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of Ontario



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 November 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 novembre 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROVINCIAL ANIMAL WELFARE
SERVICES ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LES SERVICES
PROVINCIAUX VISANT LE BIEN-ÊTRE
DES ANIMAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 18, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to enact the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019 and make consequential amendments with respect to animal protection / Projet de loi 136, Loi édictant la Loi de 2019 sur les services provinciaux visant le bien-être des animaux et apportant des modifications corrélatives concernant la protection des animaux.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: It's wonderful to rise today on the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, the wonderfully named PAWS Act, to talk about what our province, what our government, is doing to make sure that we are providing the highest level of protection and security to our animals, who we all care so much about.

It's fascinating, Mr. Speaker. I remember that during the election, when I was going around door to door, knocking on people's doors, talking with constituents, there would be a whole bunch of different issues that would come out. Of course, during the election, we were all talking about the cost of electricity, the cost of living, health care and different issues like this. But every couple of doors, I would also get somebody who would raise issues around animal welfare. This was a particularly salient issue, at least in my community, and I'm sure right across the province, because a lot of people have a pet, whether it's a cat or a dog, or perhaps they own a farm and deal with livestock or equines. Everybody is always concerned about making sure that we are providing that level of protection for our animals.

In fact, I read an article a couple of years ago that talked about how sometimes people can be even more empathetic to animals. It's partially because people view animals as more vulnerable and something that needs to be protected, something that's defenceless. I think that's one of the reasons why we're all so concerned with making sure that we have those high levels of protection.

I remember well, Mr. Speaker, that a couple of years ago, I took part in a program in Ottawa that's run by an organization called Youth Ottawa. It's called the DILA program. I went into a high school classroom. This group of high school students would come together in their civics class, and they had to pick an issue that they were particularly passionate about, and come up with a plan on how to address it.

This particular high school class were very concerned with the issue of puppy mills, and what we could do across Canada to help to get rid of the scourge that is puppy mills. They spent a couple of days working on a plan. They developed an information campaign with a little ad to go up on YouTube. They came up with a Facebook page, Twitter hashtag, all of this, and they came down to city hall and presented this plan to a number of public officials in Ottawa, to talk about their plan to fight this scourge that is puppy mills.

I was fascinated by this, Mr. Speaker, that when this group of youth had a chance to think about an issue that they really cared about, what they gravitated towards was, "How do we protect animals?"

Of course, the issue of puppy mills, alongside dogfights and other such violence and harassment against animals, is something that really tugs at the heartstrings.

This bill, the PAWS Act, is going to do a number of things to help to make sure that we are best protecting animal welfare. It's going to install provincial investigators, who will have the power to go out and make sure that we are enforcing animal welfare laws across the province. This is going to start on January 1, 2020.

Now, when these folks are caught committing violence against animals, we are going to install the toughest penalties across Canada for these individuals. We are going to set down a very strict standard to say that we here in Ontario believe that if you are caught abusing or committing violence against an animal, or mistreating an animal in any way, you are going to face the strictest penalties.

We're also looking at ways that we can change the system to make it easier for people to be able to report these instances of violence against animals. We have a catchy phone number that's going to be going up, easy for people to remember. It's 1-833-9-ANIMAL. That's a number where people at home, if you think that your neighbour is perhaps mistreating their pet, if you know of an instance of a puppy mill, if you hear about a dog fighting ring—whatever it might be, this instance of animal mistreatment, animal violence, cruelty to animals—you can pick up the phone and call, and these provincial inspectors will be able to come on site and assist with this issue.

We're also very, very cognizant of the fact that folks in rural areas, folks who do farming, folks who have livestock, equine—they need to make sure that the people who are on the inspection and enforcement side are aware of farming practices, farming traditions, all of that. So we're going to make sure that our inspectors who are working in rural areas are trained to be able to deal with this, because we want to make sure we are taking into account all of the different types of variables.

Over the course of the next couple of months, there are going to be consultations on some of the enforcement mechanisms here, and we encourage anybody across the province who has thoughts on how we can improve our system to make sure that they get involved in this consultation, that they take part, that they provide that feedback so that we can make sure the structure that we're putting up, the system that we're putting up for protecting animal welfare, is the strongest it can be.

I think back to different pets that I've had an experience with in my life. You think back to it, Mr. Speaker, and you understand why people are so passionate about this issue. Growing up, my parents—apparently, perhaps, they fancied themselves the royal family of Ottawa—always had corgis. We had three corgis growing up, and these were wonderful, wonderful animals, just the cutest dogs. Our last corgi, Baron, was a retired show dog, so when we adopted him he was impeccably well behaved.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I have a younger brother with special needs. My brother both has autism and also suffers from epilepsy. It was amazing, because Baron, despite having never had any training as a service dog, seemed to have a sixth sense about Dillon. If he saw that Dillon was running toward a busy road, Baron would run up and kind of cut him off and redirect him. It was as though the herding instinct that corgis have—because corgis, of course, before they were made famous in Buckingham Palace, were herding dogs. That's why you rarely ever see a corgi with a tail, because you didn't want the livestock or anything stepping on their tails. Baron, this corgi, would cut Dillon off and help prevent him from running out in the road.

The other thing that he would do on occasion is, if my brother was upstairs in the living room and he was watching—his favourite show is Barney. I have probably watched Barney Live! on Broadway at least 100,000 times over the course of my life. Dillon would be watching Barney, and if he happened to have a seizure and we weren't in the room, but Baron was in the room, he'd bark. We'd go upstairs and there was Dillon, and we had to engage in the emergency response. It was amazing that this dog seemed to have that sixth sense. It was a truly sad day when we lost Baron to cancer a couple of years ago.

If anyone had ever done something to Baron, I know that each and every one of us in our family would have wanted to see the highest level of penalty on these individuals to stop them from ever doing that again, because he was part of our family. He was such an important piece.

I think back to other dogs as well. Of course, I have a lot of friends who have children with autism, and one of

my friends in Ottawa, Tommy Des Brisay—Tommy is actually a Paralympic athlete. He has autism, but he's a runner, a marathon runner. He's Ottawa's first fastest runner. Tommy has had three service dogs over his career. He has had Sara, he has had Matrix and he has Adel. These service dogs are with him to provide comfort, to help him in those times when he's perhaps feeling anxious, to help redirect him, again, on things like if he's running out towards a busy road.

0910

I remember one story that Sara, his first service dog, had retired, and he'd brought in his second service dog. I went over to visit Tommy one day. We were going to go see a Disney movie. He's an absolute Disney fanatic. When I got there, I said, "Oh, Tommy, where's Sara?" Tommy turned to me—and Tommy doesn't speak at the same level as us, but he certainly does speak—and he said, "Sara has gone to live on the farm." I went, "Oh, my God," because of course, for all of us, that's something you often tell your kids, that "Sara has gone to live on the farm." And so I said, "Tommy, I'm so sorry, but I'm sure Sara is very happy on the farm." I went over to Tommy's mother and I said, "MaryAnn, I'm so sorry to hear about Sara. That's so sad. Sara was such an important part of your life." Tommy's mother sort of looked at me a little bit funny and said, "Well, what do you mean, Jeremy? Sara went to live on my parents' farm out in Aylmer." "Oh, okay." So Sara was fine.

These service dogs have been such an integral part of Tommy's life and continue to be an integral part of Tommy's life, although the latest service dog has to be very fit, because again, Tommy is an incredibly fast runner. He won the Canada Army Run in Ottawa last year, so the dogs have to try and keep up with him. I certainly can't. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, I'm not a marathon runner.

For myself, I actually got my first pet shortly before the election last year. I ended up adopting, of all things—I must have been crazy—a Great Dane puppy. When I adopted this dog, Apollo, he was about this big and just the absolute cutest thing. I didn't quite know at the time, Mr. Speaker, that I was going to be running in the election, for a number of different reasons. Suddenly, I found myself as a candidate, and so Apollo became the campaign mascot. Apollo moved into the campaign office, and he was there to greet everyone. Apollo loved absolutely every single person in that campaign office except my campaign manager. Whenever he would see my campaign manager, he'd pee everywhere. That was the one time he lost his potty training, and so it became a bit of a running joke.

Apollo was with me all throughout the campaign. I'd go out door-knocking for four hours, I'd come back, I'd take him for a walk, go back out door-knocking, come back and feed him. He was such an important part of it.

This weekend, I took a trip up to our family cottage about an hour outside of Ottawa, in Perth. I just went up to make sure that the place was fully winterized. I brought Apollo with me. It was funny because at one point, I looked out into the forest—and of course, there are no leaves, so you can see through the forest much deeper in

the winter—and I saw these deer bounding by. I thought, “Oh, that’s beautiful.” Then suddenly, I see something about the same size as the deer, bounding after them. Lo and behold, it was Apollo. He had found some friends the same size as him. Apollo was chasing after the deer and having a grand old time.

Apollo has been such a wonderful part of my life. As everyone in this chamber knows, politics can have a lot of ups and downs. You have very busy days. There is something so wonderful about getting home at the end of the day and finding a warm, smiling face waiting to see you. In my particular case, Apollo now weighs 155 pounds, and he’s up to about here on me. I keep thinking that one of these days I’m going to ride him into Queen’s Park. Perhaps the Sergeant-at-Arms might get a little nervous, but I swear that he’s a—

Mr. Dave Smith: I don’t think she’d get nervous. I think she could take him down.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: There you go.

He’s a gentle giant. But anyhow, there’s something so wonderful each and every day about going home and seeing that warm, smiling face. Although, I must say that when the puppy was about this big, it was fine for him to be on the bed with me. But now, if he tries to climb up on that bed—155 pounds, basically a miniature horse—I get about one eighth of the bed. So if I ever don’t look terribly rested, that’s why. I’ve had to sleep on the floor and Apollo has taken the bed.

But I think to myself: If anyone ever did anything to Apollo, I would be beyond myself. I would desperately want to make sure that there were consequences—the strictest consequences in all of Ontario—to make sure that this sort of thing would never happen again to anyone else. You develop a bond with these animals, and, again, as I mentioned before, they become such an integral part of your family.

I’ve unfortunately never been a cat person. There’s always this debate, “Are you a cat person or a dog person?” I, personally, am allergic to cats, and so every time I go over and see a cat, the cat seems to know. They seem to know I’m allergic and they want to come over and rub all against me and get me sneezing. But even though I may not be a cat person, I have so many friends who have bonded so much with their cats and think about them the same way that I think about Apollo.

I remember having the great fortune to have the chance to visit 24 Sussex when I was working in federal politics, and for those who knew her, Mrs. Harper, the wife of our former Prime Minister, was a great supporter of the humane society, and she actually would house a number of stray cats at 24 Sussex. When you went over to visit 24 Sussex, there would be a big sign on the door with instructions on if you wanted to adopt one of the 24 Sussex cats. She was always trying to adopt them to guests. So you would go to 24 Sussex and you would leave with a cat. It was a bit of a unique situation there. But for her, it was obvious that taking care of these animals that had been left behind at a shelter, that had perhaps been mistreated, was so crucially important. That was something that was a

big part of her legacy, and continues to be something for which she’s very, very warmly remembered around Ottawa, her support for the humane society.

So again, we’re going to be bringing in this PAWS legislation. There are going to be inspectors. We’re going to make sure that we are providing training to those inspectors so that they can deal with the unique situations in farming with livestock and equines. We’re going to be bringing in the strongest penalties in Canada for offenders. In fact, for the really highly egregious offences, they will face stiff penalties, including jail time and hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines, to make sure that this never happens again—hundreds of thousands of dollars for people who could be so heinous in attacking or mistreating one of these special animals, who just want to find a home and bring happiness and warmth to a family.

We’re also going to make sure that this legislation can be adaptable to deal with issues on First Nation reserves. First Nations constables are now going to be able to have the power to exercise these same powers as our inspectors to deal with any violations on-reserve. So again, we’re looking at this from multiple different angles.

We’re going to make sure that our police continue to have a role as well, because oftentimes, perhaps if you are in a supermarket parking lot and you see an animal that’s trapped in a car and it’s plus 35 or minus 35—I guess we’re getting a little bit closer to that—and you think to yourself, “How could somebody leave this dog in the car?”, you might wave down a police officer. Now there’s going to be that power so that somebody can step in, break through that window and rescue that dog to make sure that it’s safe, that it’s not being mistreated. Because you just simply can’t do that. Can you imagine somebody leaving a baby in a car when it’s plus 35 out? You would never do that. So we’re going to make sure that that same protection is there for our beloved animals.

This builds on some of the different things that we’re doing across government. We’ve recently introduced another piece of legislation that’s going to allow folks to bring their pets with them onto patios during the summer, which I think is an absolutely wonderful, wonderful idea. I know Apollo and I may make good use of that, although perhaps the patio owner might charge me for a whole extra seat, because Apollo is going to need a stable on that patio if I show up.

0920

Again, Mr. Speaker, I’m so pleased to be standing up to support this legislation. I know that we’re going to get broad support here, to make sure that we’re protecting these animals as best as we possibly can.

I know that when I speak to constituents now, when I go out into the community, as I did when I first ran for election, and go door to door, when folks raise these concerns, I can now turn to them and say that we have taken action. We’ve introduced the PAWS Act. We’re bringing in these inspectors. We’re bringing in tough penalties. We’re going to make sure that we have a system in place to best protect our animals. I’m incredibly proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a good opportunity to stand up on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

We just went through a federal election, and I had the opportunity and the privilege of seeing all of the great people in the Washington buildings in Elliot Lake, in both building 1 and building 3, and also the Warsaw buildings. Why do I mention those buildings? Because there are a lot of loving seniors who are within those buildings, and they have beautiful family members and all of them have paws. This is something that is going to be near and dear to them. It's always nice, meeting up with them.

I want to commend the member from Ottawa West-Nepean for bringing up one of his family members in regard to the service dogs and how they provide help to your family member. That's another major thing that came up during the door-knocking that I was doing during the federal campaign: A lot of these service dogs are not being recognized. They're not being permitted to go into certain establishments. Why? One of the reasons is that there's no established criteria on how we train these service dogs, and people are always looking for that. So we'd like to have some type of a uniform method. But again, there needs to be that respect for individuals who have their service dog with them, in order to help them with their daily experiences and the challenges that they have.

I do have a concern with this bill. We will be supporting this bill, by the way. However, the concern that we have is the money that's going to go into it. What I mean by "money" is, where will the inspections be, and where will the enforcement of this particular act, the PAWS Act, be? How much money is going to go into getting those individuals, and to making sure that our friendly, furry creatures are being cared for throughout the entire province?

Those are some of the concerns I'm hearing, and I'm hoping to hear more on that during this debate.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'm so proud to once again stand up in support of Bill 136, because this is really the right thing to do, to modernize animal welfare right across Ontario. I was proud, when I was in the Legislature yesterday, to hear that we will be getting support from our members of the opposition, because this is the right thing for animal welfare in Ontario.

For about a hundred years, Ontario animal welfare fell under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. That particular format, that model, resulted in great gaps of enforcement and oversight right across Ontario. Bill 136 addresses that.

Under this particular proposed piece of legislation, it will bring jurisdiction for animal welfare and oversight and accountability under a different format. It will also provide the highest degree of direct oversight, something that has been lacking in the existing model.

I know that my colleague across the aisle spoke about funding. In the particular model that we're bringing forward, funding is a set provincial responsibility, versus the

charitable OSPCA model. That meant that the previous model relied on fundraising. We are going to be addressing that. We are going to have inspectors who will be hired and fall under provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, our party, and members across the aisle, whether they're in the official opposition or in the independents, all want to do what's best for the protection of domestic pets and for agricultural livestock. Clearly, Bill 136 is bringing forward a more fulsome approach to animal welfare.

I'm very proud to once again speak on behalf of this particular proposed legislation, and I look forward to the support from members of the opposition.

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

M. Guy Bourgoin: Ça me fait plaisir de me lever sur le projet de loi 136. Vous savez, monsieur le Président, que ma circonscription, géographiquement, est énorme. C'est pour ça que, quand on parle de protéger les animaux de compagnie, je crois que c'est tellement important. Dans le Nord, pour protéger les animaux, on est des fervents défenseurs quand ça arrive au trappage. Les trappeurs dans le Nord, on est tout le temps conscients qu'il faut être humanitaires quand on abat l'animal ou quand on trappe certains animaux. Mais quand ça vient à nos animaux de compagnie, ça va sans dire que c'est encore plus important.

Ce qui nous concerne avec ce projet de loi, ce sont les inspecteurs. Comment nos inspecteurs vont-ils être appuyés? Comment nos inspecteurs vont-ils être subventionnés? Quand on regarde une circonscription qui est probablement la deuxième—si ce n'est pas la première—plus grande en Ontario, ça va sans dire qu'on est concernés. Des personnes qui ont leurs animaux de compagnie, s'il y a de l'abus, ou que ça soit des chenils qui font de l'abus ou que d'autres animaux se font abuser, il est important qu'on ait les inspecteurs. Il est important que les inspecteurs puissent se déplacer. On a vu souvent qu'il y a eu des coupures dans le ministère des terres et forêts, avec des inspecteurs ou des officiers de la loi qui ne pouvaient pas faire leur travail encore à cause que les subventions, ou l'argent, n'étaient pas là pour être capables de faire leur travail adéquatement.

On supporte le projet de loi, mais on a quelques difficultés à voir où on va avec ce projet de loi.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's a pleasure to be here today to speak on Bill 136. It has been said that you can judge a society by the way it treats its animals. And Bill 136, I believe, is a very positive bill for animal protection in this province.

When our government took office, we inherited a system of animal welfare protection that was completely inadequate and lacked oversight. As with everything else our government is doing, we have been listening and consulting—and we have heard—in order to create the contents of this legislation.

This is an issue the people of Ontario care very deeply about. The welfare of Ontario's animals in our homes, on

our farms or in our zoos and aquariums is important to people, and it's important to our government. What Ontarians want is a clear, accountable animal welfare regime with appropriate oversight, transparency and consistency. There should be a consistent set of enforcement practices and rules for all Ontarians.

The system that Bill 136 is proposing is the product of extensive consultation with stakeholders, including all of the humane societies across the province, organizations that are at the front line of animal welfare, education and enforcement. From these consultations, our government's firm belief is that a provincially operated system is in the best interests to ensure the highest standard of animal welfare enforcement province-wide. This system, under Bill 136, will be supported by an accountable and transparent oversight framework and the introduction of the strongest penalties in Canada for offenders. Bill 136 will allow Ontarians to have more oversight, public trust and accountability under the chief inspector.

With this legislation, our government is making the next critical step towards a new, modern and transparent animal welfare system in Ontario. I'm proud to say that Ontario will become the first province in Canada to introduce a provincially operated enforcement system that will be locally deployed with provincial inspectors—

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

We'll return to the member from Ottawa West—Nepean to conclude this portion of the debate.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I would like to thank my four colleagues who provided comments on this.

To the member for Algoma—Manitoulin, I appreciate your comments, your feedback and I also appreciate your thoughts on service animals. I know that the member for Kitchener South—Hespeler is particularly passionate about this issue, and I have no doubt that, working together across this chamber, we can look at ways to improve and strengthen our service animal framework here in the province.

0930

To the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook, I appreciate your comments on the enforcement act gaps and how that was really a motivation for us here, to make sure that we are addressing those gaps as well as we possibly can, and bringing this under a provincial framework so that they're not just relying on fundraising so that we have an active role to play here. I think that is incredibly important.

Au député de Mushkegowuk—James Bay, je vous remercie pour vos commentaires à propos de la situation dans le nord de la province. Je pense que c'est vraiment important d'avoir un système qui prend soin de la situation dans le Nord. Donc je pense que vos commentaires sont vraiment importants à ce sujet.

And to the member from Oakville—again, highlighting the fact that this law just didn't pop up overnight, that there were extensive consultations done across multiple humane societies across the province that are doing truly, truly wonderful work, Mr. Speaker, in making sure that we are protecting and saving some of those vulnerable animals.

I'd just like to conclude by thanking the Solicitor General for bringing this piece of legislation forward. I think it's incredibly important and look forward to the continued debate.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the people I represent in London West. I want to begin by congratulating this government on this bill. Sadly, Speaker, I have had very few opportunities to begin debate that way, but clearly, with Bill 136, the government has worked to bring forward legislation that actually unites Ontarians rather than divides them, and provides us all with an opportunity to take real action on an issue that Ontarians virtually unanimously agree is important.

We know, Speaker, that there was a national poll a few years ago that said that 92% of Canadians want better laws to protect animals from cruelty and abuse. More recently this year, in January, Dr. Kendra Coulter, an academic at Brock University, conducted an online survey of 20,000 Ontarians. In this province, 95% of those who participated in that survey said that Ontario's legal system should be taking crimes against animals more seriously.

There was an opportunity for open-ended comments in this online survey. One of the comments is particularly insightful, Speaker. The respondent said that animal abuse is the "canary in the coal mine" of abuse. If you save the canary, you save all the others who follow. Certainly, there is a wealth of research that demonstrates the link between abuse of animals and abuse of women and children. For that reason alone, it is important for this Legislature to act to put in place the strongest animal cruelty protections that we can.

We also know that there is an association between particular forms of animal abuse, like dogfighting and other kinds of crimes, like narcotics and firearm violations. So again, there is a compelling public safety rationale for moving ahead with this legislation.

Of course, the other reason to move forward with this bill is because it offers a permanent fix for a model that was both inadequate to fully protect animal welfare, and also, as the Ontario Superior Court found earlier this year, unconstitutional. For a century, Speaker, Ontario has delegated enforcement of animal cruelty laws to a private charity, the OSPCA. That means that the level of enforcement and the quality of enforcement rely on the effectiveness of the fundraising efforts conducted by that private charity, and it also means that there is inconsistency across the province in how the enforcement is implemented. It's also a complete anomaly in how people expect governments to work. When Legislatures pass laws, citizens normally expect the governments to enforce those laws, to be responsible, to put in place strong enforcement mechanisms, and for the ministry in charge of the legislation to be accountable for the enforcement of those laws.

So it's long past time. A hundred years later here we are, but we are finally moving forward to create a publicly accountable, publicly funded and publicly operated animal welfare regime, which is what this bill does.

Now, several of my colleagues on this side of the House have raised concerns about the lack of specifics of how this enforcement regime is actually going to work. It's one thing to say that we have the strongest enforcement legislation in Canada, but it's another thing to put the resources behind that legislation to ensure that it is actually effective. The effectiveness really depends on what kinds of resources are attached. So how quickly are these new animal inspection officers going to be hired? What kind of training will they receive? How much training will they receive? What kinds of protections will be put in place to support them as they are doing their work? Going in to break up a dogfighting ring, for example, Speaker, can be a very dangerous situation for these officers.

And, of course, we know that there will also be a need for training for the police officers and the crown attorneys who are going to be involved in prosecuting violations under this legislation, to avoid situations like the one we heard about in Niagara Falls where charges were laid against a veterinarian who was caught on video just viciously abusing animals in his care, and those charges were later dropped. We don't know what happened within the legal system to allow those charges to be dropped, but certainly better training of the crown attorneys and the police officers has the potential to help prevent that from happening in the future. We also know that the plans that will be put in place for animal care and veterinary forensics will have an impact on the effectiveness of this bill.

This bill leaves quite a few details to regulation, which is another concern, as well as the lack of specifics about resources. We'll be waiting to see regulations about the standards for custody and care of animals. We'll be waiting to see regulations about who can relieve animals in distress; in a hot car, for example. Who is the prescribed person? Is it a citizen? Is it a police officer? Is it a firefighter? Who is authorized to do that? What are the minor offences or major offences which are distinguished in this bill? There is no description of what those offences involve. How will forfeited animals be dealt with? What is going to be the role of the private debt collector? So there are a number of elements in this bill that we'll only hear about when we see the regulations.

Speaker, I also want to take two minutes and 20 seconds to talk about some of the missed opportunities in this bill. This is a welcome development for animals, for people who care about animals in this province, but there is more that we could have done in this bill, and maybe we can have that conversation when amendments are proposed at committee. Ontario is the only province currently that doesn't have any exotic animal legislation, and that is a gap that we could look at filling with this bill. We all remember the IKEA monkey. Ontarians did not think that that was acceptable, that people have exotic animals that they're taking into retail stores. It shouldn't be left up to cities. We should have some kind of provincial consistency.

0940

We also should be looking at cosmetic mutilations or unnecessary surgical procedures for animals, things like

cat declawing, tail docking of dogs, cropping of dogs' ears. These are the kinds of procedures that could also be prohibited through this legislation.

Finally, Speaker, I just wanted to mention another missed opportunity that I would love to see this government move forward with. Currently, veterinary clinics are not permitted to operate as charities. Under the Veterinarians Act, they have to be run as business corporations. In London, we have a veterinary clinic that provides high-volume spay-neuter procedures for low-income families, as well as geared-to-income veterinary services. This kind of initiative, allowing veterinary clinics like that to operate as charities, would enable low-income people to have the same access to pet ownership and the same benefits of pet ownership as many of us in this chamber also enjoy. We've spoken about our love for our pets and we know the benefits of pet ownership in terms of health and social well-being.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It's really great to be talking about Bill 136 today. Just like many of my colleagues here, I am a pet owner. I've had my dog Baxter for over nine years now, and he really is a part of the family and my fur baby, as I like to call him.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, I actually met with Mr. Bruce Roney, who is the CEO and executive director of the Ottawa Humane Society. It's interesting, because initially he wanted to meet to talk about some of the concerns that he had in the past with the way that things had been going with prior regulations. However, we had a very pleasant meeting because he sat down and said, "You know, I had a whole bunch of issues, but now that the legislation has come out, we're actually very happy with it and we're very happy with the direction that this government is taking and where it's going." He said that he was pleasantly surprised that the inspectors will have even more powers than before. He did say that some of the challenges and some of the concerns he's having is about how police services will deal with this legislation. My understanding is that he and other humane societies across the province will be working with their local police forces to set up some training.

