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Jeudi
5 décembre 2019

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 5 December 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 décembre 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

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 December 4, 2019, on the motion for third 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?

Hon. Bill Walker: It's truly a pleasure to be here today to speak to third reading of Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019, or as we like to refer to it, PAWS, for short. Mr. Speaker, for 100 years, the enforcement of animal welfare laws in the province was the responsibility of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; however, the OSPCA, a private charity, as that agency is, pulled out very abruptly.

I want to commend the Solicitor General and her team, her PA, for all of the work they've done to actually, in a very short period of time, put legislation together that I believe is very important to protect our animals, the welfare of our animals, and to respect the owners of animals, Mr. Speaker. I think at the end of the day we always need to find a balance. For many people, a pet is like a child. Many people sadly can't have children, or they make a choice not to, and their pet becomes—at the end of the day, we want to make sure we have that ability.

A couple of really key points, Mr. Speaker, are that we launched 1-833-9-ANIMAL, a new toll-free number for the public to report cruelty to animals. I think that's a very important piece of this legislation to make sure that people know that they have access. We have appointed a number of inspectors to ensure that that will happen, so that we can have timely, responsible action for people who feel there is cruelty being done to animals.

In many cases, Mr. Speaker, in my riding what I heard was a lot of misinformation, where people who may not

understand animal welfare, particularly in the case of a farm, would be driving by and would stop and maybe see a cattle beast or a horse or whatever the animal may be on a farm and they would make an assumption that they didn't look healthy. They would intervene. They would make all kinds of allegations of mistreatment and cruelty—that is unfair; many animals actually frankly may look that way—but there aren't.

I know the farmers, particularly the farmers and the people who care about their animals in my riding, take great pride in their animals. Many of the farmers I know can name every single one of their cattle, Mr. Speaker. You walk through the field with them and they know them by name. That isn't someone who is going to mistreat or abuse their animal. So we want to make sure that there is a true sense of ability to be able to respect the animal owner, but, most importantly, the animals.

I'm going to devolve for just a second, Mr. Speaker, if you'll indulge me. This is about my pet. We have a little dog. Poppy is her name. We got her on November 9, the year I got elected, and that's why she's named Poppy. She is a pug and a Jack Russell, so she is a jug, really. But why I'm telling you this story, Mr. Speaker, is my kids, when they were young, always wanted a dog. I always was the guy who said no because they played a lot of sports, we weren't around, and I didn't think that would be fair to the animal.

So my wife said, "If you're going to go down this path and you're going to run for office, we're getting a dog." I said, "Well, how about we make a deal? I'll get a dog if I win." Well, what they did is they went and got the dog after I won the nomination, not the election. I said, "No, no, no. This just isn't right," to my family. "You can't do this." They said, "Sorry about your luck. It's democracy: three to one," and at end of the day, they got the dog.

I bring a personal sense to this piece of legislation, because, of course, our family would never abuse our dog. But we want to make sure that no one does and that there is the opportunity for us to enforce if there is a need, if someone is. We've heard examples where people have mistreated animals, where people, again, have 80, 90 cats in one house, without the proper ability to feed them, house them. We, again, have to have enforcement there. We want to make sure we do that, that we:

- protect animals across the province;
- provide the appropriate powers and tools for inspectors;
- start to rebuild that trust in the public by increasing responsiveness, accountability and transparency compared to the previous model; and

—introduce the strongest penalties in Canada for offenders.

What we had heard at times was the exact opposite. In my riding, I had a number of people come to me saying that the OSPCA, in some cases—very limited, perhaps, but in some cases—had overstepped their bounds of enforcement. They were going in and taking animals. If you asked what they did, they could not even sometimes answer. It might have been a very high-end animal. It may have been someone who was a breeder stock. But they've gone in and they've actually taken—we don't know whether they euthanized it, we don't know whether they let it go, because they didn't actually ever have to come back and tell the people what they did. I know there were people in my riding who came to me with those types of concerns, even before the OSPCA deemed to step away from doing this.

I know one of the key pieces of this legislation is ensuring that there are better response times. Again, if you feel that there is distress, if there's a challenge, you can call this line and you will have an inspector who will be there to be able to be properly trained—and that's key. They have to be properly trained. They have to understand the attributes of different animals, so that they understand whether they are being, in fact, cared for in a proper way. There will be, in fact, increased coverage province-wide.

There are going to be more inspectors. That was one of the things, I think, we certainly heard some feedback on. People wanted to ensure we had the proper model, the proper resources in place. The Solicitor General has ensured, from a budget perspective—in fact, there's going to be more money in the budget than there was previously, to ensure that we have a proper number of inspectors to be able to deal with these in a timely manner.

We know that what we were hearing, again, in a riding like Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, is that a lot of this had fallen to police officers. At the very outset, they were getting called to go out and be dispatched to go and do these types of things. That was a case where the police were coming and saying, "We're stretched, at times, as it is, particularly in our busy summer tourist season, to be able to go out and do these types of calls." Again, they weren't necessarily fully trained to be able to do these types of calls. They were very pleased to see this type of legislation, I believe, come through, so that they actually had time to go back and do the job that they were truly trained to do.

So we want to know that, at the end of the day, I believe, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association—they, again, are key components. People can report that way and make sure that we understand. They, again, will work with the inspectors to make sure of proper training so that our people know exactly what they're doing when they're there.

We hear of things, sadly, each year: Pets dying from heat exhaustion, because they were left in a parked vehicle while the owner popped into a store, or left the car for longer periods, with the windows barely cranked down. How can anybody do this? At the end of the day, we want

to make sure that we have that. We've heard of dogfighting and those types of things. Again, our inspectors will be very in touch with what's going on out there. They'll be accessible. At the end of the day, they will definitely have an ability.

