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9 avril 2019

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 April 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 avril 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Steve Clark: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 87, An Act to amend various statutes related to energy, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government; and

That the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet on Monday, April 15, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Wednesday, April 17, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., for public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 87:

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 12 noon on Thursday, April 11, 2019; and

—That the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee and their designate following the deadline for requests to appear by 2 p.m. on Thursday, April 11, 2019; and

—That each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk, by 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 11, 2019; and

—That each witness will receive up to six minutes for their presentation followed by 14 minutes divided equally amongst the recognized parties for questioning; and

That the deadline for filing written submissions be 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 17, 2019; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 6 p.m. on Tuesday, April 23, 2019; and

That the Standing Committee on General Government shall be authorized to meet on Monday, April 29, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Wednesday, May 1, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m., for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That on Wednesday, May 1, 2019, at 5:30 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Thursday, May 2, 2019. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

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

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

That, notwithstanding standing order 71(d), the bill may be considered in any standing or select committee while any matter, including a procedural motion, relating to the same policy field is being considered in the House; and

That, in the event of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 20 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mr. Clark, has moved motion 35, time allocation of Bill 87. Would the minister like to lead off debate?

Hon. Steve Clark: Yes, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: We want to move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I recognize the member from Carleton.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It's always humbling to rise in the Ontario Legislature to speak on behalf of the people of Carleton. I still can't believe that nine months have passed since June 7, the day that the people of Ontario put their faith and their trust in Premier Ford and his all-star team.

It really seems like it was only yesterday that I first had the privilege of speaking in this House on behalf of the people of Carleton. I guess they say time flies when you're having fun, and, I can say, that after 15 years of waste, mismanagement and scandal after scandal after scandal that cost Ontario's taxpayers billions and billions of

dollars, diving head-first under the Premier's leadership to fix the mess has been a lot of hard work, but it has also been really fun. The feedback that I have received from the people of Carleton after our government for the people has tackled and solved yet another problem left by the previous government not only motivates me and energizes me to work harder, but it also makes the job fun. So, yes, time does seem to fly by, especially since I'm enjoying every moment of it.

That brings me to Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, 2019, and why it's so critical to have this time allocation motion. We need to fix this mess, and we need to fix it fast. After 15 years of Liberal waste, scandal and mismanagement, Ontarians just don't have the luxury of waiting any longer. I'd like to take an opportunity to thank the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines for introducing this important piece of legislation.

Even before our government for the people was elected, the Progressive Conservative caucus that was in the opposition was focused on the hydro file, and all throughout the election our party was very vocal on the need to clean up the hydro mess created by the previous Liberal government. In fact, it was one of our five core commitments. It is critical that we fix this mess quickly, and that is why it's so important to have time allocation on Bill 87.

Part of the reason that we were so focused on the hydro file—and my colleagues who served then, and the candidates who fought so hard in the lead-up to the last election will know—and the reason we fought so hard is that we saw the damage that was being done to the residents of Ontario. Since we got elected, we have been methodically taking a step-by-step approach to bring back our hydro system, to put back into place a system that our small, medium and large job creators can rely upon and, most importantly, to bring back a system that the taxpayers of Ontario can rely upon.

For decades, one of the things that separated Ontario from other jurisdictions we competed with was the fact that we had a strong, stable, reliable and affordable energy sector. It's what drove our manufacturers to the province, it's what gave us confidence in those long winter months, and it's what allowed our great province to thrive and grow. That was an advantage that we lost, Mr. Speaker, not because we had a bad energy sector but exclusively because of bad government policy. Ontarians have been waiting far too long for us to get that advantage back, and that is why we need time allocation on this legislation.

0910

For 42 years, Ontario had a strong, stable, progressive government in this province that built a magnificent infrastructure built on a hydro sector that helped us become the engine of Canada's economy. I know you've heard this time and time again, Mr. Speaker, but that is because it's true. A strong Ontario means a strong Canada. When Ontario is booming, so is the rest of the country. That is what we lost because of bad policy decisions. Over the years, it has been policies that have been built up and introduced by the Progressive Conservatives, backed by a strong energy sector, that have helped us build and pay for this

massive infrastructure and the economy. Where we have gone wrong in this province over the last 15 years of the Liberal-NDP coalition government is that we lurched from one ideological disaster to the next, looking for a solution in terms of energy policy.

We all fought for the opportunity to get elected, and we fought because we knew what was at stake. We knew that when we got elected, we were going to have to do something about the hydro mess. We also realized that we could do one of two things: We could follow the failed approach of the previous government; or we could take a step back, re-evaluate and do it properly. We would consult. We would work with communities. We would work with industry. We would work with the sector that helped build a strong Ontario. And step by step, we would unravel, and we will unravel, the bad policies that were put in place and make those policy decisions that did work, work even better. And we will reduce the cost to our taxpayers, to our ratepayers, and we will really sit down with our small, medium and large job creators to find out how we could do things better.

We needed to act, Mr. Speaker, and we needed to act fast. That is exactly what we are doing with this bill, and that is exactly why time allocation on Bill 87 is so important. It follows on the important work that we have already done on the green energy file and on the Green Energy Act. It follows, of course, on the work that the Premier, the cabinet and the government caucus has worked on with respect to eliminating contracts for power that we simply did not need.

As I said, Bill 87 is the next step. This bill focuses on three main areas: It focuses on energy conservation; it focuses on modernizing the Ontario Energy Board; and it talks about changes to the rate structure and how we finance some of the bad policies that were brought in by the previous Liberal government.

One of the first things that you will see in the bill, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's critical to how we move forward, is how we deal with energy conservation. Of course, there is a role for conservation in the energy sector, and it is important. It is something that consumers, businesses and all of us focus on daily. Unfortunately, a big part of the reason why many of us have been focusing on it so intensely is because of the horrifyingly high cost of electricity that was brought on by the previous government, which forced Ontarians into looking at different alternatives.

There are some programs that work; however, there are a great many more that simply do not. That is what the government is looking at. We looked at how the financing was handled. Under this bill, we're eliminating those energy conservation programs that just don't make sense, that cost too much, that cost ratepayers more than the benefit that we get back. That is why time allocation is so important: because we cannot afford, Ontarians cannot afford to have any more of their taxpayer dollars wasted on these devastating and totally—

Mr. Michael Mantha: Can't say the words, eh?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I haven't had my coffee yet. We were all out of coffee.

Mr. Mike Harris: Useless; useless programs.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Useless; useless programs, essentially. That's what it was.

As always, we are working closely with out small, medium and large job creators, because we understand that there is work to be done. Despite the fact that we have had tremendous job success in creating jobs since this government took office—built in no small part by the hard work of the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade—removing red tape is extraordinarily important. But there's still a lot of work to be done, Mr. Speaker, particularly when it comes to the high cost of energy. This is something that all of us, on both sides of the House, continue to hear about and it's something that we all focus on, so we're working closely with that sector as well.

Mr. Speaker, here's a quote from the Auditor General's report in 2017. The Auditor General of Ontario herself said that “it was known that the planned financing structure” undertaken by the former Liberal government “could result in significant unnecessary costs for Ontarians.” She went on to say: “The substance of the issue is straightforward. Ratepayers' hydro bills will be lower than the cost of the electricity used as a result of the electricity rate reduction. However, power generators will still be owed the full cost of electricity they supply, so the government needs to borrow cash to cover the shortfall to pay them.”

The Auditor General is an independent legislative officer. She is non-partisan. So for her to say this, Mr. Speaker, it means a lot. The Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer were very clear that the program that the previous Liberal government had put in place was not in the best interests of Ontario taxpayers. Forget the fact, just for a moment, that their policies led to horrifying job losses in the manufacturing sector, that their policies led to shaken business confidence, that all small, medium and large job creators were in fear of making investments in the province. Mr. Speaker, if you set all of that aside, when people ask you what it is that shakes them most about government, it's how the previous Liberal government set up a mechanism—a scheme—to hide the damage that they had done to the hydro system. That is why I support this motion for time allocation, because we need to move fast. We need to fix the mess and we cannot afford—and in fact, Ontarians cannot afford—to waste another penny on these disastrous policies.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm not pleased to participate, yet again, in another time allocation debate that this government has brought forward. You know, if you listened to the Conservatives when they were on the opposition benches, Mr. Speaker, you would have thought that they, like us as New Democrats, thought the use of time allocation was an excessive tool that took away the right of individuals—not just of members of the House, but the right of individuals—in this province to be part of our legislative process.

I remember the speeches, Mr. Speaker; I think you might remember a few yourself, as you were here as well.

We had the members of the opposition then—the members from Lanark and Renfrew, the member who is now the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the current finance minister, and others—who would get up in this House and speak eloquently against the Liberal government's use of time allocation, and they used some very, very good arguments. The Conservatives of the day, in opposition, like the current Minister of Community and Social Services, would talk about how it's an excessive use of force, blocking the right of individuals from being able to have a say about what it is that their government is doing or not doing in a piece of legislation.

There are two parts to time allocation. There's one part that—yes, it's true—limits the ability for members to participate and debate in the House. That's bad enough, because the Legislature is supposed to be about that. But equally and probably worse, Mr. Speaker, it takes away the ability of the public to have their say, because we have a committee structure in Ontario that's been developed through the British parliamentary system that has served Ontario and other Parliaments around the world well, that allows the public to come before committees, travel those committees and have people speak to issues such as the bill that is the subject of this time allocation motion.

It was not that long ago, when I first got to this Legislature, that there was no time allocation. There was no limit on speeches in the House. Governments did send their bills out in order to be heard across the province. And you know what happened, Mr. Speaker? People came and the public participated, and they would say to the government of the day—whoever it was, because all three parties have served in that system, New Democrats, Liberals and Conservatives, without time allocation. They would come before our committees in places like Kenora, places like Cornwall, places like Hamilton—you name it—across the province. They would come to us and say, “We like this bill for the following reasons, but we think you need to amend it there.” Or some people would come and say, “No, I don't like this bill. This is why I'm opposed to the bill in its entirety.” Then governments used to take those amendments that were brought—the committee members would hear what the people would had to say and they would draft amendments to the bill. And, Mr. Speaker, I know it's hard to believe, but governments used to accept amendments in committee.

0920

Mr. Michael Mantha: Shocking.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know. Mr. Speaker, can you believe it? They actually took the amendments and amended their own bills, even if it didn't come from the government side. I know that I'm not dreaming; I lived that experience. But you know what? It worked, because a government doesn't have a monopoly on all the good ideas. And the public is paying attention. I don't know if the Conservatives have figured that out, but they're the ones who are paying the bill, the citizens of this province, who work hard every day, who go to work, who pay their taxes, and we're spending the money here. So the public has to have a right to take a look at the product that's coming out of the place they're paying for called the Ontario Legislature.

This government while in opposition understood that. The Conservatives of the day would speak to those issues. They would hearken back to the days—because other members in the Conservative caucus then, like me, were members prior to time allocation: our current Speaker, for one; Mr. Wilson, the member for—I can't use his name, but I don't know his riding—the former Minister of International Trade. They were there at the time and understood that time allocation didn't exist. There was no limit on how long you could speak in the House, and what that did is forced the parties to work together, because a government was not able to just get their way by passing a time allocation motion: “Oh, my God. We have to pass that bill today. The world is going to come to an end,” says the government. The reality is, the legislative process is meant to be a bit of a slower process so that we can have sober second thought to whatever bill is before us, so that the public can have their say and that we can do amendments.

For example, in this bill, the government purports to try to fix the hydro mess. Do New Democrats agree with Conservatives that the Liberals created a hydro mess? Absolutely. My God, the Liberals in office when it came to hydro were just horrible on this file. Our hydro bills went up over 200% as a result of what the Liberals did and what the Conservatives did prior to that under Mike Harris. But most of the blame does go to the Liberals, I will agree, because they not only privatized over half of Hydro One, but they also privatized a large part of our generating stock, which really drove up the hydro. I heard some of the government members across the way talk to that, saying that it made no sense that they were signing long-term energy deals at way above the price that it cost us to generate electricity under OPG.

For example, back then when they signed those deals, the average cost of electricity generated by OPG was somewhere around eight cents, 8.5 cents per kilowatt hour. They were signing deals as high as 80 cents. What was worse, they would sign the deal and say, “Not only am I going to pay you 80 cents” or 20 cents or whatever the deal was, “but I'm going to pay you for all of your production, even if I don't need it.” Meanwhile, Ontario, which generates 25,000 megs, would have a demand of, let's say, 17,000—it was on Sunday; I looked at my app on my phone. The demand for electricity on Sunday: 13,000 megs. The Liberals went and built about 15,000 megs of power on private power contracts, for the most part, and were having to pay to get that power, which was far more expensive than what it cost us to generate. So we idled our own generating stock. Dams in my ridings and dams in your riding, and probably up in yours as well, that are owned by OPG and that generate electricity, more times than not, were spinning their motors backwards, from generators to motors, in order to balance the load on the distribution system. It's ludicrous. What the Liberals did to electricity is ludicrous.

The government purports in this bill that they're going to fix it. Well, they're not. They're not undoing any of what the government previously put in place. The only thing that this bill does, for the larger part, is deal with the financing aspect to the reduction of electricity prices that

the government dealt with prior to the last election. You remember, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals said, “Oh, well, we hear you now. The electricity prices are high. We've got to do something about it.” So they promised they would drop the price of electricity by 25% of the total cost.

What they did is that they went to OPG and they off-booked the cost of that and borrowed on the OPG credit card to give us all a 25% reduction in electricity. We all got the 25% reduction in electricity. I saw it on my hydro bill. If you're a mining company, you saw it on your hydro bill. But who was paying for it? It was us who was paying for it. It's like saying, “I'm going to take my Visa to pay my Mastercard, and, when that doesn't work, I guess I'm going to sell my house.” That's what these guys are doing. What they tried to do is off-book the cost.

This bill that is now being time allocated: All it does is—which is not a bad thing; I'm not going to argue against what the government did—they moved it from off-book to put it on the books. They're saying, “That should rightfully belong as an expense of the Ontario government, and it should be reported in our numbers as the budget numbers.” I agree with that. I think that was the right thing to do, for a number of reasons. The obvious one is transparency. You have to have transparency when it comes to the money that we spend here in the Legislature. The other part of it is, it's cheaper for us to borrow money than it is for OPG, so you save money because we have a much better ability to borrow large sums of money for less interest.

So we will save some money as a result of the financing cost of the Liberal hydro scheme, but now what we have is a Tory hydro scheme. The only thing that you've done is, you've changed the words “Liberal hydro plan” to “Conservative hydro plan,” and you adopted it as your own.

You do not have an energy policy that's substantially different than what the Liberals have done. Are you doing anything to go after those high-paid contracts that we signed with the private sector on the OPG side? Not one. No. You have not done anything to deal with that. Have you dealt with time-of-use pricing, something that New Democrats said needs to be done? In fact, I think it's the member from Kingston and the Islands who has a bill before the House that essentially asks to deal with time-of-use pricing. There's no change in time-of-use pricing. Are you doing anything in order to reverse the privatization of Hydro One? None of that.

We didn't argue, as New Democrats, that we were going to do it in one fell swoop. But you can certainly go from 51% ownership by the private sector down to 49%, for not a heck of a lot of money, to get control and to start doing the things at Hydro One that we need to do to reduce hydro prices.

