stand up against the job-killing carbon tax that is making our gas even more expensive in northern Ontario."

Can we completely undo the damage done to the province by repealing the legislation of the previous government? Sadly, no. We have been saddled with costs that will continue to force Ontarians to pay too much for electricity until these contracts expire. But we can assure that such mistakes will not repeat themselves.

As a former member of Parliament and federal minister and now as a member of provincial Parliament and a provincial minister responsible for energy, I have committed my career and spent my career fighting injustices, both economic and social, and I'm not about to stop now. I'm going to stand up for those communities, large and small, for those residents on the Danforth who wouldn't tolerate an industrial wind turbine for anything, and similarly for those communities in southwestern Ontario. We're going to stand up for those against the federal government when it comes to putting a tax on our gasoline that makes it a buck thirty to a buck forty a litre. We're going to continue to stand up to any piece of legislation that creates a significant financial burden on our energy costs.

Moving forward, I urge the members of the House to support the Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018. Join me, join our government, join the people of Ontario in our desire for a more responsible, transparent and—God help us all—more affordable energy plan. Let's support the important first step by repealing the Green Energy Act in

2018. Let's ensure that the future decisions on energy supply in this province are not driven by ideology but by what is best for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The minister did say that he would be sharing his time—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): You did, and I just acknowledged that you had said that. So I will move on to your parliamentary assistant, the member from Markham–Stouffville.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. It is always a pleasure to be able to rise in the House on behalf of the people of Markham–Stouffville, so I do appreciate that.

It is, of course, even more difficult to follow the Minister of Energy in a speech in this place. Obviously, he has demonstrated—not only in his remarks here today but in the hard work that he and his team have done since day one in helping, as he said, to bring back the Ontario advantage that we had for so long in this province—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: The economic engine.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Yes, that's right. As the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook mentioned, the economic engine.

Ultimately, the minister is right on a number of fronts. There's not one member of provincial Parliament in this place who hasn't been impacted by the Green Energy Act. There's not one member. Each of us has talked to our towns and to our mayors; we've talked to our principals at our schools, the administrators of our hospitals. All have told us that the cost of energy over the last number of years has had a devastating impact on them. It's more expensive to heat the arenas, to heat the ice, to keep curling rinks open.

We heard town after town at AMO talk about having to make the very difficult decision about how the town was going to proceed. One town in northern Ontario that had a hockey rink where a number of NHL players had come from—they were having to make the very, very difficult decision of having to possibly close down that one rink. The next rink was 400 kilometres away, but they couldn't afford to maintain the heating, the hydro and the cost of maintaining the rink. It was devastating to hear some of these stories.

Of course, we saw it. I know the former mayor of Oshawa at one point had talked about the escalating cost of putting the street lights on. Imagine a province that had a policy that had allowed Ontario towns to worry about if they could afford to keep the street lights on to keep their community safe. That's where we had come from.

When you look back at 2009, I remember when—there were some members on this of the House and on both sides of the House who were here in 2009 when then-Liberal Minister George Smitherman announced the Green Energy Act. I think it was February. They passed it in May, if I'm not mistaken.

1600

Interjection: A coffee a day.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Yes, he said it would be very, very affordable; it wouldn't cost a lot. They were going to create 50,000 jobs.

In the press release—I read it the other day—it was going to be 50,000 jobs. Ontario was going to unleash economic development, and green energy manufacturers were going to come here. We were going to be the centre of the whole of North America's industrial revolution in green energy. He talked about working with municipalities. They talked about energy audits for homes. When you look back, none of what was promised actually came to fruition. Instead, the results have been nothing short of disastrous.

Mr. Speaker, I hope you'll forgive me. I'm going to focus a little bit on some of the things that we heard during the committee hearings on this, and I want to thank a number of my colleagues on both sides of the House. I know that the members for Toronto–Danforth, Kingston and the Islands and Ottawa Centre were there, and on the government side there were a number of members who came in and out who had issues that they wanted to debate.

I wanted to really talk a bit about some of the evidence that we heard at the committee, so I'm going to spend a significant amount of my time on that, and on looking at individual testimony and some of the questions and comments that came out of that committee. It provides evidence of many of the things that the minister was talking about in his speech and why we had to move so aggressively and so quickly with repealing this act and opening the province back up for business.

Again, we had a number of witnesses over two days. As you can imagine, they came from both sides of the equation: those who were supportive of the Liberal Green Energy Act and a few who were not. The first day was the 29th of October, when we heard from the Canadian Wind Energy Association. I thought there was a lot of really good testimony that came out of that. You're going to hear a recurring theme during some of the testimony and some of the questions and answers on that.

The Canadian Wind Energy Association: Robert Hornung was the gentleman who came there. He started off his comments by—of course, he was in favour of the Liberal Green Energy Act. I'll quote him here: "Our members have built more than 5,000 megawatts of wind energy capacity in Ontario that meets 8% of the province's electricity demand, and has provided," he said, "\$12.5 billion in investment."

He went on to say—this was the Canadian Wind Energy Association: "Wind energy now is the most cost-competitive source of new electricity generation in Canada on a levelized cost-of-energy basis. In December 2017, a competitive electricity supply auction in Alberta yielded the lowest-ever rate paid for wind energy in this country: a weighted average of 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour among the four winning projects. That's 72% less than the on-peak power price of electricity in Ontario today," he said.

You're going to hear this theme a lot. A lot of the people who came before the committee are going to testify to how successful recent options have been in Alberta and Saskatchewan and how they're only paying 3.7 cents.

He went on in his testimony to say, after just saying it's 3.7 cents in Alberta and Saskatchewan, "While Ontario FIT pricing a decade ago was 13.5 cents per kilowatt hour"—significantly higher than 3.7 cents—"the low price for wind energy procured and being built here in Ontario under the" recent process brought in by the previous Liberal government has seen prices fall to 6.9 cents.

In questioning the witness—this, again, was a recurring theme. As you're sitting there in committee—and I know that a number of my colleagues all had the exact same reaction: How is it possible that Alberta and Saskatchewan were able to create options at 3.7 cents and we here in Ontario are supposed to be happy that it has come down to 6.9 cents?

So I asked him, or a member of our committee asked him, if he was one of the individuals, his organization, that helped advise the previous government on the implementation of the Green Energy Act back in 2009, and of course he said they were. They had participated in the process.

Now, as I said, we're going to hear a lot about this. We're going to hear a lot about this because a lot of people came forward at committee. A lot of the people who were in support of the Green Energy Act came forward and talked about Alberta and Saskatchewan a lot. But when you went after it and really started to question them, they backed down a lot of the time.

We went on to question him about the costs, and he said, "I'll be honest. I can't give you a number. The feed-in tariff program is at 13.5 cents," and when we asked him if it was still significantly higher going forward, of course he said yes.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, it's not only that we were paying more, it's not only that the process that was put in place by the previous government seems to pay significantly more, but other jurisdictions seemed to be—not seemed to be—were closing deals that were much less expensive than the province of Ontario was, and for some reason we were supposed to be happy about that in Ontario. That was somehow going to be a success story that we should all be happy about. As I said, there was a lot of other testimony.

We then heard from Nicholas Woodfield. He represented a group that helps the manufacturers, those who build green energy projects. They take it from beginning to end. Again, one of the things they talked about almost immediately was that green energy contracts in Alberta and Saskatchewan were down to 3.7 cents. I know the member for Toronto–Danforth seized on this in his cross-examination of the witness who said it's only 3.7 cents. That's really good news; right? Everybody agreed, that's great news. Good for Alberta and Saskatchewan, but not Ontario—but not Ontario.

They talked about the jobs, but when asked about the jobs that come from green energy projects specifically, he went on to say that only about 10% of the jobs would remain after. After the construction is done, there would be a significant reduction in jobs. So it wasn't a good sustainable source of job creation, to which he agreed. I know the member for Toronto–Danforth will remember

this part of the testimony. It speaks to, I think, a lot of what we saw in the Green Energy Act. I hope the member for Toronto–Danforth doesn't mind, and I'll quote him directly.

The member from Toronto–Danforth wanted to seize on some of the testimony that he had heard. He said, "It was interesting listening to the parliamentary assistant's"—which is me—"commentary about the cost of wind. I bought a Commodore 64 in about 1988, and it cost 3,000 bucks. You can buy the same computing capacity now for, I'm sure, \$200 or less."

Now, they both seized on this. It was something that they were very excited about. The whole point of that, Mr. Speaker—and I'm sure the whole point of the member for Toronto–Danforth saying that—was that the cost had come down. Since 1988, the cost of a home computer had come down. What they seemed to forget was that you could buy a Commodore 64 in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario for the same price. It didn't vary from province to province like we saw under the Green Energy Act. Like the testimony from two of the witnesses had already suggested, we in Ontario were getting, for all intents and purposes, ripped off—we were getting ripped off. We were paying far more than we should have for the green energy that had been procured by the previous government.

We had heard, of course, again and again that it created jobs, but Mr. Woodfield confirmed that actually it didn't. Once construction was done, the amount of jobs would be significantly reduced. When cross-examined or questioned further on the comparison between jobs created for renewables and those in the nuclear sector, for instance, he agreed—he agreed full on—that those jobs in the nuclear sector were higher-paying jobs and that they were longer-lasting jobs than they were in the renewable sector.

So we had two witnesses who were brought forward in order to support, and what we had heard so far with these two witnesses was that in fact Ontario taxpayers were going to continue to pay more for green energy. Ontario taxpayers had paid more for green energy, and the people who had actually advised the government back in 2009, for all intents and purposes, knew that we were overpaying for the price of green energy. And again, we heard about the jobs.

1610

But I wanted to just focus in, before I go into some of the other things, if you will forgive me, Mr. Speaker—I want to read directly from testimony that was given by Kenneth Green. Mr. Green is a policy expert with the Fraser Institute who had done a lot of research on Ontario's green energy. I just want to quote some of the things that he had said directly: "Ontario's electricity prices really took off in 2009, when the government launched its Green Energy Act.

"The centerpiece of the Green Energy Act was a program to provide long-term guaranteed contracts to generators with renewable sources—wind and solar—at a fixed, above-market price. To pay for those commitments as well as the costs of building new natural gas power

plants, and to cover the costs of conservation programs in the Green Energy Act, Ontario levied a new surcharge on electricity called the global adjustment.

“Between 2008 and 2016, the global adjustment grew more than 70%, causing a drastic increase in electricity prices. The high cost associated with aggressively promoting renewable sources is particularly troubling given the relatively small amount of electricity generated by those sources. In 2016, for example, non-hydro renewable sources generated less than 7% of the electricity in Ontario while accounting for almost 30% of the global adjustment.”

That is an absolutely glaring example of how disastrous the previous Liberal government’s program was.

Let’s be very clear, Mr. Speaker. This isn’t an indictment on green energy or on renewable resources; it’s not that. What it is is an indictment on the policy that was brought forward by the previous Liberal government that really disadvantaged, for all intents and purposes, the industry for many years going forward. They brought in a program that paid too much for electricity that we didn’t need—supported, yes, by the NDP; they can’t deny that; it’s a reality.

Mr. Green then went on further to say that the overall cost of this was, at a bare minimum, “75,000 job losses in the manufacturing sector” alone. They hadn’t researched yet other job losses that would come in other sectors like mining, for instance.

So Mr. Speaker, we were just into testimony on this and already we had heard a few things. We had heard from the previous Liberal government, when it was introduced, that it was going to create jobs. We know that it didn’t create jobs. In fact, in just one sector of the economy—one of the most important sectors of our economy—75,000 jobs were lost.

It didn’t bring down prices because we know that across the board, prices went up for families, individuals and businesses. Prices went up for our manufacturers. Prices went up for our communities, towns and villages. Across the board, prices went up.

It didn’t create an economic advantage in the province of Ontario because manufacturers didn’t move to Ontario to start building solar panels and wind turbines. That didn’t happen. The advantage that we’re supposed to be waiting for with lower prices, well, we’re still not seeing that. Other jurisdictions are, but we’re not seeing that in the province of Ontario.

Just a short time into the testimony, it was already becoming very, very clear—I know for the members on this side of the House—that the government had made the right decision to move as quickly as it had on repealing the Green Energy Act.

Mr. Speaker, we obviously went on and we heard from others. One of my favourite testimonies on the day, and one of the ones I was looking forward to, came from Environmental Defence. I was really looking forward to this because they were unabashed in their support for the Green Energy Act. In fact, they along with the Suzuki Foundation had often bragged at how it was they who had

pushed the previous Liberal government into bringing forward the Green Energy Act. They bragged about it in articles in the paper and in commentary, in fact, in committee.