We also had a really good discussion about rural animal welfare because Carleton, just like many other ridings, is very rural. Agriculture and animal welfare in agriculture is very different than the way you would take care of a dog or cat. I was pleased that there is still going to be work with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture to support our farmers, because I think ultimately that is very important, and I am very pleased to support this bill.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: It always gives me great pride to rise in the House on behalf of the folks of Hamilton Mountain and to commend my colleague the member from London West on a very thoughtful, well-put-together debate. She raised very valid points that I don't think I've heard in the Legislature yet, pertaining particularly to the

correlation between animal abuse, woman abuse and child abuse. When someone hurts an animal, what is it that they're doing to human beings? That was a very valid point that she raised that I don't believe I've heard in any of the previous discussion.

Also, the fact is the training and the enforcement needs to happen along with this bill, but we're seeing it as being very vague and a lot being left to regulation, which is always concerning, because the people of Ontario will not have any say when it comes to regulations in legislation. So we have great concerns. We want to know: where the training is going to happen, is there going to be enough training for enforcement officers and how are we going to keep those enforcement officers safe? Health and safety on the job will still persist when it comes to animal enforcement. So we have to ensure that these folks who are going in to break up things such as dogfights and animal rings, who could be put in a very precarious position and could be in danger, have the safety to go with that.

Also, financial stability: We don't know what kind of money is going to be attached to this to ensure that we do have proper enforcement, that we have the training to go with it, that we have enough bodies on the ground to make sure the animals in this province truly are protected.

Congratulations to the member, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

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

Mr. David Piccini: I would like to compliment the member opposite for a well-thought-out speech, and of course my colleague the MPP from Kanata-Carleton for the excellent points.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Just Carleton.

Mr. David Piccini: From Carleton, sorry.

I think it was important when the member opposite spoke about early signs. When one abuses an animal or treats it with profound disrespect and abuse, it's an early sign of what could be abuse later on to children, marital violence etc. That came up in a round table that we had with our municipalities, our humane societies, enforcement and the OSPCA in my riding. That's an excellent point.

I'd like to echo what she said and say that this is important, to have this in the dialogue. But I want to tie it into the framework. One of the critical pieces on oversight: With provincial inspectors now under the province, that role will be important for wraparound services, so when a provincial inspector goes into a home and we see perhaps someone living below the poverty line, we can tie them in to the supports they need. When we see early indicators of what could be spousal abuse and other things, we now have that provincial oversight for that.

I encourage the opposition to keep talking about this, to work with our government on this, because it's important. We've got the framework in place. After 15 years of neglect for animals under the previous Liberal government, we are now taking comprehensive action with the oversight piece; with the provincial inspectors, who will

be governed by a body; and, of course, with some of the strictest penalties.

They're absolutely right. Let's keep that important dialogue going forward. Let's talk about those wraparound services, those early interventions and how we can best do that, and assign the appropriate resources for that.

The regulations here are important. I'm glad the minister is working with a sound framework here. I encourage members opposite to work with our government to ensure that we continue to build on this important piece of legislation.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Regulations on animal welfare have long been overdue. We're all aware of that. It's a positive response, to the government, what they've been doing here with this bill, the PAWS Act. I'm grateful, but there are some issues, and I'll talk about them in the minute and 45 seconds that I have here.

This government, along with the previous Liberal government, have known for a long time that the system we had in place wasn't working. Both have let the animals and the people of this province down by allowing a broken animal welfare system with little to no accountability to continue. We've seen countless animal abusers go through the system and just get a slap on the wrist. This government has failed to act until now, when the situation has clearly reached a boiling point and they have no other choice.

What we're seeing with this new legislation is encouraging, as I mentioned, and it may seem to many that we're thinking about this—we're fairly cautiously optimistic about it. We're the only province in the country where we have a public model of animal law enforcement. The bill introduces the strongest penalties in Canada for offenders, which is good.

If this bill passes, there's a hope that dedicated animal welfare officers and adequate support and resources will be put in a position to effectively police animal cruelty complaints. As my member from London West mentioned as well, crown prosecutors will have to effectively enforce the law by prosecuting offences, including new offences, in the bill. We're hopeful that that will happen.

Even the best legislation won't be able to protect our animals if the funding and resources fall short, so we need to employ enough animal inspectors to serve the needs of Ontario. We need public servants who are properly trained, as we've been mentioning, to handle the unique and often dangerous situations involved in animal welfare.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, hopefully, the government will see these complaints—

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

We'll return now to the member from London West.

0950

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member for Carleton, my colleagues from Hamilton Mountain and Brampton North, and also the member for Northumberland–Peterborough South for their comments on my remarks.

The member for Northumberland–Peterborough South said that he’s looking forward to working together with the official opposition on this legislation. I want to say I appreciate the fact that we finally have something to work together on. This is one of the few times that there has been an opportunity to work together to advance an issue that has support from the majority of people in this province.

But it really depends on if we do it right. I want to again emphasize the concerns that we have raised about funding, about resources and about the number of things that have been left to regulation in this bill.

A couple of my colleagues talked about the correlation between abuse of animals and domestic violence. That is something that the research, the literature, has unequivocally demonstrated: There is a high correlation between domestic violence, child abuse and animal abuse. Frequently, these three forms of abuse occur simultaneously within a family.

So, as well as having inspectors identify the potential of domestic violence occurring in a family, we have to make sure that supports are there for women who have experienced domestic violence, for children who have experienced abuse. Sadly, something we have not seen from this government is a commitment to increase those supports. That is something that we definitely want to work on.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I’m very pleased to rise today to speak a little bit on An Act to enact the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act—Bill 136. Of course, we’re all complimenting each other on the name of this bill. The short name is PAWS, and that’s obviously the first letters in the main name of the bill.

We’re talking about animal welfare. We want to have a seamless, modern, transparent, easy-to-use system, free for the public to report any signs of abuse of animals in the province of Ontario.

Obviously, the focus is on domestic animals, on pets. Over 60% of Canadians own pets, and I am one of them. If the Speaker will allow me to very quickly show, that’s a picture—as the member from Carleton called her dog—of my fur baby. I have a dog named Chelsea. It’s the first dog I’ve ever owned. My only previous pet when I was a kid was a guinea pig—that’s all I could get my parents to agree to—but I loved her as much, probably, as I like this dog.

For a lot of families in Ontario, we go door to door and we see a lot of the pets greeting us at the door. Most of them are quite friendly. For a lot of families, this is their friend. I’m not going to say it’s their child—maybe sometimes it is—but it’s certainly a very dear friend to them.

People are concerned about animals and how they’re being treated in other homes across the province of Ontario. We had a system where the OSPCA was doing investigations into abuse and neglect of animals, and the system was not working. There were problems involving inspections on private property, so now we’re moving to more of an investigation type of system of the way the

OPP investigates human neglect and human abuse. It’s going to be much more similar to that.

The member from Ottawa West–Nepean spoke about his Great Dane—he didn’t say it was a Great Dane—named Apollo, and how he’s looking forward to bringing Apollo onto patios this summer. I had mentioned to him that it would have to be a rather large patio to fit Apollo. But what I was thinking about was that by having animals outside in the community, on our patios, in our parks, we’re able to see that they’re well taken care of. The fact is that when things are behind closed doors, that’s when abuse can happen to children, to women, to seniors and to men, obviously, as well. When things are out in the open, it gives us a chance to have the public’s eyes on what’s going on.

We know that there has already been an effort, even before this legislation was presented. We all agree that we would like to see it passed sooner rather than later. There seems to be all-party, unanimous support for this piece of legislation so far.

There is already in operation a 1-800 phone number. It’s 1-833-9-ANIMAL, so that’s 1-833-926-4625. It’s available to call in 24 hours a day.

I already asked if people are going to be able to send in some photos and videos of potential abuse and neglect, and I was told that it’s really going to follow closely, as I said, with the OPP investigations of humans. Unfortunately, not everybody should be taking care of an animal or a child in the province of Ontario, and we really appeal to the public because that’s who we need to work with to report things.

I’m reminded of the humane societies in Ontario. The member from Ottawa West–Nepean mentioned former Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s wife, Lauren. I’m reminded of a story I read in the newspaper where there was a reporter outside who was cut somehow. Lauren Harper was just arriving home and saw he was bleeding. She grabbed him by the arm and brought him through a side entrance, somehow, into the kitchen, where the former Prime Minister was reading the newspaper. He didn’t even look up from the paper and just said, “Another stray, my dear?” She was always bringing in stray animals, mostly cats, to take care of. She really had a big heart for animals.

I have in my riding of Thornhill Shelley Austin and Roz Brodsky—Shelley is actually on the board of the Toronto Humane Society—who work very hard rescuing animals all across the province of Ontario, driving very long distances to rescue animals.

We know that animals can suffer psychological harm that affects them for the rest of their lives. We’ve all met a lot of dogs and cats that have been rescued. Sometimes they overcome their emotional trauma and sometimes they don’t completely overcome it. Some of them have a lot of trouble socializing with people or socializing with other animals. It’s quite heartbreaking when we see the potential lost in a child or an animal because of abuse or neglect.

We are proposing that there be a multidisciplinary advisory team of experts to advise ongoing. I think that is something that I feel is very important when we pass this

type of legislation, that we have ongoing discussions. It can't just be that today we decide for the next 10 years or until the legislation is looked at again, that we decide this is how things are going to be without taking into account new technology. There's an app that I have—I think it's called Pawscout—on my phone that you sign up for. The animals wear something on their collars and everybody can help out if a pet is missing. If it's near them, the app will notify you to notify the owner where the pet is.

Obviously, this is presented under the Ministry of the Solicitor General. The plan is to have provincial inspectors for the whole province. That's one of the things we see—and we heard the member from London West say that abuse of animals is like the canary in the coal mine because we all know that it can lead to abuse of children, adults or seniors, that oftentimes people, I guess the word would be “experiment,” on abusing pets. It's a sign that there is the potential for the same individuals to abuse human beings as well. So maybe they need a little bit of rehab, as it were. It's not enough to just fine people and ticket people or even ban them from owning pets. We need to come up with some type of a program that people can enter and there are people to help them deal with whatever it is that they are harbouring, this violence that they are showing to animals that may, in the future, become violence towards human beings.

We have in the province of Ontario a serious problem—we've discussed it here in the House before—with human trafficking. One of the issues is that we don't have a province-wide system in place, and that's what we've all been working towards having: a seamless, province-wide system to report and collaborate on human trafficking so that people aren't just moved around and abused in a different part of the province. I would like to see the same for animal abuse, that it should be province-wide, it should be seamless, and there should be data collected. I think that that's always the give-and-take with all of these types of legislation: If data is collected, what's going to be done with that data? Who's going to have access to that data? There's always privacy and security concerns, but at the end of the day, the data could be very useful to tell us if we're doing a good job and if there are things that we could be doing better.

1000

This bill deals with questions about agricultural animals, where experts will have to be brought in to deal with the question of abuse or neglect of animals on farms and horses in our horse racing industry. Obviously, there will have to be some specialized inspectors who are involved in a lot of those cases.

In terms of penalties and sentences, there are going to be minor non-ticketable offences. Fines can go all the way up to \$75,000 or six months in jail, and that's only for the first offence. It can rise for multiple offences.

I think this shows that we are taking the issue very seriously. We're very concerned about abuse and neglect of animals, for the reason that our constituents care. We're all hearing from our constituents all the time, and it's something that matters to them very deeply. They want to

have an easy way to report what they suspect might be abuse or neglect, and I think that there is obviously always a grey area between what one person might think is abuse or neglect—there are some animals who love to be out in the extreme cold weather; they actually prefer it. They've got the coat for it, whereas other animals would freeze quite quickly. So it's hard for people to know. We're not all experts.

I'm looking forward to more debate, but more than that, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to see this passed by the timeline we would like, which is January 1, 2020. We would like to see this passed and in place. The toll-free number, though, is already operational, but we would like to see our inspectors getting trained and rolling out this program.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Any piece of legislation that deals with and protects the welfare of animals is vital. It's encouraging to learn that this government is taking steps to ensure that vulnerable animals are protected under the provincial legislation, especially those in possible inhumane living conditions, such as zoos or aquariums. As we were told a few days back, this bill seeks to strengthen enforcement and introduces the strongest penalties across Canada for offenders. I believe this is crucial. I hope the Conservatives live up to this promise.

Whatever penalties are imposed upon offenders, they need to be harsh enough to act as a deterrent. Too often, we see people reoffending or not taking the law seriously when it comes to animals. Too often, people put profits above the welfare of living, breathing creatures. This bill is important because it ensures charges against animal abusers are carried out and violators are actually prosecuted for their crimes. Too often, cruelty charges are dropped despite evidence, which leads to doubt with the public.

In St. Catharines, my home riding, a veterinarian was charged for literally abusing, and being seen on video abusing, an animal. Speaker, this might sound harsh, but he was seen taking a cat and smacking it on the ground. He was charged, but the charges were dropped.

Ontario will have faith when the government commits to fully funding inspections and enforcement, making sure enough inspectors are hired to actually intervene. It means a lot to the riding of St. Catharines, when this veterinarian was allowed to go back to practice.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'd like to thank the member for Thornhill for her comments, for her remarks and for doing another shout-out to Apollo, my Great Dane puppy. You are absolutely right: I am really not quite sure whether Apollo would fit on a patio. We'll have to find out next summer. I think patio season is over, much to all of our distress.

Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last year, I think all of us have been trying to get a chance to get to know each

other and find out what sort of things we're passionate about outside of this chamber, outside of our job. The one thing that has become so apparent to me is that the member for Thornhill truly has a special place in her heart for all animals. Every time I've seen her, she's always the first to come over and ask to see the latest pictures of Apollo, see how big he is and ask me how the pup's doing, so I know that this legislation is deeply, deeply important to her.

I think it goes back to something I spoke about earlier, and that's that these animals that we care for become such an important part of our families, that we want to make sure the protections are there to make sure that anybody committing some of these unspeakable acts that one of my colleagues opposite spoke about earlier gets punished, that they face the strictest penalties. I think that's what everybody wants to see.

I'm pleased to hear that in Thornhill, as in Ottawa West-Nepean, this is an issue that comes up time and time again at the door from people who want to see these protections in place. I'm looking forward to January 1, 2020, when these enforcement mechanisms come into place, when our provincial inspectors are there. I encourage you at home, if you see an instance of animal abuse or cruelty, to call 1-833-9-ANIMAL.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: While it's easy for us to think about animal cruelty and just talk about our cats and our dogs, of course our family members, but we also have to look at the agricultural industry, particularly the Beef Farmers of Ontario, along with other livestock organizations. They've been actively involved in the consultation process, which is great. We're glad to see that. We need to keep working with them, as well as other agricultural industries, in the long term. We need to ensure that there are adequate regulations and funding in place so that all animals—not just cats and dogs, but all animals—are protected in this province, regardless of their location, context or industry.

Now, the ministry is planning to develop more regulations, but due to the lack of clarity—this is an important point here—in these long-term discussions, it's hard to evaluate what is still to come. We have the opportunity to reopen discussions about Ontario's captive wildlife standards. Ontario is the only province that doesn't have any exotic animal legislation besides a ban on orcas. Wild animals continue to suffer as pets in people's homes and in captive environments that cannot provide for their unique needs.

One point I want to talk about as well, Mr. Speaker, is in terms of when an individual cannot pay their vet bill: What is going to happen? We've seen with this legislation that there is concern that what's going to happen is that we're going to revictimize the poor. Not everyone can pay their vet bills. What are you going to do? Take the animal away from the owner? This is something we have to get clarity on from the government. This is one area, the equity consideration. There's concern here on our side of the aisle that these mandatory vet bills will be taking pets and animals away from pet owners. We want to make sure that this will not occur in this legislation.

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

Mr. David Piccini: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to my colleague's comments, the excellent remarks she made today, and to address the member opposite's comments. Thank you for pointing out the agriculture industry. I know when we held our round table in Northumberland-Peterborough South on animal welfare, we talked about trespassing on farms. I think back to a meeting two weeks ago with the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, with Tim Klompmaker from my community of Asphodel-Norwood, who's happy to see a government taking action on this issue.

I know we spoke about equity concerns, and we know that animal abuse is an indicator for abuse later on—marital, family etc. I think it's important that in our round table, one of the things that was discussed—right now, we have an inspector travelling over a 3,000-kilometre radius. They don't have those wraparound supports, so by taking it up to the provincial level with the oversight, we're going to enable them to do that with those important supports that you raise.

Yes, we welcome the opposition's feedback to ensure that those wraparound supports are there, but I think what this legislation has done is that it has given that important oversight framework to animal welfare and will enable us to respond to people of different socio-economic needs—early indicators of abuse to ensure that people with mental health supports get those wraparound supports that they need.

I'm proud to be part of a government—again, after 15 years of neglect, after a government that did nothing for animal welfare in Ontario—that is acting with an appropriate oversight framework, with a one-window complaints mechanism, a multidisciplinary advisory table to listen to veterinarians, to listen to the agriculture community. I look to the Minister of Agriculture right here, who is nodding. This is what it's all about. We've got a robust framework here. I look forward to working with the members opposite.

I'm proud to be a part of the government that's standing up for four-legged animals and animals that have no voice. We're giving them a voice. We're having some of the strictest penalties in the country of Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'll return to the member from Thornhill to conclude this portion of the debate.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je vois qu'on a des visiteurs de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. Bonjour et bienvenue, encore.

Je veux remercier les députés de St. Catharines, d'Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean, de Brampton North et de Northumberland-Peterborough South pour vos remarques. Merci beaucoup.

On parle aujourd'hui du projet de loi 136. C'est une loi sur les services provinciaux visant le bien-être des animaux et apportant des modifications corrélatives concernant la protection des animaux. On sait que plus de 60 % des Canadiens ont un ou plus d'animaux dans leur

maison. Assez souvent à Thornhill, ma circonscription, ce sont des chiens, mais assez souvent ce sont aussi des chats et des rongeurs—d'autres amis à fourrure.

On a déjà parlé du fait que les animaux peuvent avoir le mal psychologique quand ils sont maltraités ou négligés. On a un numéro maintenant, c'est sans frais : 1-833-9-ANIMAL, alors c'est 926-4625. Alors, s'il vous plaît, c'est l'ouvrage de tout le monde de voir s'il y a un problème avec un animal dans votre communauté, et d'appeler les inspecteurs qui seront là pour vous parler du maltraitement des animaux dans votre communauté.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Colleagues, seeing as the time is almost at a mandatory recess time, this portion of the debate is now closed off.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): This House will now stand in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): In the Speaker's gallery today are local Wellington–Halton Hills area realtors Katrina Steffler, Karen Keleher, Christianne Mitchell and Brett Nodwell. Welcome to the Legislature. It's great to have you here.

And soon in the Speaker's gallery, we will have someone representing the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians and their job shadowing program that's on. Maya Li Preti will be here with former Speaker David Warner. I believe they're in the building. They'll be in later on.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We have with the Ontario realtors today from Windsor and Essex county Daniel Hofgartner, and earlier the member for Essex and I met with Tina Roy, Lorraine Clark and Anna Vozza—welcome all to Queen's Park.

Mr. David Piccini: With us today we have members from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. We have their president, Catherine Dunne; Bardia Jalayer; David Bath; Will Greene; Matthew Gerrits; Michael Beauchemin; Rayna Porter; Nicholas Ryan; Ryan Tishcoff; and Eddy Avila.

We also have members from the College Student Alliance as well. I have a local constituent so I'm going to give her a shout-out, Chloe Craig; as well as to their president, Jecema Hewitt Vasil. They also have 30 other members, so a few too many to present. I appreciate their formative voice, voices for students and our next generation.

I'd also like to give a shout-out to our local realtors who I'll be meeting with: Natasha Huizinga, Jody Ledgerwood, Sandra Smith and Al Switzer. If you're here, a big shout-out to you, too. Thanks for being with us today.

M. Taras Natyshak: Comme toujours, c'est un plaisir d'accueillir les représentants de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario qui sont ici aujourd'hui encore : Carol Jolin, Martine Bélanger, Daniel Giroux, Lise Béland et Jacinthe Desaulniers. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'd like to welcome a delegation from the Italian community from my riding of Vaughan–Woodbridge this morning. Joining us in the Legislature is Giuseppe Gigliotti, a well-respected journalist, and his assistant, Lucio Didona; Francesco Bisignano and his wife, Carole Capalbio; and lastly, Giuseppe Didiano, a well-respected businessman from Vaughan–Woodbridge as well. Welcome, all of you, to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good morning. It's with great pleasure that I welcome Jecema Hewitt Vasil, who is the president of the College Student Alliance and the world's most inspiring goddaughter. She's my goddaughter, so I'm nervous to introduce her. Welcome, honey.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature today members from Ontario Pork, who are here representing pork farmers from across the province. I invite everyone to join us in room 230 to show their support for Ontario's pork industry.

I'm also pleased to welcome the Ontario Dairy Council. President Christina Lewis is joined by the full ODC board today, representing dairy processors from across Ontario. I invite everyone to join us for a luncheon today in committee room 228 to sample a variety of dairy products from our province.

I'm also pleased to welcome to the Legislature members from the Ontario greenhouse association. I invite everybody to join us this evening in rooms 228 and 230 for their reception and to welcome and support Ontario's greenhouse sector.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: We have with us here in the gallery a very special visitor. Franklin Frederick is visiting us all the way from Brazil. He is joined by Mike Balkwill and Karen Rathwell, who are representatives of the Wellington Water Watchers group. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Karen Cox, president of the Ontario Real Estate Association, and her husband, Russ. They're also great residents of the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. To all of the real estate professionals in the room, thanks for being here.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: It is a pleasure to introduce today Michel Blais and Anne Marie Vaillancourt from the Timmins, Cochrane and Timiskaming Districts Association of Realtors.

Et c'est un plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à toutes les associations francophones qui sont ici aujourd'hui. Soyez les bienvenues à Queen's Park.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's a privilege to welcome to the Legislature today Randy Mulder, a constituent of mine who's here with the Ontario Real Estate Association; Jan VanZanten and his daughter, Annemiek VanZanten, who are here with the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance; as well as farmers from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario; the pork farmers of Ontario; and the egg farmers. I'm sure there are many of them from my riding, as well. Welcome to the Legislature today.

Interjection.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It covers everybody.

Mr. Dave Smith: On behalf of my colleague from Hastings–Lennox and Addington—because he's having

knee replacement surgery—I'd like to introduce a constituent from his riding, from the town of Madoc: Jay Kirktown.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yet again on grandfather duty—our grandkids are back here again today, Victoria and Nathaniel.

I just want to report that Eva is still at SickKids. We're waiting for transport, but she's doing well, and her sister, Elissa, still misses her greatly.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'd just like to welcome to the House today students from Lawrence Park Collegiate Institute, which is in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I'd like to welcome two guests from Thunder Bay, Karen Hill and Bob Pfaff, who are visiting Queen's Park today on behalf of the Ontario Real Estate Association. Meegwetch.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I'd like to welcome a delegation of Durham realtors: Roger Bouma, Wendy Giroux, Rhonda Foksett, Tina Sorichetti and Vicki Sweeney.

I'd also like to welcome Rayna Porter, who is a student from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, from Trent University's Durham campus.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to welcome to the House today Aidan Yates, a student at OCAD; and from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, Shemar, Joshua, Nivi, Bilal, Shawn, Zemar, Katlyn, Eric, Britney and Crystal; and from the College Student Alliance, from Centennial College, Jecema, Karamjeet, Jun, Brendalee, Ivan and Yamini; and from Sault College, Jonathan, Ahmad, Keaton and Madelaine Speer.

I encourage all members to meet with the OUSA and CSA students—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member from Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Speaker, I forgot to mention, of course, the former member for Niagara West–Glanbrook, a much wiser MPP than myself, but someone I strive to emulate. Tim Hudak, the former member for Niagara West–Glanbrook, is in the Legislature today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Welcome. Member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to welcome Ashley Sauve and Tyler Peroni from the Sudbury real estate association.

J'aimerais accueillir Peter Hominuk, Ngoné Diagne, Denis Laframboise et Badrieh Kojok de l'association francophone de l'Ontario et de leurs associations respectives.

I would also like to introduce students from the College Student Alliance: Scot Wyles, Meharpreet Hundal, Heather Firlotte, Brent Parke and Andrew Sammut.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Todd Smith: It's an honour to welcome some Ontario Real Estate Association personnel from Quinte here today. We have Natasha Huizinga, Cathy Polan, Sandra Smith and Don McColl.

I would also like to welcome a board member from the Ontario Dairy Council, Stephen Quickert. He's the proprietor of Reid's Dairy. Many of you have seen the Reid's Dairy castle, home of the loonie shake, in Belleville, alongside the 401. Welcome, Stephen.

Miss Monique Taylor: My daily introduction would be to the autism parents and advocates who are joining us today. We have Stacy Kennedy and Michau van Speyk. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: As a proud alumni, I'd like to welcome two students from the University of Toronto, Maya Li Preti and Jubana Khan. I look forward to having a great discussion later on today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm proud to welcome students, teachers, educators and other staff from St. Simon Catholic School in the riding of Humber River–Black Creek.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I would like to introduce two guests of mine, constituents from Etobicoke Centre, Mr. Gilles Froment and Mr. Ed Perugini, who are representatives and board members of the Ontario Dairy Council. Welcome to the House.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to give a big shout-out to our page, Mathias Essig. Mathias lives in the community of Port Dalhousie in my home riding of St. Catharines, as well as his. Joining us today is Mathias's father, Chris Essig; his mom is here in spirit; and, Speaker, it gives me great privilege to welcome Colin and Ruth Johnston, long-time residents of Port Dalhousie and St. Catharines and very, very proud grandparents to Mathias. Welcome to our House.