The whole issue of distribution, the price of hydro: I think it was the member from Algoma-Manitoulin who was giving a story the other day about a constituent of his—who could have been my constituent because it's the same story—you get a hydro bill for \$140; \$40 is hydro and \$100 is transportation. It's just like: We need to deal with rural transportation rates. Why is it that somebody living in rural or northern Ontario has to pay substantially

more for electricity than you do here in the city of Toronto? It's not fair. Right? We figured how to do that with natural gas; why can't we do it with electricity? When you pay for natural gas in Toronto or you pay for natural gas in Timmins, the cost is not hugely different. There's a bit of a difference, but it's not huge. In the case of electricity, transportation costs are real. They're huge. It makes a big difference in people's hydro bills. Does your bill deal with any of that? Absolutely not.

What your bill does do, though, I guess in a way, is that it takes away some of what the Liberals did under the Fair Hydro Plan, but I think not in the place that you should have done it. The member previous spoke at great lengths about how she was proud to do that, and that is to eliminate conservation programs. How ludicrous can we be? If you want to effectively deal with supply and demand when it comes to electricity, the most economical way to do it—in other words, the cheapest, for a big bang for your buck, and you help the environment—is to reduce the need for electricity. We had programs like GreenON that allowed people to go out and buy windows and change their leaking windows so that they could save heat in their homes.

I live out on a lake, where there's wind off the lake in the winter. I have windows that I put in originally, when I put that in for my mom when she had the cottage. They were not meant to be year-round windows; they were meant to be summer-plus kind of windows. Right? If GreenON was on, I could have gone there and got windows installed a lot easier than I can now. Now I'm going to have to do it—it's much more expensive, so you're having to do it much slower.

0930

My point is, people were able to invest in their own homes and be assisted by way of these programs, reducing the need to buy electricity in order to heat your home, or buy natural gas—whatever your heating method was.

The government is proud of getting rid of conservation programs. To me, it's a pretty scary thing to listen to a government saying, "It's a really great thing that we got rid of a whole bunch of conservation programs." It makes no sense. We have a planet that is warming up. We have found out, by reports this weekend, that Canada's climate is rising at the fastest rate of any place in the world, and we're seeing it. We saw it this winter, we saw it last winter, what it means to our climate. This government is doing almost nothing to be able to try to combat climate change. Where we did have programs that had some effect, the government, with this bill, is taking them away.

So, yes, the public should have a right to come before a committee and speak to your bill. Imagine if you went to Kenora, imagine if you went to Ottawa, imagine if you went to Kingston and different places, and you actually listened to what the people had to say. The government might find out that their hymn book was wrong—their ideological hymn book that they read from, where it says, "I am a Conservative. I hate all things that are energy-efficient. I believe in the following principles. I believe only in privatization." They may find out that their book is wrong. They may find out that the fiction they've been

reading from the Doug Ford Conservative school might be something that could be amended.

Maybe the government is on to something when they say, "We want to fix the Liberal hydro plan." I think you would have lots of people running to committee saying, "Hallelujah, great idea." But they might actually give you some ideas in order to make this bill do what the title says it's going to do. This is not fixing the Liberal hydro plan. This is adopting the Liberal hydro plan. That's all you're doing in this bill. You're taking the Liberal hydro plan and you're calling it a Conservative hydro plan. You're bringing it onto the books, and you're eliminating conservation programs. That's all you're doing here.

I listened to the government members on the other side get up and talk about how great of a thing it is, and how they got here, and how it's nine months that they've been in government and they're working at breakneck speed and they're doing all—no. I bet if you went out and talked to the public, they may have a bit of a different view. But that's the point. The government doesn't want to hear the other view. The government is not interested in listening to the people.

I remind the Conservative members—they should know this—who pays the bills here. It's the people, the people that you say you're supposedly governing for. "We, the government of the people," they say.

Interjection: Exactly.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, no, not exactly. That's not what you're doing here.

If you were the government of the people, you would actually be going out to committee and communities, and hearing what people have to say about bills like this, about your Conservative hydro plan that you've adopted from the Liberals. You would have taken out the health privatization act that you've put in place, that's now in committee and dealing with amendments, as we speak, in the Legislature. You would actually let the public come and have their say, because the public may inform you there are better ways to do it.

That was the whole point of the British parliamentary system. If you look at the history of how Parliament was formed, it dates back to even before the Magna Carta. The British people, or back then, Britons or whatever you want to call them—actually, they were the English back then; they didn't consider themselves British—had a form of Parliament way back before the 1200s. People would come together and petition the King. Eventually, the barons and other nobles decided the King had too much power, so they decided they had to take some of the power away from the King—still have the King, but have some certain rights so that the King couldn't exercise too much authority over things that were in what eventually became the Magna Carta.

From that point on, Parliament, the people and the King—or Queen, depending on the time—worked out this system that we call the British Parliament, which gave commoners—that's why we call it the House of Commons—a voice in what the King was able to do. Eventually, what we did is that we became a responsible government where

now the King is a figurehead and is technically the head of government. The Queen is the head of our government. She is Her Royal Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who reigns over us. But we, as independent Legislatures and Houses of Commons in Westminster, decide what we're going to do as far as governing for the public. Well, that's the point. The whole process of how we develop the British parliamentary system put in it a mechanism to allow the people to participate, and I think that is brilliant.

The British parliamentary system, for all its faults, is probably one of the best systems of government that you can find when it comes to how Legislatures work because there's a balance, and one of those balances was the people. We gave the people the right to have access to the legislation and their MPPs—or MPs, federally. People are able to come before our committees and speak to us about legislation that we have in the House that eventually has to go to committee because one of the rights that we still have—and the government may take this away at some point—is the right to force a bill after second reading into committee.

I wouldn't be surprised if at one point the government just takes that away and says, "To heck with it. We're going to go from second to third, and we are going to skip over the formality of committee, and maybe use—"

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, they already thought about it. I'm not telling them anything they haven't thought about—and possibly just go to Committee of the Whole as a way of amending bills, if they need to do that after second reading, or write the bill by completely delegating the authority to cabinet so that cabinet can decide everything behind closed doors. I wouldn't be surprised that that's where this is going, because the temptation is there.

The fact that we have time allocation in our standing orders, and the fact that we limit debates in the House and take away the ability of members to be able to hold their own government, or the government, to account is a problem, because the person who gets caught in this seizing of power on the part of the executive—in this case, the Premier, because that's the executive, because cabinet is the executive. The people who get caught in that seizing of power are the people. So why wouldn't you want the public to come and speak to your Conservative hydro plan? Why wouldn't you want the public coming to speak about your health care plan? You might learn something. We may actually have better legislation.

I remember, for example, when Mike Harris was in power, he put together a bill which was in order to give snowmobile clubs the legislative authority to deal with building Ski-Doo trails across northern Ontario. That bill travelled for at least a couple of weeks, if not three weeks. I was on that particular committee. It was pretty non-partisan, because back then, things were a little bit less partisan than they are now. It was something that both sides of the House agreed to. We thought, "Hey, this is a good idea."

The bill went out in committee. We travelled around. People came before us, and they raised things that we

never would have thought of, Mr. Speaker. Because as we sit in the bubble of Queen's Park, bills are drafted by legislative counsel, who probably never drove a Ski-Doo, right? I don't mean that disparagingly, but if you live in Toronto, you probably haven't had much chance to drive a Ski-Doo or know what it is to cross a farmer's field, or cross a person's trap line, or go on somebody's ancestral burial ground. They wouldn't have a concept of those things. So when we went out and travelled the bill, people came before us, and they made suggestions. We ended up amending that bill fairly significantly as a result of what the public had to say. I know, because I moved some of those amendments myself, and the government accepted the amendments.

The point I make is this: That bill still stands today, 20 years later, or 18 years later, or whatever it is. It still stands in the original form, and we haven't had to amend it. We haven't had to do any regulatory change, because we got it right. We didn't delegate authority to the cabinet back then, the way that we do now. The bill determined in the language what was supposed to happen; it wasn't up to cabinet to decide that. As a result of that, we drafted a better bill. Isn't that the intent of what the government wants here? Doesn't the government want to have a well-drafted Conservative hydro plan that achieves the goals that they say they want to achieve in the bill and gives the public pause to say, "Hey, the government got this right?"

You're shortchanging two people by using time allocation. You're shortchanging the public, because this is the public's House, and the public has a right to a say. But you're also shortchanging yourself as a government, because you're not benefiting from the knowledge that is out there on the part of the public on how it is that you should amend your legislation. So you end up with much faultier legislation, and the losers in this are the public and yourselves. This is the part that's just beyond me, why a government wouldn't want to be able to get a bill out into the public.

0940

Now, if it was a bill, Mr. Speaker, that had such an urgency—you know, you have a disaster somewhere and you need legislation to deal with the disaster—then okay, then I can understand. If there's something like that happening, you need to be able to move quickly. All right, you may want to, by agreement of the House, and I guess by time allocation, get something done quickly. But every bill that the government has introduced in this House since they've been here has been time-allocated.

We've followed the same pattern: The bill gets time-allocated on a Tuesday, or even on a Wednesday. The last time, a bill was passed on a Thursday—the health bill, I think, was passed on a Thursday—and the committee hearings that you applied to come and sit at had to be done by Friday. You had barely 24 hours—less than 24 hours—to say you wanted to get standing before a committee. In that time, we ended up with 1,500 people who wanted to sit at committee, of which we could only accommodate 30. Doesn't that tell you something, that 1,500 people asked to go before that committee? When I raised that with the

government House leader, he said, "Oh, those are all your friends. Those are the people you said to apply." Boy, I wish I had that influence.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I didn't think you had any friends.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's exactly it, to my friend Bob Bailey. I wish I had two friends, let alone 1,500. Does any member here honestly think that any political party can motivate 1,500 people to come and present before a committee in less than 24 hours? I know the Tories tried it in the past.

We certainly want some people to come forward. I told people in my riding, "You should apply." The director of our hospital, people at the hospital, people in the family health teams and others—I told them all. I said, "You should apply for standing at the committee when this bill comes forward." But I'm telling you, those 1,500, for the large part—I would say 95% were people who were concerned, who had something to say about your bill.

And the government said, "Well, don't worry about it. Be happy." Remember that song? "Don't worry, be happy." Remember that? I wish I could sing. I wish I was like you, Mr. Speaker. I can't sing worth a darn. But the point was, they tell us to be happy: "Just send us a letter and we'll read your letter and everything will be fine." We had how many? Was it 20,000? About 20,000 submissions were sent to the committee. Those things are still coming in after the deadline, and nobody's had a chance to read them. So, we have all these citizens, the people who pay the bill—

Mr. Robert Bailey: You've got all summer to read them.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Summer reading? The bill will be passed by then. The government member says that will be our summer reading. It won't do us any good to read that in the summer; this bill is going to pass this week. The health bill will be done this week; it will pass third reading. That will be the end of it—next week, at the very latest. So the government is saying we can do summer reading and read those 20,000 submissions some time this summer. That won't do us any good; the bill has already passed.

What was the point of sending it to committee? Why in time allocation would you send a bill to committee for two days, have 1,500 people apply, 20,000 people send you submissions, and not give them the time to be heard? The American Revolution started on less than that, right? It was on opposing a tax. There was a tax imposed by England and eventually England withdrew the tax because it was so unpopular, and the Americans created their own nation.

Well, here we have a government that's going to make major changes in the electricity sector—I wouldn't argue major changes; excuse me. Here we've got a government that is adopting the Liberal hydro plan, right? That's all they're doing here. Let's be real. And you're not going to give the public a chance to have their say? Now I know why: They understand that the people would look at this and they would say, "Hang on. Doug, I thought you said you were going to do something to help my hydro bill. All you've done is adopted the Liberal hydro plan." Maybe that's why you don't want this bill travelling. Ah, I think I just got on to something here. They don't want this bill

travelling because they darn well know that they're going to get crucified.

It's the same thing with the health bill. They know there are people out there who are very opposed to where they're going with health care. We know this is all about privatization. The government minister says, "Don't worry, it's going to be paid by your health card." Yes, that's right. It's going to get paid by the health card. Mark my words, Mr. Speaker: There is going to be more privatization as a result of Bill 74, number one, and there will be user fees.

Remember that story that came out about the colonoscopies and not paying for the anaesthetic in order to get that? Don't be surprised when you see a situation where they say, "Well, if you'd like to have deep sedation, just pay. Not a problem." I think that's where they're going. It's going to be user fees and privatization.

Here's the thing, Mr. Speaker: It's going to cost us more money. We're not going to save any money through Bill 74, which was time-allocated—related to time allocation; it was a time-allocated bill. We're not going to save any money because health care delivered by the private sector costs more money.

I gave an example at the health coalition town hall on Saturday. One of my neighbours ended up in a Florida hospital for 12 days. He almost died. Luckily, he survived. When he was being discharged from the hospital, his wife was calling me. She called me every day because at one point, they thought he was dying. Luckily, he took a turn for the better, and he's still alive and doing well today. She got the bill: \$275,000 it had cost the insurance. Between the hospital charges and the doctors' bills, it was \$275,000 for those 12 days. I took that bill, I brought it to the Timmins and District Hospital and I said, "What would that cost in our system?" They said \$27,000. That's a big difference.

That's what's going to happen when you privatize. You're going to have to have a profit margin, because no company operates as a not-for-profit. No private company wants to make no money; they all want to make a return on investment. And the return on investment—ROI, as they say—they want at least double digits; otherwise it's not even worth investing into. You look at return on investment in most companies—a mining company, pharmaceutical, whatever it is—they want upwards of 20% return on investment to be able to get the money to get a project off the ground.

Well, do 20% on \$60 billion and see where that takes you. I'm going to argue it will be more than 20%. We spend today just under \$60 billion a year on health care. Mark my words: Once this bill, Bill 74, comes into effect and the government has had a chance to implement it all—and it's going to take a while. It's not going to be next year; it's probably the length of six years or so, by the time you see all of that shake out. The cost of health care will be significantly more than it would be under a public system. Not only are we going to get worse services, not only are we going to have to pay user fees to get those services, but it's going to be done more and more by the private sector.

That's why government does not want to send bills out to committee. The government has decided—and this is

their strategy. Every bill that they've had since they've been here, pretty well, it's the same thing: a time allocation motion in the middle of the week, two days of committee hearings in Toronto the following week, followed by a day or two of clause-by-clause and we're done. They don't want the public to have their say, because if the public starts to realize what it is they're doing, the public may actually push back and they might tell the government, "You're not the government of the people. I'm the people, and you're not representing my views in what you're doing in your legislation."

This particular bill with regard to energy is certainly not what people are asking for. People voted the Liberals out because of the Liberal hydro plan. Why are you putting in a Conservative hydro plan which is essentially the same? You're not doing anything that undoes the damage the Liberals have done, other than—yes, there is a savings of money in moving the dollars from off-book to on-book; I'll give you that. But you're not getting rid of time-of-use pricing. You're not dealing with the substantial differences that we pay, depending on where we live in Ontario for delivery charges for electricity. You're not dealing with any of the other issues that we raised in our hydro plan that we put to the people in the last election. Essentially, all you're doing in this bill—you're not fixing the Liberal hydro mess; you're saying, "The Liberal hydro plan is now the Conservative hydro plan." That's all you're doing.

So there's a reason, I think, Mr. Speaker, that they're not sending things out to committee, because they understand far too well that the public ain't buying what these people are doing. With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure there are other people in our caucus who would have something to say.

0950

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

Mr. Mike Harris: I'm happy to rise today in the Legislature to speak to motion 35, time allocation on Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act.