I want to read you some of the testimony. This was from Keith Brooks, of Environmental Defence Canada. This is what he says:

“It goes too far to say that I think green energy projects were forced on communities, because it’s important to understand that every single renewable energy project out there—wind farm, solar farm, what have you—was on a landowner’s property. They signed an agreement to that, they received money as a result of that, there was a contractual agreement and people benefited from these projects ... they weren’t forced on anybody.”

He went on to say this: “That said, the way the projects were approved was not the best way, obviously. It did pit neighbour against neighbour. It did leave municipalities feeling like they didn’t have a say in the planning process....”

But it wasn’t forced on anybody, apparently.

This is one of the groups that take credit for creating the Green Energy Act of the previous Liberal government. The arrogance of the statement there is beyond—but they went on further. Again, another organization, Mr. Speaker, that went on to tout Alberta. It’s a quote again from Mr. Brooks: “I’m assuming the Alberta auction has been discussed here already, but they received bids for wind power at 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour, which is far, far lower than anything we could be procuring here in Ontario or anywhere else in Canada. Solar power is coming in at three cents in many parts of the world now as well.”

But again, what was missing in that? Not one mention of the province of Ontario. So the people who helped draft this acknowledge that other jurisdictions are paying far less for power than we are, and this would be the case going forward. It defies logic, often.

We also heard, further on in the testimony, that at least \$4.5 billion was paid in direct subsidies to the renewable industry to support this—\$4.5 billion in subsidies. That is not including, of course, the \$40 billion that the Fair Hydro Plan puts onto future generations as well. It really does boggle the imagination.

Again, we’re in the first day of hearings. To reiterate, we hear of the 75,000 job losses, and we hear that the cost of energy is still high. The people who helped advise the previous government knew it would be high, and helped put in place long-term pricing programs that would benefit a certain sector of the economy, of industry, at the cost of taxpayers, at the cost of towns and at the cost of small businesses and large businesses. We heard that they said that it didn’t really matter that people weren’t in support of this.

We also heard some testimony that said that there were very few concerns of municipalities. But that, of course, was when we started to hear from Wind Concerns Ontario. They came in later on that day, and they started to talk about all of the municipalities. I think they had said that there was something like—I want to say 80. I’m probably

wrong, and I'm probably underestimating, but I think it was something like 80 municipalities that had started to complain with respect to these windmills, with the health concerns. They had received over 4,562 complaints on the health effects of windmills, and he was concerned that nobody was listening.

Yet we would hear from the other witnesses that, no, nobody is concerned; there are no issues with respect to health care; municipalities don't care; and people wanted this. But it just simply wasn't true.

As I said, we continued to hear from individuals that the costs associated with this would be coming down. I think my colleagues who were on the committee will know that we heard this constantly, time and time and time again, that the costs were coming down, but Ontario taxpayers weren't seeing the advantage of that.

1620

We did have other individuals, of course, who brought forward some testimony with respect to health concerns. We heard from a couple of community groups who had told us about their battle against the government, that their communities had not wanted windmills but had no say in it whatsoever. The member from Stormont-Dundas, who had come to committee, had two individuals testifying from his community about how difficult that community had fought to stop wind projects. There had been concerns with health care; there had been concerns with water. Nothing had been done. The previous government refused to do anything about it.

In summary, that somewhat concluded the first day of hearings. I think a lot of the committee members were, at that point, at least on our side, taken aback, because everything we had been told, all of the evidence that individuals had said would be supportive of continuing the Green Energy Act, seemed to be debunked just on the very first day by the actual industry groups themselves that had come to support the Liberal green energy program.

But of course, we went on to the second day. I'll get into that, because on the second day, we heard from a lot of other groups as well. We started off with the Suzuki Foundation, I believe, on the second day. I have to tell you, this was one of my favourites. I was looking forward to Environmental Defence, but I was really looking forward to the Suzuki Foundation.

The Suzuki Foundation—colleagues, you will remember—were very, very large supporters of the Liberal government and the McGuinty government. David Suzuki I think it was in 2011 held a very public walk through Stanley Park with then-Premier Dalton McGuinty. They talked about the Green Energy Act and how important it was. Mr. Suzuki talked about the jobs that were going to be created. It was two years in; of course, the jobs hadn't yet come to fruition. But he talked about that. He mentioned that this was the first political party that he endorsed.

Often, they talked about how they had really created the Green Energy Act, the Suzuki Foundation. In one press release—I think it was the Georgia Straight, if I'm not mistaken—in the Georgia Straight, in an article written by

the Suzuki Foundation, they say—here is a quote from the Georgia Straight. This was an article that was written by the Suzuki Foundation: “The Ontario government is getting behind a Green Energy Act proposed by the David Suzuki Foundation.”

I'm going to spend just a little bit of time on the Suzuki Foundation, because I have a little bit of experience with them in my previous life as a member of Parliament. I think it's important to set the context of this debate when it comes to them. Through the good work of the government that I was a part of and really through the then federal Minister of Finance, the Honourable Jim Flaherty, he talked to the caucus and he said, “We have to protect the Rouge parklands.” We had lots of debate in our federal caucus about this, because Rouge park, we all believed, had to be protected.

But in my neck of the woods, what would that mean for the farmers in the community? I was very, very adamant that the farmers in my community had to be protected. If we were going to create a national park, it had to mean the protection of the farmers, but of course, the lands to the south—which are in the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park's riding—those were different. They were more unique. Could we come up with a framework that protected both of those lands?

Of course, through the leadership of the then Minister of Finance, Minister Flaherty, we were able to do that. We were able to set aside I think it was over \$110 million for the preservation of Rouge park and create a park that was many, many times larger than Central Park. Something that previous federal and provincial governments had failed to ever do, we were able to do. The Minister of Finance, Minister Flaherty, had set aside the money. We had come to the table; we had brought forward legislation that would not only protect the Rouge parklands to the south, in the city of Toronto, but would also protect the Rouge parklands to the north.

Now, what was unique about the Rouge parklands to the north was that they also formed part of lands that were expropriated by the Trudeau Liberal government, farm-lands that were expropriated by the Trudeau Liberal government for the creation of a Pickering airport. For generations, for 40 years, people had asked—had begged—government to take those lands in York region out of any consideration for an airport. Thanks to the hard work of the members of Parliament in York region and thanks to the Minister of Finance, Minister Flaherty, we were able to do that. We created Canada's—the world's, probably—largest urban park in the Rouge park.

Why bring Environmental Defence in on this? Because when the legislation was created for the Rouge National Urban Park, it preserved farming in the Rouge park. In order to preserve farming in the Rouge park, you needed to have a unique piece of legislation to do that. One of the biggest opponents of the legislation was the Suzuki foundation. They were an opponent because they said it didn't have the same protections as other national parks.

Mr. Speaker, anybody who knows the national parks knows that the Rouge national park has, of course, a pipeline that goes through it. It has the 401 that goes

through it. It has the GO train that goes through it. My home and large subdivisions are on the borders of the Rouge park. You can't have legislation that is the same as any other national park, because in other national parks, that legislation would mean wildfires would be left to burn in certain fashions, and other protections certainly just could not happen.

The Suzuki foundation didn't think it was good enough. They opposed the creation of Canada's largest urban park. They opposed it. Not only did they oppose it, but they supported the then provincial Liberal government, who then refused to transfer some lands over to create this national park.

As soon as the election happened in 2015, that transfer happened. The federal Liberals, of course, did what Liberals do. They said in the election, "Don't worry. We're going to give full protection to the Rouge park, the same as a national park." The Suzuki foundation was really happy about that.

What did the legislation do, Mr. Speaker? Well, you'd be wrong if you said that the Liberals honoured that commitment, because they didn't. In fact, their legislation did absolutely nothing; it changed nothing. And yet the Suzuki foundation—what did they do? Did they go and say, "No, this was wrong"? Nope. No problem. They were there to cut the ribbon and say, "Wow."

Mr. Speaker, the reason why I think it's important to talk about that is because, yes, the Suzuki foundation was nothing more than a cheerleader for the Liberals, be it here in Ontario or in Ottawa. And there is nothing that highlights this more than the creation of the Rouge national park. This is the same organization that had no problem evicting farmers before the creation. Let's remember, colleagues—not to belabour this—that it was, I think, in 2007 that the then Liberals came into my community and evicted farmers from 200 acres of land that they had been farming for generations to plant trees, to create a park that remained closed for 10 years and I think was only recently opened. Nobody had a problem throwing farmers off the land there. But then we heard from Environmental Defence and we actually heard from the Suzuki foundation on how we had to respect farmers. So in the context of the Green Energy Act, we have to respect farmers, but in the context of letting them farm, not so much, Mr. Speaker.

There was just so much in the Suzuki foundation. They bragged about how they had helped create the Green Energy Act. They, of course, highlighted that often. They talked about how other jurisdictions had done so much for green energy: Germany was far ahead of us; California was far ahead of us. That's why we had to bring in the Green Energy Act back in 2009. But when asked, if all of these other jurisdictions are so far ahead of us, why we did create an act that saw us pay 10 times as much for hydro or for renewable than other jurisdictions, and why we didn't seize on the same benefits that obviously Alberta and Saskatchewan are now getting—nothing. They didn't have anything to say about that.

1630

When we asked, "Did you advise the government to pay such high prices for renewables?"—no comment.

When we asked, "Should Ontario now be getting the same benefits that Saskatchewan and Alberta, the two governments that you're talking about constantly"—we heard that from Environmental Defence; we heard it from the Suzuki foundation—"should we not be getting that?" Nothing, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely nothing.

We had gone through a day and a bit of testimony. We heard from two of the biggest proponents of the Green Energy Act, and on every single issue, they failed the people of Ontario. They failed us on pricing, they failed us on the previous Liberal government—on how to develop a program—and now they were putting themselves forward as the experts going forward. They were the ones we should listen to, going forward, because everything had changed. Yes, there were some high prices in the past, but everything was changed. We had to pay those high prices, they said, in order to get to a point where today renewables like wind and solar would be much cheaper. Forget the fact that in their own testimony they said that other jurisdictions were way ahead of us. We didn't get that benefit. We're still not getting the benefit. But trust them; we'll get it at some point.

Under a testimony we heard from a solar energy co-op in Ottawa Centre—they're still getting between 19 and 64 cents a kilowatt hour under their new contracts for hydro. That is completely irresponsible, colleagues. It's completely irresponsible. We just simply cannot sustain that level of incompetence going forward.

When pushed, we often asked, "Can we be energy agnostic? Can renewables compete on the market with anybody else?" They said, "Yes, but the prices aren't going to reflect that yet." So we're still going to have to wait, Mr. Speaker, and I don't think the people of Ontario have the ability to wait.

The reason I think it's so important to talk a little bit more about some of these organizations, Mr. Speaker, is because this is how the previous government developed their programs. It had nothing to do with what was right for the people of Ontario. It had nothing to do with bringing on energy that we could afford. It had nothing to do with maintaining our economic advantage. It had everything to do with ideology. It had everything to do with temporarily winning an election.

Yes, it looked great. I guess it did look good. It looked good for Premier McGuinty to walk through Stanley Park with David Suzuki and get the support of the Suzuki foundation. For that, he had to draft a bill that would disadvantage Ontario taxpayers for generations. Did it look good and help him win an election? Yes, it did, Mr. Speaker. Did they win an election? Absolutely, they did. They were then supported a few years later by the NDP, who continued this travesty and put us—when the NDP had the option to stop this, they chose to continue on.

We heard a lot of other testimony. We heard from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. They had brought their consultant. There were parts of his testimony which I found quite interesting. Look, there can be no doubt that our nurses are on the front lines and were on the front lines and continue to be on the front lines of treating

the hazards of climate change—asthma and the other ailments that come out of climate change. It is our nurses who have dealt with that on the front lines, and we owe them a debt of gratitude. But their consultant, who is also a member of the clean energy alliance—again, we heard about this 3.7 cents from Alberta and Saskatchewan. You would have thought by this point they would have just stopped talking about it in light of the fact we were going to still be paying 6.9 cents, but they kept talking about it.