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Also, I would like to welcome Lisa Wall from the Ontario real estate alliances, as well as the Ontario undergraduate alliances that met with me in my office yesterday.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to welcome the president of the Brampton Real Estate Board here today and members of the Brampton OREA team—Sukhbir Taank and the team.

M. Joel Harden: Je veux saluer mes amis francophones qui sont ici aujourd'hui: Carol Jolin de l'AFO, mais aussi Jacinthe Desaulniers du réseau des services de santé en français. Bonjour.

I would also like to say happy birthday to my mom—71 years old—Rosemary Harden. Thank you for everything you did for me, Mom. Thank you for getting me here.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: We have a number of guests here from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex today. We have a number of egg, dairy and pork farmers, greenhouse growers and local realtors from across the riding. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I just want to give a huge congratulations to Ian Williams for his outstanding win—all the way from Brampton, Ontario—of the Scotiabank Giller Prize yesterday. Woo!

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to welcome Moses Realejo from my riding of Perth–Wellington to the Legislature this morning. Moses is here with the Ontario Dairy

Council. Also, welcome to Sue Elaine Fowler and Gwen Kirkpatrick of the Huron Perth Association of Realtors.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'd like to welcome members of the College Student Alliance here today: Tori Arnett and Satay Komanduri from St. Lawrence College in Cornwall and Madison Roy of Georgian College in Owen Sound. Thank you very much for being here in your House.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce and welcome to the Legislature today Donna Mathewson, president of the Sarnia-Lambton Real Estate Board, in town for the real estate conference, which was great.

Mr. Jamie West: From the College Student Alliance, I want to welcome members from my alma mater at Cambrian College: Marie-Claude Guillemette, Lynn Courville and Gayathri Sreeni. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to welcome the College Student Alliance to the House this morning: Vignesh Viswanathan, Sterling Finlayson and Kiran Ramesh from Confederation College in my riding.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to welcome the College Student Alliance from Fleming College Chloé Craig, Naman Khandelwal, Zoe King, Prerna Modi and Cole McCall. Welcome to Queen's Park.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would now ask our pages to assemble for their introductions.

From the riding of Don Valley West, Eric An; from the riding of Cambridge, Julian Bal; from the riding of Markham-Thornhill, Leela Bhide; from the riding of Pickering-Uxbridge, Luba Brown; from Scarborough-Rouge Park, Isabella Cadotte; from Eglinton-Lawrence, Yansong Chen; from Mississauga-Streetsville, Alexandra Zara Cucui; from St. Catharines, Mathias Essig; from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Laura Foell; from Beaches-East York, Ally Ava Hao; from Timiskaming-Cochrane, Luke Hartford; from York Centre, Emily Hranovich; from Scarborough North, Johnson Jiang; from Simcoe North, Lennon Langstaff; from Scarborough-Guildwood, Visakan Makilrajah; from Etobicoke Centre, Filip Matevski; from Toronto-St. Paul's, Daniel Morgan; from Ottawa West-Nepean, Clara O'Brien; from Orléans, Augustine Osezua; from Newmarket-Aurora, Emily Pagliaro; from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Giovanni Ricciuto-Barron; from University-Rosedale, Sarah Roff; and from Oakville North-Burlington, Suhani Surya.

Please join me in welcoming this group of pages to the Ontario Legislature.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is for the Premier, and I hope he takes the opportunity to answer the question himself and speak directly to Ontario parents.

Yesterday, the Minister of Education refused to answer some basic questions about the Premier's attacks on teachers even as he insisted that the Ford government shouldn't be blamed for the conflict and the cuts in our classrooms. The Premier has spent the last year on the job attacking teachers, calling them thugs and doing everything he could to pick a fight with them.

So I'm asking the Premier—and again, I hope the Premier will answer—does he regret making those comments, and is he willing to apologize?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The standing orders allow ministers to refer questions to other ministers. Let's make that clear: They can choose to do so or not.

The question has been referred to the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The Premier of this province, every member of this cabinet and caucus stand with the front-line workers of this province: our teachers, our nurses and our doctors. We believe, Mr. Speaker, so much that we want to see them succeed. It's why in the most recent labour negotiations, just yesterday, we tabled a plan to move to mediation in order to get a good deal for the students of this province.

The Premier has been very clear about his expectations of me, that we remain constructive and reasonable and student-centric to get deals so that the parents of this province are able to keep their children in class. We stand with them on that mission.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Back to the Premier: Last April, in response to thousands of high school students who spoke out about the government's education cuts, the Premier said, "This isn't about class sizes.... This is strictly from the union thugs ... the teachers' union." The Premier went on to say that he had the "backbone" to "hold them accountable."

How can the Ford government claim to be looking for solutions with our teachers when the Premier has made it clear that he is desperate to pick a fight with them?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The greatest solution that we could offer to families in this province is a deal that keeps their children in class.

Mr. Speaker, our plan is to move forward with mediation. In the most recent deal we received with CUPE, we turned to a mediator to help us address the few outstanding issues that remained. By doing so, we were able to deliver a good deal that was good for the workers, good for the government and good for the trustees. That's the win-win proposition that we seek.

What is frustrating for those who observe is that every three years we are back in the same position, irrespective of party. I want to be clear: Parents deserve to have predictability. Their children ought to be in class. The continuum of learning should not be impeded because a bunch of lawyers can't get their act together. Families deserve that predictability, and our government seeks to deliver it for every student in this province.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: For months, parents and students have watched as classroom cuts have taken their toll, and they've watched as the Premier attacks teachers in our classrooms, calling them thugs and making threats. And the Premier has yet to even apologize, Mr. Speaker. In fact, he continues to use the same language over and over again.

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Yesterday, the Minister of Education claimed that the Premier values these front-line workers. So today, again, I'll ask the Premier, and we need to hear this answer directly from him, Speaker: Does he consider this a good way to build a respectful working relationship with the people who teach our children?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: As I affirmed yesterday, every member of the Progressive Conservative team believes and stands with our workers in this province. It's why, Mr. Speaker, we have, yesterday, in order to ensure that our teachers, the very subject of the question, remain working in class, doing what they do best, doing what they seek to do every single day, which is inspire the next generation of workers—that is why we've turned to mediation.

I'd hope all members of the Legislature would stand with the government in turning to a reasonable proposition to consider mediation to get a deal. It is a path that worked for CUPE; it's a path we seek to replicate with our teachers.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, the mission for the government is not just a deal, but a good deal for our kids. We did it with CUPE; we hope to do that with our teachers within the coming weeks.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. When the Premier first announced plans to expand class sizes and take 10,000 of our teachers out of schools, he claimed parents and teachers would welcome the change and that it would improve education in Ontario, but it hasn't. It has made things worse, and it's only year one.

My question is to the Premier, and I want to note that parents and students want to hear an answer from the Premier himself: Will the Premier reverse this terrible course that's hurting so many of our children?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The basis of the question is premised on funding, and I want to be clear to the Legislature that this government, under the leadership of this Premier, is spending more on public education than any government in the history of Ontario. Those are the facts.

Another fact: We've just opened up a \$550-million program to help renew schools and build new schools in the province—over \$1.2 billion in renewal; a \$200-million four-year math strategy to lift math scores over time. Mr. Speaker, we're doing all this because we believe in the potential of our students and because we believe in the defence of public and Catholic education in the province of Ontario.

Our plan is to help grow the economy and keep taxes low, but most importantly, it's about having the ability to invest in the social services that matter: \$1.9 billion more in health care, \$1.2 billion more in education. We're going to continue to invest in the priorities of working people in this province.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm going to return back to the Premier again, but I just want to say, this is complete fiction coming from this minister. Please, the education spending in this province is down. The Financial Accountability Office says it's down. You're talking about—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. I'm going to caution the member on her language and ask her to place her question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: The Minister of Education spent all day yesterday desperately deflecting blame, but it's not a mystery why there has been so little progress at the bargaining table. The Premier has threatened full-day kindergarten and eliminated thousands of high school classes, everything from construction technology to math and advanced physics courses. He has forced students into a misguided online learning program. Teachers think this is a bad idea. Parents and students think this is a bad idea. Why is the Premier so committed to these cuts?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I just want to respectfully reject the premise of the question. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to areas of priority for students in the province, in mental health we've more than doubled the funding allocation. For special education needs, it's over \$3.1 billion, the highest allocation ever invested in special ed. For transportation it's at the highest levels. For French language it's at the highest levels. For First Nations it is at the highest levels ever in the history of this province. So, Mr. Speaker, to hear the rhetoric from the member opposite is simply not true.

What we are also doing, beyond the expenditure, is investing in and improving our curriculum—

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And conclude his answer.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: What we've also ensured is that our curriculum remains updated, with a math strategy that gets back to basics. Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to focus on the success of our students.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Back to the Premier: I won't even refer to this spending shell game that the minister is talking about. Here's what parents and students see right now: Teachers working hard, often paying out of pocket to provide education to our children; and a Premier who calls them "thugs" while firing 10,000 of them, forcing kids into untested online learning modules based on a program in Alabama, and into overflowing classrooms.

The Ford government claims that they want to avoid more chaos in our schools. Will the Premier start today by reversing his classroom cuts?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We're going to continue to build on our positive plan to improve education in the province of Ontario. We're going to continue to invest in our students, we're going to continue to renew our schools, update our curriculum with a more labour-focused alignment to ensure young people can get access to good-paying jobs.

Our plan is to keep children in class, which is the first basis of this discussion. Our plan yesterday is nothing more than an objective to keep the parties at the table to ensure that they know that we are serious in getting a good deal, an enduring deal, through mediation, that allows parents to have the predictability that they deserve.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: Last year, this government insisted there would be no cost to cancelling renewable energy projects like the White Pines wind farm. To quote the then government House leader, "We put in a plan, a procedure, that is going to deal with this wind farm project without costing the taxpayers."

In the public accounts for the Ministry of Energy, there is a strange little entry. It shows the government spent \$231 million on some undetailed "other transactions." Will the Premier confirm that this \$231 million represents the cost of cancelling about 750 renewable energy contracts last year?

Hon. Doug Ford: Associate Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thanks to my colleague for his question. We thought maybe one would be coming at some point.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear right from the outset that this municipality was an unwilling host from day one. They did not want the turbines, and we did the right thing. The member from the Bay of Quinte from day one said that they did not want it and they would not have one there.

At the end of the day, our government has been very clear that it would act to cancel any unnecessary contracts. Ontario has an adequate supply of power right now. The capacity that this project would have provided is not required at this time. The Environmental Review Tribunal actually decreased it from 29 turbines to nine turbines early in the sequence, which should have led to cancelling the contract at that time.

The termination act happened on July 25, 2018, effectively terminating the project's contract with the Independent Electricity System Operator and revoking project-related permits. They didn't want it, they don't—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I take that as a yes. I appreciate that information.

Wasting \$231 million to cancel hydro contracts is the sort of thing that the previous Liberal government did

during the gas plants scandal. The similarities are striking. We saw what the Liberal government did to hydro bills, and now Premier Ford is doing the same thing at the same time, because he's letting hydro prices increase.

How can the Premier claim he's saving taxpayers and ratepayers money when he's throwing away \$231 million to not build renewable energy?

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. The Associate Minister of Energy to reply.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let's start with how most of the things that the Green Energy Act did, that the Liberal government did, put this province in a perilous state. They spent billions and billions of dollars that our kids and grandkids will continue to pay. This was yet one more project.

We did not need the power. We have an adequate supply of power. We knew that from day one. They knew that from day one, and they continued to impose these—like White Pines—on unwilling hosts. At the end of the day, we knew that we didn't need this power. It was intermittent power at best and, again, we did not need it.

We are taking all actions that we can. The energy sector: We went from the lowest rates in Confederation to the highest rates. We're still trying to figure out ways to lower those costs and bring those down so that people can have some respite.

1100

This is one of those projects we didn't need. We're taking mitigating actions to make sure that they weren't there. Let's not forget again: from 29 down to nine turbines by the Environmental Review Tribunal. Why would we ever proceed when they actually said they weren't needed?

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: My question is to the Premier. Premier, when our government was elected, we inherited an infrastructure system that was badly in need of repair. We had crumbling hospitals that were leading to hallway health care. We had a transit system that was forgotten and left in disrepair for years, leading to overcrowding and lacking in service.

Premier, I understand that both yourself and the Minister of Infrastructure just delivered keynote addresses at the C2P3 conference to over 300 major industry representatives highlighting our commitment to infrastructure for the province. Can you elaborate to the Legislature what our government's plan is to expand and modernize the infrastructure systems for the province?

Hon. Doug Ford: I'd like to thank my all-star—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The Premier had the floor.

Hon. Doug Ford: I'd like to thank my all-star member from Brampton West—great people out in Brampton. There are going to be two more seats in Brampton next

time around, Mr. Speaker; I just want to give you a heads-up on that one.

People know all too well that infrastructure was neglected under the previous government. On top of hospitals, on top of schools, on top of roads and bridges and highways, they didn't think about building subways. That is why our government is taking the right actions at the right time to help move this province forward. We're putting a historic investment into infrastructure. We're putting in \$144 billion over the next 10 years: \$90 billion is going into transit; the balance is going into building new schools that the previous government cancelled—600 schools. We're going to be investing in hospitals and making sure this province thrives, grows and prospers.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Back to the Premier: Premier, that is incredible news for the people of Brampton West and speaks to our commitment to rebuild the province. I know many families in my region are very excited to hear about all those new investments, whether they are transit-related and will cut down on gridlock or the great investments in new hospitals, schools and other community projects that everyone depends on.

But this can only be made possible by the hard-working people of this province who build the projects themselves. I know in my riding of Brampton West we have many amazing individuals who help support this industry. Premier, can you speak more about our support for the infrastructure construction workers of this province?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our great member once again for the question. All you have to do, Mr. Speaker, is walk by a construction site. The support is overwhelming. I call it the "hard helmets." They're out there cheering, "Keep going, keep going." I had an opportunity actually to go LIUNA. I had a standing ovation on the way in and a standing ovation on the way out. They know there's a government that finally recognizes the hard work of the construction trades right across this province.

We're going to continue throwing money into the trades and make sure we have proper training there. But just keep in mind every time you drive on a road, drive on a highway, go take your kids to school or go to the hospital or go to a mall—think of the hard-working construction men and women who are out there doing an incredible job rebuilding this province. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? They're going to have \$144 billion to do that with.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Last week, the Globe and Mail reported that, in exchange for a \$20,000 donation, the Premier dined with a developer looking to redevelop Canada Place. The next day, that developer tried to line up more meetings on the topic with the Premier's staff.

Speaker, this is concerning for the thousands of Ontarians who can't spare \$20,000 to meet with the Premier,

and it raises serious questions about who is meeting with the Premier and why. Will the Premier provide a full list to the public and to the Integrity Commissioner of every person who has paid money to meet with him?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you, that's probably one of the most disgusting comments I've ever heard down here in the House. What he doesn't know is that it was at the Chief's Gala and it was for victim services, for victims of crime. They came up to me last minute and said, "Do you want to auction off a dinner?" There was no lobbying. People don't have to lobby Doug Ford. Mrs. Jones can call me about a pothole, and I'll show up at her door.

By the way, I'm proud to say that we raised \$100,000 for victims of crime. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? I did it again. I did it this week, and the whole crowd, 1,600 people, were applauding because I left it up to them. They appreciate raising money for victims of crime, unlike the NDP that don't care about victims.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member from Northumberland–Peterborough South, come to order.

Supplementary question?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: What's truly disgusting is that victims of crime and victim services have to publicly fund-raise because the Ford government has cut their budget and cut those services to the victims of crime. That's what's disgusting in this province. Shame on the Premier.

For a Premier who says he can't be bought, he sure seems to make time for those with deep pockets. One of those businesses that the Premier dined with is a lobbying group that is looking for more contracts with the government. Their registered lobbyist firm was run by none other than the Premier's number one insider, Chris Froggatt. This is the kind of thing that was commonplace under the Liberals, but as with other files, the Premier has taken the cash-for-access racket from bad to worse.

Speaker, why does it seem that the Premier only takes meetings with his preferred lobbyists and those with the cash to buy access, rather than Ontarians who are simply trying to get ahead?

Interjections.

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

The Premier to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the member from Essex that the police chief was there in the meeting. There was no lobbying, no nothing. I'm trying to help victims of crime. That's what I'm trying to do.

There's one thing, Mr. Speaker. They may agree or disagree with me, but every single person in this province knows two things: Doug Ford can't be bought; and if someone calls Doug Ford to get something fixed, I'll show up at their door and I'll return their phone call, unlike the NDP that destroyed this province for the last 15 years.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Last week, we learned that the government is offering a contract to a consulting firm of up to \$1 million to find half a billion dollars in savings in the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, most of which, we've learned, will come from developmental services.

Speaker, "savings" is a euphemism for "cuts." These will be cuts to the most vulnerable people and families in our province: families living with an adult child with a developmental disability. This government is headed down the same path that they were with the Ontario Autism Program.

Through you, Speaker, to the Premier: Will he release the details of this contract, and will he commit to not cutting funds for adults with developmental disabilities in this province? Yes or no?

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

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member opposite for the question. As the member knows, there is a growing demand for developmental services across the province of Ontario. Every day, kids are turning 18, and they require services in the developmental services sector. Our government is committed to improving this sector so that these individuals can get the kind of accommodation and the services that they require.

Since becoming the minister, I've been out there meeting with families, I've been out there meeting with our service providers in collaboration to ensure that we can work together to get better results for the growing demand on developmental services in our province.

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Just a couple of weeks ago, I went to speak to the provincial network, the OASIS group, Community Living Toronto, Community Living Ontario, Christian Horizons, many of them, and we talked about the fact that we were getting an outside set of eyes to look at how we can make the system better and work with them, to ensure that we're providing the services that they require in this sector.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I think people in this sector would have more confidence if the minister gave them their budgets before September.

I'll take the criticism that we all share here, that we actually haven't done enough in the last 30 years for these families. So, I invite the minister and the Premier to come to my riding, to Clifford Bowey school at graduation time and see the parents' faces, their joy at their child graduating, and the fear that they know they will no longer have support post-21 for their child—and they know that they are on their own. It's like stepping off a cliff. It's a life of wait-lists and precarious programs.

Imagine being 75 years old and having a 40-year-old daughter and saying, "I don't know who's going to take care of my daughter when I die." This is what these

families live every day in this province, and it's something that should keep us all awake at night.

So, I ask the Premier again, Speaker: Will he commit to not cutting funds for adults with developmental disabilities in this province? Yes or no?

Hon. Todd Smith: We know that this sector deserves better results for its clients. We know that while we're investing \$2.6 billion in this sector, we're not getting the results that we should be getting. That's why we've gone out and hired this second set of eyes to look at the sector. They've done a jurisdictional scan to look at best practices in other states, in other provinces and in other countries where they're actually building the supports necessary, while at the same time the government, myself and my team are working with our partners in the sector to ensure that we're getting the results that we want.

The previous government made decisions, and with all due respect, they made the decision not to invest in this sector. For 15 years, they made that decision. That's their right, Mr. Speaker, to make that decision. We're not making that decision. We are making a decision to work with the sector, to ensure that we're getting better results for those—

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

The next question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question is for the Minister of Health. Hallway health care is an issue that affects every Ontarian. Due to the previous Liberal government's mismanagement and poorly directed spending, more and more patients are experiencing hallway health care as pressures mount in our hospitals.

The people of Ontario shouldn't have to worry about how long it will take for them to see a doctor or whether the service they need will be available to them. It is time that some changes happen in our province.

Can the Minister of Health please tell this House what funding our government has committed to in order to bring an end to hallway health care and reduce the pressures on our public health care system?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore for her question. It really is essential that we tackle the immediate challenge of hallway health care, while also looking at the long term to make sure that future generations don't have to deal with the same problem.

This year our government has invested an additional \$384 million in our hospital sector to address immediate challenges. Small and medium-sized hospitals also received an additional \$68 million to make up for years of, frankly, being shortchanged by the previous government.

We're also addressing hallway health care by investing \$27 billion over the next 10 years to build new hospital infrastructure and increase the number of beds available.

Speaker, to be clear, our government is taking action to end hallway health care now, while protecting the sustainability of our public health care system into the future.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for all her hard work and for that answer. While the opposition continues to engage in fearmongering, we are focused on taking real action to modernize our public health care system and end hallway health care. It is clear we've taken on the responsibility of cleaning up the mess that the previous government left us in, and committing to funding where it is needed most.

Ending hallway health care is a complex issue that requires a multi-pronged approach to resolve. We are addressing the immediate problems with our health care system while at the same time considering the long-term needs of our population.

Can the minister update this House on other investments we are making to give Ontarians access to more timely care, and end hallway health care now and in the future?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The fact is, Speaker, the people of Ontario elected us to take immediate action to fix our public health care system, and that is exactly what we're doing. To help alleviate the pressures on hospital emergency departments, our government has brought forward new models of care for 911 patients to ensure patients receive care in the most appropriate settings.

We've committed to investing an historic \$3.8 billion over 10 years to build a comprehensive, connected and integrated mental health and addictions system so that every Ontarian can be truly supported on their journey towards mental wellness. This year alone, we've invested an additional \$174 million in more on-the-ground mental health services to support people, families and caregivers in communities across Ontario.

Speaker, these are just some of the steps we are taking to ensure that patients receive more timely and appropriate care in their communities, while also helping to end hallway health care and reduce wait times.

VETERANS

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: This is to the Premier: Before we all returned to our ridings last week to honour our veterans in Remembrance Day ceremonies across the province, I asked the government why it does not allow veterans who served after the Korean War to access grants for emergency situations from Ontario's Soldiers' Aid Commission, which is an unfair exclusion that treats post-Korean War vets as second-class citizens.

The government refused to answer, so I will ask again: Will the government extend coverage of Ontario's Soldiers' Aid Commission to all veterans, yes or no?

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

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks again to the member opposite for the question. I did answer the question the week before Remembrance Day. I just want to say that we all were out at our cenotaphs last week and at our Legion dinners and meeting with our veterans and those who are

currently in service. I just want to say on behalf of the government of Ontario that we appreciate their service and we appreciate their ongoing support for our country, the greatest country in the world in which to live.

As far as the Soldiers' Aid Commission goes, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that it was basically mothballed for 15 years under the previous government. This is a very, very important part of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. We're currently, right now, looking at how we can expand the mandate of the Soldiers' Aid Commission. We're working with our military family resource centres. We're working with Seamless Canada to ensure we are providing, at the provincial level—

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

The supplementary question?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I hope those mothballs come off quick.

Ontario's Soldiers' Aid Commission helps veterans in emergency situations, like those facing the threat of homelessness. Last week, Global News brought us a tragic story of Phillip Kitchen, an Afghanistan veteran who returned home suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and was left living in a tent with his young child. This is shameful, Speaker. It can be avoided if the provincial government stops treating some veterans as second class and turning them away from this important support funding. As a mother of an active member in the Canadian Forces, I can say there is nothing second class about the service these brave men and women have provided for our country.

Will the Premier tell this House how many veterans are turned away from Ontario's Soldiers' Aid Commission program?

Hon. Todd Smith: I reject the premise of the question from the member opposite. There is no government that has done more in its first 15 months for our veterans than this government has, Mr. Speaker. I can tick off the list of different accomplishments for those in our armed forces—keeping in mind that veterans' services is a Canadian jurisdiction. But we are doing what we can at the provincial level to ensure that where there are cracks in the system, we're filling those cracks.

We have a golden opportunity by taking the Soldiers' Aid Commission—which, again, has sat idle for 15 years—and making sure it's meeting the needs of our current military members. We're doing that by working with Seamless Canada. We had Seamless Canada representatives here earlier this year, talking to members of the various caucuses who were here. We had a great turnout from the Tory caucus. I know there were a number of NDP members. I don't believe the member opposite was at that meeting with Seamless Canada—

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

Next question.

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EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: My question is for the Minister of Education. This government has made a series

of policy decisions and cuts that will put students at risk. One of the prime examples of that is the decision to make Ontario the only jurisdiction in North America to require four online courses to graduate high school, which will further reduce teachers in schools, and to undertake this in less than a year from now.

They made this decision without adequately consulting any experts in education. Research from the Public Policy Institute of California indicates that students are less likely to finish an online course and that online courses exacerbate existing achievement gaps.

In a survey of 6,000 students across Ontario by the Ontario Student Trustees' Association—6,000 students from grades 8 to 12—95% opposed the new e-learning mandate. I ask the minister: Will you listen to students across Ontario and reverse this reckless decision that will have complex, unknown and negative impacts on many students?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, I think it would be prudent to note that our plan, when it comes to online learning, is about making sure young people have access to more course selections, utilizing modern technology and a platform that is made in this country.

With great respect to the member opposite, it is flabbergasting to be asked a question in the context of education when, under her tenure as Premier, more schools were closed than under any Premier in the history of this province. I think when you contrast that approach with our plan to expend over half a billion dollars each and every year to build new schools, to renew schools, to improve our curriculum, to give young people more optionality, more course selections so they can achieve their full potential in the context of the journey of learning—I want the members of this House to know that we will continue to support our students by giving them more courses and embracing technology as an opportunity in the modern workforce.

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

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the students who were not able to get their options this year because of increased class sizes would take issue with what the minister has said.

Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the kind of badly-thought-through decision that has poisoned the relationship between this government and educators in every school in Ontario. That poisoned relationship is on full display right now: A government in the middle of negotiations fires its bargaining team and tries to distract from the lack of progress at the table by pretending that mediation is the answer.

The answer is for the government to admit that its cuts and wrong-headed policies, like mandatory online courses, were a mistake and to roll them back. Will the government take the next step and re-engage seriously with teachers in order to get an agreement at the bargaining table?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Indeed, it is the focus of the government to get deals for students in this province. That's why we asked the parties yesterday to consider mediation

as a viable tool to proceed, in order to get them to stay at the table given the heightened levels of escalation across the board of all teacher unions.