I would like to remind the member for Timmins that there are a lot of things that go into fixing the hydro mess, and this is just one step. In my 10 minutes here I'm going to highlight a few of the other things we've done.

Our government was elected on a strong mandate to restore affordability and accountability in governing Ontario's energy system. Since forming government, we have been steadfast in carrying out this commitment. Before introducing Bill 87, the Minister of Energy, Northern Development Mines and our government had already taken many significant steps on the energy file.

One of the first major undertakings for our government was the repeal of the previous government's disastrous Green Energy Act. That is step one in moving things forward in cleaning up the hydro mess. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure I don't need to remind the House that this Green Energy Act had to go, but I will give a quick recap here of why: Quite simply, the Green Energy Act, with its disastrous feed-in tariff program, fuelled skyrocketing hydro rates for

Ontario families and businesses while forcing unfair energy contracts on municipalities.

Between 2006 and 2016, the amount an average Ontario household spent on electricity more than doubled. To put this into perspective, in 2006, the average household spent just a little over \$40 on electricity per month. That's before taxes and delivery charges. By 2016, this amount had doubled to more than \$83 a month, according to the OEB.

In her 2015 annual report, the Auditor General concluded that ratepayers forked out—are you ready for this, Mr. Speaker?—\$37 billion more than necessary from 2006 to 2014 and would have spent an additional—this number is just astounding—\$133 billion more by 2032 due to global adjustment electricity fees on hydro bills. In some areas of the province where delivery fees are highest, particularly in rural and northern communities, some residents said their bills have increased by as much as 200%.

Those I represent in Waterloo region, including those in the rural townships of Wilmot, Wellesley and Woolwich, felt the negative impacts of these increased costs. Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker: In the recent election, no issue caused more anger and resentment than hydro. My constituents in Kitchener–Conestoga saw decisions made in downtown Toronto that raised rates year after year despite individuals, businesses and families feeling the pain.

Under the poor management of the previous government, too many businesses and factories in my riding and across the province closed up shop due to unmanageable costs. We saw it time and time again with the escalation of hydro prices and operational costs. Companies that provided good jobs for working families fled to more competitive jurisdictions south of the border. To hammer this point home, let me point out that Waterloo region lost nearly 12,000 manufacturing jobs in the last decade.

Let me also point out that the rural townships I represent are home to many farms and large agricultural, food and manufacturing sectors. These producers are the backbone of our regional economy. That is no exaggeration, Mr. Speaker; there are nearly 1,300 farms in Waterloo region. Out of that, over 1,100 are in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. I heard loud and clear from farmers in my riding during the election that soaring hydro rates were impacting their bottom line. That is why I fully support the steps that our government has taken to reform the way we handle energy in this province. By repealing the Green Energy Act, our government gained the authority to make regulations to block approvals for wasteful energy projects.

Immediately after taking office, the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines cancelled more than 750 renewable energy contracts, saving Ontario taxpayers \$790 million—almost a billion dollars.

Then, with the scrapping of the Green Energy Act, our government enabled itself to put the brakes on additional projects that would add costs to electricity bills that the people of Ontario simply cannot afford.

Scaling back the renewable energy contracts signed under the previous government was essential, because if you take a minute to step back and examine what those contracts were, you can see they facilitated the largest

transfer of money from the poor and middle class to the rich in Ontario's history. Liberal insiders, energy speculators and friends of the former government made fortunes putting up solar panels and wind farms that did nothing more than gouge families, businesses and ratepayers, all while generating energy the province did not need. Ontarians don't need a government that is for their buddies; they need a government that will work for families and for the prosperity of this beautiful province, Mr. Speaker.

Under the previous government, executive compensation was out of control at Hydro One. The former CEO of Hydro One took home \$6.2 million in 2017. When you have working families barely making ends meet, there is no reason that Hydro One salaries should be so bloated at the top end. Thankfully, our government has swiftly put an end to that, Mr. Speaker. The maximum CEO compensation at Hydro One will now be \$1.5 million annually. It's quite a reduction.

Here we are, less than one year into our government's mandate, and what we have done to fix the energy file is to put more money back into the pockets of Ontarians. How are we doing this? Well, to put it simply, the Green Energy Act, the bad renewable energy contracts, the six-million-dollar man—they're gone; they're finished; they're done. Bill 87 is another crucial step forward, Mr. Speaker. As per its title, Bill 87 is all about fixing the hydro mess that the previous government left behind.

Before I get into the specifics of what this bill will accomplish for the hard-working families of this province, I want to stress why time allocation is a proper step to take here in the passing of Bill 87. This makes sense for Bill 87 because Ontarians cannot and should not be subject to an unfair electricity system any longer. I said it before, Mr. Speaker: When I spoke to those in my riding during the last election, fixing Ontario hydro was the number one issue at the doors. People want a system that is fair, transparent and affordable, and they want it now. There is no time to lose. We wasted no time when it came to ensuring that the lights stayed on at Christmas, and we are not going to waste time now. When we make a promise, we keep it. It's time to give the people of Ontario the hydro system they deserve.

In amending several acts governing Ontario's electricity system, including the Electricity Act, the Ontario Energy Board Act, the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act and the Ontario Rebate For Electricity Consumers Act, the government is taking concrete steps to replace the global adjustment refinancing structure, modernize the Ontario Energy Board, and wind down the inefficient electricity conservation programs put in place by the previous government.

The previous government neglected the OEB, allowing it to become a drain on the system, Mr. Speaker. The OEB became a wasteful and outdated regulatory body. As a regulator, it became notorious for delaying key decisions and holding up key project developments. Our changes to the OEB are aimed at making it more efficient, transparent and accountable. We want a regulator that Ontarians can trust again—one that works for them.

The changes proposed under Bill 87 would, if passed, improve the organizational governance structure of the OEB. For example, Bill 87's provisions direct the formation of a new board of directors and a new CEO. This restructuring will improve the efficiency of the OEB's decision-making process by clearly separating and defining organizational roles and responsibilities. In addition to this, our plan is proposing the reduction of duplication of responsibilities between the OEB and the IESO.

It doesn't end there, Mr. Speaker. Under our government's new system, it will be a requirement that the OEB report annually its progress towards regulatory simplification and red tape reduction.

We are working on making all areas of government administration more cost-effective and efficient. When it comes to Ontario's conservation programs, achieving this objective will require taking a more targeted approach, Mr. Speaker. Due to poor planning and management of the previous government, Ontario's electricity conservation programs became a source of duplication and inefficiency. We need to focus on the most cost-effective conservation initiatives and programs.

The global adjustment refinancing program inherited by our government from our predecessors is one with many cracks, and it is not fair to the people of this province. The main problems with its current program stem from its lack of transparency. Its long-term borrowing costs are far too high. Ontarians need to know where their money is going and how much they are paying for their electricity.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I got involved in politics. I was tired of seeing my children's future mortgaged for the Liberals to be able to buy votes. I didn't think that was right. That's part of the reason why I'm standing here today, and this is why I will be supporting time allocation on this bill.

1000

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I find it ironic, the amount of times as a new member that we've stood up as part of the official opposition to have this discussion around time allocation. I also find it ironic that we've had this discussion around time allocation and often heard government members say that their work is transparent. I don't understand how their work is transparent if at every opportunity to travel the bill—a bill that is, in fact, going to have to address something that people at the doors were talking about—they don't want to go out and speak to the people. I'm just going to focus my comments today on that: on the importance of taking the time as members of the government to actually speak to the people of Ontario.

I think that maybe part of the challenge is that the government, in their debates and as they speak in this House about this bill—and to be honest, about other bills before it—the assumption is that people of Ontario only want to speak about what happened under the Liberal government, as though what happened in the past is done. That's it; that's all that Ontarians want to speak about; they do not

want to speak about their future. But I would argue that many, many people in my riding of Kitchener Centre want to speak about the future of Ontario. That means they want to speak to the legislation that's before us in this House.

We know that based on what happened with the health care bill, there was a lot of rhetoric and discussion about, "Well, in the past 15 years, the Liberals did this and that, and now we're talking about what we're going to do." Then, all of a sudden, they don't want to talk to the people anymore. I think that we have to be really, really honest about what it is that we're doing, or we can't say that this government is acting in a way that's truly transparent. Transparent isn't telling people what you think about the past. It's telling people about what you think about the future.

I think that part of where Ontarians are concerned is that we have no sense of what the vision is. What we have seen is that we limit debate so that less and less people in Ontario—not us in our bubble, but people in Ontario, the people that we were elected and we were brought here to represent—are no longer able to speak about something that the government says is a totally different direction but that, in actuality, is exactly the same place. Transparency would allow the people in Kitchener Centre to speak to this. Their expertise would be able to be part of the legislation that we have before us—and I think, most importantly, the rebuilding of trust.

I'm going to take a step back. For 15 years, the Liberal government made promises, and then they weren't kept. There were some things when we were nearing the election time that were kind of thrown out into the public. There was some hope there that the Liberal government would be able to make some changes and maybe things would be okay. But it was 15 years. So now the people of Ontario are trying to figure out if they can trust their government. How are they supposed to do that if every time one of the major issues that led people to vote in a variety of different ways—I'm in a riding where they've never voted NDP, and here I am. People want change, but the only way to rebuild the trust with the people is to go and talk to them. Imagine that: talking to the people.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wow. You're a revolutionary.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I am a revolutionary. I hope that that's captured in Hansard.

So here we are with another bill that represents literally a major and consistent issue that Ontarians felt is something that, whoever they vote for, "We've got to address this. We've got to address this." This was a major issue during the campaign. So then why would we be worried about talking to the people with regard to what direction we want to go in? Or, in the case of this particular bill, whether or not they're willing to just slap a new name on exactly the same approach? I don't think that Ontarians would be happy with that. And knowing that, and knowing that I'm part of this group of humbled leaders who sit in this bubble when the House is sitting to try and help move Ontario into a better place, I think it's important for us to be honest and go out and talk to them. Let's find out if I'm wrong. I'm okay with being wrong. But we'd have to go and speak to Ontarians to find that out, right?

It's wonderful that we're sitting here and having this discussion and time-allocating yet another important bill, but I guarantee that if a health care bill—which was also way high up on the list of issues Ontarians had during this past election that they were concerned about, that they raised their voices about. If 15,000—right? No, how many people actually tried to speak to committee? So we've got 15,000 people who said, "Hey, I want to speak about this." To me, that's a sign of a very healthy democracy. People want to get involved. We're going to double-check the actual amount of submissions. We know that close to 20,000 people wrote in; that one, we know. Close to 20,000 people wrote in, because that was the only way for them to engage with us.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's 1,500.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: And 1,500—correcting the record—wanted to present. So 1,500 Ontarians said, "I want to speak to you," and close to 20,000 Ontarians said, "I want to speak to you." I would guess that Ontarians want to speak to us—just saying. I'm just saying that it's very possible that they would like to speak.

When we now take another major issue and say, "We don't really want to speak to you all that much"—and people have to see this as what has happened in the past; I think that's the same advice that people give you about relationships. The behaviour—not the words—is the sign of what this relationship is really going to be like. And that's why Ontarians are worried.

Interjection.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Well, that's why they're worried. So we can talk all the talk. We can slap on bumper stickers. We can spend Ontarians' money to make sure that the talk is out there. What they want is action. And that means they want to speak to us. They want to rebuild that trust. In my opinion, we should see this as an opportunity—an opportunity to get to know Ontario now. Not the Ontarians that thought, "Okay, this is what I think about the Liberal government," but what do Ontarians right now think of the Conservative government? I'm sad to say that in Kitchener Centre, with the onslaught of emails that I've received every single time the government makes a decision to just move forward without speaking to people, it's not looking so hot. It is not looking so hot.

Let me help you help yourself. Go speak to the people. See what they say. Then make a decision, and make that decision be informed. If regular people say, "Oh, I think we should go in this direction," and you have real proof and arguments and facts and information to provide otherwise, maybe they'll change their mind. Or maybe, imagine this, they have information and facts that they want to share with us so that we can move Ontario in a brighter direction. Why are we afraid to talk to each other about stuff? That's what time allocation does. It doesn't allow us to speak to each other.

If this is what leadership looks like in 2019, imagine what's going to happen next. What's going to happen next? They're going to look to the people who are willing to talk to them, because Ontarians want to speak to us.

They want to engage. I think, as much as we talk about transparency, as much as we say we're listening, I don't feel like we're listening. I don't feel like the government is truly listening. I feel badly, actually, for my government colleagues who think that this is going to be okay, because it's not going to be. Because imagine yourself in any scenario where the people in charge don't listen to you, and ask yourself how well that goes. What do you think about when you go home, when you turn on the news, when you sit down and eat with your family? Do you say, "You know what, I love my leadership." Or do you go home and say, "You know what, Liberals and Conservatives, they're doing exactly the same thing, so I'm going to go the route of the official opposition"—I don't know if Hansard can actually pick up the way I said that, but since it can't, I used a very musical tone to accentuate my excitement at being part of the official opposition.

The reason I am here is because I listen to people, because I am part of a party that wants to hear what Ontario needs and will address those needs by talking to them, by taking them seriously, by recognizing and respecting that they are part of what we do here. They're not the enemy, and that's what it feels like when you shut down debate, when you don't listen to them, when you say, "Oh, 20,000 people wrote to us? We'll read that in the summer, after we pass the bill that's going to impact them about the thing they just talked to us about."

My job as a member of the official opposition is to help support the movement of Ontario. Sometimes what that means is, I may not agree with a vote that happens in this House, but my job is to be able to go back to Kitchener Centre and speak to my constituents about why things happened. I wish that I could get a why. I've heard many, many people in the government stand up and say what they're going to do. I don't know if there's a real, clear understanding of why they would do it without listening to Ontarians, the people that they say they're doing this for. Those are the most important people.

It's kind of like a classroom. Do you know who the most important people are in a classroom? The students—also with a musical tone. The students are the ones that you're working for. They're the people who are the focus of this. Well, the whole reason why we're here is because we're supposed to be focused on Ontarians, the people that we're supposed to be working for. And yet time and time again, with something extremely important, something that is going to impact them for a long, long time, we decide, "We'll talk to them for—nah, let's not." That's essentially what we're doing. We're saying that we'll pretend like we're talking to them, because we know better.

I will just wrap up with this: If the goal, ultimately, is for true transparency—if that is the ultimate goal—then I think it's extremely important that we stop time-allocating and actually go and travel bills and let people talk to us about where their concerns are so that we can do better. We have to do better, and we can. That involves going out across Ontario and actually speaking to people who want to speak to us. Thank you.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Seeing that it's 10:13 and we're going to break at 10:15, we will go in recess now until question period at 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask members to introduce their guests, I would like to draw everyone's attention to some very special guests we have with us in the Speaker's gallery today. We have with us, from the Parliament of Scotland, the deputy presiding officer and member of Scottish Parliament, Ms. Linda Fabiani; member of Scottish Parliament Mr. Liam McArthur; and international relations officer Mr. Steven Bell.

Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We're delighted to have you here.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I'd like to welcome my constituent Rayne Fisher-Quann to Queen's Park. Welcome, Rayne.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to introduce the mother and aunt of today's page captain, Arthur McLeod—his mother, Andrea McLeod, and his aunt Jennifer Moore.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park Frank Napolitano and Vince Agozzino, who are here with Mortgage Professionals Canada. I had the pleasure of meeting with them this morning.