I think there was something in his testimony which—he started to develop selective amnesia. I was very concerned. I was happy that a nurse was beside him at the time, because the consultant was also a member of the Clean Economy Alliance. The Clean Economy Alliance immediately issued a report, after the government was sworn in, that we have to continue on with cap-and-trade, that we have to continue on with the carbon tax. They issued a report back in 2017, and I'll quote from it. I asked a question here, and it was on the carbon tax and cap-and-trade. This is a quote from the report. I asked them about it. It said:

“In theory, higher gasoline prices due to carbon pricing should have resulted in lower gasoline demand. But that doesn't appear to be the case, at least so far. Gasoline sales dipped a little in the first quarter of 2017, but rebounded after that. Ontario gasoline sales reached their highest levels ever at the close of 2017.” It then closed by saying, “The carbon price doesn't appear to have reduced greenhouse gas emissions in the province,” due to the fact that the price is still too low.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to encapsulate everything we've talked about. The government has brought forward steps to end carbon tax and cap-and-trade because, in their own report of the Ontario Clean Economy Alliance, it doesn't work and hasn't worked. It didn't change behaviour. We ended the Green Energy Act because it was costing Ontarians and we weren't seeing the benefits of it. The people who did it, who brought this in, had done it to help Liberals win an election, at the cost of Ontario taxpayers.

What the minister is doing right now, what this government is doing right now, is reinvesting in our energy sector so that we can restore that energy advantage that we have had and that we have historically had, so that we can bring back jobs, restore the 75,000 lost manufacturing jobs, restore the jobs that were lost in the mining sector and once again celebrate an Ontario that is strong.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll do questions and comments.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Mr. Speaker, there's so much here. I'm reminded of the movie *The Shawshank Redemption*, when Andy Dufresne is speaking to the warden and explaining a series of facts, and the warden refuses to acknowledge them. Andy says, “Are you being deliberately obtuse?” To me, that's what's happening. We're ignoring every reality of the situation.

Every indicator on the planet says that clean energy, green energy, renewable energy is going to be the cheapest form of energy on the planet. It already is. Solar is the cheapest. Wind is 3.7 cents.

Mr. Randy Hillier: That is not true.

Mr. Ian Arthur: That's fact. It is true. Instead, we're going to ignore projections that nuclear is going to rise in price to 16 cents per kilowatt hour, and we're going to embrace that.

Mr. Jim McDonell: We have contracts.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Just because the previous government signed contracts that weren't necessarily good contracts for the people of Ontario—I agree with that—doesn't mean that this government couldn't go out and sign better contracts. To me, it sounds like this government has no faith in their own ability to get a better deal for the people of Ontario: “We can't go out and get the same thing as Alberta or Saskatchewan because we actually just don't know how.”

We're the exception here. Ontario, the economic powerhouse of Canada, can't get the deal that Alberta gets or Saskatchewan gets? What is this, Mr. Speaker? This isn't a government that understands business. This isn't a government that understands economics. They are once again ignoring the mistakes of the previous government and pursuing a policy, once again without learning from the past, that is going to cost the people of Ontario more.

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

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to amend the Electricity Act—and to respond to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the member from Markham–Stouffville on their comments today. Certainly, it was a clear election commitment by our party to deal with the high electricity costs that we face in the province of Ontario.

1640

Certainly, a large part of the reason we have such high electricity costs is the Green Energy Act that was brought in in 2009. I happened to be around then. I remember the minister at the time, Mr. Smitherman, talking about how the cost of this was going to be—a cup of coffee a day is how he responded to what it was going to be. Well, it's a really expensive cup of coffee, is all I can say, when you look at the Auditor General reports and see the billions and billions and billions of dollars that this has cost.

I remember when the FIT program came out. It was 80 cents a kilowatt hour. If you had a small rooftop solar, it was 80 cents a kilowatt hour that you as the homeowner would receive. It was great if you were the homeowner. I wondered just how this would work. The price of electricity that we were all paying on our bills at the time was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, and yet you would get 80 cents for this. I thought, only government could come up with a plan to buy high, sell low, and somehow it would work out. Well, it worked out with the global adjustment. As we heard, the global adjustment was just an absolutely huge cost. So this bill is going to move us towards part of that election commitment of lowering hydro costs.

As the minister said, when you went around the riding—he talked about pulse; well, for lots of people in my riding, it was heat or eat. For businesses like Muskoka

Meats, they actually had to sell their products to be able to pay their hydro bill at the worst of it. We're making a commitment to restore a municipality's ability to zone where these projects go and work on these high electricity costs.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: It was interesting listening to the comments from the member for Markham–Stouffville and the member for Kenora–Rainy River. I heard talk about the need to avoid monumental mistakes and the need to reduce costs. Well, I can think of some pretty good ways to avoid monumental mistakes and reduce costs. One of them is to take meaningful action on climate change, and the Green Energy Act is part of that.

I'll tell you what is expensive: not taking action on climate change. You have got the IPCC saying that if we don't take action on climate change, we could be in for a very dark future. That's expensive. We've got wildfires in California, the worst they've seen. That's expensive. You've got Biblical-level floods in Houston. Now, that's expensive.

Here's another way we can make energy costs cheaper: How about keeping hydro public? That would be a way to reduce costs because we would pay less money to big business to keep the lights on and heat our homes. That's a way that we can reduce energy costs.

Another way to reduce energy costs is to invest in green energy. It is the future. It is cheaper. There are many ways that we can go about doing that, from investing in energy efficiency, investing in sensible energy storage, to moving forward on solar and wind. I encourage this government to look at sensible green ways to move our energy grid forward in a way that also benefits residents and keeps costs low.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: As always, it's an incredible privilege to be able to stand and speak on behalf of the fine constituents of Niagara West. I want to thank the member from Markham–Stouffville for bringing forward such an important contribution to debate this afternoon. I wish to inform the members who may not have been here in opposition of my own commitment to fighting for local, municipal rights. In fact, the first motion that I ever brought forward as a member of provincial Parliament shortly after being elected, almost two years ago exactly—this Friday will be two years since I was elected. In December 2016, I had the opportunity to bring forward a motion that called on the then Liberal government to respect local decision-making. It asked simply that in the case of future wind farms or industrial wind turbines being built, the municipalities would be consulted and heard—as the former Premier had stated in her earlier throne speeches in 2014, for example, that she would in fact listen to municipalities.

The reality was that we simply didn't see that happen. They voted against my motion, and it was incredibly disappointing not only to me but to the thousands of

people in my riding who were incredibly concerned about that impact, the waste of money that was being spent on energy we simply didn't need. If you look at, actually, the amount of energy that we're consuming compared to what our production capacity is, it's building capacity that we don't need. I want to thank the member for pointing that out and for fighting for municipalities' rights.

I also want to stress—the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned a cup of coffee a day, and I think we all know that it's a lot more than that. But it's important not to trivialize even that. If you do \$2 a day for every person in the province—14.5 million people—times 365, you're over a billion dollars a year. So you're looking at over a billion dollars a year, just for the price of a coffee a day. People like to trivialize those numbers. We're seeing that it's going to cost up to \$90 billion, the cost of the Fair Hydro Plan, where the Liberals have spent so much in wasteful spending.

I want to thank the member for his speech, and I am pleased to add my comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll return to the parliamentary assistant for his two-minute summation.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you to all the colleagues who had comments.

It might surprise the member for Kingston and the Islands that I'm going to say that he's right. He's right: We should have the ability to have lower contracts for green energy. We should be able to compete. But it's this act which has stopped us from doing that. So I hope the member will rise and support repealing this act, because he's absolutely right.

Green energy projects, such as renewables and wind, if they can compete on the open market with other forms of generation and make it cheaper for the people of Ontario, then, absolutely, they'll be able to generate, and they'll be able to save the people of Ontario money. But what we're seeing is that the people who created the Green Energy Act never intended for it to be competitive with other sources of energy.

The member who spoke afterwards talked about subsidizing big business. This act here, the Green Energy Act, put \$4.5 billion in direct, immediate subsidies for these green energy renewables. They cost Ontario taxpayers some \$40 billion.

We hear from the Ontario Clean Air Alliance—which is not a government-friendly organization by any stretch of the imagination, as I think a lot of the members opposite would appreciate. We've heard that the carbon tax is going to solve all the problems with the environment. They have said it absolutely had no impact on emissions. It had no impact on changing people's behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, the member is right: We have to bring down the cost of energy, and we have to be able to compete. The only way we can do that is by eliminating the Green Energy Act, so that government has the ability, the IESO has the ability, to go get contracts for the people of Ontario on the open market. If they can compete at a price that is competitive with others, including our nuclear

sector, then I'm sure the people of Ontario would be more than happy to source their hydro or their electricity needs from renewables—but only if it meets the needs of Ontarians.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to speak in this, the third and probably final chapter of debate on this bill.

This is a bill that won't address the fundamental problems that Ontario faces with power costs or with power supply in the years to come. It won't address the problems that the government says it will address. It's a bill that largely moves provisions of the Green Energy Act into the Electricity Act, rather than abolishing them.

What it does do, however, is make a very strong statement of the opposition of this government to renewable energy.

It's ironic that they have such an animus, a dislike, focused on green energy, on renewable energy, because as you are well aware, Speaker, it was renewable energy, hydro power, that built Ontario as an industrial society.

Just as in 1905, when the coal barons were arguing against hydro power, the current parliamentary assistant and the current minister have no use for renewable power. If they had been in charge then, we'd still be burning coal in downtown Toronto—no doubt about it.

I want to look at some of the big problems that are unaddressed by this bill.

This bill will do nothing to deliver a reduction in rates that this government has said it's committed to. It won't end privatization. It won't start the reintroduction of public ownership of the electricity system, which will be critical to controlling prices in the long run.

First of all, it doesn't wind down the Liberals' Fair Hydro Plan, a hydro plan that was a political orphan, abandoned in the political wilderness by its parents and taken in by Premier Ford—an orphan roundly denounced by the Tories in opposition, and yet somehow, strangely, now a central part of their operations.

As a refresher to those who spent a lot of their time in the last year watching reruns of *The Big Bang Theory*, people should be aware that roughly a year ago, the Liberals introduced their "Fair Hydro Plan" as the last gasp to hold onto power. Their political house had been set afire by crowds of Ontarians carrying their hydro bills like lit torches over their head, coming for them.

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The Liberals were desperate for some protection. Their plan, which was strongly advised against by their senior civil servants, was to borrow tens of billions of dollars to reduce hydro bills in time for the election. The trick was that the hydro bills would start going up sharply again within a few years, as people would have to pay off not only the debt itself but the tens of billions of dollars in interest payments that came with such a reckless plan. It's the essence of a "save now, pay big later" kind of plan. But the plan had one purpose, really, and that was to get the Liberals through that election, to protect them politically.

When the bill came forward, we in the NDP denounced it for the irresponsible, self-serving mess that it was. Interestingly, the Tories did the same. Let me quote some of their statements from debates on that plan. The now Minister of Government and Consumer Services—my congratulations, sir—the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, was scathing in his comments. My only regret, Speaker, is that I can't deliver his remarks with the same fervour that he imparted at the time because, without a doubt, the man was on fire when he was talking about the Fair Hydro Plan. He talked in the debate, commenting on the cost of borrowing all that money, tens of billions of dollars. He had this to say in response to a Liberal member who was defending the Fair Hydro Plan:

"The Mississauga–Streetsville member used a term"—he was talking about the Liberal member at the time—"something to the effect of, 'You know, it's a low interest rate. The borrowing costs you nothing, next to nothing. It's virtually free money.' Well, I'm not certain how he can actually stand and tell people that when you're spending \$12 billion in interest payments, that's next to nothing."

Just a side note, Speaker: That \$12 billion was corrected. The Financial Accountability Officer pointed out that we're talking about more like \$21 billion or \$22 billion. It's a lot more than \$12 billion, but \$12 billion is still a lot of money and worth getting very cranky about.

Again, back to the member: "Those people who actually are losing their schools: I don't think it's next to nothing" to them. "Those who cannot afford to pay their hydro bill: I don't think it's nothing to them. No doctor in their community or for their family: I don't think it means nothing to them. No surgeries, or the waiting lists that we're waiting on: I don't think it means nothing to them. Those people who are losing their businesses because of the extraordinarily high hydro rates: I don't think it means nothing to them. Or those people who can't get a job or their children can't find jobs: I don't think it's nothing to them. No mental health services for much of our province: I don't think it means nothing to them." Not to mention that the Tories have cut mental health planning quite substantially recently. "No long-term-care beds for 26,500 people who are on a waiting list: I don't think it means nothing to them."

He went on: "The Minister of Agriculture just recently stood up and talked about giving families relief, giving them 40% to 50%. It's their money, Mr. Speaker. Leveraging debt over a longer period is only moving it to our pages, our next generation. It's unfathomable that they actually can stand there proudly and say that this is a good thing, when people today are still suffering."