With those things like that, when we hear about pets dying from exhaustion, the dogfighting, or puppy and kitten mills, where dogs and cats are mass-produced, often under the cruelest of conditions—Mr. Speaker, there wasn't a significant penalty that people had to pay if they were caught doing that.

Madam Speaker: I will change my thought process now. Welcome.

In many cases, what we were hearing was the penalty was not fitting the crime. We are proposing to change that and increase penalties to be the strongest in Canada to address serious offences and repeat offenders. Individuals who are convicted of training animals to fight; harming law enforcement animals, such as horses, or service animals, such as seeing-eye dogs; or contravening standards of care would be subject to penalty of up to a maximum of \$130,000 and/or a maximum of two years in jail for a first offence. This is a 116% increase on the penalty currently on the books.

0910

For individuals convicted of a subsequent offence, the maximum potential penalty that the court may impose doubles to \$260,000 and/or a maximum of two years in jail.

A corporation convicted of similar offences could receive up to a maximum penalty of half a million dollars for the first offence and up to \$1 million for each subsequent offence.

In addition, the proposed Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019, would update prohibitions and obligations such as barring the return of dogfight equipment to an individual who has such equipment. Frankly, I'm shocked that they are allowed to ask for it back in the first place.

Madam Speaker, I think that at the end of the day, we've done a good job of striking a balance. We've ensured that there are adequate inspectors. We've ensured that there's a call line. We've made sure that the animal is first and foremost our biggest concern, and we respect the rights of that animal owner as well. At the end of the day, we want to make sure that we have more inspectors and better province-wide coverage. We've increased the number of inspectors, so that should give people pause for thought—pardon the pun. We want to make sure that, no matter where you are in our great province of Ontario, you have the resource that you need when you need it.

A one-window public complaints process and, as I say, the toughest penalties: That's what we heard from the public in consultation as we did this. We took direct action, fairly quick action, to put this together. But we did that because we couldn't bear the thought of an animal out there suffering because we weren't moving fast enough.

So I think, in this case, we've got a great enforcement model that is within our reach. It's what our stakeholders have asked for and what the public wants, and I again want to thank our members for doing this.

I'm going to reiterate again that the protection of the animal is absolutely the most critical component of this legislation. It's making sure that the animal and the rights of that animal, the thoughts of the animal owner, are taken into account. We don't want to be that frivolous. No one will ever object—if someone has a serious complaint and you actually see something, we want that reported. We want that person to step up and take the action on behalf of the animal. But what we don't want is people going—and particularly in the case of our agricultural sector, where people who know nothing about livestock, who know nothing about how to take care of animals—and I believe one of the members, from Timiskaming–Cochrane was talking yesterday about his dairy cattle, and his wife has a horse. In fact, I think he might have said that she liked the horse better than him, but we'll leave that to have a discussion off-line at some point.

I went over to him afterwards. He was talking about cruelty to his animals. He said if he walks into his dairy barn at night, he leaves music on, and all of the cattle, typically, are pretty relaxed and content and that's when they produce the best milk. He was thinking of cruelty to animals and how you would do that. I said, "Well, if we took one of Minister Yakabuski's CDs and put it in that barn and played that at night, that might be deemed cruelty to animals." Minister Yakabuski wasn't here, but I may allude to that with him when he comes back into the House, Madam Speaker.

It's common knowledge that 60% of people across Canadian households have at least one pet. Again, I know that many of my colleagues talk very, very lovingly about their pets. Many of my colleagues—certainly, many of my constituents—come from the agricultural sector. As I say, I know friends of mine who can walk through the field and lovingly name every cow that they have in their field, and they know that, so they're going to do their utmost to do that. We have to strike the balance to make sure that they can do their job.

This is, in some cases, a livelihood, but in some cases, it truly is a case of how they've grown up on a farm, they've grown up around animals, and you don't need someone coming in, making allegations that are totally inappropriate, where they could lose—and many people have lost—their animals. They've had them confiscated in past regimes, with no thought process—really overbearing power, to be able to come in and confiscate an animal. Again, the concern we had in many cases—or certainly, that I heard anecdotally—was that you didn't even have any recourse. The animal was gone. They didn't know what happened to it. Those people, again, suffered significant—not only monetary but harmful mental effects because of losing that loved pet.

We want to ensure, as always, with this type of thing, that we have the proper oversight framework. As I say, we've got a 1-800 number. I'm just going to repeat that again, Madam Speaker, for those who might have just tuned in: 1-833-9-ANIMAL, a new toll-free number for the public to report cruelty to animals. We want to make sure that at any time, people who feel that they have a

need—that they see an animal in true distress—again, I know that's a judgment call. But we have the resources there. We have inspectors who will go out and do this type of thing to be able to help them.

We'll have that oversight framework. We'll have the single number. We'll have an actual complaints process so it's standardized and everybody knows that everybody gets the same treatment, so, again, it's consistent across the province.

Oversight mechanisms to ensure public trust: One of the things we truly heard, that I as a legislator had heard, is that people had lost faith in the old regime, in the old way of doing things with the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Many people were concerned that they had overstepped and that they were allowing too many frivolous actions to take place. So I think we have struck a good balance to do that.

As I said earlier, we've strengthened the fines. We've made it very significant. If someone is going to take action to be truly, purposely cruel to an animal, they're going to pay the piper at the end of the day. They are going to know there is a significant retribution in place if they get caught doing that type of thing, particularly for those dogfighting kennels and those types of things, or people who are amassing numbers and numbers of animals—puppy and kitty mills, as we call them—with no thought process to how they're going to take care of them, how they're going to make sure that they're healthy and active. We've done that.