What unites the member, in her capacity as a former Premier, the New Democrats when they were in power in the 1990s, Mike Harris and every Premier in between is the fact that every three years, we're in the same position of parents having the frustration of not knowing if their children will be in class on Monday. We seek a resolution. We seek an enduring solution that will help keep kids in class through a deal that is good for the children of this province.

LAND USE PLANNING

AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Ontario is facing a housing crisis. There's no two ways about it. Under the previous Liberal government, people struggled to find homes they could afford, and not enough homes were being built to meet the needs of people in every part of our province. These challenges were compounded by unnecessary steps, duplication and barriers to creating the housing that Ontarians need. What is the government doing now to fix this problem, which was inherited from the previous government, and how are we providing relief to the people of Ontario to get new housing built?

L'hon. Steve Clark: Merci à la députée pour la question. Lors de la dernière séance, nous avons adopté le plan d'action « Plus d'habitations, plus de choix ». Notre plan va aider à lutter contre la crise du logement en favorisant la construction d'un plus grand nombre d'habitations dans la province.

The changes, Speaker, that we're proposing, for example, to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal would do a number of things. It would hear appeals and make the best decisions on important land use cases. It will also increase case management and mediation powers to avoid delays, and will appoint additional adjudicators to handle late file and processing and also manage both the current and future caseload. Finally, we're going to put in place a far more autonomous and more accessible system.

There are many things we're going to do to change the system, Speaker, and I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question?

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Speaker, it's no secret that the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal has experienced significant delays and a backlog of legacy cases that has impeded the construction of new homes in our province, impacting approximately 100,000 would-be housing units in Toronto alone.

What progress has the government made with respect to unclogging the backlog of cases that's preventing new housing units from being built?

Hon. Steve Clark: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: As the minister mentioned, and following the passage of the Housing Supply Action Plan,

in August we appointed Marie Hubbard, one of the most well-respected authorities on land use planning. She was appointed as the interim associate chair of the LPAT, the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. We've also appointed eight new full-time members; we've appointed four new part-time members.

When we left this chamber in June, the tribunal had a backlog of 1,200 cases, some dating back to the 1990s. It was left to languish, and we picked it up. This is so important. I'm pleased to report that the tribunal has already, since June, closed nearly 20% of the legacy cases. Now we're left with approximately 900 cases outstanding, and we're just getting started, Mr. Speaker. The tribunal has no intention of slowing down. We plan to ramp up and have further reductions in the backlog by the end of the year.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Over the past few weeks, I've been contacted by constituents worried sick about their rising hydro bills.

Glynnis Hill is a senior in my riding of London—Fanshawe living on a fixed income. Despite receiving OESP, her rising hydro bills are hard for her to manage. Glynnis tells me that she has trouble staying up so late to do laundry when it's the more affordable time. She also reads by candlelight and wears a coat inside her house to avoid using electricity. But her bills are still too high.

Glynnis is at the end of her rope with these high hydro bills. What more would this Premier have Glynnis do?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The Associate Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you for the question. You're right, it's truly sad that all of us are suffering from the highest energy rates that this province has ever seen. Thank you, again, to the Liberals of 15 years—and let's not forget that you supported most of their green energy contracts all along the way that caused these rates.

As soon as we got elected, Mr. Speaker, we cancelled 750 renewable energy contracts, saving the people of Ontario \$790 million. We centralized conservation programs to protect the most vulnerable people in our province while saving up to \$442 million for ratepayers. And we've expanded natural gas service to rural Ontario, saving the average residential customer between \$800 and \$2,500 a year.

Mr. Speaker, our government is working to lower the prices. We're doing everything we can to clean up a mess of 15 years created by the Liberal government. We'll continue to do that and we'll continue to do whatever we can to bring the rates down for all people, including the person you're speaking of.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Back to the Premier: This November, this government allowed hydro bills to go up, despite a promise to fix the hydro mess the Liberals got us into. Bills continue to increase, with no relief in sight, and

certainly not the 12% decrease like this government promised. For seniors like Glynnis, this means more nights staying up to do laundry when the prices are the lowest, and more nights reading by candlelight.

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It's 2019, Speaker. Does the Premier realize that he is hurting people like Glynnis when he fails to deliver on a real hydro relief plan for Ontarians?

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you for the question, and thank you, Glynnis, for bringing this to us.

Just think of what those rates would have been, had we not cancelled those 751 renewable contracts and taken action to stop more of the insanity of what the Liberals were doing with their ideology. Again, we cancelled 751 contracts, saving \$790 million. We've passed Bill 87, the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, so that we replaced the Liberal accounting scheme with a new, more transparent on-bill rebate—something the Auditor General wanted to happen so that the people of Ontario truly knew what the cost of electricity is—and hold the bills to the rate of inflation.

It is truly sad. We all stand here sad about the price of our energy today because of the mess created under 15 years of Liberal management, supported solely by the NDP for that whole tenure.

We will continue to try to do that. We'll try everything we can to lower those rates and make sure that we have—

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

MUNICIPALITIES

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Ma question est pour le fabuleux ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement. Félicitations pour vos efforts de parler plus en français.

Our government was elected on a promise to end the culture of waste and mismanagement, and bring back fiscal responsibility, transparency and accountability. I know that the minister as well as the President of the Treasury Board have been hard at work finding ways to ensure that every single taxpayer dollar is well invested and respected.

Since this year is drawing to a close, could the minister tell this House what steps his ministry has taken thus far to help municipalities like the region of Peel and others across Ontario to find savings and efficiencies?

L'hon. Steve Clark: Merci à la députée pour la question.

Speaker, at the AMO conference in August, our government heard loud and clear from the municipal sector that they understand the fiscal challenges that this government faced, and the fact that this also compromises what matters most.

That's why our government responded. We introduced the Audit and Accountability Fund, a fund which would provide \$7.35 million to the 39 largest municipalities to help them become more effective and more efficient.

You know what, Speaker? We had 100% support. All 39 signed on because they want to work with our government to find savings for taxpayers.

We also introduced the \$200-million Municipal Modernization Fund, which helped the 405 small, rural and northern communities with their service delivery.

We provided these two funds to work with municipalities. I'm excited to share the next steps in our government's journey with municipalities in the supplementary.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I thank the minister for his answer and for his steadfast leadership on engaging and building relationships with our municipal partners, including the region of Peel.

Last month, the minister announced his continued commitment and support for helping municipalities across our province be more efficient. Could the minister please explain what new steps the government is taking to continue to work in partnership with our municipalities?

Hon. Steve Clark: I am proud to outline our government's path forward. There are essentially four steps our government is taking.

First, we're going to renew the Municipal Modernization Fund with up to \$125 million over the next four years to those 405 small, rural and northern municipalities. We want to help them modernize service delivery.

Second, we're going to extend the Audit and Accountability Fund. We'll provide up to \$6 million annually over the next three years to help those large municipalities with their effectiveness and efficiency.

Thirdly, we're going to consult with municipalities on something that has been talked about for many, many years, and that is aligning the municipal fiscal year with the provincial fiscal year.

Finally, another item that has been discussed for many years is the fact that we're going to start the process of consolidating the municipal voters lists with the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario's, removing that burden from municipalities.

But, finally, Speaker, we're going to do something again. We're going to work with municipalities—

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

The next question.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour la ministre des Affaires francophones. Il y a quelques semaines, un enseignant d'une école près de Smooth Rock Falls a dû appeler le 911 à cause d'une urgence. Le répartiteur d'ambulances qui lui a répondu ne parlait pas français, alors l'enseignant a dû répéter sa demande en anglais.

L'enseignant a ensuite déposé une plainte avec l'unité des services en français de l'ombudsman, et le Bureau de l'ombudsman lui a demandé de déposer une plainte avec les services médicaux d'urgence du district de Cochrane, car l'ombudsman n'intervient qu'en dernier recours.

Madame la Ministre, vu cette situation, croyez-vous toujours que l'unité des services en français va détenir le même mandat et les ressources nécessaires que l'ancien commissaire indépendant?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie le député de sa question. La sécurité des Ontariens et Ontariennes est très importante pour les membres de ce gouvernement et l'accès aux services en français est aussi très important. Le Bureau de l'ombudsman est en train de faire une enquête pour remplacer le commissaire. Alors il fait ce travail, et c'est un bureau indépendant. Nous attendons tous le jour où il va nommer le nouveau commissaire, et nous attendons peut-être cette nomination dans les jours à venir.

C'est essentiel que les francophones à travers la province aient un bureau où ils peuvent déposer leurs plaintes et que le commissaire continue à faire le travail qu'il a fait auparavant. Sous le projet de loi que nous avons déposé l'année dernière, il va continuer à faire ce travail. Il va mener les mêmes responsabilités qu'il menait auparavant.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Contrairement aux pouvoirs de l'ancien commissaire, ni le mandat ni le caractère de son travail n'exigent que l'ombudsman reçoive et règle des plaintes et qu'il enquête sur celles-ci. D'ailleurs, les plaignants doivent avoir utilisé tous les moyens disponibles avant de faire appel aux agents d'enquête de l'ombudsman. Avec le commissaire aux services en français indépendant, les plaintes étaient enquêtées directement de son bureau.

Il y a seulement quelques semaines, j'ai déposé un projet de loi visant à moderniser les services en langue française et à rétablir le bureau indépendant du commissaire aux services en français. Madame la Ministre, je vous pose la question que tous les Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens veulent vous poser : allez-vous rétablir le commissaire indépendant, oui ou non?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Notre gouvernement a pleinement confiance en la capacité de l'ombudsman à faire le travail et à respecter la Loi sur les services en français. Nous avons hâte de travailler avec le nouveau commissaire dans son poste et son rôle.

Mais c'est important que le député opposé soit conscient des enjeux importants pour les francophones. Ils veulent l'accès aux services en français. Ils veulent le développement économique de la communauté francophone, ce qui est un dossier que notre gouvernement a introduit pour la première fois. Ils veulent savoir que, quand ils ont besoin de l'accès aux services de santé en français, le projet de loi que la ministre de la Santé a déposé continue à promouvoir les intérêts des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes. Ce sont là les dossiers importants pour les francophones à travers la province, et c'est ce que le ministère des Affaires francophones continue à faire.

REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

Mr. Stan Cho: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Yesterday I had the privilege and thrill of speaking on a panel at the Ontario

Real Estate Association conference alongside the member from Guelph, the member from Ottawa South and the member from Brampton Centre. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I was encouraged to see members of all political stripes represented.

Real estate professionals from across the province were in attendance to participate in an important discussion of the future of their industry, and it's great to see many of those professionals in attendance here with us today in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister responsible for overseeing the legislation that governs Ontario's real estate brokerages, brokers and salespeople, can the minister please explain what work the government is doing to ensure that the industry is managed in a way that protects consumers and provides the hard-working real estate professionals in this province with the tools they need to succeed?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you to the member from Willowdale for that great question. I also thank you for joining me and the Premier and other members of the House in a very important discussion in terms of how we move our real estate industry forward in Ontario.

As you know, it has been nearly 20 years, Speaker, since the last act was passed. Today's market is so drastically different, with new technologies and increased access to market data as well as changes to consumer expectations.

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In response to part of this change that is needed, we actually reached out to our real estate professionals and we're so pleased to with the results of the consultation: 4,200 real estate professionals responded to our online survey, and we had over 80 submissions to our consultation paper as well. This valuable feedback will inform the legislation that governs the industry in this province going forward. I thank them for their feedback and their participation and their engagement, and I look forward to speaking more about this in the supplemental.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you to the minister for the important work that she is doing for the real estate industry in Ontario. It's no secret that real estate is a crucial part of our province's economy. In 2018, there were over 86,000 registered real estate brokerages, brokers and salespeople in Ontario and home sales of \$107.9 billion. As the minister said, it has been almost two decades since a meaningful update has been made to the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, and the market has changed significantly since then.

I want to thank the minister for her leadership in taking on this important review which impacts the livelihoods of so many Ontarians. Will the minister please highlight for the members of this House some of the changes that she is proposing?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Absolutely—and thank you to the member from Willowdale again. Yesterday was a good day, where I was able to stand in front of the real estate professionals from across Ontario and tell them

sincerely, “We heard you loud and clear.” We know that this act needs updating, and we intend to take bold action to bring this legislation into the 21st century.

Changes and opportunities being considered are enhancing consumer protection—this means increasing choice for consumers and giving them greater access to information that they need. We're also looking at increasing the professionalism among real estate professionals and brokerages. This has been asked for, and we want to make sure there is a clear set of rules that is easy to understand for all parties. Thirdly, we want to ensure efficient and effective regulation for the real estate sector. We're going to be promoting a strong business environment, and also we're going to be reducing burden on their businesses.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Jamie West: My question is to the Premier. The driving conditions that northern Ontarians have to deal with every winter are disgraceful. On November 1, we had our first winter closure of the season on Highway 11. The snowy road was closed between Cobalt and Temagami for almost the entire morning because of multiple collisions. Yet, last week, the Conservative members of this House voted down my colleague the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay's private member's bill that would have improved winter maintenance on Highways 11 and 17. During the debates, government members from the south said that improving winter maintenance in the north would cost “taxpayers a great deal of money, without substantial benefits.”

Why does the Premier believe that the safety of northern Ontario drivers is not worth the money?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I would like to thank the member opposite for raising the concerns shared by his caucus and their ideas regarding winter road safety on our northern highways. I think all of us in this House share those goals of maintaining Ontario's roads, among the safest in North America, in the south and in the north. That's why we have some of the highest standards in North America for road safety and highway maintenance.

Over the course of a typical winter, on average, bare pavement is regained on Highways 11 and 17 within seven hours after the end of a storm, much sooner than the standard time frames for both major highways, class 2, and freeways and urban highways, class 1. Over the past few years, the ministry has worked very hard to continue to enhance the quality of service on our northern highways and roads to ensure that they also are among the safest in North America, and we have done that. We are committed to ensuring the safety and highway maintenance—

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

Supplementary question?

Mr. Jamie West: Back to the Premier: We may have some, but we don't have all, and I think seven to eight hours after a storm is a lot different in the north than it is

in the south. Frankly, I'm appalled to hear the minister opposite defend a position that simply puts the lives of children, families and workers at risk.

It is even more shocking to hear this, considering that the member from Nipissing spoke in this House on multiple occasions in the past to improve winter maintenance on these same Ontario highways. When the northern member from Nipissing was in the opposition he said that constituents and municipalities "want the Ministry of Transportation to undertake the evaluation and potential reclassification of all provincial highways to ensure adequate road maintenance...." That member was right to criticize the Liberals in the past for deregulating the maintenance contracts; however, what he forgot to mention was that the privatization of winter services began under Conservative Premier Mike Harris.

Speaker, why does this government think that northern Ontarians should drive on poorly maintained roads and risk their lives every single winter?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: First of all, the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade has been the fiercest advocate for the north in this chamber for the last 15 years while the Liberals ignored the concerns. The member from Nipissing, the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, has been a strong advocate for road safety in the north. Perhaps that's why we already exceed the standards that were called for by the member of the opposition in his private member's bill. At seven hours to get to bare pavement, those standards are higher than the standards we have on class 1 and class 2 highways.

I am very proud of the work that we're doing at the Ministry of Transportation to ensure the safety of our highways across the province, especially in the north where winter conditions make driving difficult. We will continue to see how we can improve on our good record. We will continue to work to ensure the safety of our roads and the drivers who use them.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for the Minister of Health. For years, Hamiltonians have been facing long wait times in our hospitals. When our government was elected, the people of Ontario gave us a very clear mandate to fix this long-standing problem. We are taking steps to end hallway health care now, while building a sustainable public health care system for the future. This is what Ontarians expect of us.

Will the minister tell this House what we are doing to end hallway health care in Hamilton and right across the province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for her question and for being such a strong advocate on behalf of her constituents.

Investing in hospital infrastructure is a very important pillar of our plan to end hallway health care. Our government has committed to investing \$27 billion over 10 years to build capacity throughout the system, including in our hospitals and in other community-based care facilities.

In Hamilton, that means the Centre for Mountain Health Services is receiving \$19.8 million towards annual service payments for their West 5th site. The Hamilton Health Sciences stem cell transplant capital expansion project is also receiving \$10 million in funding for planned construction progress. These new investments in hospital infrastructure will accommodate the growing demand for hospital beds and for specialist services.

We are going to continue to build our health care system and deliver real results for Ontarians.

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

The House recessed from 1148 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's absolutely my pleasure to introduce to the House some amazing people that we have worked a long time with, with regard to changing the landscape in Ontario when it comes to the Ontario real estate industry.

In the gallery today, we have some amazing people. In particular, I would like to point out that we have the president, Michael Beard, from RECO, the Real Estate Council of Ontario; we have Tim Hudak, the CEO of OREA, the Ontario Real Estate Association; and we also have John DiMichele. He is the president of TREB—the CEO; pardon me; I'm getting the titles all mixed up. He is the CEO of the Toronto Real Estate Board. They're joined by Karen Cox, the president—

Hon. Bill Walker: Hey, hey! Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, Karen Cox, from the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the county of Grey.

I also want to introduce to you my team. A minister, a member of provincial Parliament, couldn't do anything in this House if they didn't have a supportive team working behind them and making sure everything gets pulled together.

So, to the team at the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, thank you so much: David DiPaul, chief; Michelle Stock, our director of policy; Shannon Grimes, director of communication; and we have Monica Da Re. Two other guys are around, and I'm not sure where they are, but I will give a shout-out to Thomas Staples, as well as Nicko. They're here somewhere. There they are. Hello.

But most importantly, I want to say hello and give a warm welcome to all of the real estate professionals from across this province. They're here, and they have waited a long time for what we are going to be speaking about in a few moments.

M. Joel Harden: Ça me fait honneur d'introduire, pour nos discussions cet après-midi, Bradley Boileau et Natasha Pelletier, qui font partie du mouvement jeunesse pour les Franco-Ontariens. Je suis très heureux de vous voir aujourd'hui. Bonjour.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je prends la parole aujourd'hui en cette Chambre pour exprimer les sentiments de détresse de plusieurs aînés de Mushkegowuk–Baie James. Les services de soins de longue durée dans la communauté du nord de l'Ontario sont en crise. Les conservateurs ont annoncé en grande pompe 15 000 nouveaux lits de soins de longue durée. Mais, en réalité, on a eu zéro lit dans la région desservie par le RLISS du Nord-Est.

Mushkegowuk–Baie James est une région éloignée avec une population qui vieillit plus rapidement que la moyenne de l'Ontario, et la plupart de nos concitoyens sont francophones. Depuis juillet 2018, la liste d'attente a effectivement augmenté. Nous avons 2 117 personnes qui attendent un lit dans la région desservie par le RLISS du Nord-Est seulement, et nos manoirs sont pleins à craquer. Nous avons 78 lits au manoir Centennial, 61 chez Extencicare à Kapuskasing et il y a des centaines d'aînés sur la liste d'attente. Au Manoir des pionniers à Hearst, nos aînés peuvent attendre jusqu'à trois ans pour accéder à un lit.

Étant donné qu'on a vu la liste d'attente presque doubler pendant le gouvernement libéral, les conservateurs n'ont rien de concret à nous offrir. Nous travaillons sur des projets de courte durée pour essayer de répondre—on a 20 lits disponibles. On attend tout le temps la réponse de la ministre.

OTTAWA POLICE
AND FIRST RESPONDERS
POLICE ET PREMIERS INTERVENANTS
D'OTTAWA

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Chief Peter Sloly, who was sworn in as chief of the Ottawa Police Service on October 28, 2019. I was pleased to see that the Ottawa police's draft budget for 2020 prioritizes a return to community policing as well as a commitment to member wellness.

Supporting Ottawa's police officers was also discussed at length by everyone attending this year's Ottawa Police Service Gala. I'd like to thank Deputy Chief Uday Jaswal for inviting me to join him at his table this year.

Je voudrais prendre ce temps pour aussi remercier tous les policiers et professionnels de la police pour le travail important qu'ils accomplissent dans nos communautés. Ils travaillent chaque journée pour assurer la sécurité et la prospérité de cette province magnifique.

I look forward to working with our chief of police, our deputy chiefs, the Ottawa Police Association and the rest of the hard-working men and women of the Ottawa Police Service and in fact, all first responders across Ottawa, including Fire Chief Kim Ayotte, paramedic chief Myles Cassidy, Ottawa Professional Fire Fighters Association president John Sobey, and the Professional Paramedic

Association of Ottawa, to promote not only the safety of our communities but also the health and well-being of our first responders.

Je suis reconnaissante pour tout ce que font les policiers et j'ai hâte de travailler avec eux pour assurer la sécurité des Ontariens et Ontariennes.

ABIGAYLE LOBSINGER

Ms. Catherine Fife: Miss Abigayle Lobsinger has been fighting neuroblastoma, an aggressive childhood cancer, for most of her seven years of life. I call her Miss Abigayle because she has been fighting cancer with great strength and courage. Her parents, LEEANNE and KEVIN, and her sisters, FAITH, ASHLEY and SAM, are all on this journey with this brave little girl and have been so strong. It has been tough on everyone, especially #WaterloosToughestCookie.

On Sunday, her folks put out a call for love, prayers, good vibes and positive thoughts as Abigayle enters the next phase of treatment. When families face a cancer diagnosis, it doesn't take long to realize that friends, family, neighbourhood and even their city can make a world of difference.

Abigayle has had excellent care at SickKids. This week, she is at McMaster Children's Hospital. I want to thank the exceptional doctors, nurses and support staff who are in this fight with Miss Abigayle.

Abigayle has a favourite band, the Foo Fighters. Her favourite song is "Learn to Fly." Out of courtesy to Abigayle, because I like her, I'm not going to sing it, but I do want to leave you with these lyrics:

Fly along with me
I can't quite make it alone
Try to make this life my own
Looking to the sky to save me
Looking for a sign of life
Looking for something to help me get things right.

Abigayle, we are all flying with you and your family. You are the ultimate Foo Fighter.

DAVE DILLON

Mr. Toby Barrett: I rise today to celebrate and remember Dave Dillon, a member of our large political family. Late last week, we learned of Dave's passing. He would have celebrated his 55th birthday next Tuesday. If we counted Dave's life in relation to the campaigns, conventions, association meetings and events and, certainly, friends, it would indeed be a full life and one resembling that of a man twice his age.

Born to the late Maggie and Mike Dillon, Dave grew up in Wortley Village in London. When friends came to visit his parents, Dave was caught on a number of occasions sneaking from his room to sit on the staircase so he could eavesdrop on political conversations.

Politics was indeed in Dave's blood. He was a dedicated assistant to former London South MPP Bob Wood for

many years. Aside from this, Dave worked on countless campaigns at all levels, and recently in the federal election as a regional organizer for Andrew Scheer.

When he was not out knocking on doors or attending meetings, he enjoyed reading and a good western.

Friends young and young at heart will miss this quirky fellow whose quick wit was known through his many emails and phone calls. He had a way of making people smile and laugh.

It is the hope of Dave's friends—they didn't say goodbye—that he has departed our great earth knowing he was loved and valued far beyond the political arena. Dave leaves behind his daughter, Morgan.

TOW TRUCK OPERATORS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Todd Burgess was a truck operator. He lived in Oshawa but worked across Durham region on our roadways. We knew him in our office. It was Todd's job to help people out and get folks moving.

On November 7, he was helping a car out of a ditch and tragically was killed doing his job at the side of the road, helping a neighbour in need. His recent funeral was attended by many members of the community, and hundreds of tow trucks drove in convoy to pay respects to one of their own.

Sadly, Speaker, tow truck operators are all at risk. Tow truck operators have started an online petition calling for the use of blue emergency lights. In a very short time, the petition has garnered over 25,000 signatures. Blue lights are more visible.

The government needs to look at improving protections for tow truck operators, who are in a high-risk occupation. Our roadways are their workplaces. As critic for highways and transportation, I know that safety is paramount. If we can make people safer as they do their jobs, then why wouldn't we?

This government should also take another look at the vulnerable road users act, put forward by the member for University–Rosedale, and recognize that any worker who is working on the road should be considered vulnerable.

1510

Speaker, recently I called CAA and got a tow from Queen's Park back to Oshawa, spending quality time in traffic riding shotgun, talking about some of what trucks see every day on the roads. We talked about safety. We talked about drivers on the roads who won't put down their phones.

While we can't solve the problem of distracted driving today in this Legislature, we can start the conversation about visibility and protections for tow truck operators and workers on our roads. Todd's death was a tragedy. Tow truck operators deserve to be safe while they do their jobs.

BRIDGET AND SHAWN SAULNIER

Mr. Parm Gill: I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank two of my amazing constituents. Bridget and Shawn Saulnier, who are originally from the

east coast, call Campbellville their home, and work hard to support many great causes and community organizations in my great riding of Milton.

They have been the proud owners of Mohawk Inn and Conference Centre, which has served as a hub in the local Campbellville community. It has hosted many United Way events, Destination Campbellville Community Association meetings and many other gatherings.

In the 2013 ice storm, Shawn and Bridget opened their doors and provided food and shelter to anyone who needed it. They were recognized as entrepreneurs of the year in 2014 and were also tapped to be the honorary mayors of Campbellville in 2017. They are truly community leaders and business leaders, Mr. Speaker.

This past week, they announced that Mohawk Inn and Conference Centre is going to transform into a much larger and more modern hotel and event centre. No doubt this new space will allow them to continue their tireless community work.

I would like to thank Shawn and Bridget for their leadership in the community and congratulate them on this new chapter for Mohawk Inn.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Miss Monique Taylor: This week is Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, a week set aside to promote a safe, inclusive and positive learning environment in our schools. Youth experience bullying every day in our schools and on our playgrounds. Research shows that one in three young people report being bullied at school. It's happening online too: One in five teens say they've experienced cyberbullying.

Along with the physical scars, students who are bullied can develop deep psychological and emotional scars. In my home city of Hamilton, we recently saw a horrific, worst-case scenario of bullying. A 14-year-old named Devan Selvey died at the hands of his bullies. I cannot even imagine the anguish his mother feels, and I offer her my deepest condolences.