Speaker, he was great. He was on fire. He could have gone on to talk about rivers of blood and plagues of locusts and toads, but he didn't need to. He had done a pretty good job. I have to say, having been around this place for a while, I get to appreciate a good denunciation from time to time, and the member delivered that denunciation.

Anyone listening to what he had to say that day would conclude that he thought that the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan was a bad idea. I don't know; maybe it's subtle, but I

picked it up. He thought that this was not a good idea, not a good direction to go in.

Then we had the former energy critic for the Tories, the MPP now for the Bay of Quinte, recently named Minister of Economic Development—and I have to say, Speaker, it's hard to keep track over there. There are these cabinet shuffles that go on. Somebody does something bad and then people get moved around. I have heard that the Premier backs the new minister 10,000%, and I hope that doesn't bode ill for his future. We've seen that when the Premier is so strongly behind you, your days may be numbered, but here's hoping that he hangs in there for a while.

The now minister was chewing up the scenery when he talked about the Liberal hydro plan. Here are some quotes from the debates—and he was good; he was really good: “When you dig deeper into this bill”—that was the Liberal hydro bill—“which I will over the next hour, it exposes a lot of the failures of this legislation. It exposes a lot of the gaps in this legislation. It, again, speaks to the urgency of the government to bring something forward which wasn't well thought out, that isn't planned, because they just simply want to be able to say to the people of Ontario, ‘Hey, your electricity bill is a little bit cheaper.’ But they haven't actually fixed the underlying reasons as to why the electricity bill is soaring....”

“This was to get them through the 2018 election, and then, after that, the price of electricity is going to skyrocket to record highs.”

The now minister recognized the outcome of that Fair Hydro Plan—lower prices today, much higher prices tomorrow—and he actually goes into more detail. “We'll have the return of a debt retirement charge on our electricity bills, but not just a debt retirement charge like the one we've been experiencing for the last decade or more. This one is a debt retirement charge on steroids.” That's pretty strong language.

“The minister has come up with a new term. He calls it the clean energy adjustment, but what it is is the debt retirement charge on growth hormones.” He really didn't like the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan. I think you're getting that, Speaker.

“It's a huge, huge issue that's going to hit \$22 a month by 2028. That's \$22 in the debt retirement charge every month by 2028, on top of the record-high price of electricity, because the government isn't doing anything with this bill, except for making our kids and our grandkids pay the price.”

You know, from the sound of it, I don't think he liked the plan. I think he saw that borrowing money to artificially reduce hydro rates was a bad idea. I'll just quote a little more: “Any interest payments included in this scheme are recoverable through the rates, meaning electricity customers are going to have to pick up that cost. That means that, for the next 30 years, Ontario rate-payers—electricity customers—are going to be paying bankers on their hydro bill. Some bond traders down at Bay and Wellington are going to get very, very wealthy on this deal....”

“At the bottom of it”—and I continue to quote the now minister—“what we're talking about is basically subsidizing rates through debt and then, in turn, paying debt through rates. So electricity customers are the ones who get whacked.”

He was a righteous critic. He took a meat axe to this bill. Then, when he finished with the meat axe, he took the scalpel and he dissected it into its component parts. He dissected it finely.

Speaker, this will be a shock to you—and I can tell from your demeanour that you've been through a lot in this place. You've seen a lot of shocking stuff. You had the energy critic denouncing this plan. You had the member for Huron—Bruce denouncing this plan. The Tories put this steaming mess into their platform. No. It's a shock to me. They ripped it apart in this chamber, noted all the bad stuff that was going to happen, noted the piling of the debt onto the next generation—and, frankly, this generation will have to kick in a lot as well. They noted it made bond dealers wealthy. They hit every base, but then they put it in their plan and they're continuing to operate it.

I asked the Minister of Energy earlier in the term how much was being borrowed by this government to reduce hydro bills every day. How much was he on track to borrow this year? He wouldn't answer me, although it is several billion because they are continuing to borrow the money. He wouldn't answer. He said, “I don't pay any attention to the Liberal hydro plan.”

Speaker, this is now the Conservative hydro plan. They own it, lock, stock and barrel. It is all theirs, all with the debt retirement charge to come, all with soaring hydro bills to come. All of the problems and headaches that they denounced in terms of how the Liberals were operating, they have totally adopted. It is now their little child and they are looking after it. They're feeding it.

Speaker, they kept all the critical parts of the Liberal plan. Will they force our children to pay? Check. Will it mean higher hydro bills in the future? Check. Will it leave fundamental problems unaddressed? Check. And it wasn't just before the election that the Tories were saying this was a bad plan. I listened to the parliamentary assistant to the minister on October 15. This is what the parliamentary assistant had to say about the plan that they are now operating: “Not only was the Fair Hydro Plan a bad deal that was brought in to try and keep prices down, which they had inflated; what was worse about it was the way it was done. The auditor has been very, very elegant in explaining to the people of Ontario just how badly that was done.”

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The current parliamentary assistant understands that his government is just following the Liberal road, still borrowing that money, still piling up that debt, still setting the stage for much higher hydro bills in the future. These guys and gals are truly following the Liberal path. Maybe they use different tailors. Maybe they have different chauffeurs. Maybe when they sip champagne from a wine-glass, they don't put their pinky in the air. Maybe they're that different. It could be. But, Speaker, if you maintain

the policies of someone that you denounce, you're truly following their path. You haven't strayed from that path; you are following that path.

So here we are, debating a bill that will not end this crazy Liberal hydro plan, will not protect our children from these unreasonable debts—and here, when I say “unreasonable debts,” I'm quoting a minister of the crown—a bill that will not get at the underlying problems of the electricity system in Ontario. When will we see a bill coming forward to abandon that plan? That's the question one has to ask. Because, in fact, a few years ago the Liberals stopped contracting for new renewable energy. They abandoned the feed-in tariff program. That was over. When they got prices in much lower, they wouldn't bring any of that on the grid. So the reality is that this is not changing our hydro prices right now. But the Liberal hydro plan, which is now Doug Ford's hydro plan, is part of the reality in this province.

Two weeks ago, I had the opportunity to go to the Ontario Energy Association. The Ontario Energy Association—I would say to all the members who are here in the Legislature today, they're worth paying attention to. They put on good-quality seminars. They had a presentation by Greg Lyle from Innovative Research, looking at polling in the province—where people's public opinion was going on the parties, but also looking at their opinion on environmental and energy matters. It was a really good presentation.

One of the things that he checked on was looking at this whole question of borrowing money today for lower prices today that we have to pay back later at a much higher cost in the future. He found that people were strongly opposed to this approach—strongly opposed. Not just Tories, who should be opposed; not just Liberals, who should be opposed; not just NDPers, who should be opposed; everybody. Sixty-three per cent of those polled opposed pushing costs off into the future—63%; pretty clear. Eighteen per cent thought it was a good idea. I don't know who those folks were. Maybe they were former Liberal MPPs; maybe they were overrepresented in the sample. I don't know, Speaker. But Greg Lyle was pretty clear that this approach was ticking, ticking, ticking.

I would say that most Conservatives would find it hard to believe that their government is employing the same payday loan strategy to dealing with electricity prices that the Liberals did. But, in fact, they are. That bomb continues to tick away, and at same time, the Premier is dealing with diversions, not taking this on.

Speaker, billions of dollars a year are being borrowed. The interest clock continues to run. You would have thought that this government, fully aware of and emotionally strongly responsive against this hydro plan, would have addressed it. They said that they could reduce hydro bills by 12%. Well, frankly, phase out borrowing all these billions per year, bring your plan in and leave people in a position where they aren't accumulating all this debt but they have lower bills. I've seen no indication of a strategy to actually reduce bills—none. But they could have gone there.

If we had been elected, we were committed to phasing out the Liberal hydro plan. We would have put in place our program to reduce hydro bills: cutting back on the profits that companies could make out of the system; taking the \$2.6 billion that was given as a gift to Hydro One when they were privatized and putting that money into the pockets of those who pay electricity bills. We would have done that. We would have made time-of-use payments voluntary, not mandatory, a 10% reduction for almost all those people who are on that payment plan right now. That could have been done. Those are practical things that could have been done, but this government is far more interested in making sure that privatization continues, making sure that they're beating up on symbols rather than actually getting down into the wrestling ring and dealing with the issues that have to be dealt with.

Now, we tried to put forward a number of amendments to this bill when we were in committee a few days ago—a few days ago? Time passes so quickly here. It was yesterday, Speaker, yesterday. We proposed a number of amendments. I'm going to go through them, and I'll just tell you in advance—again, Speaker, you're a seasoned veteran of this place. You won't be surprised that no amendments were adopted. In fact, we didn't get a single vote from a single Tory member on committee, which was surprising to me because, in fact, these were pretty common-sense amendments.

The first amendment was to restore the integrated power system planning process the Liberals scrapped with Bill 135 in 2016. Now, not everybody out there follows the politics of the integrated power system planning process. I'm sure there are people watching this on TV right now who are thinking, “You know, I've got a cup of rice pudding in the back of my refrigerator. I put it there a few months ago. I could get up right now, stop watching this, go eat that rice pudding and be a happier person.” But I urge you to stay for this, because I think this is an interesting point.

Ontario actually needs an open planning process for its electricity system. I know it's a shock to everyone. I know that when the Liberals were in power, we attacked the Liberals and the current Conservative government attacked the Liberals for not having an open power planning process, because, Speaker, you could do a lot behind closed doors, right? The minister and his friends and his buddies can be in the minister's office with scotch on the table, having a good time, deciding what the fate of Ontario is going to be, and Ontarians never really know the basis for the decisions that have been made about allocating money here or there to the electricity system.

What you actually have to have is a plan that gets put out in public, where you have an energy board hearing where witnesses can be called and questioned—I know it sounds wild, but actually, an evidence-based approach to making decisions. It would be a shocking departure from the norm here in this chamber, actually making sure that people have to defend under oath their proposals to direct the electricity system in one direction or another. The Tories were not interested in that, even vaguely, not

vaguely. The Auditor General pointed out when she was criticizing the Liberals that they killed off this evidence-based planning, and she was right. It all descended into the back closet of the minister's office somewhere in the area around Queen's Park.

The Conservatives could have done that. They could have looked at all of the mistakes that have been criticized broadly by themselves and by the Auditor General and by us over the years and introduced a bill to correct that, just as they could have introduced a bill to get rid of borrowing large sums of money to artificially and on a short-term basis reduce hydro bills, giving us much higher hydro bills in the future. They wouldn't do that, and then they wouldn't go for an open planning process. In fact, my motion was ruled out of order. I couldn't get unanimous consent. I couldn't get support from the Tories to actually have a debate on an open planning system. Who would have thought it?

So that was the first amendment that went down. I think it was a mistake on the government's part, contrary to what they had to say when they were in opposition, contrary to what they say they're about in terms of transparency and rational planning for the electricity system, but there you are.

We put forward an amendment that would allow a requirement that government agencies consider energy conservation and efficiency in their operations. The cost of electricity services when you use efficiency or conservation is about two cents a kilowatt hour. It is the cheapest we've got, cheaper than solar in the Chilean desert, cheaper than anything globally—two cents a kilowatt hour—and, frankly, should be a central pillar of any energy planning in this province because it's the cheapest, right? And environmentally, it's a wonderful thing. You're not actually burning anything. You're not having to set up new structures. You are just reducing your energy consumption. It's really cheap. Gas-fired power: 12 cents to 31 cents a kilowatt hour. That's a lot more expensive. Nuclear power in this province: going to 16.5 cents a kilowatt hour.

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I see the parliamentary assistant shaking his head. I look forward to reading from the OEB filing by OPG as I get further on into my speech, because I actually am assuming that OPG, when it says it's going to charge 16.5 cents a kilowatt hour, probably intends to charge 16.5 cents. That's assuming there are no overruns.

Anyway, instead of getting a commitment from this government to actually make energy efficiency a central pillar of government operations, it got fluffed off. It couldn't get a single vote, even though I made a great speech, Speaker. You would have voted for it, I'm sure. It was a great speech.

Then we went on to another amendment. That was to change the Environmental Protection Act that would require—no, I'm going to go back to it. There was a requirement in the bill that any new project demonstrate that there was demand for power before a project went forward. But interestingly, it applied only to renewable

power, not to gas-fired power, not to nuclear power, not to coal power—only renewable power. So if you are thinking to put a hydro dam in, you have to show there's demand.