Mr. Stan Cho: I want to introduce my friend Dong Lee, who I see in the gallery today. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'd like to welcome Holy Name of Mary College School from the riding of Mississauga-Lakeshore.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to introduce to the Legislative Assembly John Rycroft and Sandi Wilcox. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Good morning. It is my pleasure to introduce Paul Taylor, the Mortgage Professionals Canada president and CEO; Tracy Valko, on the Mortgage Professionals Canada board of directors; and Kris Barnier, Genworth Canada's vice-president of government relations. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I just want to welcome the members of the Ontario Waste Management Association who are here at Queen's Park today. I enjoyed meeting with them and invite everyone to go to their lunch reception today.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I, too, want to thank the Ontario Waste Management Association for being here today, and I welcome everyone to the reception this afternoon.

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has informed me that he'd like to rise on a point of order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. I seek unanimous consent that members be allowed to wear daffodil pins in honour of the cancer society's daffodil campaign for cancer awareness.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow the members to wear daffodil pins in recognition of Cancer Awareness Month. Agreed? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday, British Columbia's Minister of Education made a surprising offer to Ontario's teachers. He said that while Ontario may not want teachers, BC certainly does. In fact, they're holding job fairs in Ontario, hoping to poach our front-line educators because, to quote the minister, "teachers are interested in coming to British Columbia" because, "first and foremost, there is a government that is supportive of public education here now."

Was it the government's intention to start a talent drain of educators leaving Ontario, or are they willing to consider this as a sign that their attack on world-class educators isn't working?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Education.

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

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate it very much. I have to tell you, the premise that the opposition leader is trying to perpetuate is absolutely ridiculous. We stand by our teachers and we stand by making sure we have the best learning environments in the classroom across Canada.

That said, we are also making sure, though, that our education system in Ontario is sustainable, and on March 15 we presented a plan for education, a plan that works for you, that has been embraced by everyone in this province in the sense that we're touching on the important parts of job skills and life skills that students sorely have been lacking because of the failed experiments and ideology that the Liberal administration inflicted upon classrooms over the last 15 years.

We were given a mandate last June to get education in Ontario back on track, and that is exactly what we're doing. People will be embracing our plan because, again, the fact of the matter is—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, parents, students and teachers are finding it hard to believe the Premier's and the minister's claims. In fact, last weekend, thousands of students, parents and education workers from across Ontario came to be heard in unprecedented numbers in the demonstration that took place on the lawn. They know that larger classes mean that schools will soon be losing shop classes, music classes and the teachers who teach them.

Yesterday, the Premier said that not one single teacher is going to lose their job, but school board after school

board is announcing cuts. How many teaching positions will this government eliminate before they admit that teachers are actually losing their jobs?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Honestly, you would think that the Leader of the Opposition would have more integrity than fearmongering like she has insisted to do day after day—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution the minister and remind all members that intemperate language leads to disruption in the House. We have to have a reasonable debate over the course of this question period.

I'd ask the minister to conclude her response.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: When it comes to the actions that school boards are taking over the recent weeks, that's routine annual activity where they take a look at their roster, they evaluate how many teachers are retiring, how many teachers are redeploying, how many teachers are actually resigning, and then they reallocate teachers accordingly.

So it's just part and parcel of an annual process that is absolutely irresponsible to use as an excuse to fearmonger and make teachers think that they're going to be losing their jobs, because, quite frankly, we're going to be looking to hire more elementary—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: With all due respect, I think that the school boards know more than the minister about what's happening in their classrooms at their schools.

The Premier expects students, parents and workers on the front line in our schools to ignore the facts. The thousands of the people on the lawn this weekend shows how believable that is.

Toronto's board has sent notices to 1,000 teachers telling them there are no jobs for them next year. In York region, they're eliminating 300 teachers; in Peel, 500; in Kawartha, 90; and in Hamilton, 136. In Waterloo, the Catholic board is eliminating 22 jobs next year.

How can thousands of teaching jobs disappear in communities across Ontario while the Premier claims not a single job has been lost? Does the minister think that maybe he needs a math refresh?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Well, I would suggest that the Leader of the Opposition needs an education herself because, quite frankly, the school boards act as the employers of the teachers. She needs to get that straight and stop the fearmongering because, quite frankly, we're taking a look at how to improve education after 15 failed years under the Liberal administration.

One thing Ontario can guarantee will be a result from us: We will never, ever use the classroom as a soapbox to perpetuate fearmongering, because we have a job to do, and that job is to get education back on track. We are not going to be bullied by unions. We're not going to be put off-key by fearmongering. We're focusing on getting students back to the basics. They're going to learn math. They're going to learn job skills. They're going to learn life skills, because (a) teachers, parents and students

have asked for it, and (b) we're going to deliver because we want those students graduating with the skills they need for the jobs—

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

EDUCATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. The Premier has gone on record in this House accusing the organizers behind the Students Say No campaign of being “pawns” for teachers’ unions, dismissing their hard work and the voices of over 100,000 students who supported them. Yesterday, the Premier had an opportunity to apologize for those comments, but he refused.

One of the young organizers is here with us today. She was introduced by one of our members. My question, of course, is to the Premier; unfortunately, I guess it's the Acting Premier who is going to have to answer it. Will they—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The government side—

Interjections.

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

Do I need to say again that from time to time members might be away? Some of us are not here every day. We don't take attendance, but some of us aren't here. That's why we don't make reference to the absence of each other, because sometimes we're away for good reasons. I'll remind all members once again.

Restart the clock. The Leader of the Opposition can conclude her question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The question is: Will the Premier apologize to her and the other young people who, even if the Premier and the government disagree with them, they should at least give credit for having their own opinions?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my opinion that past behaviour is indicative of future behaviour, and we know that in the past, union bosses organized student walkouts under the previous Liberal government. They organized against Bob Rae's government. They organized against the Liberal government. It's just routine. It's just a practice.

But what I can tell you, as well—and I want to be perfectly clear—is that no one, including the unions, gets to veto our education plan. No one is going to stop us from getting education back on track and delivering value for students and their families. It's the tax dollars generated from Ontario parents that pay for education here in Ontario, and they deserve better than what they've been getting. We stand beside parents across this province when we say we've listened, and the plan that I introduced on March 15 demonstrates that once and for all. Education in Ontario is going to work for—

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we know about past behaviour, like the last time the Conservatives were in government and cut, cut, cut education in Ontario, to the point where we had less than 70% of high school students graduating. Less than 70% graduated the last time the government across the way was in office in this province.

But look, the letter that the student organizers of the provincial walkout put together says this: “To claim that this walkout was organized, orchestrated, or puppeteered by adults is not only false, but extremely insulting to the young people of Ontario.”

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the government, if they would care to listen. These students want to know: Will the government acknowledge that the resounding success of the Students Say No campaign was born out of the hard work of students across the province like Natalie, and Rayne Fisher-Quann, who is with us here in the House today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. There were numerous outbursts from the government side. I could barely hear the person asking the question, the Leader of the Opposition. Come to order.

Start the clock. To the minister to reply.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Well, Speaker, we are never going to take a history lesson from the Leader of the Opposition, because if we were to take a look at history, just a few decades ago, under Bob Rae and the NDP government, 100,000 people were out of work. A million people were on social assistance.

I can tell you that we are developing an education plan that will guarantee that our future generations will never have to experience that again. We're focusing on an education system that's going to get people to work. Our education system is getting back to the basics, and we're embracing amazing things that people spoke about in our consultation last fall. Never before has mental health been a focus like we're going to be focusing on. Never before have skilled trades been embraced like this government, and we are going to get it right: 100,000 jobs are waiting for people interested in skilled trades. We need to embrace that. We need to celebrate it and encourage students to pursue the careers—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's really quite unfortunate for the students of Ontario that this minister doesn't know that you're doomed to repeat history if you don't remember it. They should remember their history in government and not doom our students to repeating that history.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Students across the province have tried every possible way to get this government to listen to what they have to say, and the government's only solution is to pretend that the students didn't even say it. They don't want larger classes. They don't want students

to lose music class or shop class. They don't want thousands of teachers to lose their jobs and leave the province.

In summary, they don't want a Premier slicing and dicing their education. They want a good future here in Ontario. Instead of pretending they don't exist, why won't this Premier and his government listen to what they have to say?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I have to tell you, Speaker—let's use our example of the fall consultation. We listened to over 72,000 respondents, parents, students, teachers, grandparents, employers. Honestly, we're getting it right because they chose to contribute their voice in a forum that allowed online consultation, telephone town halls, as well as written submissions.

We are moving forward on research that matters—qualitative and quantitative. It's qualitative research that we have to really take a look at because, again, in opposition to the fearmongering that's coming from across the House here, there is no research that says smaller classrooms are indicative and correlate to student success. Take a look at our own Liberal government and what they achieved: declining math scores and poor student success. The fact of the matter is—

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

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Acting Premier. But I have to say, of the thousands of parents and students I talked to, not a single one has told me that they want larger classrooms and fewer adults in the schools. Not a single one, Speaker.

Yesterday, the Minister of Health said that “there is a lot of health care that is delivered privately,” and as a result, we should not be concerned about the expansion of private, for-profit care, apparently. In the Acting Premier's view, should there be any limit at all on how big a role private, for-profit care should play in our health care system?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, thank you very much for the question, but I believe—through you, Mr. Speaker—that the leader of the official opposition is trying to put words in my mouth with things that I did not say. What I did indicate—and the fact of the matter is that there is already private delivery in the health care system, but it is paid for with public dollars. Doctors, for example, in private practice are entrepreneurs. They are in private practice. Should we not have doctors anymore? Should we not have pharmacists? Should we not have labs? It's not practical, what they're suggesting—

Interjections.

Hon. Christine Elliott: —absolutely not practical. We need to have that care in our system. It's working—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

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

I apologize to the Deputy Premier. I had to interrupt her because of the ovation on the government side. I couldn't hear the minister answering the question.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Nationalize the doctors. Nationalize the pharmacists.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Nationalize your mouth.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Oh, my. Are we getting under your skin, Andrea?

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

Interjections.

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

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would say to the government that the failing of our private home care system is not something that this government should be proud of. It was the Conservatives who privatized home care, and it is one heck of a mess in our province. If that's what they're so proud of, I think they should take a double look at what it is that they've done in the past.

Here's what families are worried about: The same Premier who said he would leave no stone unturned when it comes to privatization is refusing to set limits on how much private, for-profit care can creep into our system. Families know what that means. It means less care, more and longer waits, and more fees.

If the Premier isn't determined to plow ahead with privatization, why is the government defeating NDP amendments to their health bill that would prevent a massive increase in privatization in our health care system?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Before I ask for a response, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services needs to come to order, as does the member for King–Vaughan.

Start the clock. Response, Minister?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Again, through you, Speaker, I think it's really important to say that the system of our health care is as it is now, not as the leader of the official opposition and the official opposition would like it to be. This has been the situation in Ontario for many, many years. We are not changing any of that.

What we are doing is to strengthen our public health care system. That's what Bill 74 actually speaks to. We are determined to do that. We are going to make sure that our public health care system is strengthened, that local health care providers perform the needs of local communities, that they provide the care that's necessary, that we take away some of the boundaries that have existed before in the Ministry of Health to allow that integrated care to happen—all within the context of our public health care system.

TEACHERS

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question is for the Minister of Education. As a proud daughter and daughter-in-law

of retired teachers, it's really concerning to hear all the misinformation being spread about what our government is doing to support teachers.

Mr. Speaker, I heard it loud and clear when knocking on doors in Etobicoke–Lakeshore that students are leaving their classrooms without being prepared for the real world. Our government knows that our students' supports start at home, but we also need to be sure that that they are getting the best supports inside the classrooms.

Can the Minister of Education tell us what our government is doing to ensure that our education system is back on track and to ensure that we have the best teachers in our classrooms?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I have many teachers in my family as well and I can appreciate exactly what your parents are feeling.

As Minister of Education, I'm so glad to talk about the great work that our teachers are doing in our classrooms. We know Ontario has some of the best teachers in the world. It's something we're very proud of and it's something that we can invest in and support more in terms of what they do in the classroom. That's why I am so pleased to share with everyone today that we're going to be providing full funding for every teacher in Ontario who wants to get additional qualifications in math. Mr. Speaker, let me be clear: This is about investing in our educators to get it right for our students, once and for all.

We understand the difficult job teachers have, but what we don't want to do is to allow another generation of students to get left behind without the skills they need for the jobs of today and tomorrow. This is about getting it right, and we look forward to working with our teachers across this province so parents have confidence in our—

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Thank you to the minister for that response. I am so grateful that we have a government that is ready to support all of our students and our teachers. I know that this government is focused on getting it right for our teachers. But I know that we have outdated hiring practices. They allow situations where our teachers are not able to find the job they want.

Can the minister help us and talk to us about what our government is proposing so that our teachers can get the job that is right for them?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, thank you very much to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I appreciate her question very much because, as a member of the opposition, I heard this from teachers for years. We heard it through our consultation, loud and clear, that we need to increase teacher mobility.

The previous government, sadly, instituted outdated hiring practices that rewarded teachers based on seniority and did not recognize teachers who are excelling at their jobs. That needs to change, and we're going to get that job done.

Mr. Speaker, I've said it before, and I'll repeat it now: We need to ensure that we have the right teacher in the

right classroom. Our proposal to allow new teachers direct access to apply to permanent positions in any school board is a step towards accomplishing just that.

This isn't about an outdated regulation; this is about doing the right thing for our students, and the right move for our teachers. We're standing by our teachers. We're making sure the best teachers are in the classroom, doing what they enjoy, by supporting not only their education but also making sure—

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

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Education. The recent policy change that your government has announced for increasing class size for secondary classes could lead to something in rural schools, northern schools and small schools called “class stacking.” So, you don't have enough students in grade nine applied, so you throw in academic, and then maybe you throw in grade 10. What's ultimately going to happen is, parents and kids are going to notice that the teacher can't keep up, and they're going to look for another school—a bigger school.

How can this government claim to be wanting to protect rural schools yet implement policies that, in the end, are going to close the school in my hometown and going to close the school in the minister's hometown? How can you do that?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: First things first: We stood up against the former Liberal government in closing 600 schools. We stood up against that. Secondly, I can tell you that we will never, ever play politics with the success and well-being of our students, no matter where they are in Ontario. It doesn't matter whether it's urban Ontario or rural Ontario.

The fact of the matter is, our Education that Works for You plan was highlighted on March 15. That very day, I opened up consultations for our education partners, to hear from them, to work with them, through to May 31—to hear how we can move forward together, making sure we get it right for every student across Ontario.

I look forward to their input because, again, we want to make sure the learning environment in the classroom is absolutely improved and make sure that our students are focusing in on the basics and the fundamentals that will ensure that they have great opportunities in the future—

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I asked about class stacking and didn't get an answer.

As small schools close across rural Ontario, the students are going to be bused farther and farther. Do you know what? The school bus will pick up the student in the morning, and the school bus will bring the student home in the afternoon. But do you know what doesn't follow students in many places in rural Ontario? Broadband—actual, usable Internet. You guys want to have four secondary school classes be e-learning, but in many cases

the only place that those kids are going to do that is at school or in the library. Come on. Rural Ontario needs the same access as the rest of the province. How can you talk about e-learning when students in rural Ontario don't have access to usable, accessible broadband?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It gives me an opportunity to stand up in this House and congratulate the Minister of Infrastructure for the amazing work that he's doing across Ontario, because I could tell you—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Once again, I'll remind members to make your comments through the floor. I can't hear you when you turn your back to me. Secondly, as soon as the standing ovation started, I could not hear the member and had to interrupt.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask our guest to refrain from heckling the members, or you will have to leave.