No mother should have to experience this, and no young person should be tormented at school. The reality is that all of this trauma is preventable. We simply need to do better to support Ontario students. We must provide them the in-school resources that they need, such as counselling and safe reporting mechanisms.

We need to support our teachers and education workers as well. Cutting resources in our schools will only make bullying worse. A safe and positive learning environment is essential for students to succeed. Government can help by providing schools the resources they need to tackle bullying.

RÉSEAU DES JEUNES PARLEMENTAIRES

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: This summer, I was honoured to be elected global chair of the International Network of

Young Parliamentarians of the APF, l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

Le réseau assure un échange de meilleures pratiques entre parlementaires de partout afin que nous puissions bénéficier des succès des autres parlements et afin d'apprendre à surmonter les défis que nous partageons.

Depuis mon entrée en fonction, j'ai participé à plusieurs conférences et rencontres, où j'ai eu l'occasion non seulement de représenter le réseau mais aussi l'Ontario, pour partager nos succès.

J'étais à Washington pour la conférence parlementaire de la Banque mondiale et du Fonds monétaire international, à Asunción au Paraguay pour la conférence des jeunes parlementaires de l'Union interparlementaire, et à Paris pour différentes rencontres la semaine dernière.

J'ai partagé le succès de nos mesures concrètes pour la jeunesse, qui visent à fournir aux jeunes l'appui et les outils nécessaires pour améliorer divers indicateurs, tels la santé, l'éducation, les options d'emploi et, de manière critique, l'engagement et le sentiment d'appartenance à une communauté. J'ai noté que nos gouvernements, de tous les partis et de tous les niveaux, ont déployé énormément d'effort pour accroître le bien-être, la qualité de vie et l'engagement civique, ce qui contribue davantage à nos succès.

Je reviens ici avec un vent d'énergie pour continuer à travailler avec tous les parlementaires de cette Assemblée afin que nous continuions d'être un modèle pour les autres parlements à travers le monde.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR, TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Jane McKenna: I'm very pleased to rise in the Legislature today to let you know about an online exhibit commemorating the 100th anniversary this year of the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. The exhibit is posted on the Archives of Ontario's website. I would like all Ontario residents to know about the exhibit. I believe it will be of great interest to educators, students and the general public, as well as employer and labour groups and everyone in the workplace.

The exhibit is a remarkable telling of our ministry's history: how it began as a small government department focusing on workplace standards and safety and grew to become an essential organization for Ontario workplaces. It contains stories of key figures, ministers, deputies and labour relations people, as well as ministry staff.

Our ministry didn't just adapt to its environment; it helped to shape it by laying the groundwork for safer, fairer and more harmonious workplaces.

I want to thank the ministry staff who were involved in putting together the history. The exhibit gives us knowledge we never had before. I hope you all take a look at it and enjoy it.

Thank you so much, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on the 100th anniversary.

COOPERATION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE CONFERENCE

Mr. Aris Babikian: Today I stand here to speak about my recent trip to Armenia and Artsakh. In October, I, along with three other elected officials from Ontario and Quebec, had been invited by the Armenian National Committee of Canada to attend the Cooperation for Justice and Peace conference in the region. The conference, which was attended by parliamentarians from 30 countries, was a great forum for dialogue and an opportunity to learn about Artsakh.

During our visit, we also had meetings with the President of Artsakh and the Speaker of the Artsakh Parliament.

The conference showcased the commitment of the Artsakh people to democracy and human rights that I know they share with Canadians. I am very much looking forward to continuing the co-operation and the conversation that began at the conference in October to ensure that peace and democracy are the hallmark of politics in the region for generations to come.

During the Canadian delegation visit to Armenia, we had a productive discussion with members of the Canada-Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group. We examined Ontario's and Canada's bilateral relations with Armenia and the possibility of co-operation between our two countries. Armenian officials expressed interest in growing the already strong economic and social ties between Ontario, Canada and Armenia. I believe that this co-operative spirit of the Armenian officials speaks strongly to the government's agenda of ensuring that our Ontario is open for business.

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 November 19, 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.

1520

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED TO DOGS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2019

Mr. Nicholls moved first reading of the following bill:
Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2019.

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

I recognize the member for Chatham–Kent–Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just very quickly, this bill repeals provisions in the Animals for Research Act relating to the disposition of pit bulls under the act. It also repeals provisions in the Dog Owners' Liability Act that prohibit restricted pit bulls and provided for controls on pit bulls.

The act also is amended to provide that if a court finds a dog, in an unprovoked attack, has inflicted a severe physical injury on a person or has killed a person, the court shall declare that the dog is a vicious dog and may order that the dog be destroyed, and shall order that the owner be prohibited from owning another dog for a period of at least 10 years.

I could go on, but very briefly, instead of breed-specific legislation, which has discriminated against pit bulls and related look-alike-type pit bulls, this bill, if passed, highlights breed-neutral legislation which will not discriminate against any breed of dog.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LE COMITÉ
CONSULTATIF DES SUBVENTIONS
AUX RÉSIDENTS DU NORD
DE L'ONTARIO POUR FRAIS
DE TRANSPORT À DES FINS MÉDICALES

Ms. Monteith-Farrell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to enact the Northern Health Travel Grant Advisory Committee Act, 2019 / Projet de loi 144, Loi édictant la Loi de 2019 sur le Comité consultatif des subventions aux résidents du Nord de l'Ontario pour frais de transport à des fins médicales.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan to explain her bill.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Thank you, Speaker. This bill enacts the Northern Health Travel Grant Advisory Committee Act, 2019. The act requires the Minister of Health to establish an advisory committee. The committee's mandate is to make recommendations for improving the facilitation of reasonable access to health services for people in northern Ontario by means of reasonable, realistic and efficient reimbursement for travel costs. The committee is required to consult with all relevant stakeholders, including, at minimum, the stakeholders specified in the bill, and the committee is required to report its recommendations to the minister. The minister is required to inform the assembly of the recommendations that she will implement.

TRUST IN REAL ESTATE
SERVICES ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LA CONFIANCE
ENVERS LES SERVICES IMMOBILIERS

Ms. Thompson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 145, An Act to amend the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 145, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the Minister of Government and Consumer Services care to explain the bill?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Absolutely. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has been nearly 20 years since the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act has been passed, and it's absolutely overdue for a review. This is necessitated because today's market has drastically changed, with new technologies, increased access to market data, and changes in consumer expectations.

Our proposed changes in this legislation will take a look at:

- enhancing consumer protection;
- increasing professionalism amongst our real estate professionals;
- ensuring efficient and effective regulation;
- promoting a strong business environment; as well as
- reducing burden.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce a bill that's very important to a lot of people in this House. The long title is An Act to amend the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act. The short title that everyone will know it as is the Trust in Real Estate Services Act. This is an act that, if passed by this Legislature, as I mentioned earlier, would be a much-needed update to the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, known as REBBA.

If passed, this act would strengthen the business environment for real estate brokerages, brokers and salespersons, which would in turn protect consumers when making the biggest and most important purchase in their lifetime.

It would also rename the act to the Trust in Real Estate Services Act, a name that I think we can all get behind. We want to ensure that consumers and real estate professionals alike have trust in each other.

The current law sets out rules that govern Ontario's real estate brokerages, brokers and salespersons. An administrative authority that my ministry oversees is the Real

Estate Council of Ontario. It is responsible for administering and enforcing the act and its regulations.

Why are we doing this now? Speaker, it would be news to no one that the real estate market in Ontario and, quite frankly, across Canada has seen enormous changes since the act was first passed nearly 20 years ago. Higher condo skyscrapers and new subdivisions embody the hopes and dreams of people all over Ontario, and in rural Ontario, it's acres of farmland and open spaces that catch one's eye. The commercial properties, particularly in downtown Toronto, are more expensive than ever, with vacancy rates at all-time lows. Economically, real estate is booming. Statistics Canada reported last year that in the years 2005 to 2015 the total value of all residential properties more than doubled in Ontario. While recent numbers may be more tempered, values remain high.

We also have to keep in mind that the numbers do not tell the entire story. Real estate is just not about square footage and great floor plans; it's about the kitchen table where you have your Thanksgiving dinner, your Christmas dinner, and the spaces with cozy corners to look out that window on a winter's day, and it's about the living room where dreams are hatched and the bedroom where you lay your head at night. It's those things that make real estate not just the largest purchase a person will ever make; it's about homes.

Over the last two days, I have heard and have been inspired by two amazing people—and I can tell you, from my perspective, it's about enabling the goal of owning a home.

Mr. Speaker, our proposed amendments, if passed, will do a number of things to help ensure that Ontarians who are buying and selling real estate continue to benefit from strong consumer protection, while creating a stronger business environment for registered real estate brokerages, brokers and salespersons. This is something that is very important to the people in this House.

If passed, the act would allow for changes to the regulations to give consumers more choice in the purchase and sale process by permitting real estate professionals and brokerages to disclose details of competing offers at the seller's choosing, and by improving the information consumers receive about what a real estate professional and brokerage must do for them.

Our second point: If passed, this act would enable making changes to update and streamline the code of ethics regulation that real estate professionals and brokerages must follow to increase professionalism.

1530

Thirdly, if passed, this act will update the regulatory powers available to the Real Estate Council of Ontario, including allowing it to levy financial penalties, also known as administrative penalties, and allowing its registrar to look at a broader range of factors when considering registration eligibility to more effectively and efficiently deter and address bad conduct.

Our fourth point: If this legislation should pass, it will lay the foundation for allowing real estate professionals to incorporate and be paid through the corporation.

Last, and certainly not least, it will reduce regulatory burden.

Mr. Speaker, our proposed changes are the result of a long and thorough consultation process with stakeholders and consumers throughout Ontario which began this past January. I'm pleased to share with you that I appreciate the work that Minister Walker and Minister Smith put towards this as well, and of course my outstanding parliamentary assistant, the member of provincial Parliament from Sarnia-Lambton, Bob Bailey.

Interjections.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm also pleased to note that the gallery is filled with real estate professionals from across Ontario. Thank you so much for being here. I know you have waited a long time for the changes I've outlined today—but don't clap; it's not allowed. But we'll see you on the stairs later.

Mr. Speaker, from January until March 2019, the ministry consulted with consumers and the real estate industry. There were almost 7,000 responses to an online public survey: 39% came from consumers and 61% from real estate professionals. The ministry also received more than 140 responses to a detailed consultation paper and met with a range of interested individuals and organizations. I want to thank all of those who contributed to the consultations for their valuable suggestions and feedback.

Again, I thank the Real Estate Council of Ontario, the Ontario Real Estate Association, as well as the Toronto Real Estate Board, for being here and supporting the introduction of this particular bill.

I also want to thank the members of this House who have so thoroughly conveyed the feedback they have received from their local real estate boards in their ridings, and I thank everyone who has advocated and met directly with me as well.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this bill is needed to help bring our real estate services legislation up to date with the realities of today's business practices and consumer expectations. I know these issues are important all across Ontario, and I look forward to debating this bill.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Buying a home is one of the biggest, most important decisions financially that a person will make. It certainly was for me and my family. After living for over 30 years in rentals, a real estate agent worked with my family to deliver a home that has been a dream—a dream for me throughout my childhood, a dream for me throughout my youth and my young adulthood. It was a real estate agent who helped us find that property, a place we still live in today.

I want to recognize the work of all real estate agents across this province, and I want to recognize the Ontario Real Estate Association. I've met with them on a number of occasions, and they've talked to me about how important it is to strengthen and modernize regulations, to ensure that real estate agents meet the highest levels of professionalism and excellence, and to look at opening possibilities of specialization. And of course, they spoke

about consumer protection, and I recognize their advocacy and the great work they're doing for their own membership.

I look forward, as I was provided this legislation today, to going through this. You can rest assured that the New Democrat opposition will ensure that any legislation we support only brings improvements, and that's what we're going to be looking at.

I'd also like to spend a little bit of time, as we're discussing the concepts around homeownership, about Tarion. As I said, homeownership for me has been a dream, but for some, especially people in the riding of Orléans in Cardinal Creek Village, that dream has become a nightmare. We've seen problems in the system for the provision of warranties for new homebuyers, especially under this previous Liberal government. For over 15 years, the pleas of new homeowners were forgotten, and we have a current system, as we speak, that is not working, that has lost the confidence of the public.

The Auditor General just reported a whole bunch of recommendations, and it was not only just eyebrow-raising but shocking, in many cases, to see managers being rewarded for being stingy and essentially denying claims to those people who need it the most. We saw, just in a period of four years, almost 10,000 people have their claims rejected just because of timelines. When the Auditor General looked at how Tarion followed its own timeline policies, they couldn't. They missed their own timelines in many cases. This is currently the system that we are facing.

I also want to recognize the important work of stakeholders like Karen Somerville and the Canadians for Properly Built Homes, Barbara Captijn, Marcel Bellefeuille, his family, all the members affected in Cardinal Creek Village and so many people across Ontario who have been demanding change.

We as New Democrats are proposing a PMB that you'll be hearing about that is looking to implement so many important recommendations from Justice Douglas Cunningham to reform Tarion. It's time. We've lost confidence in the board. It's time for the board to go. It's time for the CEO to go. It's time to implement recommendations that had been listed before in 2017. We've seen this government move very quickly on a number of other different priorities, some of which have been quite unpopular, but this one here is a no-brainer. There are hundreds of thousands of people who are currently under warranty as we speak who are counting on this government to step up and do the right thing. We're modernizing other acts. Let's modernize this. Let's bring improvements to Tarion. It's not working, and I'm calling on the minister and I'm calling on this government to do the right thing. We can't wait any longer. Let's get it done.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise and respond to the ministerial statement. I've been a long-time advocate for updating and modernizing the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act. It was a fine minister who

originally wrote that act, but it was almost 20 years ago, and I think it is time that it's updated.

I want to just say a big shout-out and thanks to the Real Estate Council of Ontario as well as the Ontario Real Estate Association for the amazing work you've done in informing MPPs of the need to professionalize the real estate profession.

I want to echo the member's comments. Buying a house, buying a home, is the most important investment any Ontarian will make. Making sure we have a system that ensures trust and confidence in professional standards is absolutely critical to insuring that investment for people. Modernizing REBBA is an important step in that direction.

I want to give a shout-out to Brett Nodwell and others from Guelph who have been important advisers in helping me to understand the changes that need to happen. I also want to give a shout-out to Alan Mason, who met with me about five years ago and said to me, "Mike, you're a small business owner. You serve as a consultant. You can have a corporation. You can actually write your business expenses off. You can use that money to make contributions to the community as a responsible professional. Why am I unable to do that as a realtor?"

So bringing in tax fairness for realtors is something that is long overdue. I think realtors deserve to be treated like any other professional in our communities: to be able to set up professional real estate corporations and to be able to be treated, tax-wise, in a fair way, just like all other consultants, professionals and small business owners in this province. I haven't had an opportunity to read the bill—it has just been introduced—but that's a component I'll certainly be looking for.

1540

I also believe it's critically important to have specialty certification for realtors. We know that it's different if you're selling a condo in downtown Toronto or a farm in a rural community, if you're selling commercial real estate or home real estate. I have realtors who I know want to talk to people about how we can make their homes more energy-efficient and tackle the climate crisis. They want to make sure they have the kinds of certification and credentials so that their clients will be confident in the claims they're making and the types of real estate they're selling, and having those specialty certifications is essential to making that happen.

I also believe it's important that professional standards be implemented and enforced properly, and ensuring that we have an enforcement mechanism so that people have confidence that the realtors serving them will serve them well and that other realtors will have confidence that their profession will be regulated appropriately and professional standards will be enforced.

Finally, I just want to say how important it is, I believe, for realtors and the people they serve to have trust and choice in the realtors they choose. While we want to make sure there is no conflicts of interest in the process, we also want to make sure that people have a choice in the realtor they work with. So we need to have a system of transparent, consumer-focused disclosure, but I think that putting

too onerous restrictions on that process can also be a detriment, particularly in rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to reading this legislation and working with the opposition and the government to make sure we bring forward a modernized REBA that the former minister and current president of OREA can be proud of, that we have actually updated properly to reflect the 21st century and, most importantly, that the people who make a purchase of a home have confidence in a person who's helping them make that choice, or in selling their most important investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to reading the bill.

PETITIONS

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ford Conservatives’ cuts represent an all-out attack on municipalities, health care, schools, universities and social services; and

“Whereas the Ford Conservatives’ cuts are harming families, children and the most vulnerable across Ontario, making the services we all rely on less accessible and accountable; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will strip workers of their charter-protected right to free collective bargaining; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will force front-line public sector workers to accept contracts below inflation, compounding cuts that make the delivery of services more difficult;

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

“That the government ... stop dismantling our social infrastructure, properly fund our public services, withdraw Bill 124, and support communities, not cuts.”

I support this petition, will be affixing my signature to it and giving it to Isabella to take to the Clerk.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Dave Smith: “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 (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 agree with this petition, will be signing it and giving it to page Sarah.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I’m glad to be rising in the Legislature to talk about tuition and education.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas students in Ontario pay some of the highest tuition fees in the country and carry the heaviest debt loads, even with the recently announced 10% reduction; and

“Whereas many students will now be forced to take on more loans rather than previously available non-repayable grants; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has failed to take action on the chronic underfunding of colleges and universities; and

“Whereas students must have an autonomous voice that is independent of administration and government to advocate on our behalf; and

“Whereas the proposed ‘Student Choice Initiative’ undermines students’ ability to take collective action;

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

“—provide more grants, not loans;

“—eliminate tuition fees for all students;

“—increase public funding for public education;

“—protect students’ independent voices; and

“—defend the right to organize.”

I’m glad to be signing this petition on behalf of We The Students. I’m giving it to page Clara.

GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: This petition is entitled “The First Year of Premier Ford’s-led Government (Supporting and Promoting the Timeline of the Government for the People).

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas almost one year ago, Premier Ford’s PC-led government was elected with an overwhelming majority; and

“Whereas the government was elected on a mandate of restoring Ontario’s finances, as well as delivering responsible, accountable and transparent government; and

“Whereas since being elected, the Premier Ford government has passed a historic amount of legislation to get Ontario on the right track, including:

“Bill 2, Urgent Priorities Act, 2018;

“Bill 4, Cap and Trade Cancellation Act, 2018...;

“Bill 32, Access to Natural Gas Act, 2018;

“Bill 34, Green Energy Repeal Act, 2018;

“Bill 36, Cannabis Statute Law Amendment Act, 2018;

“Bill 47, Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018;

“Bill 48, Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, 2019;

“Bill 57, Restoring Trust, Transparency and Accountability Act, 2018;

“Bill 66, Restoring Ontario’s Competitiveness Act, 2019;

“Bill 67, Labour Relations Amendment Act (Protecting Ontario’s Power Supply), 2018;

“Bill 68, Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, 2019;

“Bill 74, The People’s Health Care Act, 2019;

“Bill 81, Supply Act, 2019;

“Bill 87, Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, 2019,” which is a personal favourite of mine, Mr. Speaker;

“Bill 100, Protecting What Matters Most Act (Budget Measures), 2019;

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

“Continue to fulfill your mandate to protect what matters most to the people of Ontario while working to reduce immense debt and deficit shamefully left by the previous ... Liberal government.”

I happily affix my signature, and I will give it to page Mathias.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It’s with great pride that I stand to read this real petition entitled “Increase Grants Not Loans, Access for All, Protect Student Rights,” presented to me by the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario. A special shout-out to George Brown, Casa Loma, students in my riding who signed this.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas students in Ontario pay some of the highest tuition fees in the country and carry the heaviest debt loads, even with the recently announced 10% reduction; and

“Whereas many students will now be forced to take on more loans rather than previously available non-repayable grants; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has failed to take action on the chronic underfunding of colleges and universities; and

“Whereas students must have an autonomous voice that is independent of administration and government to advocate on our behalf; and

“Whereas the proposed ‘Student Choice Initiative’ undermines students’ ability to take collective action;

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

“—provide more grants, not loans;

“—eliminate tuition fees for all students;

“—increase public funding for public education;

“—protect students’ independent voices; and

“—defend the right to organize.”

I couldn’t be more proud to sign this petition and hand it over to page Julian for tabling.

1550

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Dave Smith: This petition is entitled “Consumption and Treatment Site in Peterborough–Kawartha.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas currently Peterborough city and county has seen a major increase in the amount of opioid-related overdoses, poisonings, and deaths;

“Whereas in Ontario and across the country it has been deemed that there is a current opioid crisis; and

“Whereas Peterborough currently does not have a consumption and treatment site to help in the reduction of overdoses and deaths in the area;

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

“Work to put forward an application for a treatment and consumption services site to follow the mandatory services, such as:

“a) supervised drug consumption (injection, intranasal, oral) and overdose prevention services;

“b) on-site or defined pathways to addiction treatment services;

“c) on-site or defined pathways to wraparound services: primary care, mental health, housing, other social supports;

“d) provide ... harm reduction services such as education, first aid/wound care, distribution and safe disposal of needles, and provision of naloxone and oxygen;

“e) removal of any discarded harm reduction supplies around the consumption and treatment area;

“f) support ongoing discussions to address local community and neighbourhood concerns on an ongoing basis.”

I’ll sign my name to this petition and give it to the page Luba.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled “Don’t Take Away Social and Economic Rights for Women and Marginalized People.” It was presented to me by the Ontario Federation of Labour and signed by Waterloo, Kitchener and Cambridge citizens.

“Whereas Bill 47 erased many of the legislative gains achieved through Bill 148, the fairer labour laws and working conditions that had a particularly positive impact on women and marginalized people;

“Whereas statistics show that women, particularly women of colour, are most likely to be employed in precarious work, and the Bill 47 amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and Labour Relations Act, 1995 create conditions that lead to a growth in precarious employment while also eliminating protections for millions of Ontario workers;

“Whereas Bill 66 further erodes women’s and marginalized people’s social and economic rights; and

“Whereas the Ford government continues to remove, cancel or freeze funding for other supports, programs and

regulations that would increase women's equality in the workforce and beyond;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to, at the very least:

"—reinstate paid sick days, the scheduled increase to a \$15 minimum wage, legislation to increase pay transparency, regulations that support equal pay for equal work, and all other worker protections gained under the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act..."

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Johnson.

VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mrs. Robin Martin: I have a petition here in support of constructing a memorial to honour our heroes.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces members served in the war in Afghanistan including the 159 Canadians who made the ultimate sacrifice; and

"Whereas the Premier made a commitment to the people of Ontario to build a memorial to honour the bravery and sacrifice of our armed forces; and

"Whereas, by remembering their service and sacrifice, we recognize the values and freedoms these men and women fought to preserve; and

"Whereas the memorial will show our gratitude to our veterans, their families and to their descendants; and

"Whereas the memorial will be a place of remembrance, a form of tribute, and an important reminder to future generations of the contributions and sacrifices that have helped shape our country;

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

"That the government of Ontario immediately construct the memorial to honour the heroes of the war in Afghanistan."

I fully support this petition, will sign my name hereto and give it to page Emily.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A very important petition to make real changes in Ontario when it comes to long-term care:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

"To amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix."

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

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: "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 proudly affix my signature to this petition, and I will be giving it to page Visakan.

DOCUMENTS GOUVERNEMENTAUX

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier M. Paul Sylvestre de Toronto pour les pétitions qui suivent.

« Accents en français sur les cartes de santé de l'Ontario et les cartes de permis de conduire....

« Alors qu'il est important d'avoir le nom exact des personnes sur les cartes émises par le gouvernement, tels la carte santé ou le permis de conduire / Whereas it is important to have your exact name on government-issued cards such as your health card or your driver's licence;

« Alors que plusieurs personnes francophones ont des accents dans l'épellation de leur nom / Whereas many francophones have accents in the spelling of their names;

« Alors que le ministère des Transports et le ministère de la Santé ont confirmé que le système informatique de l'Ontario ne permet pas l'enregistrement des lettres avec des accents / Whereas the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Transportation have confirmed that the province of Ontario's computer systems do not allow the recording of accented letters; »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « qu'elle s'assure que les accents de la langue française soient inclus sur tous les documents et cartes émis par le gouvernement de l'Ontario avant le 31 décembre 2020. »

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make sure the French accents are included on all documents and cards issued by the government of Ontario, before December 31, 2020.”

I fully support this petition, and will affix my name to it and give it to Augustine to bring it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLAN TO BUILD ONTARIO TOGETHER ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LE PLAN POUR BÂTIR L'ONTARIO ENSEMBLE

Mr. Phillips moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 138, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes / Projet de loi 138, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter, à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

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

Hon. Rod Phillips: I'll inform the House that I'll be splitting my time with the member from Willowdale.

It's a pleasure to stand in the House today for second reading of Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act. As I told this House two weeks ago, our plan to build Ontario together is the result of 16 months of hard work and dedication.

Over 16 months ago, the people of this province were struggling. They were being squeezed by higher gas prices, more taxes and a higher cost of living. They were working harder, paying more, and getting less.

In response, our government, under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford, unveiled a bold, new vision for this province, and the people of Ontario bought in. We promised to build a better future where we would work with them, not only so that they could make ends meet, but where government helped enable them to have a better quality of life and a higher standard of living, and that that would be for all of our citizens.

1600

We promised to start by lowering taxes, making hydro rates more affordable and ensuring that home ownership is not just a dream, but a reality.

We committed to building world-class highways and transit systems, admired and studied around the world for their efficiency and affordability.

Our loved ones would be cared for in state-of-the-art hospitals, where service levels are high, wait times are low and transitions to and from home are easy.

Our young people would be prepared for the jobs of the modern economy, with the skills that make them adaptable, lifelong learners in an ever-changing world.