Now, I think that you should actually have to show demand, but that's for all forms of generation. What we tried to get was a statement that at least the system operator, the body that runs the electricity system in Ontario, the Independent Electricity System Operator, would do a determination as to whether or not there was a need for new generation, but that wasn't acceptable.

It's interesting to me that the minister spoke to this on October 15. In one of his Kellyanne Conway kind of moments, he said, "We're also making amendments to the Environmental Protection Act. Our government's proposed legislation will give us the authority to freeze environmental approvals for proposed energy projects where the need for electricity has not been demonstrated. This would allow us to put the brakes on unnecessary additional projects that would add costs to electricity bills that the people of Ontario simply cannot afford. This would allow our government to continue to make responsible choices that respect energy customers and keep their bills from skyrocketing again in the future."

You know, that's somewhat short of full disclosure, to tell you the truth, because it only applied to renewable energy projects. It didn't apply to nuclear projects, gas projects, coal projects. Building any other kind of technology, you can ignore whether or not there's a need for power. That is what they did, and they ignored the change that would have meant that at least a central body in this province would do the assessment of what was necessary. If they have friends who need to make a fortune building a power plant and there's a lack of demand, well, no problem, because as long as that power plant isn't renewable, they're happy campers. They're truly happy campers.

Now, we asked in another amendment that there would be clarity that net metering could go ahead. For those who are not familiar with net metering, if you were to put a solar panel on your roof or if your property had a creek running through it and you put a little generator in the water to make power for your household and you had more power than you needed, net metering allows you to sell it into the electricity grid. It could be a really cheap source of power for Ontarians, because individuals, families and businesses make the capital investment. We can buy the power off at a reasonable rate.

There is really a risk with the way the government bill is written that it could be used to target net metering. Frankly, net metering is where we in this country and where people in the industrialized world—and, I think, globally—are going to be going over the next few decades. It simply allows you to expand your electricity generation in a way that gives individual families and businesses an ability to make some money and reduce their costs. It really is extraordinarily sensible. Unfortunately, not a single Tory would vote for that. It's a shame. I think it would have been a good thing to do, to make sure that there was protection for net metering, but they couldn't go there—wouldn't go there.

Then we went on further. Bill 34 purports to restore respect for municipal planning authority, but it only addresses renewable energy projects—not gas plants, nuclear plants, coal plants, take your pick—only renewable energy plants.

Here's the minister again on October 15—that was a gold mine. It was an amazing speech. Every schoolchild should read it; no doubt about it. It should be taught in every grade so that people will memorize it: “Amending the Planning Act is about making the right decisions for the people because it would restore authority to municipalities across Ontario. It means more power in the hands of the people and the communities, where it belongs. This is going to bring about positive change, change that is much needed.” In fact, the minister said pretty much the same earlier today. I think he said “power to the municipalities.” It was a stirring moment, Speaker. You had to be there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I was.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again—somewhat short of full disclosure—when we tried to get amendments passed in committee to give power to municipalities to reject gas and nuclear plants, we couldn't get a single vote, not one. The government wouldn't support that. Sure, they'll support municipalities if they want to reject renewable power, but my goodness, Speaker, there are some sacred things in the world and nuclear plants and gas plants are two of them. They have to be protected. So the government wouldn't go anywhere near that.

The idea that your whole bill is targeting renewable energy and permitting other energy sources is a very clear indication of where this government is going. It has no use or interest in renewable energy, even though the cost of that energy is dropping substantially. I'm just going to take a moment, because I listened to the parliamentary assistant earlier and there were a few things that I just wanted to get on the record because I was intrigued by his comments.

In Ontario in 2009-10, the feed-in tariff set a price for wind power at about 11 cents; there were some add-ons, but 11 cents, 12 cents, in there. That was a price that was fairly common across North America. Now, in eight, nine years, the cost has been dropping, and that's one of the things you have to note about renewables. As the technology improves, as manufacturing improves, as the science improves, the cost has been dropping substantially. That's a very important point. The minister seemed to think, when I talked about buying a computer back in 1988, that you could have gotten the same price in Alberta. That's true. If I bought it in Ontario or Alberta, the price would have been roughly the same. But it's not a question of geography; it's a question of time. As the cost of renewable energy drops, this government's antipathy towards it, its hostility towards renewable power means that we're going to be cut out from those low-cost affordable energy options in the future, and that is a substantial problem.

Let's be very clear: If you're a municipality and the province wants to put a giant, polluting gas plant in your town, you are out of luck. It's tough. You're going to have to breathe those fumes. If they wanted to put a solar farm in an industrial area? “No, no. Forget about that.” But a giant gas plant? “Go right ahead.”

I want to point out, for those who are new to this House, that the big fights around the gas plant scandal in Oakville and Mississauga—those were gas plants. They were on industrially zoned areas, and the province would not give those municipalities the power that was given here today to shut them out, not at all.

1720

In fact, the York Energy Centre that was built in the Holland Marsh area—I talked to people in York region when they were engaged in that fight. They didn't want that gas-powered plant in their area, not at all. The previous Liberal government forced it on them, and this government has set up things so exactly the same would happen in the future. I don't think they would act differently for a moment. Except for this: We'd see a lot more gas.

They may want to say that they're giving more power to municipalities, but that is not how they vote. I suggest people read Hansard, look at what happened in committee and know that when you put up your hand to oppose having a level playing field between all the forms of technology, you're going to make sure that municipalities don't have the power you say you're giving them.

In the past, Speaker, I would have thought that if you're a municipal government and you didn't want one of these technologies, say, a gas plant or a nuclear plant, it was more likely that a gas plant would get built in your area. But things are changing. Mr. Alykhan Velshi, a recently hired—and apparently recently fired—vice-president at OPG, was talking in his very short tenure—I think he had a day and allegedly was paid \$500,000 for that day, which is an amazing amount. I have to say, when I talk about the Tories following in the Liberal footsteps, I'm impressed. I mean, you guys went the full monty. You didn't mess around. You wanted to make sure the bucks got thrown everywhere. So Mr. Velshi, if the reports are true, made out really well for a day's work—a half a million bucks. Where else does this happen?

Anyway, I digress, Speaker. When he was there for his short tenure, he talked about a nuclear renaissance. It led me to wonder, is this government keeping veto power away from municipalities because of their interest in the new smaller nuclear power plants that OPG seems to be getting involved with? And I just sort of poked around, because I thought this was an interesting development, because clearly you could put a 300-megawatt power plant in the middle of Markham, but you couldn't put a solar farm in the middle of Markham.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I'll take it any day.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I think he would; I'm not sure his constituents would.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Yes, they would.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I don't think they would.

OPG recently signed an agreement with an American company, NuScale, to promote this new reactor technology in Canada. Just on a side note: I don't know if you've noticed this, Speaker, but OPG seems to be becoming a lot more focused on the United States. It recently bought a hydro company down in the northeastern United States.

They've made this deal with the American nuclear reactor company instead of dealing with Candu, Canadian technology. It's interesting to me that they're now developing this partnership with an American company. Even the structure of the Liberal hydro plan, which is now the Conservative hydro plan, was adopted from American utilities. So I ask myself, how deep is this commitment to becoming a more American jurisdiction? We will see. But that, Speaker, is a digression.

People should be aware of the open door that's been left to these reactors in their community by the whole approach of the bill before us. These reactors aren't affordable, and there are substantial problems with waste. In terms of siting these nuclear reactors, I have to say to smaller-town Ontario: Peterborough, look out. Picton, keep your eyes open. Kingston, hey, you should be looking at this. North Bay, look behind you; look at what's coming. Dryden, think twice. Grimsby, you may have an issue here. Wainfleet, you're about to have a big surprise. Because this government, contrary to everything it said about giving power back to municipalities, hasn't. It has beat up on renewable energy, no doubt about it—no doubt, very clear. But other technologies, they're very happy with.

Interestingly, last year, Forbes magazine had an interesting little bit about Ontario Power Generation and its interest in nuclear power: "As Nicolle Butcher, vice-president of strategy and acquisitions at Ontario Power Generation, told the 2017 International Small Modular Reactor and Advanced Reactor Summit in Atlanta, Georgia last month, 'Ontario Power Generation forecasts a significant gap in its power generation mix after 2030, and it intends to fill this gap with nuclear power.'"

You know, Speaker, people should be asking substantial questions about this, and they should be asking those questions because of cost. There are other things to ask about, but let's start with cost. Let's look at the cost of nuclear in this province today, because as I alluded to earlier, Ontario Power Generation is asking for an increase in its rates for the Darlington plant, which is a major power producer in Ontario, from the 5.9 cents a kilowatt hour they were charging in 2016 up to 16.5 cents a kilowatt hour in 2025. And this is an exhibit filed with the Ontario Energy Board, filed 2017/03/08, exhibit 2016-0152, exhibit N3. For those who want to look it up, I'm sure you can look up these numbers and actually look at what OPG is proposing. Because if you go from 5.9 cents a kilowatt hour to 16.5, people are going to notice in their hydro bills, particularly when the Conservative Fair Hydro Plan starts ratcheting up with repayment of the debt—extraordinary to me. That's one reality.

So we've got over here Darlington and OPG ramping up sharply in costs. Then we've got the actual cost of power from these small modular reactors. In 2016, the Ministry of Energy did a study on those reactors. Hatch engineering, a fairly well respected name in engineering, looked at the cost of power from those reactors. They looked at 13 different models; there are 13 different technologies out there. The technology costs from 19.3 cents

per kilowatt hour, almost making Darlington look like a bargain, to 76 cents per kilowatt hour. That's what this government is opening the door to: 76 cents a kilowatt hour, in very large quantities—very large quantities. Now, that would be consistent with our experience with nuclear costs in Ontario.

In 2009, the Liberals rejected a nuclear power plant—and I was shocked that they rejected it, because they're such strong proponents—because the only compliant bid they received came in three times higher than the province expected to pay—three times higher. Speaker, that's an issue. Is this government thinking about the cost of power in the years to come? Apparently not. Because if it was, it would be focusing heavily on efficiency and conservation. It would have accepted a number of the amendments that I brought forward. It would have actually looked at whether municipalities could reject nuclear reactors in their areas.

There are a number of people who have raised questions about these small modular reactors. The Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Greenpeace and a number of others sent a letter recently to the Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change; the Honourable Amarjeet Sohi, Minister of Natural Resources; and the Honourable Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science and Sport. They argued in their letter that "Canada should not advance investment in 'novel' forms of nuclear energy when transparent, public dialogue has not occurred."

Because—I'll be honest, Speaker—there hasn't been any dialogue on this. I kind of follow energy issues, from time to time, and it hadn't shown up much on my radar. I wasn't aware of the great interest that OPG had in this, the fact that they had come to a partnership with Fluor Corp. and their subsidiary NuScale—fascinating to me, particularly given the cost of the power. I know if in your riding, Speaker, the cost of power went up to 76 cents a kilowatt hour, you might get the odd phone call of complaint. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe things have changed there. But I think you might get a call about it.

The groups asked that an environmental assessment would be needed of this whole project—not that I've seen any evidence of that and not that I've seen any evidence on the government side of an interest in that kind of assessment. They also noted that there would be nuclear waste issues that would have to be dealt with. That's of consequence, Speaker. We already are going to be spending many, many billions of billions of dollars dealing with waste from the plants that we already have, and frankly, we don't yet have a proven technology. What we have are concepts, investments, but we don't actually have a proven technology in place for dealing with those wastes, at the same time as this government and its bodies seem to be interested in substantially increasing that waste.

1730

Small and medium-sized towns in Ontario should be a bit aware that this is rolling on. They should be aware that earlier this month, OPG signed an agreement with

NuScale Power to have OPG support NuScale in its vendor design review with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. Speaker, OPG is set up to provide power to us that we can afford. I don't know why they're working with an American proponent on American technology. Why are we providing them with services? Why aren't we dealing with Canadian technology? Why aren't we focused on Canadian hydro bills? What is it costing us? I look forward to the government saying it. We've got a number of people left to speak. I'm sure the government will clarify.

We tried a few other amendments. One that I want to note is an amendment that would remove the government's ability to exempt itself from legal liability for unfair or arbitrary actions in relation to changes to the Planning Act rules. Wow. I mean, talk about a get-out-of-jail-free card. I was astounded earlier this summer when one of the government bills came forward which made it impossible for you to sue the government for misrepresenting its approaches on Hydro One, effectively saying, "You can't sue us if we lied to you." That's unusual. You've been around here a while, Speaker. I've seen you go through a few bills in your time. I've seen you chew up the scenery, and if the Liberals had come forward with an amendment to a bill or a clause in a bill saying, "You can't sue us for lying," my guess, Speaker, is that you might have spoken out. Maybe I misread you, but I think you would have. I think you would have. That is pretty amazing to me.