At the end of the day, we think we've struck a good balance. We have many of our stakeholders who have said that they are onside with us. I think it's always something that, in a couple of years, we'll take a look at again and review and see if there are ways that we can enhance it even more.

I believe there is an advisory committee that has been struck, as part of our process, so that they can always review and ensure that we have the proper disciplines in place. Yes, a multidisciplinary advisory table will inform regulatory development and provide ongoing advice on emerging and specific issues.

We know that all legislation, if it's going to be the best that it can be, needs regular review. We want to make sure that we look at it and we have the proper people around the table to be able to do that.

We think, at the end of the day, that we have struck a good balance. Certainly in my riding, I've had good feedback from people saying, "I like what's proposed. I like what's being debated."

We have put the people—proper, law-abiding, loving animal lovers—we have taken their concerns. As I said as I started off my remarks, many people treat their animals, their pets, like a child. It truly is part of the family. We want to make sure that we do that.

We've looked at the agricultural community, where it actually is a livelihood, in many cases, and they have a business that they're running. So we again have to respect and do that.

I want to do a bit of a shout-out, a little bit off topic, but very close, Madam Speaker, so I hope you'll indulge me.

The Minister of Agriculture introduced legislation as well about protecting livestock, and people trespassing on farms and creating farm safety issues. I think that is a brilliant piece of legislation that has struck the right balance. We've protected the people who earn their livelihood. We've protected the workers who are, in many cases, transporting their livestock to market or to wherever they may be going, while also allowing people—if they have a true concern, there is a process. If they go and get permission from a farmer to be on their land, that's a whole different story. But if not, then we have to treat it that way. I had a lot of my agricultural community coming and saying they were starting to get very concerned about the safety of their food, the safety of their families and their workers. I think that is a great piece of legislation.

We did not pause on the PAWS Act. We made sure we went straight to it. We did it very quickly; we did it very diligently. We did a lot of consultation. We had a lot of stakeholders come to the table who wanted to do it.

We modernized this legislative framework. Like many things that we found in our great Legislature, a lot of things—we have a lot of laws. We have to review those. We have to keep up with the 21st century.

I think, at the end of the day, by increasing the ability for having timely inspectors, qualified inspectors, a timely response, making sure that people know that there is a very onerous penalty structure in place, that they may think twice before they abuse or are cruel to an animal—I think that has done a great thing.

We are always, of course, respectful, and value our great veterinarian community across the province, so we'll work with them to make sure that they have input at all times to be able to help us.

I think, Madam Speaker, that we have done a good job of making sure we have gone out to the pet owners. First and foremost, we've put the pet right in our thought process. That was the first thing. Then we go to the pet owners and think, "What do they need? What are they expecting from us as legislators?"

We have looked at the other side. We said, "Who are the ones that are doing purposeful damage to our pets, to our livestock, to our animals across our province?" We have said that we will not accept that. We will make sure that we come down hard on those who maliciously harm an animal, a pet, livestock, whatever that case may be, and we will make sure that we do that in a consistent manner.

I'm very, very pleased. The Solicitor General and, as I say, her team—her PA, I believe, is Christine Hogarth, the member from Etobicoke—

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Lakeshore.

Hon. Bill Walker: Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I know you would have known that quicker, Madam Speaker.

I think they've done a great job. I think people across the province, forgetting partisan political thought processes, are going to like this piece of legislation. I think they're going to agree that we've done a good job to consult and make it balanced, fair and respectful. Most important, Madam Speaker, it's accountable and it's responsive to the

pet owner, taking the pet as our concern at every single step of the way.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to stand up and talk—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Sorry to interrupt the member. It's not questions and comments; it's further debate. My mistake.

I again recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, that's great. I get to talk for five minutes on Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound's 20 minutes of whatever he was doing there on Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019. To the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: He had a really good idea yesterday about having tiny homes for pets. Has anybody heard of that? I don't know if he remembers that from yesterday, when he sent that over to me. Tiny homes for pets, I think, would be really good as well.

My mother, long passed, who I have spoken about here—she used to love her cats. We were actually known, on William Street in St. Catharines, as the cat house, just because my mom had so many cats. They would go out, meet a cat friend and end up having more cats. We had so many cats in our house. I always thought—because this is a true story. When we were growing up, we didn't have a lot, but I always thought—we always had food for the cats, but we never had enough food for the kids.

This is what this is all about—

Hon. Bill Walker: You could have been a six-footer, Gatesy.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I know. We had a big house back then, not a tiny house.

But I think this is what this is all about. It's about our pets and how we love our pets, sometimes, more than we love our children, quite frankly.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: They don't talk back.

Mr. Wayne Gates: They don't talk back. My dad had a poodle, which—

Interjection: Hated the cats.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, my dad loved the poodle, too. It was hilarious. My dad took the poodle everywhere. He told me to walk, but he always took the dog in the car.

These are true stories. I mean, you live through this when it comes to your pets. So the fact that we're coming up with a bill that we think is going to be beneficial to cats, dogs and your pets—whatever your pet is. I had a goldfish. I had a goldfish that—unfortunately, they don't live that long when you win them at the carnival, but the kids loved the goldfish, fed the goldfish.

This is a great story. I really want my colleagues to listen to this. It's too bad my buddy from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is gone, but this is a true story. I had—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay, I apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): No, when I stand, you don't. Thank you.

A reminder to all members that we don't make reference to those who are here or not here.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that, Madam Speaker. You're absolutely right. I didn't mean to do that. I didn't realize that he had left. So—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm going to interrupt the member again, and I ask that you respect what I have said. Thank you.