Ontario would once again be the economic powerhouse of Canada and competitive in the global economy—a province that celebrates and rewards our entrepreneurs,

admires wealth creation, and brings jobs and investments to every region of our province. This would rebuild the necessary link between a growing economy and our ability to invest in world-class government services.

This vision is within our reach. In our fall economic statement, I was pleased to report that our plan is working. We've taken significant steps to strengthen our finances, our economy and critical public services, and we've done so by balancing the three priorities that the people of Ontario expect us to balance: We're putting more money into people's pockets, we're continuing to invest in critical public services, and we are on the path to returning our books to balance.

I'd like to take a few moments to outline just a few of the highlights of our plan. As you know, our fall economic statement included an update on the fiscal plan outlined in the 2019 Ontario budget. It showed that we are seeing the results of our prudent, balanced plan to deliver on what the people of Ontario expect of us. We have been listening. We are making investments this year to ensure that critical public services are supported, while maintaining our commitment to balance the budget by 2023-24. We are now projected to beat our deficit target for 2019-20 by \$1.3 billion, reducing the projected deficit to \$9 billion from the \$10.3-billion outlook presented in the 2019 budget, and that is at the same time while we are investing an additional \$1.3 billion in critical services.

We are proud of the results of these past 16 months and look forward to taking the next step in our plan to build Ontario together through the measures included in Bill 138. My parliamentary assistant, the member from Willowdale, will speak to a number of these measures, but I'd like to take a moment to outline a few of them as well.

Mr. Speaker, our government's plan is making life more affordable for families and individuals in this province. We heard loud and clear that people are tired of paying more and getting less. The cap-and-trade carbon tax, increasing child care costs and higher costs of living have made it harder for families to make ends meet. We want to put money back into people's pockets. That's why our government is taking concrete steps to make life more affordable for families and individuals across the province, such as providing tax relief for low-income workers, supporting families with child care expenses, and reducing the cost of post-secondary tuition. In fact, families and individuals can expect to see \$3 billion of relief in 2020.

One of these initiatives, if passed, would bring relief to people in the north. I recently returned from Sault Ste. Marie, where I made an announcement alongside our Minister of Colleges and Universities. We recognize that northern Ontario has unique challenges and unique opportunities. One of the greatest challenges is distance—over 800,000 square kilometres of land mass, with a population of 800,000. To put that into perspective, the land mass of the United Kingdom and France is about the same but it has a population of 130 million.

Our government recognizes that living in northern Ontario can bring with it a higher cost of living, in part due to greater reliance on air travel and air freight. We want to

help businesses and families succeed. We want to enable a better quality of life and higher standard of living in northern Ontario. We believe the best way to do that is to help to reduce taxes. That's why our plan is proposing to help reduce the cost of living in the north by cutting the aviation fuel tax.

If passed, Bill 138 would reduce the aviation fuel tax rate in the north to 2.7 cents per litre from 6.7 cents per litre. This would begin on January 1, 2020, and return the aviation fuel tax in the north to what it was in 2014. It would apply to aviation fuel purchases in the districts of Algoma, Cochrane, Kenora, Manitoulin, Nipissing, Parry Sound, Rainy River, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Timiskaming—helping bring down the cost of groceries and other basic necessities for northerners, which would save a family in the north approximately \$230 a year. It would also help provide more affordable air travel for those visiting loved ones or pursuing job opportunities, saving frequent travellers \$135 a year.

Making life more affordable for people across Ontario is not about grand gestures but rather practical, meaningful actions that make life easier for everyone. That is why our government brought in Ontario's low-income tax credit. It's one of the most progressive tax breaks in a generation, benefiting 1.1 million Ontarians by providing them relief of up to \$850 per year. In addition, we are providing 300,000 Ontario families with an average of \$1,250 per year in tax relief and letting parents choose the best child care options for their family through Ontario's child care tax credit. This is on top of our government's \$1-billion commitment to create 30,000 new child care spaces.

Our government is also making life easier for families by letting kids ride GO trains and buses for free. We have cut post-secondary tuition fees by 10% this year and are freezing them next year to help keep more money in the pockets of Ontario students and their families. We are helping 100,000 low-income seniors in this province by providing them with access to publicly funded free dental care. Once again, in total, our plan to make life more affordable is putting \$3 billion back into the pockets of Ontarians next year.

Another aspect of our plan, Mr. Speaker, is to create a more competitive business environment, particularly in the area of small business. Small businesses, as I know you know, are the backbone of our economy. We have a plan to create a business environment that attracts investment and encourages entrepreneurs and risk-takers to grow their businesses and create high-quality, good-paying jobs. Ontario is a province of tremendous opportunity and potential, yet high taxes, excessive payroll costs and burdensome red tape have been driving away investment and jobs from our province. That is why our government is creating the conditions for success by reducing taxes and eliminating outdated, duplicative regulations.

Small businesses play an important role in our province, from Wawa to Windsor, from Kenora to Kingston. In fact, they make up one third of all private sector jobs. I was very pleased to join our Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction in Brampton last week, where we

announced the next steps in our plan to help small businesses grow and succeed. We are proposing to reduce the small business corporate tax rate to 3.2% from 3.5%, starting January 1, 2020. This move, Mr. Speaker, will fulfill our promise to cut Ontario's small business tax rate by 8.7%. This measure, if passed, will provide tax relief of up to \$1,500 annually to 275,000 small businesses that benefit from the small business corporate income tax rate, from family-owned shops to innovative start-ups. This comes in addition to the excellent work that the Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction is doing to reduce red tape and the regulatory burden facing our businesses across the province. Overall, Ontario's small businesses will save \$2.3 billion in 2020 through the actions that this government is taking, such as cancelling the cap-and-trade carbon tax, supporting WSIB premium reductions and delivering on Ontario corporate income tax relief, among other actions.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that there are other things that can be done to improve Ontario's business climate. That's why we'll be consulting with industry and business leaders to better identify the needs of small business to inform our small business success strategy. We have also proposed to form the Premier's Advisory Council on Competitiveness. This group would consult with business leaders and private sector workers, and leverage the lessons of other jurisdictions to improve Ontario's competitiveness.

Our plan so far has seen great success, with over 250,000 new jobs created since we took office. We look forward to continuing to create a more competitive business environment to empower Ontario's risk-takers and entrepreneurs to succeed.

Our plan also calls for building healthier and safer communities. As I stated earlier, Ontario is investing an additional \$1.3 billion in critical services, which includes more funding for small and medium-sized hospitals.

Let's talk about the further investments in health care. The challenges faced by our health care system are daunting. The previous administration left Ontario with a health care system that could not keep up with the demands of rapidly growing communities and an aging population. The province's hospitals are overcrowded and in some cases reaching breaking points. The status quo is no longer an option. That is why this government is delivering on its commitment to end hallway health care with a plan to build a more modern, connected, sustainable health care system.

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Ontario is taking steps to give patients and their families security and peace of mind while receiving the health care they need when they need it. We are increasing health care spending by \$1.9 billion in 2019-20. This includes an additional \$68 million this year to support small and medium-sized multi-site hospitals to help maintain critical capacity and to respond to increased demand in communities across the province.

We're also investing \$17 billion in capital grants over the next 10 years to create a better health care experience,

build more capacity within the health care system, and expand the hospital infrastructure system.

Last week, my colleague the Minister of Health and Deputy Premier announced the new Digital First for Health Strategy, which will make it easier and more convenient to access health care and allow patients to see their doctors virtually and doctors to provide more service options for patients.

To further reduce barriers to care, Ontario is investing \$3.8 billion over 10 years to create a comprehensive, connected system of mental health and addiction services and housing supports.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the status quo is no longer an option.

Going forward, our government will continue to balance our three priorities of investing more in critical public services while putting more money into people's pockets and returning our books to balance.

To achieve our goals, everyone must do their part. That is why we'll be examining government ourselves. We are asking long-overdue questions about how we as government can do better. Our plan will bring the provincial government into the 21st century because inefficient, outdated processes mean government cannot easily respond to the needs of people in a timely and cost-effective way.

Our government has a balanced and prudent plan that will make processes simpler and services smarter. We're finding ways to spend more efficiently while ensuring that every taxpayer dollar is spent well and includes partnerships to make smarter investments.

Here are some examples of how we're spending smarter. In order to deliver on our commitment to make life more affordable, our government is adopting initiatives that reduce costs, eliminate inefficiencies and ensure that government services that people rely on every day can be delivered with prudence and with care.

Bill 138 is the next step in building a modern, centralized government procurement system. This new system is projected to generate savings of \$1 billion annually and make it easier for companies of all sizes to do business with the province.

We're also endeavouring to deliver simpler, faster and better services to the people of Ontario. We're improving digital services to make government services easier to use, more efficient and, over time, cheaper to deliver because in today's busy world people don't want to stand in line for government service for hours or even for minutes, and they shouldn't have to. To borrow a phrase from the President of the Treasury Board, "If you're not online, then you're in line," and that's not acceptable in 2019.

We deliver simpler and faster services with online transactions, such as renewing one's driver's licence or getting a health card. People can have access to the services they want when they want them. We are exploring new opportunities as well for non-tax revenue-generating opportunities, such as advertising and naming rights for GO stations through our newly announced value creation task force. These are revenues that will help to ensure that

critical public services such as health care and education are financially sustainable over the long term.

Our plan is changing the culture of government and improving the customer service experience by delivering simpler, faster and more easily accessible services for today and in the future. It's putting Ontarians first, Mr. Speaker.

These are just a few of the things our government is doing as part of our plan to build Ontario together through Bill 138. As we move forward, we'll continue to balance the priorities that Ontarians expect us to balance: putting more money into people's pockets and continuing to invest in critical public services while we return the books to balance by 2023.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that our plan is working. Before I turn the floor over to my parliamentary assistant, Mr. Cho, I'd like to just take a moment to acknowledge the many people who helped make the 2019 fall economic statement possible. There were lots of late nights and very long weekends and a lot of coffee that helped put together the plan to build Ontario. I'd like to thank everybody involved across the government for their hard work.

With that, I'm pleased to hand things over to the member from Willowdale and my parliamentary assistant, Stan Cho, to continue to share our plan to build Ontario together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The minister did say he would be sharing his time. I turn now to the member from Willowdale.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 138, A Plan to Build Ontario Together Act, 2019. I'd like to start by thanking the Minister of Finance for his tireless work for the people of this great province. Thank you, Minister.

Along with the Premier, the minister has made sure that Ontario is once again on sound fiscal footing, providing transparency and accountability for Ontario's finances and continuing to invest in the programs and services that we all rely on.

In June 2018—530 days ago, to be exact—the people of Ontario sent a clear message: They wanted their government to start working for them. They were working harder, longer hours, multiple jobs, seven days a week, just to get by. And the government was reaching time and time again into their pockets. They were paying more taxes than ever before but getting fewer services.

The people in my neighbourhood, Mr. Speaker, are good, hard-working Ontarians. They don't mind paying their fair share. They know that we need good schools and hospitals, that we need to take care of the most vulnerable in our communities. But as I knocked on doors in Willowdale, I heard time and time again that people were scared about the future. The previous government had spent recklessly, and Ontarians had very little to show for it. They threw more and more money at problems but didn't solve them. Hard-working Ontarians, moms and dads, were paying more in taxes but weren't seeing their children's grades get better, their aging parents receive

better health care or their costs of living decrease. My constituents knew that it was time for a change, time for the government to work harder, work smarter, to do things differently.

They wanted a government that would respect their hard-earned money, a government that would make electricity bills more affordable, that would help to make homeownership more possible, with more affordable housing and an adequate supply.

They wanted to end hallway health care and return to high service levels and state-of-the-art hospitals with low wait times, and long-term-care homes where our seniors can live with dignity.

They wanted Ontario to be competitive in the global economy, where our businesses can grow and thrive.

For most of the last 15 years, unsustainable spending resulted in structural deficits and an unprecedented increase in public debt, leaving Ontario more vulnerable to economic shocks—shocks, Mr. Speaker, that are not a matter of if, but when, they come.

Unfortunately, this government inherited the highest subnational debt in the world, which comes with an almost \$13-billion price tag in interest payments annually. That's more than \$1 billion a month—\$1 billion a month that can't be used for critical programs like health care and education to help the people of Ontario in their daily lives.

Over the past 16 months, this government has taken deliberate steps to balance the province's books. All members of this House should be pleased that, since the 2019 budget, Ontario's credit rating has been affirmed by all four credit rating agencies. Fitch Ratings has improved the province's credit rating outlook from negative to stable.

We should be pleased that the Auditor General has issued a clean opinion of Ontario's books for 2017-18 and 2018-19—the first unqualified opinions in three years.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that our government's plan is working, making the province more adaptable, more agile and more stable in an often uncertain world. We have taken significant steps to strengthen our finances, our economy and critical public services. So today I'd like to spend my time outlining just a few of the measures in the fall bill that, if passed, would benefit the people of my community in Willowdale and across Ontario.

We have everything we need here in Ontario to take on the world. We have everything we need in Ontario to win in today's highly competitive global economy. But we urgently need to strengthen our competitiveness and fiscal foundation so that people can live the lives that they have earned through their hard work and so that we in government can provide the world-class services Ontario families rely on.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that there is an essential link between a growing economy and our ability to invest in public services and supports for our most vulnerable.

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Since our government took office in June 2018, over 256,000 net new jobs have been created in Ontario. The

vast majority of these jobs—over 250,000—have been in above-average-wage industries. And since June 2018, the unemployment rate has declined to a near-historic low of 5.3%. We are seeing the results of our prudent, balanced and fair plan to deliver on what Ontarians have asked of us.

This government has listened to the people of Ontario and been responsive, making changes since the 2019 budget in a meaningful way that ensures critical public services are supported while maintaining the commitment to balance our books by 2023-24.

In the 2019 budget, we projected that the government's deficit would be \$10.3 billion at this time. We know now that we are beating that projection to the tune of \$1.3 billion and are forecasting a deficit of \$9 billion for 2019-20. And that's while we have invested an additional \$1.3 billion in critical services. This includes more funding for small and medium-sized hospitals, public health units, child care and programs to help our most vulnerable.

This is the kind of responsible government that Ontarians expect and deserve. They expect the government to live within its means, the same way any responsible family would. They also expect us to work smarter. They want their government to spend their money in the most efficient, pragmatic and careful way possible. After all, finding savings in government is not an end in itself. It is a means to investing in the programs and services Ontarians rely on every day, and protecting those core services for future generations.

For too long, governments of all political stripes have measured success by the number of dollars spent, not by the outcomes for its citizens. Achieving those outcomes starts by asking long-overdue questions like, "What can we do better?" People have come to expect innovation, customer-centric service and efficiency from their interactions with the private sector, and now are rightly demanding the same qualities from their government. This is why we're focusing on spending smarter, on transforming and modernizing the way government works, and reducing unnecessary red tape.

Procurement reform is just one of the steps we've taken to control spending and bend that cost curve down. Transforming the procurement process for the entire public sector, I might add, is a huge undertaking, and while it's hard to estimate—an issue in itself—we spend approximately \$29 billion every year on procurement in the public sector, or roughly 20% of Ontario's annual budget.

But we've seen centralized procurement work in other jurisdictions. In New South Wales, Australia, centralized procurement of consumables in the health care sector alone achieved savings of up to 4%. In New Zealand, in the city of Auckland, they found \$168 million in procurement savings on just a \$3.6-billion spend.

In fact, a May 2017 report from the Ontario Healthcare Sector Supply Chain Strategy Expert Panel—I know it rolls off the tongue—estimated that centralizing procurement in Ontario's health care sector alone could account for savings of upwards of \$500 million.

Today, procurement in Ontario's public sector is largely decentralized. Although there have been successful

attempts on smaller scales, such as the vendor-of-record programs for commercial print and voice services in the Ontario public sector, and through shared service organizations in the broader public sector, this limited centralization hasn't fully addressed the challenges of the supply chain operating model within government. In fact, these programs are largely voluntary, and it's led to a limited standardization of products, consolidation of contracts, and a lack of data and analytics that limits our ability to purchase efficiently or provide effective transparency and oversight.

Imagine that you're injured in Orillia and paramedics arrive and determine that you require an intravenous drip, and they then decide that you need to be flown to St. Michael's Hospital in downtown Toronto. When the Ornge air ambulance arrives, they'll need to replace that perfectly good IV. Why? Because Ornge and Orillia EMS purchase from different suppliers. And when you arrive at St. Mike's, they'll need to replace that second IV a third time for the same reason. So not only is the Ontario taxpayer purchasing three IVs instead of one, but the needless change of product increases the risk of infection and discomfort for the patient.

Mr. Speaker, finding efficiencies and savings is important, but I'm especially excited about these changes to procurement because we expect them to lead not just to less spending but, perhaps more importantly, to better outcomes. We need to break down the traditional silos in government that have for far too long stood in the way of looking at life cycle costs or sector-wide outcomes.

Speaking with front-line health care professionals and administrators alike, I've often heard stories of the bureaucracy getting in the way of very common-sense solutions. I've heard about operating room administrators opting for lower-cost products that fit within the OR budget when a slightly higher-cost solution would have drastically reduced recovery time or hospital readmission—solutions that would have saved money for the system as a whole and delivered better patient outcomes.

Take as another example investments made in home monitoring technology that alerts home care service providers about a potential problem with a patient. The cost of the technology would fall on home care providers, but the benefits would be realized in hospitals by preventing costly emergency room visits and, more importantly, would be realized by patients.

This whole-sector approach to strategic procurement could lead to larger savings across government and goes hand in hand with our government's plans for integrating health care providers in a patient-centric system.

Bill 138, if passed, would take important steps in modernizing the way government buys things, which, as the Minister of Finance mentioned, is projected to generate savings of \$1 billion annually and make it easier for companies of all sizes to do business within our province. But this is just one of many modern policy tools our government is using to deliver better outcomes at a lower cost. Our government is taking steps behind the scenes to make government agencies more efficient through opportunities for back-office consolidations, the use of digital

tools and dissolving inactive or duplicative agencies. To generate revenue, Ontario is selling surplus government property that it no longer needs. This will save taxpayers money on ongoing maintenance costs and will also provide new private sector opportunities for economic development and job creation.

Another aspect of our plan to build Ontario is making new investments in our communities, investments to benefit both businesses and people, strategic investments in the province's infrastructure, including transit, highways, schools and hospitals—an investment of \$144 billion over 10 years. The government's plan calls for building a world-class transportation network so people can get where they want to go when they want to get there.

For too long, the Ontario government failed to invest in our province's infrastructure needs. Unfortunately, my riding of Willowdale is a perfect example of this. Over the last few decades, my community has seen unprecedented growth. Once a sleepy bedroom community, our population has exploded. Willowdale has already reached its provincial population growth target for 2041, but past governments of all levels have failed to look forward and invest in the necessary infrastructure to support this growth. This has led to serious pressures on our community, especially when it comes to traffic, transit, schools and housing. Our transit system is so overcapacity that it's not uncommon for Willowdalers working downtown to ride the subway one or two stops north to Finch just to get not a seat, Mr. Speaker, but a spot on a southbound train.

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That's why Ontario is building highways, subways and rapid transit systems that are efficient, affordable and get people and goods where they need to be. We are fighting gridlock and helping the environment by building more transit options, making public transit an attractive, affordable and low-stress alternative with \$67 billion in investments in provincially owned municipal transit priorities. Ontario is modernizing GO Transit by moving forward with the next stage of the GO rail expansion program to provide two-way, all-day GO Transit service every 15 minutes on the network's core segments.

The province is also collaborating with its municipal partners to build more subways and subway extensions, with the goal of getting people to where they need to be in a cost-efficient way in the greater Toronto area. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the government's plan includes four new subway projects, with a total estimated preliminary project cost of \$28.5 billion: the Yonge North subway extension, the three-stop Scarborough subway extension, the Eglinton Crosstown west extension and, of course, the new Ontario Line.

This province continues to make progress on delivering rapid transit programs, including the Hurontario LRT that will run between the Port Credit GO station in Mississauga and Gateway terminal in Brampton, and the York Viva bus rapid transit that provides dedicated bus lanes along several segments of Highway 7, Davis Drive and Yonge Street in York region.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Stan, come on. You're on a roll here—

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've never spoken for 40 minutes in a row in my life.

We are also expanding and improving highways and bridges across the province, with \$22 billion to be invested in highway improvements and expansion. These much-needed upgrades will keep Ontario highways reliable and safe for workers, families and businesses across the province, allowing the movement of people and goods while promoting economic development.

Helping goods move and people connect quicker today also requires improving our technological infrastructure. The activities of everyday life such as banking and shopping are now often conducted online. My 70-year-old father is now making reservations on his phone. This is why the government has a plan—a plan to help improve services to customers, to help businesses grow and expand. We are improving high-speed Internet and cellphone services across rural and remote communities and making long-term infrastructure investments in broadband services by investing \$315 million over the next five years. The plan aims to expand broadband and cellular access to underserved and unserved communities by connecting up to 220,000 households and businesses.

Our government is also working to empower our entrepreneurs and innovators to take risks right here in Ontario, to encourage industry leaders to build their businesses and incentivize companies to create jobs in communities across our great province. Our government understands that fierce global competition is the reality of our country and the reality of our province. We appreciate the urgent need to continuously improve on our own competitiveness to help businesses grow and prosper.

As I'm sure you know, Mr. Speaker—it has been said before in this House—98% of businesses in Ontario employ less than 100 people, and those over 400,000 small businesses account for a third of all private sector jobs in our province. Without small business, Ontario falls behind. That's why, as a former small business owner myself, I'm proud of our plan to work with industry and business leaders to better identify the needs of small businesses and create a small business success strategy.

We are starting with tax relief for small businesses, proposed in Bill 138, that, if passed, would reduce the small business tax rate by 8.7% starting on January 1, 2020. This will save 275,000 small businesses across Ontario—and we're talking small, family-owned shops to innovative start-ups—up to \$1,500 a year. This is money that these small businesses can reinvest into their business or create jobs. We know that this is important to boost our economy.

All in all, Ontario's small businesses would save \$2.3 billion in 2020 through actions that this government is taking. For example, we will provide accelerated write-offs for capital investments. They will also benefit from the cancelled cap-and-trade carbon tax system. And of course, we're continuing to reduce WSIB premiums.

We are also proposing to form the Premier's Advisory Council on Competitiveness. This body would consult with business leaders and private sector workers, and

leverage lessons from other jurisdictions to improve Ontario's competitiveness.

The government also continues to work with the Ontario Securities Commission to support the capital markets plan. This plan focuses on strengthening investments in Ontario, promoting competition and facilitating innovation in order to position Ontario as a leading capital markets jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, the Securities Act has not been reviewed in over 15 years. It's outdated, and we have to make sure that it supports modern capital markets. That's why our government is working to modernize the securities regulatory framework, to make it responsive to innovation and changes in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

But creating a better business environment also means ensuring that Ontario has the best workforce in the world. Our plan addresses this reality in several ways.

First, we are making post-secondary education more affordable, to ensure that people have the training and the skills they need to get good-paying jobs. Our government has made a historic tuition reduction of 10% across all funding-eligible post-secondary education programs in the 2019-20 academic year, and froze tuition fees for the 2020-21 academic year, to help Ontario students and families keep more of their hard-earned money. Students will see an average tuition reduction of approximately \$340 for those attending college, and \$660 for those enrolled in an undergraduate arts and science degree.

The government has also introduced the Student Choice Initiative to ensure that students have the transparency and freedom to choose which non-essential ancillary student fees that they pay. But I do want to reassure this House, Mr. Speaker, that fees that fund major campus-wide services and facilities, such as those that support essential campus health and safety initiatives, will continue to be mandatory.

We are making sure that today's students—tomorrow's entrepreneurs, tomorrow's innovators and workers—have the skills that they need to succeed in a highly global economy.

Advances in technology, globalization and an aging population are just a few of the challenges facing Ontario's workforce. Unfortunately, the province's education and training systems have not kept pace with the shifting economy and do not have the flexibility needed to adapt.

That's why the government is investing in education and skills training programs, from elementary schools through to adult employment services, to set our young people up for success and prepare them to match the needs of a growing economy and develop the skills to be adaptable, lifelong learners.

It starts with giving them better places to learn.

Mr. Speaker, up and down the Yonge Street corridor in my riding, Willowdale schools are operating at up to 150% capacity. Children who can see their local schools from their condo balcony are being bused across town. That means they're picked up before school begins, they're dropped off right when the bell rings and, as soon as school is done, they're bused right back home. That's not a

childhood, Mr. Speaker. That means no band practice. That means no sports after school.

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That's why we're making strategic investments—\$19 billion, including \$13 billion in capital grants over the next 10 years—to help build new schools in high-growth areas like Willowdale and improve the condition of existing schools. I think all members of this House will agree that they have heard from constituents who are upset, and rightly so, that their children are learning in schools with missing ceiling tiles and where it's so hot that no member of this House would be able to sit in there for longer than 20 minutes. These are learning conditions that are unacceptable in our society in a developed province such as Ontario, and that's why this government is making that capital investment—an investment that the last government failed to make for way too long.

We're also making sure that children have the best curriculum to prepare them for the jobs of the future. This government is renewing its focus on science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM, learning. We're also making investments into the skilled trades. The K-12 Ontario STEM Education Strategy will enable the province to become a global leader in STEM learning. This will ensure that students graduating from Ontario's universities and colleges have the skills they need to succeed in today's highly competitive labour market. Mr. Speaker, I cannot stress enough the importance of this initiative. It is crucial that not only are we graduating students with life skills, but we have to be training them for the jobs that are out there in today's market. Jobs have changed. The education system must adapt to reflect that employment, and that's why we're making these strategic investments and we're proud to be making those strategic investments.

We also have to increase accountability. That's why the government is introducing an outcomes-based funding model as part of negotiating our new strategic mandate agreements with publicly assisted colleges and universities. The government is linking 60% of operating funding to performance outcomes by the 2024-25 academic year.