The minister, in his presentation, talked about his natural gas bill. I didn't get an opportunity to touch on it at length, but I want to respond to some of what he had to say about the expansion of natural gas into rural Ontario. There are three concerns I have that I think people in rural areas should think about. First of all, the bill that is brought forward doesn't actually explicitly say it's for rural, northern or isolated communities. That's not in there.

In fact, it was interesting to me that the validator for that bill was the home builders' association, not the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, who had been proponents of this idea in the past. And so it made me think, Speaker, and I think people in this building should consider that the way things are being structured is that we may well have a situation in which subsidies will be set up for suburban sprawl developers, so they get their natural gas infrastructure paid for, while rural, northern and isolated communities get abandoned. I think that's a real concern. People should look at that bill very closely to see if it actually reflects what those in rural and northern areas think it will reflect.

The second thing I want to say is that the way the bill is set up—and this is really interesting, because of the concern on the part of the government about global adjustment—effectively, all the natural gas users in Ontario will be subsidizing the extension of these lines. Now, it won't show up on your gas bill. You won't see that line saying "subsidy to developer for their new subdivision." But the way the bill is structured, that's what's going to happen. I have to tell you, the Liberals and their cross-subsidizing—

they got into trouble on that, and you guys should think about it very seriously, because you could get into trouble as well.

The third thing I want to say is that a lot of rural Ontario has got electric baseboard heating. Why is that, Speaker? You know, in the 1970s and 1980s there was a big surplus of power, and Ontario Hydro at the time decided that they needed to dump that power into some customers, so they had a big program making it easy for rural areas to go onto electric baseboard heaters. They weren't interested in cheap heating; they were interested in dealing with a lack of demand, and they saw rural areas as marks, as people they could take advantage of.

I want to tell you right now that in North America, you have a fracking industry that has got a big oversupply of product, and it's looking for people to soak up demand. They don't care what the price of heating will be in those houses 10 years from now. They don't care. They want the demand now, which is why they're exporting natural gas to other continents and why they're bringing in fertilizer plants. They're bringing in whatever they can to soak up demand.

I just caution people in rural Ontario that what happened to you with Ontario Hydro may be what happens to you with the natural gas salesmen. Be cautious. Technology exists to substantially reduce the energy use in houses—to dramatically reduce that energy use—that is stable in the long run. When I see these salespeople running around, selling their products as they did in the 1970s and 1980s, looking for someone who is hungry, who is in a tough spot, and taking advantage of them, you've got to say, "Careful. Watch out. Watch out."

There are a few other things that I just wanted to address, because I have some remarks, but I don't want to lose some points that came up.

When the parliamentary assistant was talking about the global adjustment—I'm not sure he's aware that the global adjustment was set up long before the Green Energy Act came into effect. I got elected in 2006. The global adjustment was in place at that time. The global adjustment was meant to provide money to generators that was the difference between what power was selling for in the market and what their contracts reflected. So the global adjustment went to nuclear power plants; it went to hydro plants; it went to gas plants. It went to some small, non-utility generator contracts that were signed by the Liberals back in the 1980s. Some of it went to pay for the stranded debt from the Harris times in the late 1990s. People should actually look at the global adjustment.

So, when you're talking about that, to say it was exclusively for green energy doesn't reflect the facts. And you don't have to dig far. You can google the Independent Electricity System Operator and look at who gets payments from the global adjustment. To say that it was set up for renewable energy is factually incorrect.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Nobody said that.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Oh, yes, you did.

Mr. Paul Calandra: No, no.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Oh, yes. Yes, you did.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes, you did.

Speaker, I think it's interesting that the parliamentary assistant is a bit nervous about this.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I'm not nervous at all.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A bit nervous about that. It was interesting to me. Now, Speaker—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I hear noise, Speaker. I hear noise. So—

Mr. Paul Calandra: Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. The member for Markham–Stouffville has raised a point of order. Yes, sir.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I just wanted to assure the member that I am not nervous about debating the global adjustment and the fact that it takes up 40% of the cost for only 8% of the power, Mr. Speaker. I would be delighted to debate the member on the merits of the global adjustment—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have three late shows this afternoon. We can have four, if you'd like. Thank you for your point of order.

Back to the member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I didn't see that as a point of order, but it's interesting that the parliamentary assistant is a bit touchy about this issue. I look forward to reading Hansard. I'm sure it will be enlightening.

I want to go back to some of the points I raised when we first debated this so many weeks ago. Was it two weeks? Three weeks? I don't know. Time passes so quickly.

I think we all recognize that 15 years of Liberal leadership on the energy file was disastrous. There's no doubt about that. They were interested in themselves. They carried on the Harris-Eves program of privatization of the electricity system. That was disastrous for us—very expensive. It's something that the Conservatives could correct if they wanted to, but they're not, because they're privatizers. Their only interest is following American jurisdictions, following jurisdictions where you see sharp spikes in electricity prices, because powerful economic interests, private business interests, can dictate to governments how electricity is provided and at what price.

1740

Speaker, the people of Ontario have had a tough time dealing with the price of power. This government with its rejection of conservation and efficiency, this government with a complete disinterest in conservation and efficiency, is making sure that's where we're going to go in the future. This government that's continuing the Liberal failed policy of a hydro plan that relies on borrowing mountains of money in order to actually deal with the hydro problem isn't going to take us anywhere that we need to go.

They've forgotten what we knew a century ago, and that's that you have to have public ownership and that having a renewable base for your electricity system makes

a huge difference. That's why Ontario industrialized: because it took advantage of vast renewable resources, with hydro power, and it built, at very low cost, affordable power. That is something that has been lost to this crowd—and a disinterest in renewable energy at every point, at every turn, at every turn.

Now, the reality is, as of today, that hydro prices are still rising, although the reality is masked by all the money that's been borrowed and been piled on top of them. Bill 34 will do nothing to bend that curve—nothing, rien, nada, gone, zip, nothing. It is a convenient cover for obscuring what this government is not doing on the hydro file. It ensured that the province's ability to site electricity generators wherever they want to is left intact—not touched, not touched at all, all there. The powers remain. You can say, "Power to the municipalities," but I urge municipalities to talk to their legal counsel and have legal counsel analyze the bill and analyze the other elements of the Planning Act that will make it very clear that the province can do whatever it wants. That continues.

The bill is also a clear signal that this government is turning its back on climate action—no doubt about it. It was a clear signal when it came to their scrapping of cap-and-trade, and they're doing that without actually having a climate plan in place. I thought, "Okay. They have spoken, loudly." But they wanted to reiterate. They wanted to double down and make sure no one was confused. They may now say that they accept science, although there are doubts. They may say that, but if you don't actually act on a crisis, then, frankly, Speaker, you can't claim that you care about that issue. You can't care about it at all.

The rise in hydro rates is directly related to the decision by the Harris government to privatize the electricity system. I don't know if the current parliamentary assistant is aware, but at the time, in the late 1990s, when they were looking at doing this, at selling off the power plants, it was realized that Darlington and Bruce wouldn't be economic if the debts remained on their books. So they were taken off, and they became those stranded debts. So if you saw that on your hydro bill over the last decade and a half, that's a gift—that's a gift from Mike Harris to you. When he was privatizing those plants, he said, "They're not going to be economic; I need to take this debt off them," and that's what landed on our hydro bills. Nothing has changed. Nothing has changed in their approach. They're still willing to take on huge debts to look good, no problem at all.

The reality was that prices started zooming up in 2005–06. I ask the members to actually go and look at the movement of cost of electricity in Ontario from that period. As the Liberals built more and more gas-fired power plants, prices were zooming up. They were privately owned power plants; they didn't want any of this public stuff. They had truly inherited the mindset of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. They thought that private power was the way to go, and we paid a very heavy price—a very, very heavy price.

This is a government that doesn't particularly care that those private profits flow out of Ontario. It doesn't occur

to them for a second that that's an issue. Where will the money come from to build generation if you don't have private investors? Well, I'll say to you, Speaker, we seemed to be able to figure it out for a century. We seemed to be able to build power in Ontario, financing it ourselves, because we were buying wholesale. We weren't buying retail. We bought the whole thing and we got a better price.

But that has been abandoned by this government, completely abandoned. It was abandoned by the Liberals as well. Don't get me wrong. They were very clear on where they wanted to go. They didn't like this idea of money staying in Ontario. The idea that a billion dollars a year is what Ontarians are paying in profit to these private companies didn't faze them and doesn't faze this government, not a bit. But it fazes us, and it fazes people who are paying those hydro bills. It fazes people who are facing an economy that is not as robust as it once was because of higher prices related to that ceding of control, that turning over of control to private interests. That is a big problem.

It's not just the profits that are flowing out, but the whole distortion of the electricity system. It was very clear when we went through the gas plant inquiry that the preceding government—it sounded at the time like the Tories were upset with them, but not really, apparently. The previous government just wanted to be friends with the private sector. They just wanted to be friends. So whenever you came across TransCanada in the Liberal emails, the Liberals would talk about how important it was to be buddies, to be friends, and not to frighten them in any way, not to suggest for a moment that they would be defending the interests of the people of Ontario against that private corporation. That is the mindset that continues here.

So the reality is that when you have an electricity system dominated by private interests, they look after themselves. They look after themselves. They have lobbyists running around this building. They pitch their projects. Any attempt to cut back on their projects, to do something like put all your money into efficiency and conservation, is something they resist mightily, something they undermine, something that they get papers published against to say that it doesn't work, because they want to make a big buck. This government is a facilitator for that, just as the previous government was. That continues.

Speaker, neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives wanted to talk about privatization. We had the Liberals saying prices were going up because of green energy, because they didn't want to admit that privatization was the issue. We had the Tories attacking green energy because they wanted to make it the issue. Both sides were going after it, with the Liberals throwing green energy under the bus and the Tories ready to throw in the boot.

This bill needs to be defeated. This bill will not deliver what people need to have delivered in this province. It will mean ultimately higher prices. It will mean a lack of action on climate change. It will mean a continuation of the failed policies of the Liberals, with a different suit on. That's all, Speaker: just a different suit.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 34, the Green Energy Repeal Act.

This government for the people is delivering on its promise to repeal the Green Energy Act to reduce Ontario's hydro rates. Under the previous government, the energy rates tripled, hurting families and driving manufacturing jobs out of Ontario. Let's be clear: The Green Energy Act helped Liberal insiders get rich while families across Ontario were forced to choose between heating their homes or putting food on their plates.

The Green Energy Act made it so much harder for the businesses in Ontario to stay in business. Thousands of jobs were lost across Ontario because manufacturing plants were too expensive to operate.

One of the first actions we took as a government was to cancel 758 expensive and wasteful energy projects as part of our plan to cut hydro rates by 12% for the people of Ontario, which is saving \$790 million for electricity customers. We made a promise to lower the cost of living for hard-working Ontarians by reducing hydro costs, and this bill is doing just that. When it comes to putting more money in the pockets of Ontarians, we are just getting started. We are cleaning up the hydro mess and making sure that our electricity system works for the people once again.

1750

Mr. Speaker, I urge the members of this House to support the Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018. Let's ensure the future—

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: I couldn't resist. There was some chirping from across the way the last time I stood up, I think, from my esteemed colleague to the north.

Just so we're clear: Solar being the cheapest form of new energy is based on a report by the World Economic Forum. I'll read a quote here from this magazine called Forbes. It must be one of those hippie, dippy green crusader publications.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: They're a bunch of granolas.

Mr. Ian Arthur: They are. That's exactly what they are: granolas all the way.

"For the first time in history, the production cost of renewables is lower than that of fossil fuels...."

"Kaiserwetter Energy Asset Management wrote ... based on data from Bloomberg"—another hippie, dippy organization—"fossil fuels generated energy costs in the range of \$49 and \$174 per megawatt hour ... in 2017."

Over the same period, renewables had a range of \$35 to \$54 per megawatt hour. Well, colour me green, Mr. Speaker. Just so we're clear, I'm turning green thinking about the wasted green that we are about to spend on energy that is way more expensive than what we should be spending.

The poor people of Ontario are about to get another raw deal. This is right now. This isn't at some future point; this is right now and right here. The future point puts the cost of solar at 1.5 cents per kilowatt hour. I'd like to see nuclear compete with that. I'd like to see natural gas compete

with that. I know that coal will never compete with that ever again.