Interjections.

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

Interjection: We've got to find out who let him in.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That reaction from the government side was not the least bit helpful to our security services, to our Legislative Protective Service.

The Minister of Education has the floor. Please restart the clock.

1100

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, I want to thank the Minister of Infrastructure for following through on a commitment that we had made going into the election and we carried through to this day. We're absolutely committed to make sure that all of Ontario has access to high-speed Internet connectivity. It's a promise we made and it's a promise we're going to keep. In doing that very thing and investing in broadband across Ontario and following through on our strategy, we're going to ensure that every home and school in Ontario has access to high-speed that will enable students to employ online learning. It's a tool that many colleges are already utilizing. It's a tool that they need—

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

Next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Aris Babikian: My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, and Indigenous Affairs. From day one, our government has been focused on lowering energy costs for low-income families, seniors and small businesses. We cancelled the Liberals' cap-and-trade scheme that made life unaffordable for the people of Ontario. Our government is putting money back

in the pockets of families who are struggling to make ends meet.

Now, the federal government is imposing their own carbon tax, which came into effect on April 1. Mr. Speaker, can the minister update us on how much Ontarians will pay under Justin Trudeau's job-killing carbon tax?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for his great work in his constituency and for raising this question in this place. The heart of this is all about transparency. That's why we followed the Auditor General's instructions when it came to being transparent about the real cost of electricity and the subsidies and moved it out onto their bills. That's why I wrote the Ontario Energy Board and asked them to identify clearly, on a line, how much this job-killing carbon tax was going to increase their home heating bills. For businesses, how much more expensive it was going to be to fire their manufacturing plants, to operate forestry mills and mines. Make no mistake about it: This is a tax on everything.

So how do we take that transparency to the next level? If anything can, a sticker sure can, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to put stickers on gas pumps to remind the people of Ontario that gas has gone up 4.4 cents and 11 cents in the future, and we can't afford that and we reject that tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Aris Babikian: It is clear that the minister takes the concerns of drivers across this province very seriously. It is important that drivers are aware of the adverse impact that Justin Trudeau's carbon tax will have on their day-to-day lives. When I speak to small business owners and families in my riding, they tell me that they are concerned. They are worried about the true cost that the carbon tax will have. This carbon tax threatens the affordability and the competitiveness of our province. The federal carbon tax will increase the price of almost everything.

Can the minister tell this House what other impacts the people of Ontario can expect?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member for his question. I was with the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines just yesterday in Oakville, with the great member there, talking about these impacts—not just the impacts at the pump; the impact on our hospitals, \$27 million; the impact on our colleges and universities, \$20 million.

Mr. Speaker, myself and the Minister for Seniors were with a couple last week where, sitting in their kitchen, they talked about could they afford healthy food or would they be paying Justin Trudeau's carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, these impacts will affect more than just families, more than just business; they will affect all Ontario. That's why, Mr. Speaker, we will make sure that Ontarians know the cost of the Trudeau carbon tax. We'll make sure that we use every tool at our disposal, including going to the courts next week, joined by Manitoba and joined by Saskatchewan, to fight this carbon tax with every tool we have.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Suze Morrison: My question is to the Acting Premier. Women in Ontario are still only earning 71 cents on the dollar compared to men, and racialized women take only 60% of what white men make. Closing the wage gap makes sense, Speaker. It's just the right thing to do, and honestly, it's 2019; it is time. The government should be taking meaningful steps to close the gender wage gap, but instead they have stalled the implementation of the Pay Transparency Act, all so that they can ask businesses how much of a burden it would be to pay women equally. Will the Premier reverse that decision and implement the Pay Transparency Act by May 1?

Hon. Christine Elliott: This is in fact the Ontario government's fifth Equal Pay Day. Let me say from the outset that our government believes that men and women should be earning equal wages. There is still work that needs to be done on that, but in fact we have taken many steps.

Right now, since August 2018, the number of women involved in the workforce has increased by approximately 45,000 women; 50% of all new businesses in Canada are led by women, and women wholly own or partially own 47% of all small and medium-sized enterprises. So progress is being made. We are meeting women's needs with innovative approaches to child care, tuition, student loans and microloans for entrepreneurs. We continue to work with stakeholders and with women to find out the other solutions to allow women to get into the workforce and certainly to make sure that they earn equal pay.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary: the member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. Let me be clear to all the women in this province: Ensuring that you have equal pay for equal work is not a burden, it is not bureaucratic and it is certainly not red tape.

Mr. Speaker, we are asking for a plan and for a commitment, and women in this province should expect as much. Instead we have a Minister of Labour saying one thing when she was in opposition and another thing when she is in government. On April 11, 2017, the now Minister of Labour stated, "The women of this province deserve equal pay for work of equal value," yet they still do not have it.

Will the Acting Premier ensure that this minister follows through on what she said in opposition when she was over here on this side of the bench, ensure that all women receive equal pay for equal work and implement the Pay Transparency Act today?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christine Elliott: The ministry is already working very hard to ensure that women receive equal pay for equal work. As the member would know well, this is a legislated requirement under the Pay Equity Act of 1987. However, the Pay Transparency Act is something quite different. I think the member will know that the Pay Transparency Act is about reporting and publishing information

about compensation. It is not about pay equity. That is what the Pay Equity Act deals with.

When the Liberal government rushed out the Pay Transparency Act, it should be noted, just ahead of the last election, it contained no regulations, no guidelines and no information as to how it would be enacted. In fact, the members of the gender wage gap steering committee indicated it would probably take three years for that to be enacted. So that is being worked on. We have delayed it so that we could enter into those consultations that must be had so that we understand exactly where we—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member for Waterloo must come to order.

Next question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: My question is for the Minister of Education. With the budget about to be introduced in the Legislature on Thursday, there are lots of rumours about what may or may not be contained in the document. One of the areas of concern, Mr. Speaker, is full-day kindergarten. I know that the minister has assured parents and children that FDK will remain in place, and that's a great thing, but there continue to be rumours about how the classroom might change.

In the description of FDK on the minister's website, the explanation of the teaching model is that "a teacher and an early childhood educator (ECE) work together to help young students learn during the regular school day. These educators have complementary skills that create a learning environment to support the unique needs of each child." In other words, the team's skills fit together, and that prepares the young child for grade 1, and those complex little beings get the support they need.

1110

Will the minister tell us today whether the current teaching model for full-day kindergarten will be maintained?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: First things first: I will absolutely make clear that we will not be closing hundreds of schools, like the member opposite's government did in the previous 15 years—and that included closing kindergarten classes. We're not going to be doing that.

The other thing that we're going to be doing is focusing in on the fact that we want to ensure that parents have confidence, when we talk about class sizes—not one change is going to happen with the class sizes from kindergarten to grade 3.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: That's not the question.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: In grades 4 to 8, not one student more—no more than one student will be seen as an increase in grades 4 to 8.

Again, in terms of average class sizes in high school, secondary classes will go up to an average size of 28.

The CBC fact check of March 25 shows that those class sizes are some of the lowest across Canada.

In terms of kindergarten, we're going to get it right. Our—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The member for Orléans has to come to order.

Supplementary.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, it was actually a very straightforward question. It was a yes-or-no question, and that answer does not provide much assurance.

On the issue of school closures: I hope the government is going to open the hundreds and hundreds of schools that we opened, as well.

I want to just ask again: Given that the preliminary research from McMaster and Queen's University, also available on the minister's website, showed that, "overall, students in FDK are better prepared to enter grade 1 and to be more successful in school," and, "in every area, students improved their readiness for grade 1 and accelerated their development," does the minister agree that the current model is working, and is she advocating, with her Minister of Finance, who is, I know, looking for cuts, for that complementary team that is working so well in full-day kindergarten?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll ask the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to come to order and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, again, when it comes to getting our young people on track, our four- and five-year-olds deserve the best start possible.

We're not going to be closing the schools like they did under the Liberal government. That's where it all stops and starts.

Over and above that, we're going to make sure that our young people get the best start possible—and that's by listening to our parents and focusing on the fundamentals, to make sure that we get it right. We want the best people in the classrooms. We just passed a bill last week that we celebrated—safe and supportive classroom environments. That's exactly what our PC government is going to achieve.

The fact of the matter is, we absolutely embrace all the good learning techniques that are used in kindergarten straight through to secondary school. We're going to be working to ensure that what matters to parents—is that quality education and that they're getting their students off on the right track. Again, that's getting back to the basics and focusing on the fundamentals and making sure our students are prepared for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Mr. Speaker, our government for the people is moving forward with our campaign commitment to modernize our public health care system and centre it squarely on the

needs of patients, families and caregivers. This is incredibly important for my constituency of Ottawa West–Nepean because we have the largest seniors population in all of Ontario.

An important part of this plan includes our commitment to adding 15,000 long-term-care beds in the next five years.

Can the minister please inform the members of this Legislature on how this government is finally delivering results for Ontario seniors?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much, to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean, for your question.

Our government envisions a health care system that allows seniors to enjoy the highest possible quality of life and, when available, stay healthy at home, whether that's through home care services or retirement home communities.

However, we have also committed to adding 15,000 new long-term-care spaces within the next five years. In just nine months, we have already allocated over 7,200 new long-term-care beds, fulfilling almost half of our commitment toward building these spaces within five years. Our government will ensure seniors will have a long-term-care bed when and where they need it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I would like to thank the minister for her response. I am proud of the fact that our government is taking patient care so seriously by taking immediate action on this important issue. The previous government failed to address many of the most pressing issues facing Ontario's public health care system. My constituents and seniors across Ontario will certainly benefit from these new long-term-care beds and spaces.

Could the minister please explain why adding more long-term-care capacity is part of our broader plan to strengthen Ontario's public health care system?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thanks again to the member for the question. Adding more capacity to long-term care will strengthen Ontario's public health care system by helping to reduce wait times for those who need care immediately. This will help take pressure off hospitals, allowing nurses and doctors to prepare and care for patients the way that they were trained to do: in proper rooms instead of hospital hallways and storage closets. We envision a public health care system where patients and families will have access to better, faster and more connected services, a system where patients are supported when transitioning from one health care space to another; for example, from hospital to home care or from hospital to long-term care.

The people, including Ontario's seniors, have been and always will be our government's top priority, and we will create a health care system that works for them, for patients, for families and for caregivers.

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a question for the Acting Premier. There is a report today in the Toronto Star indicating that neither the TTC, the mayor of Toronto nor city council

has any details about the Premier's hostile takeover of Toronto's subway system. No one at the city knows what the Premier is proposing for the relief line: whether it will be underground or overground, what route it will take, how much it will cost, or how long it will be delayed because of this Premier's antics.

Why is the Acting Premier keeping the city of Toronto in the dark?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks to the member for that question. I would think the member would agree with me that the current transportation system isn't working for the riders of this province. People aren't able to ride the subway without it being overworked. For decades, the city of Toronto has been unable to expand the subway network. We're making the way forward to make changes to that.

We have been working with the city of Toronto since last year, after Michael Lindsay was appointed our adviser, working towards a new partnership between the city of Toronto, the TTC and the province of Ontario in order to upload the subway system where the province would take ownership of the rails and the stations and take care of the maintenance, and the city of Toronto would continue to have the TTC run the day-to-day operations and at the same time keep the fares that they're collecting today. It would be a new partnership that's going to be great, not only for the people of Toronto and the GTHA as a whole but for the rider. That's where the focus is going to be and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa Centre and the member for King–Vaughan will come to order.

Supplementary?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the Acting Premier: The city has spent years in partnership with the province developing plans for the relief line, the Eglinton West LRT and the Yonge subway extension. Some \$200 million has been spent on planning, design and other work, and the city was nearly ready to launch the procurement process. But now the Premier wants to rip up these schemes and replace them with his own plan, setting us back years and costing us unknown millions of dollars.

Why won't the Premier let the city get on with building transit, instead of wasting even more time and money with his misguided, hostile takeover?

1120

Hon. Jeff Yurek: We have been working closely with the city of Toronto for the last few months developing our terms of reference, which is leading towards the final conclusion of the upload of the subway system, which is going to create a new partnership, which will allow us to move forward with the expansions.

Right now there has been a lot of talk—for decades. For decades, people have been waiting for the relief line on the Yonge line. Unfortunately, they have been unable to deliver. It's not the fault of any one particular person. It's the system that's at fault; it's the system that needs change.

We're proposing a change to that system so that we can actually take these plans and turn them into projects. Under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford, we're going to do just that: We're going to expand the subway system, and we're going to create a whole new rider experience for the people of Toronto, the user of the TTC. We're going to create a regional network that works for the riders of the region.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next question? The member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question.

Deputy Premier, for almost 20 years, in my entire career, I've been fighting for the next generation here in Ontario. I've worked as a youth worker, I've organized family literacy day, I've run a literacy organization, and I've worked as an MPP and of course as the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

But, Deputy Premier, I'm concerned that over the last 10 months we've seen so many cuts that are particularly targeting young people: increasing class sizes by 27%, the elimination of 3,000 teaching positions, cuts to children with autism services, the cancellation of after-school programs and summer employment programs, the elimination of the child advocate, the cuts to post-secondary budgets by 5%, the cancellation of free tuition, the scrapping of Ontario's first French-speaking university, cuts to mental health and so much more.

My question to the Deputy Premier: Deputy Premier, why are your cuts targeting young people here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to say thank you very much to the Deputy Premier for referring this question to me, because between herself, the Minister of Education and so many more ministries, we are—for the first time in Ontario's history—taking a whole-of-government approach in the matters of education and in the matters of health care for our children and youth across this province. That is why we are engaging and we are right now in the process of appointing three tables, one for children in the justice system, one for children in our Indigenous child welfare system, as well as for our children in the welfare system as a broad whole.

We are working together through wraparound supports to support children with autism, which is why we doubled the funding—a historic funding announcement of over \$600 million in just the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services alone, in addition to the supports provided through the health care system, in addition to the supports that are provided to the tune of over \$3 billion for children with special needs in our education system.

This is a government that is for the people, but more importantly, Speaker, it's for the children.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'll ask a question about a specific program. In 2017, the previous Liberal government put forward a program to support Black youth here in the province of Ontario. It was a \$47-million commitment that, when fully implemented, would support over 10,000 young Black children here in the province of Ontario.

Over the last 10 months, in the 80 programs that were funded, they haven't heard a word from the government. All the information that was on the website has been removed. All of the grants have been removed from the website. We know, Mr. Speaker, that this is a blatant way to remove funding for some of the most vulnerable kids in our city.

My question is to the Deputy Premier: Why are you removing much-needed funding to some of the most vulnerable children here in the province of Ontario?

I heard it a few weeks ago; the minister responsible for children said, "No one in this government will ever apologize for the best social program, which is a job." Mr. Speaker, our program—

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to this, because when he was the former Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, we had the opportunity to work together and he introduced me to somebody who is a mutual friend of both of ours now, Farley Flex, who has been engaged with my ministry and who I'm planning to encourage to do a lot of work with youth at risk across the province.

We are taking our time. As you know, the budget will come forward on Thursday. But let me be perfectly clear: For children who are at risk, particularly Black youth at risk in our major cities, particularly in Toronto and Ottawa, we are making sure that we continue to extend investments for the internationally recognized Stop Now and Plan, which is why I announced, as one of my first acts in this job, plans to expand that program across the province of Ontario, in particular in the city of Ottawa, where I reside and where we were able to do that.