We are transforming skilled trades and employment programs as well, because they are a vital part of our plan to increase the competitiveness of our province's environment. Apprenticeships are important for people of all ages to gain practical training and experience. That's why, to support skilled trades, the government is modernizing Ontario's apprenticeship system by reducing the regulatory—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Point of order?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry to interrupt. A member wants to raise a point of order. I recognize the member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Although it's interesting what the member is speaking about, I would appreciate if he could speak to the bill that's before the House today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): That is a point of order. I am listening closely to the member, and I

will ask him to constrain to what is in the bill as much as possible.

Mr. Stan Cho: Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that we are transforming skilled trades and employment programs as well. As I was saying, they are vital to our plan to increase that competitiveness in our province's business environment, and apprenticeships are important for people of all ages to gain that practical training and experience. That's why, to support the skilled trades, the government is modernizing the Ontario apprenticeship system by reducing the regulatory burden in the skilled trades and creating more opportunities for apprentices and employers.

Mr. Speaker, if you'll allow me—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Point of order?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry once again to the member from Willowdale. The member from London–Fanshawe appears to be raising another point of order.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I'm trying to give the member a lot of latitude, but nowhere in here—we gave him quite a bit of time, so I would appreciate if he could talk to the schedule of the bill and bring back the content about the bill that's before the House. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sure the member has heard her point of order. I will listen even more closely.

Please continue.

Mr. Stan Cho: I appreciate the point of order from the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, but I am providing some context on the point that I will be making shortly that does relate to the fall economic statement.

As I was saying, we need to help job seekers get good-quality jobs, and that's why our government is transforming Ontario's employment services to focus on the needs of local communities, workers and employers. Based on that feedback, the new employment services model will launch in three diverse urban and rural communities: Peel region, Hamilton-Niagara, and Muskoka-Kawartha. This model will be expanded across the rest of the province starting in 2022.

We've created over a quarter of a million new jobs in this province in just a year and a half, and this has accounted for the unexpected revenue that has led to the success of bringing down our deficit faster than expected. I make the point again that a skilled labour force is the core of this province's economy, but many small and rural communities are struggling to attract the people they need. Simply put, we need to attract more skilled workers to the great province of Ontario.

Mr. Paul Miller: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry to interrupt the member from Willowdale again. The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek appears to have a point of order.

Mr. Paul Miller: We're being a little repetitious here. I think we've given the member about three chances here, and he's back on trades again. I'd like to know what schedule he's referring to that addresses that issue. I don't

think it's in there. Obviously, when we're debating a bill or discussing it, we stick to the mandate; we don't spend most of the time bragging about what the government did. I hope you're listening very intently because this has happened—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you very much for raising the point of order. I am listening very intently. I know that what comes around goes around, and I would expect that after the number of points of order that have been raised on this side, when your side gets a chance to respond—I wouldn't at all be surprised if members on the other side raise legitimate points of order as well.

I shall turn to the member from Willowdale. You've heard what they're saying. Please govern yourself accordingly.

Mr. Stan Cho: I appreciate the members opposite raising their points of order, but I want to stress the point once again: We are ahead of schedule on returning to balance in this province because of stronger revenues in Ontario generated by job creation. I could talk about this for the full 40 minutes and then some because it's exactly proof positive of our plan working, a plan laid out in our budget 2019 that says job creation—job creation. A strong economy in this province is the key to seeing not just Ontarians succeed, but returning to balance and protecting those vital core services and programs that this province relies on, Mr. Speaker. So, with your permission, I will continue on the topic of debt reduction as well as—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, you're doing a drive-by. Thank you very much.

Mr. Stan Cho: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite who seems to be concerned about the point I'm making when it comes to the skilled trades—I will indulge the member opposite a little bit and continue to talk about why that's so necessary.

For those watching at home, structural deficits mean that we are adding to our debt every single year. To the member opposite—I know my mom is watching right now as well, for sure. We are adding to that \$360-billion debt with that structural deficit every single year—a debt that right now, as I said earlier, to service is costing us \$1 billion a month. This is a topic that we all need to be speaking about in this House. In what world, from a small business or a family at home, do we only look at the money spent and not how that money is being spent? Mr. Speaker, to me, that's ludicrous. We must be looking at outcomes, we must be looking at where our dollars are going, and that's exactly what this government is doing. That \$1 billion a month is \$1.4 million an hour. That is \$400 a second in interest payments. It is no secret in this House that we spend more money on interest payments on our debt than we do on training, colleges and universities combined, more than we do on transportation. As I said earlier, that is money that must be going to health care, that must be going to education. That is why we're so focused, in Bill

138, on making sure that we return to balance and stop adding to that debt, which is crippling our province.

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I believe that it is morally reprehensible that we expect the next generation to pay that debt, because these programs—this public health care system, this public education system—yes, they must be great today, but they must also be great tomorrow. That's why I am talking about job creation. That's why I'm talking about the skilled trades. It is evidence of our plan working. The fall economic statement was an update on that plan working, a plan that we outlined in the spring of 2019, a plan that we are ahead of. That deficit is now down to \$9 billion, and we are proud of that.

Hon. Bill Walker: Going in the right direction.

Mr. Stan Cho: We sure are going in the right direction, and I think the people of this province deserve it after 15 years of their hard-earned tax dollars being mismanaged.

But we have other issues in this province. We have to talk about the housing affordability challenge, especially in the greater Toronto area. I say “challenge” because, on average, home prices continue to put the dream of home ownership out of reach for far too many. Skyrocketing real estate prices and the federal government's mortgage stress test are making it frustratingly hard for Ontarians, especially first-time homebuyers, young families and new Canadians, to find a home. In this government's More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan, we're committed to making it easier for the market to build homes faster and to make sure that the homes are built in the right places, so that everyone can find a place to live that meets their needs and their budgets. Of course, the dream of home ownership is something that drives the hard-working people of Ontario to continue to create those jobs, to continue to generate that revenue and to continue our path to balance by 2023-24.

Bill 138 also introduces many great measures, focusing on the aviation fuel tax as well. The last government thought it would be okay to add a regressive tax which affected small communities, rural communities in the north, and affected everything from groceries to gas prices. Mr. Speaker, in some of these remote communities, supplies have to be flown in. Those taxes were leading to direct increases in prices for the most vulnerable in our remote communities. We said, “That's not right. We're changing that,” so we reduced the aviation fuel tax. It's a measure the last government should never have taken. We're proud that Bill 138 speaks to that.

I know that the members opposite often talk about spending more and how it's necessary to spend more and more, but I want to encourage all members of this House to understand that there are always two sides to that equation. We have to understand how that money is being spent. I would like to have that conversation not just about the funding levels—because, agreed, funding levels are important—but we also have to look at the outcomes of that spending. As I said earlier, for far too long, governments of all political stripes have measured their success based on the dollars spent, and that's an incomplete

picture, Mr. Speaker, because we have to look at the way those dollars are being spent. That's why the Smart Initiatives program is something that we're very proud to be introducing as well.

We had the opportunity to look at how the agencies, boards and commissions, 191 of them, are being run in the province of Ontario, and let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, some of these agencies have not been active in two decades. So let me ask the members of this House: How is it possible that we've had an agency, inactive for two decades, spending taxpayer resources? These are the types of issues that we need to talk about when we're looking at the smart initiatives for government. We need to be looking at procurement reform, because it's not just about bulk buying; that's not the only issue here.

I brought up one example when we were talking about syringes earlier, but there are countless examples that are happening right now. Much of it has to do with how we have very little line of sight once transfer payments are made from government to the various agencies, boards and commissions out there. I believe that we need to have some line of sight in how taxpayer dollars are being spent, that we need to measure those outcomes.

Right now, if there's a doctor in a hospital, a surgeon, who has got gloves that are just simply of an inferior quality—there are many operating rooms out there currently in our health care system that may be operating with inferior-quality gloves because of budget concerns, because of price point. But they won't know if those surgeons are doubling or tripling up on those gloves because they're not of a good enough quality. This is what we're talking about when it comes to looking at the outcomes as well. It's not enough just to look at how much gloves cost, but are they any good? If we had paid a little bit more for a better-quality glove, would they be lasting longer?

Lifecycle costs, value for money: These are the smart initiatives we're talking about in Bill 138. It is pivotal that while we are having that discussion of dollars spent, we have that discussion of outcomes. And so, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the points of order from the members opposite, but I think I would like to have a debate about those outcomes as well, because it's a conversation we don't have enough in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue to discuss—and I see I'm running out of time a little bit, so I do want to return. I'm grateful to have had the opportunity, really, to speak to our government's plan here to build Ontario together.

My story I've said in this House before, but having grown up in a household with not that much, I learned the value of a dollar. I remember watching my parents struggle, and they taught me the value of a dollar. They also taught me one other lesson that I carry with me to this day: that their measure of success is making sure that they left me, my younger sister and my younger brother with more than they had. I didn't always understand that, Mr. Speaker, but now that I'm older and starting a family of my own, I fully do. I agree: Our measure of success must

be making sure that we leave the next generation with more than we had.

Today, we see the same hard work: the seven-day work weeks, the long hours. What we don't see are the same opportunities. We need to address this debt, because the last government spent recklessly. And it wasn't on our credit cards; it was on the backs of the next generation. That is not a successful province. That is not the successful Ontario that we know. We are the economic engine of this country. We need to make sure that it stays that way for our kids and their kids, because that is the true measure of success in this government: making sure that our powder is dry, to survive economic downturns, but most importantly, making sure that those vital programs and services that we all rely on, our public health care system, our public education system—a world-class education system—remain that way for our future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity today to speak to this very important bill. I hope that we can continue to have that constructive conversation here in the House. I appreciate the time to speak today.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I was trying to figure out why the member from Willowdale didn't want to speak to the legislation, Bill 138, and then I went through some of the schedules.

Schedule 30, of course, has been flagged by privacy experts, because this schedule provides cabinet with regulation-making powers to allow Ontario Health to “collect, use and disclose personal health information.” It also gives the same powers to the Ontario health teams. This is incredibly invasive, and worrying for privacy experts, because nobody trusts this government.

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Then I looked at schedule 31, which says that any person or public body can now appeal a community benefits charge bylaw with LPAT by filing with the municipality before the end of the notice. This has been criticized by AMO. AMO says that this change will add red tape for municipalities. Now I have a better understanding.

I want to go back to the finance minister's comments, because he was talking about child care. We know the economic return on child care: For every \$1 invested, there's a \$7 return. But the measures that this finance minister and this government have brought forward through their child tax benefit were analyzed by the Financial Accountability Officer, who is an independent officer of the Legislature. He has said—and the finance minister should know this—that, as with any tax credit, you have to earn taxable income to benefit, which means that this measure will only benefit 300 families in the province of Ontario. And there's no strategy whatsoever to create more spaces with that.

The finance minister talked about relief in the north around fuel costs for airplanes. The people in the north need relief for their gas prices. They're paying \$4.11 a litre in some places. They want their highways cleared so that goods and services can move through the north. Imagine

the economic impact if people weren't stuck on a highway, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: What a great speech by the member from Willowdale, member Cho. I think he really summed up Bill 138. He's doing a great job as PA to finance.

I'm proud to support Bill 138. I'm so pleased to see that the Ontario economy, since June 2018, is on fire, with over 270,000 jobs created in that short time.

One of the key initiatives our government is taking through Bill 138 is to make government smarter. It's not too difficult, after 15 years of Liberal mismanagement. We are starting on a process of moving our government into the 21st century, with some key new initiatives which I would hope the opposition would support.

With that, there are some special interests that may be opposed to some of these changes. There may be some of the special interest groups, or maybe some of the opposition parties, such as the NDP and the Liberals—it's no different than when carriage manufacturers were against sharing the roads with cars in the early 20th century.

Having said that, our government is focused on the greater good of society, and we will continue to move forward not just for special interests but for the people of Ontario.

Here are a few key things we're doing in Bill 138.

First, building a centralized procurement system: This which will project about \$1 billion in savings across the province. That is going to take a nice chunk out of the debt. Imagine the programs that that could fund in education and for people with disabilities.

Secondly, moving government to be more accessible, and bringing more services online: Why the previous government didn't do this, I don't know.

Third, selling surplus government property: There is hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of property throughout the province that is sitting vacant. We're paying fees to still maintain that land. We're unloading some of that so we can bring in the revenue to our government.

Fourth, exploring new opportunities for non-tax revenue generation, such as advertising and naming rights: I know we talked about that on the GO stations—

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

Questions and comments?

Mr. Joel Harden: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this bill. I guess, given what I heard from my friends in government here, there's a lot of interest in projecting themselves as being on a winning track. But I have a couple of questions that I actually would like answered about this particular bill.

Schedule 15 of this bill is proposing a wholesale change to the way in which personal information is distributed for folks in our health care system. My inbox in my email account—and our phones have been ringing off the hook at the constituency office, from medical professionals

back in Ottawa who want to know why this government has not consulted their organizations on this dramatic change to the use of personal information.

I want to know why the Ontario Medical Association has not had one meeting with this government about this radical change.

I want to know why this government believes doctors should be suspected of activity that is unforthcoming in their billing practices. Everyone in the medical profession—I am myself married to a physician—wants a properly audited procedure for medical proceedings, but this government has not told medical professionals why they are doing this. I think they deserve an answer. What we just heard was 40 minutes of pomp and pageantry and not a case for a radical change in the way in which health care information is used.

I also want to respond to a comment made by somebody on the government side who talked about the economy being on fire. I want to ask that member if they think the disabled and the poor share that perception of our economy. The member from Willowdale got up to talk about the LIFT tax credit, which will give poor and disabled people a tax benefit of 34 bucks a month. The Financial Accountability Officer of this province told us that if this government had done the right thing and followed through on a \$15-an-hour minimum wage, which was supposed to happen, poor and disabled people would be much better off.

I want to ask them whose interest they're serving in this bill.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'm very pleased to stand up in support of Bill 138, our government's plan to build Ontario together. This is a plan I'm so proud to support because we are once again committing to balance the budget in 2023-24. We're taking a very responsible approach to balancing the budget, but we are also going to be making some strategic investments in public services and infrastructure right across Ontario.

This plan to build Ontario together will provide Ontario with a bold new vision—a vision that will get people to work on time faster, a vision that will get people back to their loved ones at home faster on new highways and state-of-the-art transit systems. It's a plan and a vision where our loved ones will get improved and quicker health care services in state-of-the-art hospitals. It's a vision where Ontario can once again become the powerhouse of this country. We once were the economic engine, but we lost that designation following 15 years of fiscal mismanagement by the previous Liberal government. Bill 138 addresses that.

This is a bill, this is a plan, that will allow businesses to do what they do best: grow the economy and create high-paying jobs. It will allow Ontarians to become the architects of their own future, to keep some of their hard-earned dollars in their pockets so that they can create the lives that they want for themselves and their loved ones.

We are a government that does not believe that you can tax, spend and borrow your way out of the fiscal mess we

inherited. Instead, we are presenting a strong, manageable responsible plan to move Ontario forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll return now to the member from Willowdale to conclude this portion of the debate.

Mr. Stan Cho: I appreciate the comments from all of the members around the Legislature.

There is a lot in the bill that I wasn't able to speak about, but this again is about tomorrow's generation and making sure that we have those vital programs and services available to them in the future.

There are some things that I want to chat about as well in conclusion, and it's about making sure that we are rewarding hard work, that the Canadian dream continues to be alive in Ontario, that with hard work, you can succeed in the province of Ontario. That is exactly what we are trying to protect. We don't believe that taxing is the solution. Ontarians are already paying enough. They told us. They're paying too much at the pump. They're paying too much in taxes. They're paying too much for groceries.

We believe that we can help the revenue in this province without regressive measures, and that's why we're creating a value-creation task force. We're looking for creative ways to generate revenue for this province. I didn't get to speak earlier about things like giving naming rights for Metrolinx stations. Metrolinx has expressed interest in that. This can generate revenue for the province.

We're talking about naming rights for the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, about having corporations apply to pay for having their name on the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

Nickels and dimes count in this province, because that adds up to dollars, and those are dollars that we need to make sure get redirected into health care and into education. Some \$360 billion of debt is not going to be an easy mess to get out of, but this government is committed to making sure that we take the necessary, transparent, sustainable steps to do just that, so that in 2082, we have the world-class health care system and the world-class education system that our children and grandchildren deserve and expect.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? The member for Hamilton East, Stormont and Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's like an amalgam of the two ridings here. That's okay; that would be a very interesting riding, I would say.

I rise today to discuss this bill, but it's hard to know where to begin. I don't know if we're talking about the same bill. It's like Bizarro World on the other side of the House. I can't believe some of the things that this government has presented. This bill is essentially a magic bill, apparently. Apparently, this is going to turn the province of Ontario into the Land of Oz. It's unbelievable that this bill, which this government has put forward, apparently is the bill that we've been waiting for for all of these years. It remains to be seen, but, boy, oh boy, Bill 138, from the way that the member from Willowdale and

also the Minister of Finance discussed this bill, you would think it was the second coming.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we're here to show you that this bill is not that, and that it is significantly flawed. Rather than helping the people of Ontario, when you actually look at the schedules—we were encouraging the MPP from Willowdale to speak to the bill and look at the schedules—you will see what this bill is all about. It does nothing to help the lives of the people of the province of Ontario.

I think we need to be perfectly clear that the government's plan is not working. We see it time and time again: People in this province continue to suffer. We continue to have hallway medicine. We continue to have people protesting around the building. We continue to have autism families in the gallery, in the halls, crying because of this government's lack of commitment to funding their needs adequately—lots of pretty words, but no actual funding.

I would like to believe that the minister believes his words, and I would like to believe that the MPP from Willowdale believes the words that he spoke in this House. I would recommend that he take a lesson in humility. The word "modesty" comes to mind. I've never seen such bravado in the House. But I would say that you may believe your words, and I would like to believe that you believe that, but I have to say that nobody's buying it. The people of the province of Ontario know what they know, and they're not buying all of these grandiose promises and these grandiose plans that are not delivering any relief to the people of Ontario.

Really, these words are just mellifluous. The government said it's going to change its tune or change the song, but it's the same old song. Somebody got removed from the choir, so maybe we have a new choir leader, singing the same song in maybe more mellifluous tones than the previous choirmaster, but it's the same tune. It's the same, same tune. Really, what we see—your words, the song that you're singing, the same policies that you've presented—it's your actions and your inactions that tell the true story.

So let's be clear: There's nothing new in this bill—with the economic statement and now this bill. This is a bill that continues to cut services that the people of Ontario need, and that is not working for the people of Ontario.

You make it perfectly clear in the fall economic statement, and now with Bill 138, that this government has absolutely no plans to reverse these deep and disastrous cuts that are really affecting the people of the province of Ontario. You might have delayed some of those cuts, but a cut is a cut. Maybe we can expect them next year, so we still have these cuts looming over us in the coming year.

I find it really hard to listen or watch the minister and the member crow about how wonderful this is for the province of Ontario when, in fact, this is the same story. It's the same cuts. It's the same economic projection. There's nothing new in this bill at all—nothing. There's delaying, backtracking, softening cuts—it's nothing to be proud of. But, boy, did they not seem proud today? They're pretty proud of themselves over there—a lot of high-fives and self-congratulations.

But you know what? I am here to cut your victory lap short, because the fact of the matter is, this bill does nothing to address the concerns of the people of Ontario. You've got your priorities all wrong. These are not the priorities, not the concerns, not the worries of everyday Ontarians, the people we hear from day in and day out in our constituency offices—and I have no doubt you hear the same things too, if you were only prepared to admit it.

We heard the member from Willowdale talking about the way we're going to implement cuts. We're here to say that you can talk about the future of the young people of Ontario, but, really, all you're doing is balancing the budget—cutting services. You are attempting to balance your budget on the backs of young people in the province of Ontario, on the backs of the most vulnerable people in the province of Ontario. This still continues to be a government that's all about the cuts. Isn't there a song like that?

Ms. Catherine Fife: There is.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: All about the cuts.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes.

You've made it clear in question period that you still plan to fire 10,000 teachers and educators in the province of Ontario in the next few years. We see time and time again the increase in class sizes, and fewer course options for students. The minister himself talked about the conditions, that our kids are going to school in classrooms—but this is a government that cut the funding to address the repair backlog. It's just the complete audacity of talking about being concerned about the conditions in the schools where our kids go—when this very same government cut funding to address the backlog. We know about lead in the water. We know about crumbling roofs. We know about the conditions that kids go to school in—a \$16-billion backlog, increased under this government. There's nothing in this bill or the fall economic statement to address that backlog.

Health care—everybody's favourite topic these days—continues to be squeezed.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry to interrupt the member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

Point of order, member from Flamborough—Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'm just suggesting that perhaps the member opposite would stick to what's in the bill and discuss what's in the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you for raising that point of order. We spoke earlier today about, what goes around comes around. I would suggest that I'm listening closely to the member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas. So far, she has touched on elements that have been discussed earlier today, and I would refer her back to the bill and your comments on what was said earlier by the government in relation to this bill, Bill 138.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: There are significant schedules in this bill that address health care in the province. Schedule

19 would be one that addresses the issue of health care in the province. I refer to schedule 30, which addresses the issue of health care in the province—and also refer to the fall economic statement that was mentioned by the minister quite extensively. There's nothing, not a single dime, in the fall economic statement or in Bill 138 that does anything to alleviate the concerns of hallway medicine. There's nothing there. There's no funding that will give relief to hallway medicine.

Besides health care and our cuts to schools, we continue to see that cuts remain in the fall economic statement related to post-secondary education. Really, this is a government that cut \$700 million from colleges and universities, and that is still not in the fall economic statement. That still stands. Post-secondary grants virtually eliminated—not restored in the fall economic statement or in the bill. In fact, the government even found a way to charge more interest on student debt for students of the province of Ontario. There's nothing in this bill or the fall economic statement to address or retract some of those cuts, despite the government saying they've changed their tune.

We talked about hallway health care. We talked about what is essentially an inflationary cut to health care funding in this province. Those cuts remain. But in the fall economic statement and referenced in the bill, there are cuts to some areas that are even deeper than were anticipated in the spring budget from this government. I would cite two that are particularly egregious: cuts to Indigenous affairs and also when it comes to the environment.

1720

We all hear stories every single day about the struggles of the people of Ontario, and we see that nothing has changed between the first spring budget and the fall economic statement. Nothing in this bill will give any comfort to the people of Ontario that were looking to this government for change and looking to this government for relief. We see also that we did languish under 15 years of Liberals that cut our services, that didn't fund health care adequately. We see, now that we have a fall economic statement, that the government plans to stick with those cuts and doesn't plan to change anything as far as the Liberals' focus on health care. We like to say on this side of the House: Liberal, Tory, same old story.

The minister and the member from Willowdale talked a lot about the deficit. They talked a lot about the deficit and addressing the fiscal reality in the province of Ontario. But my question stands: What is the fiscal reality in the province of Ontario? Because it really seems to be a moving target with this government.

We heard that the deficit was \$15 billion, and that has generously been described as “inflated.” We've heard it quoted by the Premier in the House that we inherited a \$15-billion deficit from the previous government. In fact, the Premier had to be—the Auditor General took what I would consider to be an unprecedented or unusual step in having to correct the Premier to say that in fact there never was a \$15-billion deficit in the province of Ontario.

So what is the deficit in the province of Ontario? We just feel like the government—it seems like they're

playing games with the numbers to create a context and a justification for their ongoing deep cuts. We have—what is it now? At one point, it was \$7 billion; now it's inflated to \$9 billion. The problem here with an exaggerated deficit, or a deficit that keeps just floating in the wind, depending on which way the wind is blowing on that side of the House, is that it provides the government a context for cuts, and those cuts are hurting families. We know it. We hear it and we know it.

Life is not getting better for people in the province of Ontario under this government. They're not seeing more money in their pockets. The member from Willowdale talked about how nickels and dimes matter. Guess what? Nickels and dimes matter to the low-income people of the province of Ontario because they need to count those nickels and dimes because there's no relief in sight for them. There's nothing in this bill that makes life affordable for them. Your promise of reducing hydro bills? Gone. Hydro bills, in fact, are going up in the province of Ontario.

So the deficit that is the basis for the fall economic statement—and, I would suppose, is the basis for Bill 138—the problem with a deficit that people can't have confidence in really is that: It's that the people of Ontario have lost confidence in the government's numbers. There is absolutely no confidence. They don't listen anymore. The government likes to rhyme off numbers—how much every month and how much every year and rhyme off those numbers—but they don't have any confidence in what you're saying when it comes to those numbers.

In fact, it's even worse than not having any confidence. They know that you talk about numbers, but you never talk about people's lives. You never talk about their real lives. You never say why this matters to the people of Ontario. Do you think that the people of Ontario feel that the deficit is their fault, that they have to pay the price to balance this deficit when they had nothing to do with creating this deficit? It was previous governments and it's this government. So not only do they not have confidence in the numbers of this government, but they do not trust this government to understand the priorities of everyday Ontarians.

What happens is, when you have this deep lack of confidence in the government, it eventually becomes a deep lack of trust. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, that's where we are today in the province of Ontario. Their numbers and their figures have become meaningless to the people in the province of Ontario. Nobody is buying anymore what this government is selling. They're not buying what the government is saying about their inflated numbers about the deficit; they're not buying all the bragging around taking credit for job numbers, taking credit for spending that comes from the feds. People understand that what you're saying is not what matters to them, and that they can't trust or have confidence in what you're saying. That's a terrible state of affairs to be in in the province of Ontario.