I return to the member.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I apologize again.

I had a pet called Hammy Hamster. I'll never forget this. This is a really funny story. A lot of people here don't know I was goaltender. I played goal for a number of years until about—

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Just shoot.

He was called Hammy Hamster. He used to lay on my chest all the time. He used to fall asleep on my chest, and then you'd put him back in the cage. He had that wheel. He'd run around and get his exercise.

One day, he got away. This is a true story: He got away and we couldn't find him anywhere. We were looking all over the house—because I actually liked Hammy Hamster. I enjoyed his company, right? If your wife gets mad at you, you've got to have friends. I had Hammy Hamster.

Hammy Hamster, I couldn't find him. I looked all over the house for a week. When I finally went to play hockey a week later on a Sunday morning, at the Thorold arena—the old Thorold arena, which I think they're going to tear down soon to build another arena, which is great for Thorold. My colleague from Niagara, he knows this.

So I take my hockey equipment out, and who comes running out of the bag? Hammy Hamster. He just wanted to go to the hockey rink with me; I didn't know that. That's kind of how our pets are.

But I've got a good story for my colleague here from St. Catharines. They only gave me five minutes on the bill. I could talk for hours on pets. But she had a cat—

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Still do.

Mr. Wayne Gates: —still does—and her cat disappeared. I have to put my glasses on, because she gave me some of the notes. It was Family Day. A terrible day for your pet to go missing is Family Day; we can all agree to that, right? We want to enjoy our pets on Family Day. The cat was 18 years old. It had nine lives—that's why he was 18.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, that's true—nine lives. But he disappeared on Family Day. When he was a little kitten, a baby kitten, they put in this thing called a microchip that I'm sure a lot of people who talked on this bill are familiar with. When he was a kitten, they put in this microchip. Six months later, she gets a call from the Welland county humane society, which is almost in Port Colborne. To walk to it as a human is four hours. I don't know what it is for cats or for Poppy; I don't know how long it takes to go

there. But think about this: They found this cat—am I right?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Yes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It was one of the happiest days of her life. She had thought the cat, at 18 years old, might have had a heart attack and died under a branch or something—and the cat is still alive. This is a true story; it's still alive. There you go: microchips, our pets, Family Day—she was so happy.

It was one of the happiest days of your life when you reunited with your cat. And what's it called?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Freakster.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Freakster—

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: The freakiest day of our lives.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It was the freakiest day of her life.

Madam Speaker, thanks for allowing me five minutes to speak on this wonderful bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 25, 2019, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Calandra has moved third reading of Bill 136, An Act to enact the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019 and make consequential amendments with respect to animal protection.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day? I recognize the Associate Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kinga Surma: No further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 0927 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Good morning. I would like to welcome to our House—to their House—Taylor Downes and Francesca Delano. Welcome.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the privilege of welcoming to the Legislature today His Worship Mayor Junkin of the town of Pelham; Councillor Bob Hildebrandt; the CAO of the town of Pelham, David Cribbs; as well as a good advocate for the town of Pelham, Gord Marasco. Welcome to the people's House today.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly for the first time Mark McQueen and his daughter Molly McQueen. Welcome.

Mr. Stan Cho: Good morning. It's my privilege to welcome members of the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association: OKBA's chair, Shin Young Ha; chief operating officer Shim Kiho; Peterborough chapter president

Lee Kyung Suk; and Chung Bong Jae. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. It is my great privilege and honour to welcome a group of friends from Canada and Armenia.

First of all, I would like to welcome Mheir Karakachian, chairman of the Armenian National Committee of Canada from Montreal; Mr. Sevag Belian, executive director of the Armenian National Committee of Canada's office in Ottawa; Houri Najarian, board member of the Armenian National Committee of Canada; and Harout Matossian, chairman of the Armenian National Committee of Toronto.

We have a special guest from Armenia, Mr. Ishkhan Saghatlyan, the chairman of the Dashnak Party in Armenia. He's here to learn about our democratic process so that they can improve on their system.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome some anti-poverty groups who are here today from Hamilton. From the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits, we have chair Elizabeth McGuire; from Hamilton's social work action committee, we have chair Sally Palmer; with them we have guests Ursula Samuels, Josie D'Amico, Jay Cruz, Katelyn Williton, Elizabeth McGuire, Tim Button, Joanne Johnson, Alana Baltzer, Tze Chan, Sally Palmer, Bryan Russell, Daren Taylor, Liz Lamb, Carole Szytlo, Anne Delina, Kelly McCormick, Gail Powless, Simon Kerr, Chris Labenski and Jeffery Paul. Welcome, all of you, to Queen's Park.

I'd also like to do my daily welcome of autism advocates who are here with us in the House today: Michau van Speyk is joining us here from the Ontario Autism Coalition. Welcome back to Queen's Park, Michau.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I wanted to welcome the students of a school in my riding, St. Nicholas of Bari. Welcome to your House.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome McMurrich Junior Public School's grades 5 and 6 gifted classes and teachers Devon Marshall and Samantha Barkin. Thank you very much for coming out to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario—your House. You are welcome to be here all the time.

I'd also like to introduce Nella Li, a constituent of ours and a lover of fashion who is celebrating her birthday today. Welcome to Queen's Park and happy birthday.

WEARING OF HATS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Carleton has informed me that she has a point of order.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent from the House for the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries and myself to wear hats during our questions during question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Carleton is seeking the unanimous consent of the House on behalf of herself as well as the Minister of Heritage to wear hats during question period during their questions. Agreed? Agreed.

WEARING OF BUTTONS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for members to wear a button with respect to taking action on violence against women on December 6.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear a button with respect to taking action against violence against women. Agreed? Agreed.