Let me be perfectly clear: This government is committed to ensuring that children who are overrepresented in the child welfare system, as well as in the youth justice system—which is overwhelmingly Indigenous or Black youth—we are committed to making sure we have better outcomes for all of those children.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. Our government made a commitment to the people of Ontario that we would create good jobs. Early in our mandate, we've done exactly that: over 75,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker, in under a year. Imagine how many jobs will be created as we move forward with our open-for-business mandate, eliminating the barriers that have been holding businesses back for the past 15 years.

Our government is focusing on major job-creating sectors, but we aren't forgetting how important local economies can be in northern Ontario. Unlike the Liberals, our government will never discriminate by region. Can the minister please tell the members of this House how a recent investment in Algoma is unlocking the potential in northern Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook, who is actually a Nickel Belt girl, born and raised in Capreol. She cares deeply about what we're doing in northern Ontario. As we renew and reset the focus of the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, we're making sure that we're making strategic investments in businesses small and large, Mr. Speaker, focused on product diversification, new products and, most importantly, creating jobs.

That's why we were pleased to announce a \$50,000 grant to secure a trademark in purchasing equipment for the manufacturing facility located in Batchewana First Nation. Black Fox Fishing has got a great idea. They make an ice fishing rod holder that automatically sets the hook when a fish bites. Ice fishing season is soon over but I can't wait to try it next year and I can't wait to stand up with that manufacturer and the three new jobs that they've created and celebrate good products made in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Donna Skelly: It is clear that opening Ontario for business is at the heart of our plan to make Ontario the economic powerhouse of this nation. That means creating good-paying jobs, but it also means protecting them right across Ontario, especially in the north. I'm proud that our government is injecting new life into northern Ontario's economy, and I'd like to thank the minister for his unwavering commitment to protecting good-paying jobs in northern communities.

Everyone in this House knows what a major employer the steel industry is in this province. It provides families with the means to put food on their table. Can the minister please tell the members of this House how our government is standing up for the hard-working men and women in the steel industry, including those in Sault Ste. Marie?

Hon. Greg Rickford: It makes me proud to say that Ontario is only as good as northern Ontario is strong. We provide a lot of important resources that over the course of time have made Ontario the economic engine of this country. We hope to get back to that place and one of the ways that we're going to do it is to support large manufacturers in northern Ontario. Case in point: Sault Ste. Marie. They've got a great member of provincial Parliament, a strong advocate. He knew that the largest private sector employer in that city needed help. We were there for them. Not only were we protecting jobs, we were creating jobs and protecting pensioners.

Algoma Steel employs 3,000 people, and there's good news: Algoma Steel has hired more than 240 new people this year, in the first half, and they're going to be hiring even more this year.

Mr. Speaker, we stand up for large employers in northern Ontario because we know a strong northern Ontario—

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

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Solicitor General. The Toronto Star reported that the special investigations unit, which conducts investigations into circumstances involving police and civilians that resulted in serious injury, sexual assault or death, is bracing for significant cuts to its budget. In a note they sent to employees, SIU is expecting a 30% cut to their budget. Speaker, will SIU see a reduction in their budget on April 11?

1130

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I would refer this question to the Attorney General.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I read with great interest the story in the Toronto Star. I can confirm today that the report is incorrect. That is not true. The SIU will be waiting, just like all other agencies, for April 1. But our government is committed to giving SIU the resources it needs to do the work we need it to do.

We worked very hard. My ministry has worked hard with the Ministry of the Solicitor General to ensure that effective oversight and respect for police go hand in hand once again in the province of Ontario, unlike the way it has operated for the last 15 years under the Liberals. We will make sure that the SIU is properly resourced. We will wait until April 15 for further information.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: The SIU plays an important accountability and oversight role and helps build trust between civilians and police. But this government has already significantly curtailed SIU's mandate in a way that the outgoing SIU director said would "reduce public confidence in the SIU." A 30% cut to SIU's budget and a scaling back of their mandate means that SIU will not have the resources it needs to protect the integrity of our police force.

Does the minister think reducing police accountability and oversight is a good thing?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, the budget is on April 11, not whatever I said, to clarify the record.

Our government was very proud to introduce the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, which once again restored trust and respect in police, which goes hand in hand with effective oversight. Policing oversight must be transparent and fair in order to have the confidence of the people of this province, and that is what our legislation has done. We fixed Bill 175. We restored the faith and trust of the people of Ontario in policing oversight.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker: The SIU mandate was clarified. It now focuses investigative resources where they need to be focused: on criminal activity. But at the same time, we have implemented Justice Tulloch's recommendations to ensure that oversight is even more independent than it was under the Liberals' Bill 175. The people of Ontario can have confidence once again in policing oversight in the province—

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

ELGIN-MIDDLESEX DETENTION CENTRE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question today is for the Solicitor General. The Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre, also known as EMDC, has been the setting of many tragedies and ongoing problems that have violated the sense of security of correctional officers, who go to work each day to keep our communities safe. Correctional officers have a challenging job as they work to manage risks of inmate violence on a daily basis, as well as issues related to crime, mental health and addictions. Families of inmates who have passed away are forced to confront these heartbreaking issues, and they should not be forced to carry this burden alone.

Mr. Speaker, can the Solicitor General please tell this House how our government is working to fix the problems left by the previous Liberal government to ensure the safety of correctional officers, staff and inmates at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington. I have to say that this member, with his many years of advocacy while we were in opposition, has been incredibly helpful with advice and insight. I very much appreciate your help with that.

The very first tour and meeting that I had with front-line corrections staff was at the urging of the Minister of Transportation because, as the member locally, he understands how important this is to the families and the community. I want to assure the families of individuals who have died of overdoses or deaths in our institutions that they will not walk this path alone. We are actively working on addressing some of the issues. Specifically in Middlesex, I want to highlight that we've already taken immediate action—

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I want to thank the Solicitor General, not only for your kind comments but also for your response to this very serious issue. These actions to support our front-line staff are needed to address the problems afflicting Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre.

As a member of this government, I'm encouraged to know that we are facing these stark challenges head-on and giving our front-line staff the additional tools and supports they need to keep themselves and those in our custody safe. I know the Solicitor General will continue to deliver on this government's commitment to ensuring that safety is job one in Ontario's corrections system.

Mr. Speaker, could the Solicitor General please share more about our government's plan to make Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre even safer?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I will try to talk faster. So, immediately, we've put safety first by providing enhanced safety training for all staff and increasing the number of random cell searches. We are using a canine unit to detect and serve as a deterrent to contraband, specifically drugs. We have a dedicated hospital escort team that was piloted in December, which is working out very well. We've also

test-piloted ion scanners at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. These scanners can identify trace elements of drugs and will be used to detect contraband on inmate mail. We have hired additional addictions counsellors and three new social workers.

I want to assure the people of Elgin-Middlesex that we are actively working on making sure that this institution is the safest it can be.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: To the Minister of Transportation: For over a year, the city of St. Catharines and the Niagara region have been advocating to have barriers installed on the Burgoyne Bridge. Six residents since October have taken their own lives.

Mayor Sendzik and the city council are doing their part to advocate for funding through the Niagara region, but the minister also has a hand in ensuring that drivers under the bridge remain safe while travelling along the busy 406 provincial highway.

Two letters from my office have been sent to the minister asking the minister to fund these barriers for the safety of the travelling public. Unfortunately, our last letter has gone unacknowledged.

Will the Minister of Transportation acknowledge the barriers are necessary to protect citizens with possible mental health issues and drivers travelling along the 406 highway, and commit to funding this life-saving measure?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks for that question. We've had that conversation in the House a couple of times here and we have received letters on it. I did remind the member at the time that it is a municipal bridge, and I'm looking forward to—MTO has offered to help them in any technical ways or support them in their decision to fund the supports on their municipal bridge.

We are very serious on this side of the House about dealing with the mental health crisis that's occurring throughout this province. Our government has promised to match the federal funding and create a new mental health system, and I'm proud to say that we have the best Minister of Health in place to put this process forward. We are going to look forward to supporting the people who are falling through the cracks and not getting the supports that they need.

But I just remind the member opposite it is a municipal bridge. We're there to support the municipality. I hope they come forward with a decision in order to come to a conclusion on this issue.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has informed me that he has a point of order.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to take this opportunity to introduce to the House a frequent visitor and a constituent of mine from Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes: Alexandra Prefasi-Horning is here. I've seen her here with her husband, Paul,

and her daughters, Peyton and Taylor, but I want to welcome her here again today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand that the member for Don Valley North has a point of order.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the afternoon, grade five students from Arbor Glen Public School in my riding of Don Valley North will be visiting Queen's Park on their field trip. I would like to welcome them to the Legislature in advance. I hope they enjoy their visit.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Guelph has a point of order.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to welcome Abhijeet Manay, the deputy leader of the Green Party of Ontario, to Queen's Park today.

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

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome the team from TRY Recycling, who are at Queen's Park today, and my constituent Jim Graham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask members to introduce their guests, I would like to draw attention to the fact that we have a very special guest in the Speaker's gallery today. The member for Scarborough—Ellesmere in the 30th, 31st, 33rd and 35th Parliaments and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in the 35th Parliament, David Warner, is here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And you will know that he was my very favourite Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Yes; mine, too.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I wanted to rise today in the Legislature and acknowledge that today is Sir Winston Churchill's birthday. As a great defender of democracy and the parliamentary traditions that we hold so dear, I thought it would be fit to mark this occasion.

Mr. Mike Harris: Although he's not here in the Legislature with us today, I would like to give a special mention to my brother-in-law, Adam Lingenfelter, who is a second lieutenant with the Royal Canadian Regiment here with the Canadian Forces. He was kind enough to send me a beautiful pin, which I am proudly wearing today, to support and celebrate the 102nd anniversary of Vimy Ridge today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WALTER ALLWARD

Mr. Percy Hatfield: This is a shout-out to David Warner. As you know, he was the Speaker of this House between 1990 and 1995. These days, he's the editor of the

InFormer, a magazine published by the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians. In the latest issue, Mr. Warner chose to highlight the sculptures and monuments on the precinct grounds here at Queen's Park. What caught my eye was the feature on Walter Allward. Most of us wouldn't recognize his name, but he's the man who created what is perhaps the most remarkable monument ever created by a Canadian: the Vimy memorial in France. It took him 14 years to complete that extraordinary memorial to peace.

David Warner writes that Allward was a modest, self-taught, talented man who left school at 14. Around the Legislature, Walter Allward created the Northwest Rebellion statue and one of William Lyon Mackenzie and the struggle for democracy in Upper Canada, as well as statues dedicated to General John Graves Simcoe, Sir Oliver Mowat and Sir John Sandfield Macdonald. His smaller sculptures and monuments still stand today in places such as Stratford, Peterborough and, Speaker, I am so proud to say, in my own community of Windsor.

Walter Allward, in 1906, 30 years before his Vimy masterpiece in France, created the Boer War memorial fountain which still stands in the Queen Elizabeth II sunken gardens in Windsor's Jackson Park. In Ottawa, this talented man has two statues on Parliament Hill, Robert Baldwin and Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine, and the Truth and Justice figures cast in bronze that flank the entrance to the Supreme Court building.

Speaker, on behalf of all of us, I say thank you to David Warner for reminding us of the significance of what surrounds us in this wonderful place, our provincial Parliament. David, thank you for informing me about the Windsor connection to that magnificent Vimy memorial in France.

Applause.

CITY OF RICHMOND HILL

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I am proud to announce that my riding, Richmond Hill, being one of the largest towns in Ontario, was renamed as the city of Richmond Hill when the council reinforced its position in York region and the Ontario as an urbanized and competitive municipality.

Indeed, the city of Richmond Hill is home to many successful businesses. Just last week, I had the honour to share the joy and success of CoreFour Inc. They have built award-winning education software for over 30 years. Recently, their product Edsby has won them a contract from all the school boards in New Zealand. The York Region District School Board is also one of their clients.

Edsby is the most comprehensive learning and analytical platform. It engages students and parents, and is available to them so that they can connect on all their devices. It enables personalized learning experiences and gives school districts, states and provinces or national governments powerful new ways to measure and improve their educational effectiveness.

We are very proud of the level of innovation and creativity demonstrated by this team. Way to go, Edsby, and way to go, city of Richmond Hill.

MATTHIEU AND ROCH MANTHA

Mr. Michael Mantha: Speaker, the two individuals I want to talk to you about today—I think I mentioned them in my inaugural speech, so it's been a long time I haven't talked of them. They braved a pretty tough weekend. This weekend, they were with me. They actually braved the drive that we took from my place all the way down to Manitoulin Island. They braved the discussions they had with me as the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. They were tireless and put up with me all weekend. And you know what, Speaker? They're the two individuals that make me most proud to take my seat each and every day.

I want to thank my son Roch and my other son, Matthieu, for having spent this weekend and made last weekend so special for dad. You guys have no idea what it meant to me, just the fact that we went out on the lake and we fished together, we laughed together, we ate together.

I want to give a shout-out to Liz and Rupert, who were our hosts, who put us up in this beautiful little cabin. It was nothing fancy: a wood stove, four walls, a couple of windows and a couple of cots. It was just a remarkable moment for me and my sons.

I encourage all members, when you have that opportunity of being a dad—it's one of those rewarding things that you have, to be a dad or to be a mom. Just be there for your kids when you have that opportunity, because you know what? This place takes a toll on you. It's nice to go back home and get re-energized.

I want to say, Roch, Matthieu, thank you so much. Dad really loved the weekend.

ELMIRA MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

Mr. Mike Harris: I have a very special member's statement here today, and I'm sure you're going to really appreciate this, Mr. Speaker.

It is a true privilege to rise this afternoon to celebrate another successful year for the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival. For its 55th year, the people of Elmira and Woolwich township welcomed over 60,000 visitors from across Ontario and beyond to enjoy the world's largest one-day maple syrup festival. Beyond the consumption of golden-brown pancakes topped with locally tapped, delicious maple syrup, Ontarians enjoyed a horse-and-buggy ride out to the sugar bush and various exhibitions for all ages.

Team Harris was out and about all day welcoming visitors, and this included engaging in the pancake flipping relay—which I'm sure you've done over the years, Mr. Speaker. We were armed with spatulas, tennis racquets, scuba flippers and frying pans, and we were ready to take on all rivals. But we had a secret weapon with us—a ringer, if you will—the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the honourable member from Vaughan-Woodbridge. I would like to thank the minister for working the spatula in our victory over our local Liberal MP and then taking some time to share his expertise at the crafts and collectibles market, joining Waterloo region chair Karen

Redman, Woolwich mayor Sandy Shantz and event chair Kim Dixon to tour the half-mile-long outdoor mall. I know the minister shared his appreciation for Kim Dixon and the countless volunteers who make this event possible.

I would like to invite all of my colleagues to Elmira next year for the 56th annual maple syrup festival.

DUDLEY-HEWITT CUP

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome and invite everyone, both in the Legislature and those people watching, to a very important event that's happening in my riding. It's called the central Canadian junior A hockey championship, better known as the Dudley-Hewitt Cup, and it's happening from April 30 to May 4. The great thing about holding the Dudley-Hewitt Cup in Cochrane is that it's likely still going to feel like hockey weather in Cochrane, because there will likely still be snow.