Mr. John Fraser: Maybe.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Well, maybe. Yes, coal is coming back; we hear it all the time.

I know that the term “common sense” has forever been tarnished by the ideological predecessors of this government, but where is the sense in once again choosing the more expensive option for the people of Ontario?

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

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I'm so pleased to be able to offer some comment today on what I am participating in, which is a debate on maybe the worst piece of legislation that was ever passed by the previous government—of course, might I say, even aided and abetted by the official opposition now. The sad reality is, of course, that it really is one of the reasons that drew me to participate as a member in this House right now.

I take a look back at all of our areas where we see the hurt from the Green Energy Act—the debacle. I could give hundreds of examples, but maybe a small example from just a small business, one of many of hundreds and hundreds we have. I went by this little restaurant area that was up in the northern part of my riding. It serviced an area of about 40 miles. There were three people working there. That was it—not a huge business, Mr. Speaker. But, you know, it was a job, and it provided a service for the local people. I went in there visiting just before I decided to run as a member of Parliament. I said, “Gee, things appear to be doing well. Having a good summer?” They said, “Oh, yes, we're having a great summer—maybe the best summer we've had since we've been here.” I said, “Well, that's terrific.” But she said, “It's too bad that, this fall, we're going to close.” I said, “What do you mean, you're going to close?” She said, “When we started the business, we were paying \$800 a month on our energy bill just three years ago. Now, it's \$2,300 a month.” They had to close that business and simply lay off those three people.

It's maybe not a lot, but when you have hundreds and hundreds more like that in our area, in a lot of these rural areas, and then I take a look in my same area in my riding—I'm down in Amherst Island; White Pines, of course, is in Prince Edward, which I had previously. I'm so thankful that our—

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: A recent study came forward that said that five countries in the entire world contain 70% of the remaining untouched wilderness in this world. That's Brazil, Australia, Russia, America and, of course, Canada. Even these forests, these remaining untouched wildernesses throughout the world, even they are at fear of disappearing completely. If you look at the statistics around the world, we see that 60% of the wildlife population has been decimated over the past four decades.

The world is at a very, very important juncture right now. We're at a fork in the road, and we can make two decisions. We can make decisions that make our environmental situation worse for the world, or we can make

decisions that make our environmental situation better. The reality is that the legislation being put forth by the government right now is taking things from bad to worse. It is further exacerbating the situation that we face. It is further exacerbating dangers towards our environment. It is creating a situation where climate change can be even more of an issue. It is not taking us in the direction that we need to go in as a province. It is taking us backwards.

We need to be making investments in things like renewable energy. We need to be making sure we're making investments so that future generations can enjoy and experience nature and the environment, and ensure that our society, our world, is safe. The government is putting forth legislation that is going to make this much, much harder to do. It's going to put renewable energy at a disadvantage compared to other forms of energy. It's putting our environment in danger. It is hurting our province and hurting our world, and it's something that we must vote against.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I now return to the member for Toronto–Danforth for his two-minute summation.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to wrap up. I also want to thank all those who commented: the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park, the member from Kingston and the Islands, the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington, and the member from Brampton East.

This is a substantial debate. This is a substantial issue before us. The prosperity and the sustainability of the province for decades to come is going to be decided not only by this bill, but by a number of other bills that will come forward. Whether or not we have affordable power, whether or not we have environmentally acceptable power, is something that we have to wrestle with if we actually want to leave a future for the next generation. This bill will not do that. This bill will take us backwards. It undermines the transition we're going to have to make to renewable power.

The simple reality, contrary to what the parliamentary assistant had to say, was that the bill could have been left in place and we could have had competitive bids on renewable power in Ontario without any difficulty. In fact, the Liberals had a competitive process for power roughly two years ago. The price of wind energy came in at 6.9 cents a kilowatt hour, a bit more than Quebec, which is six cents. There was no obstacle at that point posed to that approach, no obstacle from this act.

It is very unfortunate, Speaker. This is a government that has decided to go back not to the early 20th century and the idea of public ownership, but back to the 1990s, back 20 or 30 years ago to a privatized model relying on technologies that, in the end, won't give us the low-cost, affordable, sustainable power that we require. I urge everyone in this House to reject this bill, to vote against it, and I urge the people of Ontario to let their MPPs know that this bill is a mistake.

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

Third 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

EDUCATION FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have three late shows this evening.

The member for Davenport has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Education. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or her parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I turn now to the member for Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to start by thanking the parliamentary assistant to the minister, I think it's going to be, for being here tonight. But respectfully, I am not satisfied with the government's response, and neither are parents and educators across the province who have seen nothing but turmoil in the education system since this government was sworn in.

1800

On October 31, in question period, I asked the minister a very simple question: How can she reconcile her government's stated goal of improving math outcomes for students with the cuts they have made to the very supports meant to strengthen math skills for teachers? With Bill 48, the government is bringing in a new math test for teacher candidates in the hopes that it will, I guess, improve math outcomes for students. That is despite the fact that they have presented little to no evidence of its effectiveness as a tool and no details about how this will roll out or who will have input.

On top of that, they're completely abandoning teachers already in the system who are looking to upgrade their skills, which was my question on October 31. It just doesn't add up, Speaker. Instead of providing a solid answer to my question, the minister simply said that someone at a dinner party told her that they appreciated her ministry's memo on the importance of math. Well, news flash: Yes, Minister, we all want our kids to do well in math.

But I'll tell what you what parents are telling me about and contacting me about, and that's the fact that the Parents Reaching Out Grants for this year won't be coming—another victim of this government's pause on various parts of the education system. Those grants helped parents get more involved in their children's education through workshops and events on a number of subjects. Many of them involved math skills. I, myself, attended several of them. Speaker, just as we know that anxiety about math can be a barrier for kids in their studies, we also know that it can be a barrier for parents in helping their children with homework or encouraging them to stick with a complicated homework assignment. So imagine the frustration of a group of parent volunteers who have spent

hours preparing a grant application to host a workshop to help parents help their children with math, only to simply have the application languishing on a desk somewhere in the ministry—they didn't even get a notice to tell them this wasn't going to proceed—because this government has ordered a halt in the funding. If this government truly thought that improving student outcomes in math was important, they would not be cutting funding to the very programs designed to help parents and teachers support kids in their learning.

The point is, when we talk about improving math skills in our education system, we need to take a holistic approach and to look at all the factors that help students learn. Frankly, we need to go beyond just the one measure, which is the EQAO, to understand where we are succeeding. That includes supports for parents. It includes better resources for teachers, including access to continuing education—a subsidy program that this government has now cut, a subsidy program that was intended to allow teachers to sharpen their skills.

Meanwhile, the government is also not paying any attention to the physical state of our schools. As I've said, if your school is literally crumbling around you, you are going to have a hard time concentrating in class—or teaching a class, for that matter.

Speaker, all that we're getting from this government is about cuts and contradictions, when parents, students and educators deserve so much better. As Ontarians take part in this government's online survey in good faith, it's becoming increasingly clear that they have already got an outcome in mind, and that's really a shame. It seems that every week we're hearing about new cuts to education. We're not hearing it from the minister, who just gave her very first press conference since assuming the role only a few weeks ago. We're hearing it from parents and educators when they're quietly told—or not told and they just find out—that the funding they were counting on isn't going to be there for them. It's disrespectful to parents, it's disrespectful to teachers, and it's putting the success of Ontario students at risk.

In light of this, I have a message for the government: You cannot cut your way to a stronger public education system. You can't cut your way to better math scores. And dragging out a generalized online survey for months while you're busy cutting the programs in the meantime is not going to fly with the people of this province.

Speaker, there is a better way. Instead of just directing people to some sort of catch-all online forum, they could actually listen to the recommendations of parents, educators, students and experts in the field of education and make our public education system stronger. I know that all of the members here care about the success of Ontario's students, but it's time to drop this policy-by-press-release strategy and come to the table with us. Let's work together with ideas to make Ontario's world-class education system even better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We turn now to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, the member for Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I would like to thank the member from Davenport for this opportunity to speak about our government's commitment to addressing the Liberal legacy of abysmal math scores, and I'm pleased to provide this further response to her question.

I want to, first off, say that our government is taking action because we care about students and we care about our students' futures. That's why we have been working to improve math education in our province. We want our students to find rewarding jobs. We want them to be successful in life: at home, at school and at work. Math and financial literacy play a key role in that.

We all know that the math scores of public elementary students in Ontario have been steadily decreasing. Last April, the headline from a Globe and Mail editorial read: "Grade 8 Math Scores Improve Across Canada over Six-Year Period, Except in Ontario..."

This is the story of the education system under the previous Liberal government. The EQAO data released in August showed that just 49% of grade 6 students met the provincial math standard in the last school year, down from 54% in 2013 and 2015. Among grade 3 students, only 61% met the provincial standard in 2017-18, down from 67% in 2013 and 2014. So this is a 5% and 6% decrease in just a few years.

We can do better than that. Parents expect better than that, and students deserve better than that. That is why, in August, we announced that we are refocusing \$55 million in existing math investments to school boards to support math facilitators as well as providing release time for our teachers to participate in training and learning focused on the fundamentals of math.

Let me repeat that to ensure all members hear that: In August, we announced we are refocusing \$55 million in existing math investments to school boards to support math facilitators.

Applause.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Absolutely worthy of applause.

That's also why our government has made changes to scrap the failed ideological experiments of the Liberals of discovery math and to bring back methods of teaching math that actually work. That is why we released a teachers' guide and parent fact sheet that will help both teachers and parents focus math learning on math fundamentals. It's why we've introduced this math test to ensure our teachers are comfortable and proficient with teaching math when they receive their licence.

Universities such as Lakehead had already seen the benefit of requiring a math test for teacher candidates and implemented it for their teacher candidates. Their goal is to ensure that all eligible candidates understand basic mathematical concepts at their desired teaching level.

The Ontario College of Teachers—and I think this is very important to note, for the member opposite—the body that is designated with licensing, governing and regulating the profession, has come out publicly in support of this math test. They see the logic of what we are doing. We are working to support our students and our teachers. But Speaker, something the NDP doesn't understand is

that we must do this in a responsible and sustainable way; otherwise, we're truly not supporting our students or our teachers. That's why we're taking the necessary time to do a line-by-line review of all ministry expenses. It takes time, but we know that our students are worth this investment.

Speaker, when we make decisions regarding expenses, we will be sure to notify the organizations that are impacted because we want the people of Ontario to know what we're doing for them. We campaigned and believe in responsibility, and we campaigned and believe in transparency. That is why the people of Ontario elected us.

We're working to improve our education system, Speaker. It's why we're asking for the people of Ontario to share their views with us. We are now in the process of conducting the largest and most comprehensive education consultation in Ontario's history, and we encourage everyone to participate. After the consultation process, we will carefully examine what supports are needed to revise and implement an updated curriculum.

The NDP are trying to change the channel on what is a historic moment for Ontario's education system, so let's set the record straight. We are committed to ensuring that Ontario's students are once again leaders in math education, and I invite the opposition and member opposite to join us in this worthy endeavour. There's no reason why this can't be a bipartisan effort.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Bring back the modern sex ed curriculum, Sam.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Through you, Speaker, to the member from Davenport: Join us in ensuring that we have a curriculum that prepares our kids for the challenges of the modern economy. Show Ontario that you care about the future of the province's education. No matter where anyone might live in this great province, they all deserve the right to share their views.

I thank the member—

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

1810

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Ottawa South, Mr. Fraser, has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer given by the Premier. The member will have five minutes to debate the issue, and the Premier or his parliamentary assistant can respond for up to five minutes.

We turn now to the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Speaker. You are correct: I was dissatisfied with the answer that I received on the government's plan for climate change, essentially because there is no plan for climate change.

What I asked the Premier is, how could you dismantle a plan for climate change and put nothing in its place? Even China, which yesterday adopted cap-and-trade—China. They're a big country, far away from here, the biggest economy in the world. They changed because they realized that it was central to their future prosperity and the health of their people.

The irony in this whole thing, and I tried to point this out in the question, was that the Minister of the Environment, who responded on behalf of the Premier, had signed on to a plan for climate change. He'd signed on, as did the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Agriculture, who I can see right there, the whip—I can list about every member on the Conservative side who signed on to that plan for climate change, one that's eerily similar to the one the federal government has right now.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: No, no, no.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes. It's almost a carbon copy.