ANNIVERSARY OF MONTREAL MASSACRE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent for this House to observe the 30th anniversary of the Montreal massacre, which took place on December 6, 1989, with the independent members speaking for up to five minutes, followed by the official opposition speaking for up to five minutes, followed by the government speaking for up to five minutes, followed by a moment of silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent of the House to observe the 30th anniversary of the Montreal massacre, which took place on December 6, 1989, with the independent members speaking for up to five minutes, followed by the official opposition speaking for up to five minutes, followed by the government speaking for up to five minutes, followed by a moment of silence. Agreed? Agreed.

I will recognize first the member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today with a heavy heart and firm resolve to recognize the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Thirty years ago, 14 women were murdered at l'École Polytechnique. They were murdered simply because they were women. All Canadians were profoundly affected by this horrific act of violence on December 6, 1989. My heartfelt thoughts go out to the victims, their families and friends.

But, Mr. Speaker, thoughts and prayers are not good enough. Gender inequality and gender-based violence still persist, and we cannot ignore it. I especially want to challenge people like myself, who identify as male. We have a special responsibility to be allies and advocates, to follow the lead of women in the effort to eradicate gender-based violence.

According to the Canadian Women's Foundation, every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner, Indigenous women are killed at six times the rate of non-Indigenous women and over 6,000 women and children sleep in shelters on any given night because it isn't safe to sleep at home. These statistics are unacceptable, and we can all play a role in changing them by funding shelters and rape crisis centres, increasing legal aid support for women escaping abusive relationships, ending human trafficking and fighting for pay equity.

I urge all Ontarians to take action today, and every day, to have the courage of survivors and to stand strong against the attitudes that lead to violence against women.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Tomorrow, December 6, is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women and also the 30th anniversary of the 14 women whose lives were lost in what has come to be known as the Montreal massacre. Their lives were cut short by a tragic event that unfolded as a result of gender discrimination, a senseless act, and we honour and remember them here.

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We must end gender-based violence. We must condemn hate, violence and abuse that disproportionately affects women. We must actively condemn it, not just with our words, but with our actions. Our deeds must follow our words.

I'm having a bit of a hard time right now following my words because I read a story on the CBC website last night by Loreen Pindera and I can't get the image out of my head. It's important that we remember. This anniversary is important. I suggest that you all read it if you get a chance. She tells the story of Police Lieutenant Pierre Leclair, who arrived on the scene and gave a very brief scrum and said, "I'll be back." He walked through all the carnage at École Polytechnique, went to the third-floor classroom and found his daughter. We forget these things. I forgot that. I can't get it out of my head—because we have daughters, sisters, mothers. I have a daughter. I can't imagine it. It's senseless.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next I'll recognize the member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Tomorrow, December 6, 2019, is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. I stand today, since the Legislature does not sit on Fridays, to denounce gender-based violence and all forms of violence against women and girls.

December 6 will mark the 30th anniversary of the Montreal massacre, a day of terror, when 14 women engineering students were killed inside l'École Polytechnique de Montréal by a man who hated women and who indicated in his notes his belief that women were stealing men's jobs.

On December 6, we reflect on the thousands of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the often forgotten victims, names, faces of what Judge Marion Buller, the chief commissioner of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, referred to as a "deliberate race, identity and gender-based genocide" right here in our province of Ontario and our country. According to the 1,200-page final report, First Nations, Métis and Inuit women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or to go missing than members of any other demographic group in Canada, and 16 times more likely to be slain or to disappear than white women. The inquiry includes 231 imperative changes—not recommendations, but direct calls to justice necessary to implement.

YWCA Toronto tells us that every single night in Canada, over 3,000 women, along with 2,900 dependent children, live in emergency shelters to escape gender-based violence. The YWCA reports that violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women. To quote them: "The crisis of affordable housing in Toronto and across the country remains one of the most significant barriers for survivors to move into security and safety." They say women are literally running for their lives and finding nowhere to go.

Keri Lewis, the executive director of Nelson House in Ottawa, describes a reality where survivors must often choose between sleeping in freezing cars and the streets, or having to return home to abusive partners and more violence because of shelter bed shortages.

The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability reported in 2018 that a woman or girl was killed every 2.5 days in Canada and that a former or current partner killed a woman every six days.

Every stat I have come across is worse for Indigenous, Black, racialized, Muslim, poor, sick, marginalized, queer and trans women and girls, including seniors, disabled and deaf women and girls.

I heard from students from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance that they're worried about campus safety and need us to do more for sexual violence education and prevention, bystander intervention and campus security training, as well as program evaluations on campus.

Statistics Canada suggests a rate of 73 incidents of sexual violence per 1,000 students.

I ask of all of us today, especially the government side: When you get home tonight and unwind, maybe watching a favourite show, indulging in a hot bath and then climbing into your comfortable, warm bed with your human or fur babies, think of the women and girls who simply cannot. Think of the women and girls who must live like prey, consistently looking over their shoulders in their own homes, with partners—mostly men—wondering if this day will be their last. See and listen to these women. Step aside and make space for these women. Travel to the communities where you feel the most uncomfortable, unwelcomed, and listen. Share power. Do not hoard power.

You must take bold action on violence against women across your ministries, through an intersectional gender equity lens that addresses the root causes of violence—the stench of inequity and injustice that has trapped too many women and girls inside cycles of violence for years—for decades.

Recognize women's need for pay equity and access to secure, unionized jobs, and their right to economic justice as integral parts of a much-needed provincial gender-based-violence strategy.

Recognize women's access to post-secondary education without debt, to affordable housing, to a legal system that works, to fair ODSP, to the ability to access health care in her community—rural, northern, or urban—as an integral part of a gender-based-violence strategy.