1510

It's a combination of the Northern Ontario Junior Hockey League, the Ontario Junior Hockey League and the Superior International Junior Hockey League, and it's hosted by Cochrane's own Cochrane Crunch. It's going to be held in a beautiful arena known as the Tim Horton Events Centre.

Cochrane is the birthplace of none other than Tim Horton. They're very proud of that. They're very proud of their hockey. They're very proud of their young people.

I wish them a great hockey tournament.

If people come to Cochrane and you're wondering what else you could do in Cochrane—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Lots.

Mr. John Vanthof: Lots of things. But I particularly recommend the polar bear habitat. It's a research facility where they do research with polar bears. One of their main goals is to see how polar bears are going to be able to adapt—and if they're going to be able to adapt—to climate change, which we all know is happening. We all have to be cognizant of it, and Cochrane is taking steps to help the world see how it's going to affect them.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday, I had the opportunity to visit my sister, and I stopped at one of the ONroutes to pick up a cup of tea. It was early, it was quiet and there wasn't much activity, and I had the opportunity to have a conversation that I have had over and over again with young people in their workplaces, in their colleges, in their universities or in their high schools.

The two young women working behind the counter are both part-time employees and part-time students. What they wanted to talk about was their anxiety about next year. They shared their worry about whether they would be able to continue in their courses—whether they'd be able to go to school at all—because of the cuts to student assistance.

These are enterprising young people. They're working hard to complete their degrees, they're eager to make a contribution to their communities, and they're telling us that they may have to give up that path because of the changes that have been made and the concern they have about debt.

Our government put in place the free tuition program for low- and middle-income families because our advantage in Ontario, with our huge geography and our small population, is our young people.

We need everyone at their best. On behalf of those young people who are on the brink of their future all across this province, I encourage the government, I implore the government, to think again about those cuts to student assistance, because we need them, our economy needs them, all to be at their best.

MEGAN OLDHAM

Mr. Norman Miller: I rise today to tell members of the Legislature about an amazing young woman from Parry Sound. Megan Oldham is an 18-year-old freestyle skier who, in her first season on the World Cup circuit, won a gold medal in slopestyle in Switzerland on March 30. This gold medal completes a set with the bronze medal she won at Mammoth Mountain in the US and the silver medal she won in Italy in January. With the gold medal win, Megan also won the 2019 Crystal Globe for slopestyle, an award given to the competitor with the most World Cup points.

Megan learned to ski right here in Ontario, just up Highway 400, at Mount St. Louis. Megan started freestyle skiing with her older brother Bruce, who himself won a bronze medal at the 2019 Canada Winter Games. Megan follows in the footsteps of another skier from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Olympic gold medallist Dara Howell from Hunstville.

I hope the successes of both Megan and Dara can inspire more young women to take up freestyle skiing, just like both Megan and Dara were inspired by another Ontario athlete, Sarah Burke.

On behalf of all of the members of the Legislature, I want to express our congratulations to Megan on an outstanding first season on the World Cup circuit and her gold medal and Crystal Globe. Congratulations.

ANNIVERSARY OF RWANDAN GENOCIDE

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: “Dear government:

“It has been 25 years since the Rwandan genocide. As the Toronto Star explains, ‘Those who survived say they always strive to keep the balance between moving forward with life and remembering and paying homage to the departed.’

“So what does it mean to pay homage to the departed? How can we join those who have survived to heal in Ontario?

“Well, last Thursday, this House voted unanimously to condemn and address Islamophobia. However, that same

day, a concerned settlement organization contacted our office, having just received word that the Attorney General is considering cuts to legal aid for immigrants and refugees.

“A coalition of settlement organizations quickly came together to alert the Attorney General that ‘cuts will put at risk the lives of thousands of people seeking safety here in Ontario.’

“Last Thursday, we agreed that our choice of language matters in our fight against racism of all kinds. But yesterday, this Conservative government was once again referring to asylum seekers as ‘illegal border crossers,’ a term that, purposefully or not, serves only to degrade the dignity of real people and dismiss the stories of hardship that brought them here to safety.

“So I ask: Does defunding legal aid services for refugees pay homage to the victims of the Rwandan genocide who came to Canada as refugees? Does calling asylum seekers derogatory names pay homage to the survivors of the Rwandan genocide who found asylum in Canada and in Ontario?

“Dear government, please do better. Ontario is watching.”

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Le 5 avril, la province a approuvé la construction d’une nouvelle école élémentaire catholique de langue française à Ottawa, qui accueillera des élèves de la maternelle à la 6^e année. Ce nouveau bâtiment comprendra également des salles dédiées aux services de garde, qui bénéficieront aux jeunes enfants et à leur famille.

Notre gouvernement est fier de soutenir la construction de cette nouvelle école élémentaire de langue française qui servira la communauté francophone de la région d’Ottawa et Carleton. Nous réformons notre système d’éducation, et nous centrons nos ressources sur les outils dont les éducateurs ont besoin pour faire leur travail et aider les élèves à trouver de bons emplois dans l’économie moderne.

Une fois terminée, cette école élémentaire offrira un nouvel espace d’apprentissage qui pourrait accueillir plus de 400 élèves et trois nouvelles salles dédiées aux services de garde agréés qui pourront accueillir 49 enfants.

Monsieur le Président, nous savons que les environnements d’apprentissage de haute qualité favorisent la réussite des élèves. Avec l’annonce de cette nouvelle construction, notre gouvernement montre qu’il investit dans l’avenir des élèves et des familles d’Ottawa et Carleton qui travaillent dur.

FUSION PHARMACEUTICALS

Ms. Donna Skelly: I am so pleased to rise today to recognize an historic investment of US\$105 million in Fusion Pharmaceuticals, a McMaster University start-up company. It is the largest single investment ever in a Canadian start-up, and one of the largest single private investments in Canadian biotechnology.

Fusion Pharmaceuticals, based at the McMaster Innovation Park in my hometown of Hamilton, develops cancer therapy products that target cancer cells by delivering a precise dose of radiation. They are designed to attack drug-resistant tumors that do not respond to traditional therapies, including lung, brain, prostate and breast cancer.

This multi-million-dollar international investment reflects strong support for McMaster University’s work, its people and its product pipeline. As a result, they will be able to broaden their team and develop new therapies.

This investment will allow Fusion to design products for the marketplace directly out of university research. Commercializing McMaster’s research is achieving real results.

More than 100 people will be hired over the next three years. The first clinical trial is already under way in Hamilton and Montreal. More trials are expected to be added around the world.

Once again, I would like to congratulate Fusion Pharmaceuticals on this investment, and I wish them all the best as they continue their groundbreaking work.

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

The member for Orléans has informed me she has a point of order.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am seeking unanimous consent so that my colleague from the Liberal caucus and I can split our five minutes of response to both ministerial statements. So, it will be about two and a half minutes each. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Orléans is seeking unanimous consent of the House to split the time with her colleague in response to the ministerial statements. Agreed? Agreed.

1520

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated April 9, 2019, 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.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EQUAL PAY DAY

Hon. Christine Elliott: As our government for the people recognizes Equal Pay Day, I am proud to stand as

Deputy Premier to read the following statement. Our Minister of Labour, Laurie Scott, is unable to be with us in the House today as she is in Sudbury announcing a \$2.6-million investment in mine safety. Minister Scott has asked me to read the following statement on her behalf in recognition of Equal Pay Day:

“Women play a critical role in our economy, contributing across all professions, trades and sectors, helping to make Ontario open for business.

“Today, I am proud to be in Sudbury meeting with an all-woman mine rescue team. I am encouraged to see women entering the trades and non-traditional jobs and roles in record numbers.

“As Minister of Labour, I am proud to be part of a government that is creating real reforms and delivering economic results for women.

“Since August 2018, the number of women working in Ontario has increased by approximately 45,000.

“We are meeting women’s needs with innovative approaches to child care, tuition, student loans and micro-loans for entrepreneurs.

“We continue to work with stakeholders and job creators about ways to address the gender wage gap, and we look forward to continuing to hear new ideas and solutions for future improvements.

“Our government understands there are many factors that contribute to—or detract from—the quality of life for women in Ontario.

“Ontario’s government believes that people—men and women—should be paid equally for the work they do. We will continue to strive for new and innovative ways to continue closing the gender wage gap.”

Speaker, I am honoured to have shared this statement on behalf of my colleague Minister Scott.

In closing, I would like to inform the House of some statistics that point to the incredible contributions women make to our economy: 50% of all new businesses in Canada are led by women; women partially own or wholly own 47% of all small and medium-sized enterprises; and women-led businesses generate more jobs than businesses led by men.

I am proud to be a woman in this government that is doing so much to support women.

VIMY RIDGE DAY

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Today Canadians mark Vimy Ridge Day. As we do, we reflect on the courage and sacrifice of Canada’s military, its legacy and the formidable victory at Vimy in 1917 that came at great expense to Canadian troops, leaving our nation with 10,000 men either dead or wounded. Considering Canada’s population was roughly seven million people, that number is even more pronounced as we reflect on it today.

It’s often said that the Canadian victory at Vimy brought the emergence of a great nation and a country that was capable of success, one that would become admired throughout the world. Vimy marked the first time all four Canadian Corps worked together. For the first time, men

from every part of Canada—this great nation—stood on the battlefield together.

Post-war, Brigadier-General A.E. Ross said, “In those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation.” As importantly, French philosopher Ernest Renan said, as a result of this, “Nations are made by doing great things together.”

Today we celebrate Canada’s success on the battlefield as liberators of France. We commemorate the sacrifice of the over 3,000 men who died and the over 7,000 who were wounded. And we recognize that singular moment of our history that would become the birth of modern-day Canada.

The importance of Vimy to both the world and to the creation and unification of our country can never be overstated. The strategic victory did what neither the French nor the British troops could do, turning the tide against the Germans and preparing us for becoming a truly independent nation that would sign the Treaty of Versailles.

Each year, throughout Canada and France, we take the time to recognize the significance of Vimy. Each year, I lay a wreath at the Vimy Memorial Bridge that crosses the historic Rideau River in our nation’s capital between Barrhaven and Riverside South.

My daughter, whose great-great-grandfather served at Vimy, whose great-grandfather served in World War II and whose grandfather and father served in our Canadian Forces, joins me. I firmly believe that the sacrifices of our military and their contributions to world security and the protection of our values must always be shared with today’s youth. We should be proud of the Canadian bravery at Vimy. We should be grateful for the legacy that those men left us: a strong and unified country. And we should always remember that the rights and freedoms we enjoy today are a direct result of their sacrifices at Vimy and every other conflict that Canadian soldiers have fought in.

I often look up to the ceilings in this assembly and I think about the fact that we are here today debating in a truly free environment. As Canadians, we are free to express ourselves regardless of our gender, race, ethnicity or religion. We are free to assemble, to either rally for support of an idea or to protest in dissension. We are free to speak our minds without fear of retribution or incarceration. We are free to go to a ballot box and vote in or vote out our government. We are free to respect other people’s points of view while maintaining our own. We are free to do all of this because Canadian soldiers, as they did at Vimy, protect our rights, our values and our beliefs.

These freedoms are in short supply in many parts of the world, which is why it’s important to reflect on everything we have to be grateful for. There are women who are denied basic education in parts of the world. There are those who are LGBTQ+ who today, elsewhere in the world, are denied basic rights.

Vimy showed us the victory of good over evil. Vimy showed us the possibilities of a unified country at home and abroad, and Vimy showed the generations that followed that freedom is worth fighting for, as they did in World War II, when Will Bouma and Ernie Hardeman’s

families were liberated in Holland, or the young women who are now free to go to school in Afghanistan. Thanks, Canadian soldiers.

In Ontario, we salute our heroes. In 2007, a part of Highway 401 was renamed the Highway of Heroes. In 2010, Vimy Ridge Day was officially recognized in this province by all three major political parties at the time.

In 2018, our government for the people announced a memorial at Queen's Park for Afghanistan veterans. And this year, we will modernize Canada's first veterans affairs office, the Soldiers' Aid Commission, which started during the First World War in 1915 right here in Ontario and which supported the veterans of Vimy, to include veterans of recent wars and conflicts.

Speaker, as I conclude, we all owe a significant debt of gratitude to the men who sacrificed at Vimy and, today, to the men and women currently serving Canada at home and around the globe as they fight for our freedom, as they liberate those who are oppressed and as they continue the Canadian legacy of always fighting for good over evil.

Applause.

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

1530

EQUAL PAY DAY

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's a privilege today to rise in honour of Equal Pay Day. Women in Ontario are still only earning 71 cents on the dollar compared to men, a statistic that is even higher for racialized, Indigenous, immigrant and trans women.

The gender wage gap means that Ontario women would have to work an extra three and a half months every year for the same pay. This is why we recognize Equal Pay Day today, because today is how far into 2019 women would have to work to have earned equal pay for last year. Today is why we also wear red, to symbolize women's wages being, in fact, in the red.

Speaker, the government has the tools and resources that could make real strides towards pay equity. But instead, this government has taken every opportunity to block pay equity initiatives across the province and to make life harder for women. They froze the minimum wage at \$14 an hour, which disproportionately disadvantages women, who represent the largest share of the province's minimum wage earners. They are leaving early childhood educators in the dark about their wages, a field which is predominantly made up of women workers. The \$2-an-hour Wage Enhancement Grant that early childhood educators receive expired on March 31, and the government has been silent about whether or not they will continue to fund this crucial grant.

The Conservatives have also failed to negotiate with Ontario midwives after they won their historic pay equity case, which found that the government was underpaying midwives—again, a field predominantly worked by women. Instead of doing the right thing by midwives, this government turned around and retroactively cut all of the funding to the Ontario college of midwives.

Speaker, if all of that wasn't bad enough, this government has also iced the Pay Transparency Act so that they could consult with businesses about how much of a burden it would be for them to pay women fair and equal wages. Honestly, this government's actions speak louder than words, and women in Ontario deserve so, so much better. They deserve to be paid fairly and equally for their work.

Today, on Equal Pay Day, I am calling on the government to close the gender wage gap. You can start by implementing the Pay Transparency Act, raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and reinstating the Wage Enhancement Grant for early childhood educators.

VIMY RIDGE DAY

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It is an honour to rise today, April 9, 2019. As we here in Ontario, and indeed the entire country of Canada, prepare to celebrate the coming Easter weekend, it is easy to forget to reflect on an Easter weekend 102 years ago. It was an Easter weekend that helped to define who we are as Canadians, our commitment to freedom, and our commitment to serve our country and our allies.

Easter came early in 1917. It was an Easter morning, April 9, 1917, when Canadian regiments began the Battle of Vimy Ridge. By the 12th day of April, after a four-day battle, 3,598 Canadian lives were lost, 7,000 Canadians were wounded, and the Battle of Vimy Ridge was considered a victory.

Canada entered the First World War in 1914. By war's end, 619,000 Canadians had enlisted. This was an enormous contribution from a country of just under eight million. One can only imagine the impact of the number of Canadians lost and injured at Vimy Ridge.

Because pre-war Canada had a very small permanent armed force at the onset of the world war, citizen soldiers formed most of the new Canadian expeditionary forces. Ontario was very well represented.

Many of the regular forces and reserve units were from our ridings right here in Ontario, ridings throughout this province. Indeed, there are most likely descendants of those who fought in the Battle of Vimy Ridge here in this House and amongst us today. Out of 42 units, 16 regiments from Ontario represented Canada at Vimy Ridge: six from Toronto, two from Ottawa, two from London and the others from Hamilton, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Oshawa and Kingston.