The question that we have on this side of the House, and, I would say, the question that most people in the

province have—and I would say that it's a fair question—is, when are the people of the province of Ontario going to get an honest answer, with real numbers, about the state of the finances in the province of Ontario? People have to make decisions, too. If they can't trust or have confidence in or rely on what the government is saying, what then? What do we have in the province now? We already know that people are deeply cynical about politics. We know that on the government side, their popularity numbers are plummeting. I would say that's connected to the fact that people feel like they're living in one reality and the government is living in another reality.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Twilight zone.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Twilight zone. Honestly, I think George Orwell will be making a comeback in the province of Ontario because the language that they use, the things that they say and the names that they come up with for their bills really speaks to the kind of flippant attitude that people don't like in politics. The name of their bill, the name of this bill—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Speaker, point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry to interrupt. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence has raised a point of order.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'm sorry to interrupt, and I hesitated many times, but I believe the member is using abusive or insulting language, pursuant to rule 23(k). She called us unhumble. She has talked about braggadocio, and now she's done it again. I'm getting tired of listening to those kinds of comments. I think it is likely to create disorder in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The words that have been used so far fall within the guidelines of what we normally use in this House. There was nothing used of a personal nature. So I will thank you for your point of order and ask the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas to continue, please.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, you know, it's hard to talk about this bill and the fall economic statement using adjectives that have—

Ms. Catherine Fife: That are positive.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: That are positive. I suppose I could use some with fewer syllables, if that seems to be a problem on the other side of the House. But really, it's very difficult to talk about this bill—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'll ask the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas to withdraw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I'll return to the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas with a suggestion that you watch your language for the rest of the debate this afternoon. Thank you.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now, we are still talking about the deficit. What I would like to say is that this is a government that likes to talk about the deficit numbers, but one of the things we don't hear from that side of the House is that, in fact, this government has the lowest per capita spending on health care,

on education, on any social service. They have the lowest per capita spending in the country, bottom of the pack.

Interjection: Congratulations.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Congratulations. We're pulling up the rear as far as it goes with spending on people in the province of Ontario.

I also think it should be noted that we also have the lowest per capita revenue. I would suggest that there's a corollary there. Maybe that's something that the Minister of Finance might like to look into. Maybe there's some hint there as to what the problem is in terms of the deficit of the province of Ontario. Low revenues and cutting services: Really? That's not exactly a recipe for a thriving province, as they like to describe.

Of the many things that this government has done in the short—what is it, 16 months?

Mr. Paul Miller: Nineteen months.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Is it?

Mr. Paul Miller: Roughly.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Gee whiz—is their abysmal record on the environment. Really, it has been described as a war on the environment. This government came into office, and the first thing they did was they cut cap-and-trade, a \$3-billion-plus loss of revenue. They ended Drive Clean. They literally ripped electric vehicle chargers from the ground. They eliminated the 50 Million Tree Program. They cancelled 750 renewable energy projects, which we heard this morning is going to cost us \$231 million—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Speaker, point of order.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. I'm sorry to interrupt. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence is on her feet with a point of order.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Excuse me for interrupting again, but I'm trying to find the schedule that refers to the environment, to see where that's relevant to the matter being debated. I would hope the member could keep her comments with respect to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I believe it might be in there, under declaring a litter day, perhaps. The environment is mentioned. Thank you very much for your point of order that wasn't a point of order.

We'll return now to the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. Please, colleagues, we've got to get through this. Let's do it.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would refer the member from Eglinton–Lawrence—I'd suggest that she might make herself more familiar with this bill, because there is a schedule—

Mr. Paul Miller: Schedule 32.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Schedule 32. That's your litter bill schedule that talks about the environment.

Interjection: This legislation is a litter bill.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, exactly.

Given that this government's track record in the fall economic statement has not done anything to address people's concerns about climate change—budget 2019 cut \$50 million from programs designed to fight climate change, and the fall economic statement cut a further \$27

million in funding. That's in the bill, Mr. Speaker. So that's a total of \$77 million worth of cuts to the environment under this government.

Ms. Catherine Fife: A lot of litter.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: A lot of litter, yes. So, litter—I mean, there's something. Maybe they've turned their minds to the environment.

But can we just talk about the environment? The member from Oakville said that the economy is on fire. Well, I have to say that the planet is on fire, and here we have a government that has done nothing, has shown absolutely no leadership on our climate crisis.

We have a schedule that addresses litter, and I suppose anywhere is a good place to start. But, really, the climate crisis is the single greatest threat that we've ever faced. It's extraordinary to sit here and listen to the grand words from the members about their bill.

What we're facing in terms of our climate crisis—the scale of what we're looking at is unbelievable. We have wildfires in California. Venice is under water. Canada is warming at twice the rate of the global average. We've seen flooding in Ontario. In Muskoka, they've had their second 100-year flood in six years. Right now, there's flooding in the riding of Kiiwetinoong—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me, please. I'm sorry to interrupt. It appears that the member from Cambridge has a point of order.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under section 23(b), it says to direct comments to the matters in the bill, and there's nothing about the climate crisis in there. There's a litter bill, but nothing on climate. So I would ask the member to stick to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you for your point of order. I'll return now to the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would agree with the member that there is nothing in this bill that addresses climate change. There is something in this bill that addresses litter, though, and that's what I'm discussing. I'm discussing the litter bill that the government has put forward as an effort to address climate. I mean, it's right there in the bill. That's their own words. This is a bill—this is a day, actually. It's a litter day.

I appreciate your efforts—better late than never, or better something. I don't know. It's hard to find something—

Mr. Paul Miller: That will change the world—litter day.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: There's nothing wrong with a litter day, but it's really inconsequential to addressing climate change when we are facing this kind of existential crisis in our climate. We have a government that says that they are listening to the people of Ontario, that they are consulting, but when I listen to the people in my riding—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Government members, I can't hear what's being said by the member who has the floor. Please conclude those independent conversations or take them outside. Thank you.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Even though you couldn't hear me, I will assure you it was about the bill.

It's a government that listens. But I didn't hear once, when we had kids circling the building, trying to express their genuine heartfelt concerns about the climate—I didn't hear any of them say that they were looking for a day on litter.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, we have some suggestions to improve the schedule that addresses litter in the province of Ontario. In the spirit of Her Majesty's loyal opposition and in trying to improve legislation, we would wonder why we didn't have a schedule or, in the litter bill, an attempt to stop litter at its source.

Our member proposed a ban on single-use plastics—turned down by this government. It seems to me that would help the problem of litter in the province of Ontario. My suggestion is they might reconsider voting down our motion to put a ban on single-use plastics.

We also talked about moving forward with extended producer responsibility for packaging. Well, that would also certainly lower litter at its source. We're in favour of holding businesses, as well as citizens, accountable for the litter that they create in the province.

I would also like to say that while we recognize that litter is important, I would say that—we understand this in the province of Ontario. We don't need our province to take credit for what is already happening in the province of Ontario. Scouts and cadets, school boards, members of community groups in my riding and probably everybody's riding: They all spend countless hours on park cleanups and cleanups in the streams. In my riding, we have Stewards of the Cootes Watershed. They spent all time clearing out all kinds of remarkable things that ends up in Cootes. They do this. It already happens. I don't really why the government needs to take provincial credit for that, but again that seems to be a pattern, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing is, when we talk about people looking at this litter day and the kind of mocking that it has invited, it's not that it's not important and that we don't want to have clean streets and roads and parks. It's not that that's not important. But in the context of the global scale of the problems that we're facing, we finally have a litter day? It's really hard to not find this is almost farcical.

I would also say that this is at the same time that, before this House, there's Bill 132 which is reducing fines for individuals and corporations that have a major impact on our environment. Really, the very fact that we have one bill before the House that is essentially a pay-to-pollute bill, reducing the ability of our province to monitor and preserve our environment and to protect species in the province, but I guess we have to be thankful that finally—hallelujah—we have a litter day and so perhaps maybe that's a start. Maybe it's an opportunity for us to have a dialogue with the government for them to really understand that they have a real, genuine obligation to address climate change in the province of Ontario.

They may also want to reconsider the fact that they voted down our opposition day motion to declare a climate

crisis in the province of Ontario. That would be a nice corollary to litter day. From the point of view of wanting to make legislation better, I would suggest that you consider supporting our motion that we need to declare a climate crisis in the province as have other jurisdictions, as have municipalities all across this country.

But one day a year, we're going to clean up garbage.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's not as glamorous as—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's not as glamorous, no. Right.

I have the honour to sit in this House beside the member from Kiiwetinoong. Every single day, I hear the answers to his questions and I see through the lens of his experience what this government is doing and not doing when it comes to Indigenous affairs. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, of all the things this really hurts. I can't believe that I have to stand up here and remind the government that we have an obligation to the First Nations people of this land. What we continue to see is, really, a lack of action which is really disgraceful—let alone respect in answering the member from Kiiwetinoong directly when he asks questions about the state of Indigenous affairs in the province of Ontario.

1740

We have asked questions on this side of the House: What has this government done to honour its treaty obligations? What has this government done to address decades of mercury poisoning in Grassy Narrows? What has this government done to ensure that First Nations have access to clean, reliable drinking water? We know that water is a basic human right, and there are First Nation communities who have gone decades without clean drinking water. So we hear a lot of words, but we are looking to the fall economic statement, we've been looking to the bill, to get an answer on what this government's commitment is, what their genuine commitment is to the Indigenous people and the First Nations people of this province. And I guess we got our answer in this budget. This government has already cut the Indigenous affairs budget in half, and now with this fall economic statement, the government twists the knife even deeper. It is hard to imagine how this government could find millions more to carve out of an already starved ministry.

I'm kind of tempted to quote Romeo Saganash, but I won't. But really, it just appears that this government does not seem to understand or care about the plight of First Nations people in the province of Ontario. Really, I don't understand why they're not prepared to take actions toward true and meaningful reconciliation. We hear the member ask constantly—just the other day he asked a question about what this government is doing, and they essentially chose not to answer directly. They don't answer his questions, and he is nothing but respectful, patient and resilient in this House. I have to say it is really a disgrace to see the way that we treat First Nations people in this province.

The President of the Treasury Board likes to bang on a lot about cutting the deficit as a moral obligation. Well, I'm here to say that there is no greater moral obligation that we have in this House than to treat the First Nations people of the province of Ontario with dignity and restore base funding to their ministry.

Monsieur le Président, je vais simplement dire que ce projet de loi du gouvernement n'a rien à offrir pour la communauté franco-ontarienne. Il y a presque 650 000 Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens dans cette province, et il y a presque un an, jour pour jour, le gouvernement conservateur annonçait l'élimination du Commissariat aux services en français et l'annulation du financement pour des institutions éducatives et culturelles.

De plus, la ministre des Affaires francophones a fait des promesses à plusieurs reprises par rapport à la modernisation de la Loi sur les services en français. Pour l'instant, nous n'avons aucun engagement de sa part. C'est, comme on dit en anglais, le « radio silence ».

Les conservateurs veulent se montrer rassurants, mais ce projet de loi ne le fait pas. Pour être franche, les gens ne font que retenir leur souffle. Les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes doivent-ils se contenter cet énoncé économique parce qu'ils n'auront pas de coupes massives comme l'an dernier? Franchement. Les priorités des Franco-Ontariens sont loin d'être représentées dans ce projet de loi du gouvernement.

M^{me} France Gélinas: That was a very good effort.

M^{me} Sandy Shaw: Très bien, n'est-ce pas?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes.

M^{me} Sandy Shaw: Comme j'ai déjà dit, plus ça change, plus ça reste le même avec ce gouvernement. Mais—wow. I can only say wow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I only did it for six years.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Okay. So if we could return to Bill 138, schedule 31—there are a couple of schedules in here that refer to the Planning Act. My guess, although I don't have answers—despite having a technical briefing, we didn't get clear answers, but many of these changes, it seems to me, should have been addressed in Bill 108. But as has been the practice in this House, we seem to rush bills through the House rather quickly, and so it's my sense that this government has had to take a backwards look and correct errors that could have been avoided had they taken the time to listen to the opposition, not time-allocate Bill 108, and extend opportunities at committee for people to come from all parts of the province to weigh in on a bill that makes significant changes to their lives.

Many of these changes that are in what purports to be an economic bill—there's very little in here that refers to the economy or finances at all. In fact, there really isn't anything except, perhaps, one schedule. But I would like to understand why schedule 31 in this bill is necessary to make changes to the Planning Act, when this government spent significant time reviewing that when it came to the changes that they were proposing under Bill 108.

Specifically, schedule 31 establishes a process under the Planning Act to allow municipal community benefit charges—for municipalities to introduce bylaws to allow them now to have community benefit charges. The thing about this is that now, because municipalities have to enact a bylaw to allow municipal community benefit charges to be made, they now have to make sure that they enact a

bylaw at the municipal level in a prescribed time, so that they don't lose that opportunity to be able to charge that.

I think the other thing that is significant here is that any person or individual, or, I believe, organization—I think you said that earlier—can now appeal these charges to the LPAT. So now we have a government that has said—in fact, municipalities are now dealing with the downloading of the costs or the delayed cuts to public health, the delayed cuts and mergers in our child care, but now we have a bill that in fact, for municipalities, really will add additional red tape. How's that for the municipalities? I kind of thought they were against red tape, but—pfft—you know.

What I would say it is important to understand is that the government likes to talk about taxpayers and money in their pockets, but guess what? Taxpayers at the municipal level are still taxpayers, and this kind of hampering, this kind of inability that you've given to municipalities to charge developers adequate charges to help pay for the cost of development, is going to result in additional downloads or costs to the mill rate. Really, where are municipalities going to find the money to pay for development? Because development, we know, doesn't pay for development. It's a net cost to municipalities, and who pays those costs? Taxpayers—residential taxpayers.

This is yet another piece of legislation that ensures that municipalities will continue to struggle to not pass on those additional property taxes to residents, to not pass on additional taxes to small businesses that are operating in our municipalities. It's something that, had the government taken the time to really look at the legislation that they previously rushed through the House, maybe they would have taken the time to consult on these changes.

AMO has said quite clearly, “If passed, municipal community benefit charge calculations would become appealable through the” LPAT. “This represents an additional administrative step for municipalities,” or red tape. They remain concerned, as we said earlier, that “development charge and community charge benefit revenue will be inadequate to support growth without additional support from existing property taxpayers. As AMO has noted in its Bill 108 submission, the methodology for calculating the community benefit charge is of vital importance to the successful financing of local growth-related infrastructure. They've already suggested that this is going to be a problem. It's hard to understand why the government now needs to make this change backwards.

In the technical briefing, we asked questions about how this change was identified, who brought it forward, who was asking for this change and who had they consulted, but again, it seems to be that making publicly available results of consultation has not been a practice of this government. That seems to have been case with Bill 108 and the submissions regarding that.

1750

But there is nothing in this bill that already doesn't sound like a bill that we are not in support of—spoiler alert, we will not be supporting this bill—but if I hadn't already outlined some things that are really going to be

tough medicine for the people of Ontario to swallow, the changes to our health care, through the schedules in this bill, are chilling. They're nothing short of chilling, and every person in the province of Ontario needs to pay attention to what is going on here under your nose.

This bill, Bill 138, in a number of schedules, gives the minister and the cabinet extraordinary powers around the use and the collection of our personal, private health information. It's not even in the bill. In fact, all they're doing is enabling legislation to allow them to make—and the minister to make—regulations at a later date. So the people of Ontario can't even understand what these changes will mean to them. But we're here to try to explain to you that serious, serious concerns and red flags have been raised not just by us, but by all kinds of people in this province, and actually beyond this province, who say that this has the potential to be a serious invasion of people's privacy rights, a serious invasion of the use of people's data, and we have nothing but concerns and questions for the government on how they intend to implement this.

Bill 138 talks about giving regulatory powers not only to the minister and the cabinet, but to Ontario Health, that super-bureaucracy that we hear a lot about. This super-agency will have extraordinary powers to access, collect and share your personal health information. Ontario health teams, that are yet to be determined, which may or may not have public delivery—I mean, we asked the minister many times during the health care bill, are these Ontario health teams going to be not-for-profit public delivery of health care? The answer was not given to us, and it certainly wasn't in the bill, despite the fact that it's in the Canada Health Act. The fact that we have two agencies that we have little information about—Ontario health teams, that have not been determined and which may be for-profit corporations, now have extraordinary powers to access our data. And there are no provisions in this bill that put limits on what they can share, how they can share it or who they can share it with. It's really, really frightening, and people need to pay attention to this.

There's a big theme in this bill, if I could say so, which is about enabling the use of sharing data through electronic means or electronic documents. I know the government thinks this is going to save a buck or two, but what I would say is, at what cost? At what cost are you going to put at risk the health care records of millions and millions of the people of the province of Ontario? I would say—and you don't have to take it from me, because clearly you're not going to be taking my advice today—you might want to listen to the privacy commissioner, who has already confirmed that the government has already ignored one of his recommendations concerning the use of electronic plate validation on cell phones. So this is a government that thinks they know better than our own privacy commissioner.

So because the information is not really in the bill and because, at a technical briefing when we asked very pointed and specific questions about who will have access to the data and what will the use be, we thought that maybe

what we might like to do is look at the government's own documents that relate to their new—I suppose they're calling it non-tax revenue generation, but my sense is what they are doing is selling off data sets at a profit in the province of Ontario.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Eglinton—Lawrence has raised a point of order.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Under section 23(i), I believe the member opposite is imputing false or unavowed motives about selling off data sets. I don't know where that came from.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I don't believe that's a valid point of order.

We'll return to the member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas to continue. We only have a few more minutes left.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say that our concern about the use and the sale of our public health data has a precedent. For those who would like to look at this, there's a project that was called Project Nightingale. The whistleblower identified that Google was collecting and sharing the records of millions and millions of people in the United States to use as data that they would then sell to people who were providing medical services and medical devices. This data was being collected—people did not know, service providers didn't know and doctors didn't know. So there's a precedent for data being misused and sold under the noses of people who are accessing services.

So I would say that if there's nothing else in this bill that we need to stand up, ask questions and take notice of, it's the extraordinary powers that will make people accessing health care concerned about how their data is being used. In fact, they will also ensure that people cannot have confidence that when they visit a doctor or when they seek medical services, their information is not going to be sold to insurers who are trying to access people's use of services, that it is not going to be used to deny claims. There's nothing in this bill, there's nothing in this legislation, that helps to identify protections for individuals in the province of Ontario. There's just enabling legislation that they will determine at a later time. It's like, "To be determined. We'll let you know what we're going to do with your personal information data." Mr. Speaker, that's not how we behave in the province of Ontario, let alone Canada.

With the time I have left, I would just say that the fall economic statement—I guess it's a do-over for the new minister, a mulligan perhaps; but it's the same bill, it's the same budget and it's the same cuts. I would also say that not only is it a disappointment, but if people take the time to look at the schedules in this bill—they have very little, if anything, to do with the economy. They're simply schedules that change all kinds of legislation—this government yet again handing themselves, grabbing for themselves, extraordinary power around information around people's lives. This is not something—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. You've run out of time for your opening lead. You'll have to conclude the next time this bill is up.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that on the ballot list draw of July 11, 2018, Mr. Coe assumes ballot item number 88, Mr. Rasheed assumes ballot item number 91 and Mr. Cuzzetto assumes ballot item number 99. On the ballot list draw of November 4, 2019, Mrs. Wai assumes ballot number 16.

Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

SEXUAL ABUSE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Toronto—St. Paul's has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Attorney General. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or her parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

We turn now to the member from Toronto—St. Paul's.

1800

Ms. Jill Andrew: I would first like to thank Kelly Grenier, a Métis woman and a survivor of historical sexual violence, for sharing her experience with us last week. To Kelly and all survivors, please know the NDP official opposition hears you, we see you and we will continue to advocate for you and with you on gender-based violence and your rightfully entitled survivor services.

On November 7, I asked the Attorney General about cuts that effectively revictimize survivors of sexual violence, namely its dissolution of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and cuts to funding, which have resulted in countless survivors not receiving the therapy they're entitled to. I was shocked by his response, one which referred to resources survivors currently count on today as "outdated." Instead of answering my questions, the minister shared his mother's resumé, as though somehow her vocation serving survivors inoculated him from his and this government's disgraceful decision. It didn't.

Kelly contacted us with her story of betrayal by this government. According to her and many others I've heard from, there is no grandfathering or transitioning into the new Victim Quick Response Program+. She was simply abandoned, terrified that her therapy had been interrupted. She received no official notification from this government indicating the CICB cancellation, and no one from this government would return her calls.

Since her story has gone public, like magic, the government has responded to some of her calls and has told her that they are reviewing her file. Kelly said, "Well, what happens to everyone else? The stories you will not hear, the names you will not know in the news—what's going to happen to them?"

There are particular problems with the Victim Quick Response Program+, which takes Ontario backwards and could easily be renamed the "blame the victim quick response program plus." As Kelly said, the program is "light on therapy and heavy on rhetoric."

Mr. Speaker, you don't place a Band-Aid on a stab wound, and this is precisely what the VQRP does. This short-term program is unavailable to victims of historical sexual crimes, like child sexual abuse, and there is—I repeat—no transition from CICB to VQRP. Strict criteria on survivors by VQRP also dictate that survivors must report the sexual crime against them to either a victim services agency or to the authorities within six months to qualify. So in other words, for this government, in regard to survivors of sexual violence, If you snooze, you lose.

This government must recognize that while immediate supports are critical for survivors, the government's accountability does not stop there. We have to think about long-term, embodied trauma, body memory, the work it can take for a survivor to gain the courage to speak up—months, years, decades—after surviving sexual violence. Survivors shouldn't have to operate on the government's timelines. This is inhumane and unjust. We are demanding that the government listen to survivors. The quick-fix VQRP program is not working.

The Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres and Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape are still awaiting responses from the Attorney General, as are several other organizations that I know of, because I have personally met with them and survivors during my women's issues listening tour in October. Survivors deserve a response. They deserve one now. Survivors are requesting an apology from this government for cuts made unannounced. People didn't receive as little as an email, letter or phone call indicating that their therapy may be stopped because their therapist isn't getting paid. This is unconscionable, Mr. Speaker.

Survivors like Kelly are not getting the financial compensation for therapies that they have signed agreements for from the board. The government must keep their promise. And I'll tell you why it's easy for this government not to keep the promise, Mr. Speaker: because the government repealed the Proceedings Against the Crown Act and replaced it with the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act in 2019, essentially stifling survivors from being able to sue the crown, limiting their access to social justice. Do you know what the Premier said about this? "Well, hey, you can look sideways and some special interest groups out there are trying to sue you." He was in agreement with this.

So I ask this House: Are survivors of sexual violence a special interest group? Are they something that your

Premier—because he's not mine—should be making fun about?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll turn now to the Attorney General's parliamentary assistant, Ms. Park. You may have up to five minutes to reply.

Ms. Lindsey Park: Thank you, Speaker. I thank you and I thank all my colleagues who are here in the House to talk about this important issue. It matters to us deeply.

On behalf of the Attorney General, I want to thank the member for her original question, and I also want to congratulate her on taking the time to do a women's issues listening tour. I think it's important. I think it's something we all should be doing. In fact, our ministry has been leading a complete review of victims' services and there's more to come on that.

But I want to speak to the specific question that was asked of the Attorney General last week, and I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak again about the work our government is doing to improve the way victims are compensated and are supported in the province of Ontario after experiencing a violent crime. I do want to take a moment to speak specifically to a comment the member opposite made in her previous question and repeated again tonight in reference to this about survivors of childhood abuse.

I want to be absolutely clear: Historic abuse continues to be covered under the enhanced VQRP+ program. Eligible survivors of historical abuse are absolutely able to access supports.

In our last budget, our government committed to reforming victim compensation services. There is certainly a lot of work to be done on this front after the previous government sat on their hands and let the system fall out of date and become too complex and difficult to navigate for the people who need it.

Now, before I talk about where we're going, let's talk about where we came from. The old compensation program was far too slow and complicated, and something had to be done. The reality is, under the old program, victims of sexual, domestic and physical violence were paying out of pocket themselves and then waiting months or even years on end before their paperwork was processed and they were finally reimbursed for essential supports from their government. Can you imagine a two-year process, or even longer, where the government would say,

"We don't believe you; prove it," and then a year later they would say, "We don't believe you; prove it," so you needed to hire a lawyer? Can you imagine the mental toll that the process took on victims, who were forced to relive their trauma through a long and drawn-out adjudicative process?

The member opposite raised an important issue when she said, in asking her question of the Attorney General, "Why is this government so intent on revictimizing Ontario's most vulnerable?" We are trying to address exactly that with our reforms. The old process did revictimize people for years on end. They couldn't get support. They had to pay out of pocket for their own treatment. They had to pay out of pocket for their hotel rooms after being rescued from human trafficking. It's wrong. The old process was wrong and outdated, and that's why we were intent on fixing it. It just wasn't right.

Can you imagine? They had to go through this process of being revictimized. On top of that, they could have also been required to be a witness during a criminal prosecution related to their case. That also revictimizes them. I'm grateful we have, in the province of Ontario, the Victim/Witness Assistance Program that provides support, because I can't imagine how painful it is. I was speaking with a woman in my community only a couple of weeks ago who was frightened for that time that was going to come when she had to be a witness and face her abuser, just to ensure that there is consequence for this alleged crime.

Victims have suffered enough. That's why we put in place a program to make it easier and faster for them to get the supports they needed without having to pay out of pocket. Now instead of waiting months and years, victims will get help immediately after experiencing a violent crime.

I think this is really an important topic. I want to thank all the designated agencies, like Victim Crisis Assistance Ontario providers, for the incredible work they do, day in and day out, and specifically, I think it's important—

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

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1810.

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Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (IND)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Yakabuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Vacant	Orléans	
Vacant	Ottawa—Vanier	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Wayne Gates
Randy Hillier, Andrea Khanjin
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Michael Parsa
Randy Pettapiece, Peter Tabuns
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Kaleed Rasheed
Jeremy Roberts, Amarjot Sandhu
Sandy Shaw, Donna Skelly
Dave Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Daryl Kramp
Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

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Marit Stiles, Vijay Thanigasalam
John Vanthof
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Lorne Coe, Parm Gill
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Gurratan Singh, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
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Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
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Goldie Ghamari, France Gélinas
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Joel Harden, Mike Harris
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