These are not women's issues, Mr. Speaker; they are our demands. At the very least, consider women and

gender equity as a more dignified ministerial portfolio name, since we don't have a stand-alone ministry. Name the fight, instead of perpetuating 19th-century stereotypes of women's hysteria. Remember: Words have power.

Please dedicate your time here in government to actions rooted in community allyship, so all women and girls can actualize the right to live free of violence—all violence—including political violence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Exactly 30 years ago tomorrow—December 6, 1989—a gunman walked into École Polytechnique de Montréal and killed 14 female engineering students, not because they were students, not because they were potential engineers, but because they were women. Let us take a moment to remember and acknowledge the names of the 14 lives tragically lost: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault and Annie Turcotte.

It's been 30 years, yet I can still remember exactly where I was and what I was doing when I heard about the tragedy at École Polytechnique, and I know I'm not the only one. After 30 years I can still remember the absolute devastation it caused to families and communities. After 30 years, the shock waves of this heinous act are still present.

Today, we remember the 14 women who were murdered. These women were primarily young engineering students, working toward careers in a field where women were and still are underrepresented. Their choice to pursue this field made them trailblazers in the eyes of friends and family, but made them targets in the eyes of a hateful, misogynistic killer. We mourn their lost lives and lost potential. We think yet again of the families and friends they left behind, and we hope and pray that days such as these evoke a changing of attitudes, condemning all violence against all women.

Thirty years later has allowed time for real change to happen, but we all know in our hearts that not enough change has happened. The sad reality is that women are still fighting for equal opportunities and, in many cases, for basic human rights and freedoms. We know that one in three women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. We know that women are three times more likely to be stalked and four times more likely to be victims of intimate partner violence. We know that Indigenous women, newcomers, members of the LGBTQI2S community and women with disabilities are at an even greater risk of experiencing violence.

Today we commemorate 14 women. We mourn them, we honour them and we remember them. We also think of others. We remember the calls to justice from the national conversation around missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. We must continue to change attitudes and behaviours and eradicate misogyny so that women and girls can live in peace and safety.

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We must challenge each generation of men to be better than the generation that preceded them—to speak out against things they know in their heart to be wrong, and speak up for their mothers and sisters, their wives and their daughters, for their peers, and, perhaps most importantly, for complete strangers.

Every year, we host vigils, we place roses and we light candles to pay respect to these 14 women, who are the symbol of our fight to combat violence against women. We are backing up that belief in communities across Ontario by providing supports for victims, raising public awareness and holding offenders accountable.

This year, our government is investing more than \$166 million in supports for survivors and violence prevention initiatives. We are funding vital services like emergency shelters, counselling, 24-hour crisis lines, safety planning, and transitional and housing supports, and boosting support for rural, front-line agencies to increase collaboration and reduce geographic and transportation barriers. We are also funding 18 Indigenous agencies that provide emergency shelter, counselling, child witness programs and other supports both on and off reserve. And we are fighting the trafficking of women and girls in every corner of this province.

Speaker, talking about violence against women year-round is key to raising awareness and encouraging women to come forward with their stories. We must not let our vigilance wane. We must continue to educate boys and girls, and men and women, about healthy, equal relationships. We must continue to change attitudes and behaviours so that women and girls can live in peace and safety.

Today, I ask all members of this House to join me in wearing a rose button to remember women whose lives have been cut short by violence, and to recommit ourselves to taking action on violence against women and girls.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the members now to rise as we observe a moment's silence in memory of the 14 young women who lost their lives that tragic day in Montreal 30 years ago this week.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Acting Premier. In 2013, the Ministry of Health issued a policy statement directing emergency medical services, hospitals and other stakeholders to work together to ensure that "no patient with a life- or limb-threatening condition shall be refused care." In other words, when a patient is in danger of losing their life, they should always be able to transfer to the hospital that can provide the specialized care they need to save their life.

Can the Acting Premier tell us how many patients in a life- or limb-threatening situation were unable to make that transfer over the last three years?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. This is a very serious issue. It isn't something that just happened overnight. This has been growing for years and years, as you will know.

With 15 years with the previous government, we now have hallway health care. We now have hospitals that are operating at over 100% capacity. We are trying to deal with that. We made a commitment to the people of Ontario that we would end hallway health care. We are working on that right now. Some ambulances do have to be diverted to other locations, unfortunately, because of that. But we have a plan to eliminate hallway health care.

We want to keep people out of hospitals in the first place. We want to make sure that we can, in some cases, divert them to other locations, because hospitals are not always the best place for patients to receive care. If it's life and limb, obviously, yes, but not always, depending on their situation.

We want to integrate care to improve patient health and, of course, we are going to improve capacity by investing \$27 billion over 10 years, to build new hospitals but also to build up community care facilities as well.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: With all due respect, when someone is in a life- or limb-threatening situation, a hospital is the place they need to be. A specialized hospital is the place they need to be.

Yesterday, the Auditor General revealed that between 2016 and 2019, 748 patients in a life- or limb-threatening situation could not transfer to the hospital they needed to be in because the overcrowded hospital had no beds available to receive the patient. Ten of those patients died, waiting for that transfer.

Why are patients in life- and limb-threatening situations literally dying while they wait for spaces in overcrowded hospitals now?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Of course patient safety is our utmost concern, and any loss of a patient, any patient death, is one too many in a situation where it could perhaps have been avoided.

But the reality is that we inherited a situation where many hospitals in Ontario are currently operating at over 100% capacity. We recognize that and we have a plan to deal with that.