I would like to conclude by quoting the words of First World War General Arthur Currie in addressing the Canadian Corps: "Your names will be revered forever and ever by your grateful country."

JOURNÉE DE L'ÉQUITÉ SALARIALE

EQUAL PAY DAY

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Je veux remercier la Chambre d'avoir l'occasion de discuter de la question de l'équité salariale.

I'm very grateful for the opportunity to stand in the House today and recognize Equal Pay Day on behalf of the Ontario Liberal caucus.

Equal Pay Day is not a day of celebration. It's a day where we recognize how much work we still have to do to make sure that women are paid fairly for their work. Today marks how much we still need to do to eliminate barriers that exist for women, particularly women with disabilities, and low-income, Indigenous, racialized and immigrant women for whom the gap is that much larger.

Les barrières érigées contre la participation des femmes doivent être éliminées. When we refuse to eliminate these barriers, our economy loses and our society loses. I want to say I've had the chance in my career to sit on the pay equity tribunal. I've also been an advocate for the advancement of women. I am a mother of a daughter who is a tree planter and who is now a wildlife biologist, who is conquering new depths and entering new fields. I'm very proud of that, and I think we celebrate that today. We celebrate the fact that more and more women are entering the workforce in non-traditional fields.

That's why we need pay transparency, so that they are able to go and ask what the wage is that should be given to them. Pay transparency allows them to know what the market bears for the work, and not to be disadvantaged in that market. I advocate today for pay transparency because I think we want to celebrate, and equip our young women with the capacity to be true participants in the labour force. Pay transparency is just a tool to make sure that we are getting there. It ensures that people know what the wages are that they should be asking for, and asking simply that there be reporting on what's going on in the market.

Alors, je veux juste terminer en disant : We want to have equality, and we want to have pay transparency. Les femmes veulent toujours contribuer à la mesure de leurs talents. C'est important pour les femmes. C'est une question d'égalité, mais c'est aussi important pour notre économie.

VIMY RIDGE DAY

JOUR DE LA BATAILLE DE VIMY

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: One hundred and two years ago, on an Easter Monday, thousands of Canadians fought in one of the decisive battles of World War I. On that day, over 7,000 soldiers were wounded and more than 3,500 soldiers would die.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge marked the first time that Canadians fought side by side as one, united in the four divisions of the Canadian Corps. It is believed by many that Canada, not as a colonial dominion but as an independent country, was born on this day. This beginning was made possible by the sacrifice made by those who served in our armed forces. It can be easy through the course of history to forget the human side of the soldiers who fought for us. Our veterans are more than just distant heroes. They are our neighbours, our family members, our friends and our colleagues.

Monsieur le Président, au sein de ma communauté, j'ai le privilège d'avoir plusieurs vétérans et membres actifs des Forces armées canadiennes.

Every year, many families gather at our local legion, Branch 632, on Remembrance Day to pay tribute to the sacrifices made by those men and women of our armed forces. Prior to my election, Mr. Speaker, I owned a retirement residence, and I must say that some of the closest memories that I cherish are those where I had the great privilege of listening to the veterans who shared their stories and remembered what they went through. For that, I say thank you; thank you for everything they did to protect our liberty and our freedom. The honour and sacrifice that was shown by the soldiers of Vimy Ridge continues on today, as I would like to thank those who continue this tradition today by serving in our armed forces.

We lost the last veteran of Vimy Ridge in 2003, as he passed away at the age of 103 years old. However, we continue to honour the sacrifice of all those who served at Vimy. Mr. Speaker, we will remember them, et nous nous souvenons.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you to the ministers and all those who responded.

1540

PETITIONS

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Given that it's Equal Pay Day today, I think it's a good reminder that many Ontarians are petitioning to maintain the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant for registered early childhood educators and child care workers in licensed child care.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant provides \$2 per hour in wage support to many registered early childhood educators and child care workers in licensed child care;

"Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant supports staff recruitment and retention in licensed child care, increases income security among registered early childhood educators and child care workers, and begins to recognize their contributions to Ontario communities;

"Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant helps close the gender wage gap;

"Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant helps keep parents' child care fees from rising;

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

"Maintain the \$2-per-hour provincial Wage Enhancement Grant for registered early childhood educators and child care workers in licensed child care."

I fully support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I have a petition on proposed changes to social assistance from the ODSP Action Coalition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas on November 22, 2018, Minister MacLeod announced proposed reforms to Ontario’s social assistance programs, including changing the ODSP definition of ‘disability’ to align ‘more closely with federal government guidelines’;

“Whereas federal definitions of disability as outlined in the Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD) and the disability tax credit (DTC), have a much narrower definition of disability than the current ODSP definition, with more than five in 10 first-time CPP disability applicants being denied;

“Whereas aligning the ODSP definition with federal guidelines will mean that many more Ontarians with episodic or periodic disabilities, such as certain cancer treatments or mental illnesses, will be denied crucial supports and forced onto Ontario Works, which provides a maximum of only \$733 per month;

“Whereas Minister MacLeod also proposed on November 22, 2018, to increase the clawback rates on earned income in ODSP and OW from 50% to 75%, once exemption thresholds are met;

“Whereas the proposed increase to clawback rates from 50% to 75%, once income exemption thresholds have been met, will only serve to discourage recipients from seeking earnings beyond the exemption threshold, irrespective of the threshold amount;

“Whereas a \$14 minimum wage job with a 75% clawback on earnings effectively translates to working for \$3.50 per hour, which is hardly an incentive and grossly undervalues the labour of recipients;

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

“Keep the current definition of disability in ODSP. Keep the clawback rates for ODSP and OW at 50% maximum once income thresholds have been met, irrespective of the threshold amount.”

I agree with this petition, and will be signing it and giving it to page Mathew to give to the Clerk.

CAMPUS RADIO STATIONS

Mr. Joel Harden: I have a petition that reads, “Campus Radio Stations are an Essential Service.” I want to thank the good people at CHUO at the University of Ottawa for giving me this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario campus radio stations consist of over 150 staff members and 3,500 volunteers, a majority of them youth and students;

“Whereas campus radio stations offer training and development for students, both as part of their on-campus course curriculum and within the community at large,

including preparation for careers in broadcasting and journalism;

“Whereas campus radio stations in Ontario are key providers of emergency information under the National Public Alerting System;

“Whereas campus radio stations are an independent news and media outlet for students and communities that provides a platform for marginalized voices;

“Whereas campus radio stations have a high fixed cost compared to other student services;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deem campus radio stations an essential fee under the Student Choice Initiative.”

Speaker, I will be signing this petition with great pleasure and passing it to page Aaryan for the Clerks’ table.

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition entitled “Keeping Transit Public: Saving the TTC.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the TTC has owned, operated and maintained Toronto’s public transit system since 1921; and

“Whereas the people of Toronto have paid for the TTC at the fare box and through their property taxes; and

“Whereas uploading the subway will mean higher fares, reduced service and less say for transit riders; and

“Whereas the TTC is accountable to the people of Toronto because elected Toronto city councillors sit on its board;

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

“Reject legislation that uploads any aspect of any aspect of the TTC to the province of Ontario, and reject the privatization or contracting out of any part of the TTC; and

“Match the city of Toronto’s financial contribution to the TTC so transit riders can have improved service and affordable fares.”

I fully support this petition, and I will be giving it to page Nicholas.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Will Bouma: This petition says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the ban on hunting and trapping in sections of Ontario to protect the eastern hybrid wolf was put in place without regard for the overall ecosystem;

“Whereas this ban has adversely affected the ability of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR), hunters and trappers to properly manage animal populations and Ontario’s ecosystem;

“Whereas this ban is no longer needed and is in fact causing more damage to Ontario’s ecosystem and increasing unnecessary encounters between wildlife and Ontarians;

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

“That the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry immediately lift the ban on hunting and trapping set in place to protect the eastern hybrid wolf.”

I fully support this petition, will be happy to put my signature on it and I give it to page Katherine.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled “It’s time for frequent all-day, two-way GO rail service to Kitchener-Waterloo.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario is responsible for investing in building, maintaining and upgrading GO Transit trains and rail routes throughout the province; and

“Whereas local technology companies say that a lack of GO trains between Kitchener-Waterloo and Toronto is their biggest constraint on growth; and

“Whereas dependable, efficient public transit is a catalyst of economic development; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has repeatedly made commitments to invest in and improve GO Transit trains for the purposes of improving connectivity, increasing transit ridership, decreasing traffic congestion, connecting people to jobs, and improving the economy; and

“Whereas increased congestion on Highway 401 between Kitchener-Waterloo and Toronto places a strain on economic development opportunities in the region and costs households” a minimum of “\$125 per year;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to provide a firm funding commitment and a clear timeline for the delivery of frequent, all-day, two-way GO rail service along the full length of the vital Kitchener GO corridor.”

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature, and I will give this petition to page Saniya.

CAMPUS RADIO STATIONS

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It’s an honour to rise today with a big stack of petitions from CFRU supporters in my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario campus radio stations consist of over 150 staff members and 3,500 volunteers, a majority of them youth and students;

“Whereas campus radio stations offer training and development for students, both as part of their on-campus course curriculum and within the community at large, including preparation for careers in broadcasting and journalism;

“Whereas campus radio stations in Ontario are key providers of emergency information under the National Public Alerting System;

“Whereas campus radio stations are an independent news and media outlet for students and communities that provides a platform for marginalized voices;

“Whereas campus radio stations have a high fixed cost compared to other student services;

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“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deem campus radio stations an essential fee under the Student Choice Initiative.”

I fully support this petition and I will ask page Mathew to bring it to the table.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: This petition is in honour of That Hunting Store, which is a hunting store in the same plaza as my constituency office in Richmond.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the ban on hunting and trapping in sections of Ontario to protect the eastern hybrid wolf was put in place without regard for the overall ecosystem;

“Whereas this ban has adversely affected the ability of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR), hunters and trappers to properly manage animal populations and Ontario’s ecosystem;

“Whereas this ban is no longer needed and is in fact causing more damage to Ontario’s ecosystem and increasing unnecessary encounters between wildlife and Ontarians;

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

“That the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry immediately lift the ban on hunting and trapping set in place to protect the eastern hybrid wolf.”

I fully support this petition. I am honoured to affix my signature to it on behalf of the people of Carleton and give it to page Sanjayan.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My petition is entitled “Don’t Increase Class Sizes in Our Public Schools.

“Whereas the vast majority of parents, students, and educators support smaller class sizes and the current model of full-day kindergarten and want the best education possible for the students of Ontario; and

“Whereas larger class sizes negatively impacts the quality of education; reduces access to teaching resources and significantly diminishes teacher-student interactions; and

“Whereas the impact of larger class sizes will be particularly detrimental to students who need additional support; and

“Whereas Ontario has an internationally recognized public education system that requires careful attention and the investment to ensure all of our students can succeed;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit to reducing class sizes, maintain the current model of full-day kindergarten, and make the necessary investments in public education to build the schools our students deserve.”

I certainly support this, will be affixing my signature and giving it to page Ishwarejan.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to present this petition today on behalf of the constituents in London North Centre. The petition is entitled “Stop Doug Ford from Cutting Mental Health Care.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Doug Ford has announced a \$335-million per year funding cut to mental health care and services;

“Whereas an estimated 12,000 children are waiting up to 18 months for mental health care, and there are 63% more children in the ER for mental health issues than there were in 2006;

“Whereas a cut to already threadbare mental health funding will mean longer waits for care and fewer services—which can result in mental health conditions being exacerbated, and more people living with mental illness spiralling into crisis;

“Whereas front-line care workers and first responders are doing the best they can, but coping with a shortage of resources;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse Doug Ford’s \$330-million per year funding cut to Ontario’s mental health services.”

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

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Mike Harris: In honour of the member for Carleton and the member for Brantford–Brant, I thought it would be a good idea if I read this petition into the Legislative Assembly of Ontario today as well.

“Whereas the ban on hunting and trapping in sections of Ontario to protect the eastern hybrid wolf was put in place without regard for the overall ecosystem;

“Whereas this ban has adversely affected the ability of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry(MNRF), hunters and trappers to properly manage animal populations and Ontario’s ecosystem

“Whereas this ban is no longer needed and is in fact causing more damage to Ontario’s ecosystem and increasing unnecessary encounters between wildlife and Ontarians;

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

“That the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry immediately lift the ban on hunting and trapping set in place to protect the eastern hybrid wolf.”

I fully support this petition. I’m going to affix my signature to it and pass it to page Julien to bring to the Clerks.

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Keeping Transit Public: Stop the Subway Sell-Off.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the TTC has owned, operated and maintained Toronto’s public transit system since 1921; and

“Whereas the people of Toronto have paid for the TTC at the fare box and through their property taxes; and

“Whereas breaking up the subway will mean higher fares, reduced service and less say for transit riders; and

“Whereas the TTC is accountable to the people of Toronto because elected Toronto city councillors sit on its board;

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

“Reject legislation that allows for the breakup and sell-off of any aspect of the TTC to the province of Ontario, and reject the privatization or contracting out of any part of the TTC;

“Match the city of Toronto’s financial contribution to the TTC so transit riders can have improved service and affordable fares.”

As a transit rider myself, I couldn’t agree more with this petition and I affix my signature to it.

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

Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Speaker. I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): On division, motion carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1556.

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| Bourgouin, Guy (NDP) | Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James | |
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| Cho, Stan (PC) | Willowdale | |
| Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC) | Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes | Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
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| Coteau, Michael (LIB) | Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est | |
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| Fife, Catherine (NDP) | Waterloo | |
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|--|--|--|
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| Ghamari, Goldie (PC) | Carleton | |
| Gill, Parm (PC) | Milton | |
| Glover, Chris (NDP) | Spadina—Fort York | |
| Gravelle, Michael (LIB) | Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord | |
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| Harris, Mike (PC) | Kitchener—Conestoga | |
| Hassan, Faisal (NDP) | York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston | |
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| Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC) | Dufferin—Caledon | Solicitor General / Solliciteuse générale |
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| Karahalios, Belinda (PC) | Cambridge | |
| Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP) | Parkdale—High Park | |
| Ke, Vincent (PC) | Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord | |
| Kernaghan, Terence (NDP) | London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord | |
| Khanjin, Andrea (PC) | Barrie—Innisfil | |
| Kramp, Daryl (PC) | Hastings—Lennox and Addington | |
| Kusendova, Natalia (PC) | Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre | |
| Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB) | Orléans | |
| Lecce, Stephen (PC) | King—Vaughan | Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement |
| Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | |
| MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC) | Nepean | Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine |
| Mamakwa, Sol (NDP) | Kiiwetinoong | |
| Mantha, Michael (NDP) | Algoma—Manitoulin | |
| Martin, Robin (PC) | Eglinton—Lawrence | |
| Martow, Gila (PC) | Thornhill | |
| McDonell, Jim (PC) | Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry | |
| McKenna, Jane (PC) | Burlington | |
| McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC) | Lambton—Kent—Middlesex | Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure |
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| Miller, Paul (NDP) | Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek | |
| Mitas, Christina Maria (PC) | Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre | |
| Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP) | Thunder Bay—Atikokan | |
| Morrison, Suze (NDP) | Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | |
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|---|--|--|
| Pang, Billy (PC) | Markham—Unionville | |
| Park, Lindsey (PC) | Durham | |
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| Rasheed, Kaleed (PC) | Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville | |
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| 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 | |
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| Singh, Sara (NDP) | Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
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| 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 | |
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