So why is that? Why is it that you had a plan for climate change, you dismantled another one, and you have put nothing in its place?

Then the minister has the audacity to say, "We're consulting. We're going to consult on climate change." Speaker, climate change is here. They may not have noticed on the other side, while the Premier and his cohorts across the province were posing for the vanity picture in Maclean's, that climate change is here. It's here in Ontario. It's here in this world. You can tell by the adverse weather effects. I know that almost every member in this Legislature has had their community affected by floods, storms. We know that.

The whole idea that you're going to consult on a plan for climate change and that you actually dismantled one and put nothing in its place is perhaps—you guys have done a lot of things. You've stopped the basic income program, you've cut social assistance rates, you decreased the ability for people to try to get a job while they're on social assistance, and you've ended sex education in this province, essentially, that has been taught for three years. There are all sorts of things that you've done in haste and really, really without any thought. But this one takes the cake, because this one is the most irresponsible thing you've done since being here in this Legislature. Not only are the people of Ontario right now depending on us for a plan for climate change, but our kids and our grandkids and their kids, because climate change is upon us right now. It's upon us right now—

Mr. Jim McDonell: What about the debt you gave them?

Mr. John Fraser: The member opposite signed on too to the People's Guarantee, and I'd like to remind him of that. I don't know what happened on the road to Damascus—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Government members, come to order please. Government members.

Mr. John Fraser: —but a whole bunch of people got hit by something, something big, because what you're doing by not having a plan, by not addressing climate change, is the most—

Interjection: The man with no plan.

Mr. John Fraser: You guys are the men with no plan, all five of them on the front page of Maclean's magazine. That was a nice vanity photo.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Government members, order, please.

Mr. John Fraser: But do you want to know what, folks? It is the single most irresponsible thing that you've done, so you'd better come up with a plan for climate change, because people are depending on it. I can see you smiling over there, but it's a serious thing. It's a very, very serious thing. To actually not have a plan in the 21st century, when China has a plan, when Third World countries have a plan—for Ontario not to have a plan, probably the largest jurisdiction in the world, at least in North America, is irresponsible and not respecting those people who we serve and who are going to come after us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The Premier's parliamentary assistant, the member for King—Vaughan.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Ottawa South for his passionate response.

I will just say off the top that I find it interesting that the member from Ottawa South, the interim leader, cites China. I know that the Prime Minister of this country has a great "level of admiration" for China. It is curious that the Liberal Party would cite a country that, over the next decade, has a commitment to build 700 net new coal plants in China and around the world. Mr. Speaker, you should not be surprised because after all it is this member and his party who invested in US coal just two years ago. He's very well versed in investing in dirty production of coal.

Interjection.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Oh, it was over a billion dollars, if I'm not mistaken, for the member for Ottawa South.

But let's get back to the facts. We do have a plan. We have a strong record as Progressive Conservatives. I am a conservationist. I believe in the conservation of our water, of our land and of our air. We have a great record. This goes back to 2001, when a former Progressive Conservative government announced and implemented the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, which, I will add, over 90% of the township of King in the great riding of King—Vaughan is protected by. We plan to maintain that protection. That is protecting the moraine, which is the watershed for the GTA, for decades and for generations.

It is our party that created the Toronto Transit Commission, which helped build the vast majority of our subway system, removing millions of commuters from the roads. It was our federal Conservative government that introduced the acid rain treaty in the late 1980s. It was our government, in the 2000s, that phased out coal-fired generation of electricity from this country; that came into force on July 1, 2015. The first coal-fired generating plant to be closed in this province was initiated by a Progressive Conservative Party—with other closures, I will add, supported by other parties.

This has led to the biggest single reduction of greenhouse gas emissions not just in Ontario but in this country. The numbers speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker. Since 2000, Canada's total emissions have declined by 1.5%. In Ontario, we've made a 20% reduction. Now, this is not to say that we're done; it's to suggest that we are doing our part. We are leading by example. There is more to do. We

accept the premise by the member that we have to do more, and we have a plan that is coming henceforth.

Since 2005, Canada's emissions increased by three points; Ontario's reduced by 22 points. This is why Ontario is on track to meet our share of the Paris 2020 targets. The combination of nuclear, hydro and other renewables has given Ontario one of North America's cleanest energy grids, full stop. Ontario has made progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and on other environmental initiatives, but that has come at a cost. These decisions have forced—especially decisions by the former government, by the member himself—millions of Canadians and Ontarians to have to choose between heating and eating because the price of energy was so prohibitive. The people of Ontario were stretched thin—many to a breaking point.

In giving us a mandate to govern, the people told us they could not afford Kathleen Wynne's costly, ineffective cap-and-trade system. The people were clear and the people were right: They no longer could afford this tax. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to report that one of the first initiatives our party has done was to axe the carbon tax. We made good on our promise to pass the Cap and Trade Cancellation Act. This is putting \$264 per year back in the savings of Ontarians. It is the right thing to do, but it's also the first step in helping to see a 10-cent reduction at the pumps. Residents are seeing \$80 in savings on their home heating bills—\$285 for small businesses. While members opposite have ridiculed that amount, we believe that, part and parcel of our broader tax relief and economic reforms, this is moving the yardstick forward for affordability, finally, after 15 years of darkness by the former government.

As I previously mentioned, we believe climate change is real. I believe that and we believe that, Mr. Speaker. We do not believe that a carbon tax is the solution. It is not an environmental plan; it's a tax on working people, on commuters, on moms and dads and people. In every single one of our ridings, it is an indictment on those who have to drive to get to work or to bring their kids to school. We say, as Conservatives, that we will stand up every day so that people can heat their homes and not have the indignity in the winter of having their home heating closed on them—like the former government proudly did—cancelled on them because they couldn't pay their bills because of skyrocketing energy prices.

The Prime Minister of this country, one who is no doubt supported by the China-loving interim leader of the Liberal Party, is imposing a punishing, job-killing, punitive carbon tax on the people of this province. We are saying resolutely, categorically and without any apology that we're going to stand up for taxpayers every step of the way.

1820

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for London–Fanshawe has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question by the Minister

of Health and Long-Term Care. The member from London–Fanshawe will have five minutes to debate, and then we'll give the chance to respond to the minister or her parliamentary assistant.

I turn now to the member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This is a great opportunity, the late show, to highlight the really important facts when it comes to question period and to explain to the public why we need these late shows. I haven't had a late show in a very long time, but this is the new normal when it comes to this government. We all want answers from them. We don't want to hear their applause and them patting themselves on the back, and how great they are and all the great things they're doing for themselves—because they are a government for themselves.

That's why, on Monday, I asked the Minister of Health a question. I wanted to know if the minister could explain to the House what a virtual long-term-care bed is. A virtual long-term-care bed: How is this something that we are thinking is going to help long-term care, is going to help seniors who are on wait-lists to access a bed in that facility?

There are over 32,000 people—more than 32,000 people—waiting for a long-term-care bed. And where are they, Speaker? A lot of them are at home, in precarious situations, with not enough hours of care to meet their needs. Day by day, week by week, month by month, their health is diminishing because they're not getting the home care they need. They may be on a long-term-care wait-list, but because we've got 32,000 people waiting, it's going to be a long time. So what happens is that their health deteriorates and they get into crisis. And where do they go? They go into the hospital, and they're in a bed in the hospital. The hospital is kind of in a tough situation. It can't release them to home because there's not enough home care to keep them there. Their physical needs have gotten so acute that they need a long-term-care bed. But they can't get it, so they're in a hospital and they're in what they call an ALC bed.

Interestingly enough, Speaker, recently there was an exclusive article in the CBC, and now they're referring to seniors, vulnerable seniors who, through no fault of their own, can't access a long-term-care bed and are in a hospital bed, waiting, languishing, waiting to get the care they need in the appropriate setting that they need—how are people now referring to seniors in long-term-care beds? The colloquial term is “bed blockers.” That is disturbing. I talked about this yesterday.

How can it be someone's fault, because the system let them down, and home care isn't adequate—and that was under the Harris government, by the way. They actually capped the hours of care in home care. That's this government's fault. And now you have seniors, when we all know they're coming—there's a wave of seniors coming, and nothing is being done. And then the answer to the question is that this government says we need to have virtual beds. Well, that isn't the answer, Speaker. The answer is, you need to look at long-term care, and you need to look at it in a systemic way.

We have proposed what that means. It's opening up the public inquiry, which is now going to be coming up with their recommendations, in a phase 2. Those systemic issues are really important, because when you want to solve the problem, when you want to change the system, when you want to focus on patients and people and families, you need to look at the whole problem.

I'm very proud that we brought this forward, as the NDP, and I was the critic at the time that led that. We want to look at safety of residents and staff; quality of care; funding levels; staffing levels and practices; regulation, enforcement and inspections; capacity, availability and accessibility in every region; the impact of for-profit privatization on care; and government action and inaction on past recommendations. That is what we need to do to actually solve the system's problems, because it's going to address staffing; it's going to address funding; it's going to address quality of care.

We also need to ensure there's capacity. We know that this government talked about building 6,000 beds in 15 years. I have written questions on the order paper, asking where the beds are going to go in those cities and how many in London. Has the government taken the time to do the homework to find out where the needs are? If they were to analyze this in a way to actually solve the problem, they could answer those questions during question period.

So I look forward to the parliamentary assistant answering that today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The parliamentary assistant, the member for Oakville North-Burlington, now has five minutes to respond.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak again on the great steps our government is taking to build more long-term-care beds in Ontario.

We have committed to 15,000 long-term-care beds over the course of the next five years. And I'm very proud that within 100 days of our government taking office we have already launched the first 6,075 beds.

When we announced the beds, we also announced that we are providing an investment of \$90 million of new money to secure more than 1,100 beds and spaces to ease hospital gridlock across Ontario as communities prepare for the upcoming flu season.

Our long-term-care plan is a commitment that our party made in the last election.

As I pointed out in my remarks to the NDP motion yesterday, we told the then Liberal government that they needed to build these beds well before the election, but they did nothing.

As the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care said in her answer to the member's question, there are many creative ideas to finding these beds and making up the numbers. Some people may be able to move into a retirement home with the appropriate home care supports, but then eventually be able to go back into their own home.

Most people want to stay in their own home if they can, so we have to build a system flexible enough to allow this.

The minister said very rightly that people would rather go home if they can with home care supports, and our ministry is looking into all possible alternatives to achieve this.

Our government wants to make sure that the care is appropriate and meets the needs of each individual and each family. It has to be safe for them, and it has to be comfortable and allow them to maintain their dignity, but it must also be properly planned as part of a holistic system.

What a holistic system means is that we must build better programs in mental health care, home care and prevention that keep people out of acute care and, if we can, out of long-term care until they really need it.

Stakeholders across the province tell me again and again that we've spent too many years failing to invest in care that meets the real needs for the people. We will not follow the NDP approach they suggested in their opposition day yesterday of arbitrarily promising long-term-care funding to individual communities, many of which haven't even applied for funding yet. We will plan before we build, and the action we have taken is based on real and demonstrated community needs.

Here are just some of the new beds we have already announced we will build. These are just new beds alone:

—320 beds for a site in Mississauga and 320 beds for one in Stouffville;

—256 for the Davenport riding in Toronto;

—224 for a site in Scarborough;

—192 for sites in Hamilton, Milton, Richmond Hill and the Parkdale-High Park riding; and

—more than 100 beds each for sites in Ottawa, Peterborough county, Bowmanville and Kleinburg.

When we look at new and redeveloped beds, we get 320 beds in Kingston, 261 in St. Catharines, 224 in Burlington and 192 in Sudbury.

These are just a few real examples of announcements extending to every part of our province. This is a government taking real action.

Applause.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you.

Real long-term-care beds that will benefit real people. And all of this is only a start to meeting our commitment towards 15,000 long-term-care beds over the course of the next five years. The NDP can make arbitrary demands for beds, as they did in their motion yesterday, but our PC government is taking real action.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Colleagues, I have some rather sad news: We're out of time for further parliamentary business this evening.

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 1830.

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Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
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Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
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Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	

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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, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce 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 Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
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, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
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

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Stephen Crawford
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Doug Downey
Sol Mamakwa, David Piccini
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Lorne Coe
Chris Glover, Christine Hogarth
Logan Kanapathi, Daryl Kramp
Natalia Kusendova, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Dave Smith
Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
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Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
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Michael Coteau, Mike Harris
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Catherine Fife, Goldie Ghamari
Jim McDonnell, Norman Miller
Suze Morrison, Michael Parsa
Peggy Sattler, Kinga Surma
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