But it's not a simple solution. There are many reasons that contribute to that. One is the fact that we don't have enough long-term-care spaces. There are many patients who are alternate-level-of-care who remain in hospital but don't need to be there. That is something that my colleague the Minister of Long-Term Care is working on very hard.

We also know that many patients come back into hospital because of chronic mental health and addiction issues. They don't necessarily receive the care that they need in the hospital, so they go in and out of hospital emergency departments.

That is why we are coming forward with our \$3.8-billion, over 10 years, mental health and addictions plan. That should help ensure that people get the care that they need in the community.

We are working—

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

The final supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: Ten patients died waiting for transfers to hospital beds that they desperately needed, because the hospitals they needed to be in didn't have a bed available.

In rural Ontario, we have small hospitals without specialized care. It's personal to me. In 1993, I had one of those accidents. They took me to Englehart hospital. I woke up five hours later in Toronto Western, and that's the only reason I have any use of this arm. We know how important it is in rural Ontario.

The Auditor General's report yesterday showed that, under the Liberals, the availability of acute care hospital beds decreased. The Financial Accountability Office confirmed that the Ford government plans to cut \$2.7 billion more health care funding.

The auditor's report confirms that cuts to health care are putting patients' lives at risk. Why does this government continue to make them?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Through you, Mr. Speaker: It's necessary to paint the true picture of what is happening in health care. We are increasing our contributions to health care by \$1.9 billion this year over last year.

We know that we need to continue to work on reducing the overload in Ontario hospitals created by the previous government. We have a plan to do that. We're working on that on many fronts.

We recognize and appreciate the work that has been done by the Auditor General. We have already started to work on this problem because, as I said before, patient safety is our utmost concern at the Ministry of Health. Any patient death in a situation where it could have been avoided is one too many, and it's something that we are going to continue to follow the recommendations, both of the auditor and our own plan, to reduce the number of patients receiving hallway health care and reduce the overcrowding in our hospitals.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Acting Premier: On Monday, the Premier told the Legislature, "We have an incredible policy moving forward to meet our target, the Paris accord, of 30%. We're well on our way. We're actually going to exceed that goal."

The Premier was almost certainly briefed on yesterday's report by the Auditor General ahead of time. Why would he knowingly say something that was days from being completely and utterly refuted by the Auditor General?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: We, on this side of the House, appreciate the work of the Auditor General. We take her recommendations seriously, and we are going to be working on them. What she also did say, that the focus of her recommendations, as the provincial auditor, is that actions are needed to improve the existing plan as Ontario works toward reducing emissions.

We have an evolving plan, going forward. We are listening to others as we change and infuse new technologies and new ideas towards achieving our targets. Mr. Speaker, I'll tell the Legislature right now, we will obtain our targets of 30% by 2030 in order to meet our agreement with the Paris agreement. We are going to be making those changes, make sure our modelling is what the Auditor General is working for.

But the member opposite has yet to have his party table a plan for climate change. I'm looking forward to them bringing forward a plan. We will work together with the party once they have ideas and see how we can work together to improve our—

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

Supplementary question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thanks to the Ford government, Ontario isn't just missing crucial targets for greenhouse gas reduction. It's clear they never had any intention of hitting them.

One of the Premier's first acts in office was to go to court with electric vehicle makers—one of the first acts. He spent \$231 million tearing down wind farms and ripping up clean energy contracts. Yet the Ford government somehow managed to count both of these cancelled initiatives towards their greenhouse gas reduction goals. Was this incompetence or was this ignoring reality?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you again to the member opposite for that question. Listen, the Auditor General also said the climate change plan that was put out is an estimate of what the emissions are today and what the reductions will be. We're saying that more work needs to be done to develop the ways in which emissions can be reduced further.

We moved out with an ambitious plan last November. We have listened to the Auditor General. This plan is going to evolve. It's going to change year to year. That is what's going to make us reach those reductions and targets.

Mr. Speaker, we need to move away from the partisanship the members opposite like to play with the climate change issue and work together in order to get our climate change—we're looking for ideas from the other side of the House. We're going to be touring the province and listening to people across the province. We're going to continue to work with stakeholders, listening to the Indigenous communities, working with the Green Party. We'd love to work with the NDP, but we want to attain those targets. It's too little, too late to wait for them to come up with a plan. We want action now. We're going to make sure it happens.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again, to the Acting Premier: The terrible reality is that Ontario does not have a real plan to confront the climate crisis. Around the world, national leaders and everyday people are pushing governments to take action on the climate crisis—around the world, every day. The stakes could not possibly be higher, and the Premier couldn't take them any less seriously.

When is the Premier going to stop the cuts, stop attacking efforts to clean up our energy system, stop citing climate-denial blogs, stop wasting money on stickers that don't stick and lawsuits that can't be won, and put together an honest plan to tackle the climate emergency that we face? At the very least, when will he be able to hit the climate reduction targets the government says they plan to hit?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Well, we will hit our climate change emissions targets by 2030, as we've said over and over. One of the solutions that we have out there is expanding transit in this province and building \$28 billion worth of transit in Toronto. Unfortunately the members opposite don't agree with that. They've been vocal against the building of the Ontario Line. Those are clear solutions.

We are moving towards 15% renewable content in our fuels. We have our Ontario emissions performance standards waiting for approval from the federal government. We have a green bond, \$1.7 billion raised to go towards improving transit not only here in Toronto but in Ottawa, in Hamilton and in London, and building new roads up in northern Ontario to get them around.

We have a new advisory council on climate change to give us the best information, so people will become resilient and adapt to the changes in climate that are happening today. We're making sure that people can be protected.

We want Ontarians to be participatory in our climate change plan. They need to make changes. We need to make changes. We're going to work together and get this deal done. We will reach our 30%—

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, schools are thankfully open today after the first province-wide strike by education workers in 22 years. Those teachers and education workers were not alone. They were joined on the picket lines by parents, by students and by community members.

But, Mr. Speaker, Ontarians should not have to take to the streets to defend our schools from cuts. They shouldn't have to fight tooth and nail to make sure that kids have the supports they need to learn. Will the Premier finally admit that his plan is hurting students and go back to the bargaining table with a serious offer that protects the quality of their education?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, this government unequivocally stands against escalation by teacher union leadership. We opposed it yesterday and we oppose it in the coming days, given that they have been pre-positioning the fact that they want to further escalate, impacting our kids most.

Mr. Speaker, we have been reasonable and focused on getting deals. We want a deal that keeps kids in class. We've lowered the classroom average from 28 to 25 and we've reduced online learning from four to two, but the insistence by the union is a \$750-million increase from taxpayers. We're offering 1%; they want 2%. That \$750 million could pay for 7,500 new mental health workers. It could pay for 92 more schools being built in this province.

The bias of this government, of every member of this Progressive Conservative team, is to invest in our kids. That's what we're asking all parents: to stand with this government against escalation and stand with us as we invest in the future of our province.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, it is beyond disappointing that this minister is still looking to cast blame anywhere but where it belongs: with this Premier and this government. How can this minister possibly believe that he could cram students into overcrowded classrooms, move them out of classrooms and into untested online courses, and hand pink slips to 10,000 teachers without a fight?

Speaker, they thought they could take a wrecking ball to our education system, divide teachers and parents, and save money on the backs of our kids. Yesterday Ontarians proved they are more united than ever against these cuts. Will the minister listen this time?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, let me affirm to the families of this province that we want children in class. We are prepared and working hard at the table, through the mediator, to get a deal. We are the political party working hard that got a deal with CUPE just a month ago, with labour in this province. We've made reasonable moves because I believe being reasonable must be reciprocated by all parties at the table. But, Mr. Speaker, what is unreasonable is a demand for another \$750 million more, which could pay for 23,000 more child care spaces, which could heat every public school in this province for a year and a half.

The priority of parents is for government to invest in their kids, and that's who we stand with: with parents, against escalation and for investments in their children.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, the media coverage of yesterday's one-day strike by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation made it sound like it was all a test of wills between the government and the union. The real story was that across the province, parents and students had their lives interrupted by this irresponsible strike.

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Many parents in my riding have contacted me to voice their displeasure about the OSSTF's one-day walkout. They're frustrated that despite our government's reasonable efforts at getting a deal, unions continue to escalate. Parents and students deserve a deal, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Education. Can he share with the Legislature what our government is doing to reach an agreement?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you very much for that question. Speaker, it is not fair that the teachers' union leadership has decided to escalate, hurting our children, particularly the most vulnerable kids, kids with exceptionalities who were out of class yesterday and who may be out of class in the future should the teachers' union decide to escalate further, as they have pre-positioned in the news.

Mr. Speaker, the government has been reasonable and focused on the investments in our kids. We made a decision to move from a provincial average of 28 to 25. We moved online learning from four to two. We've made investments—the greatest investment ever noted in the history of Ontario by this Progressive Conservative government.

It is not fair that they're out of class. Unions can't have it both ways. They cannot outright reject every proposal made by the government but bring no new innovative options since the first day of our negotiations.

We're going to work hard, in good faith, to get a deal that keeps children in class.

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

Mr. Parm Gill: Thankfully, students are back in school this morning, but many students and parents aren't in a forgiving mood towards OSSTF for their irresponsible one-day strike.

Today, the Halton District School Board's Human Rights Symposium—Rights of the Child, was supposed to take place, Mr. Speaker. The human rights symposium is an important learning initiative for the board to bring educators and community partners together in a meaningful way. Unfortunately the symposium was cancelled because of job action by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the OSSTF.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please share with the Legislature how these unions are putting students, families and communities at a disadvantage due to their actions?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member from Milton for the question. This one-day strike obviously created numerous headaches for families and parents in the province. We unequivocally call on the union to cease from escalation. Teachers and students should be in class.

Mr. Speaker, when you hear of the example of the Halton board cancelling a human rights symposium because of this needless escalation, it only underscores the point that this is not about our students. It is increasingly about compensation and benefits at the table. The focus for this government is investing in our students. However, we've made it clear that we want to provide a fair increase of \$750 million. Apparently, that is an unacceptable increase for the OSSTF, which has said, "We will potentially

further escalate if we don't get a \$1.5-billion increase in compensation and remuneration."

It is disappointing that they've made these moves, but we stand with parents against escalation. We're going to focus on keeping students in class.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. The Auditor General's report is the fourth this year that paints a grim picture of Ontario's long-term-care system. Decades of chronic underfunding under the Liberals, maintained by this Conservative government, have created a system so strapped for cash and so lacking in adequate resources and staffing that some long-term-care homes have resorted to feeding residents, our loved ones, expired food. That is beyond egregious, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Premier tell us why his government is still planning to cut \$34 million in long-term-care funding when homes are so cash-strapped that they are literally serving our residents and loved ones expired food?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for that question. Our government is very, very pleased to receive the recommendations and observations from the Auditor General's report on food and nutrition in long-term-care homes. We say in medicine that socialization, mobilization and nutrition are absolutely key to healthy aging and the care for our seniors and elderly in long-term care.

Each day, there are 234,000 meals served in our long-term-care homes. That equates to a little bit less than 85 million meals every year in long-term care. Food-related incidents really amount to 0.01% of incidents related to the food and nutrition in homes. So this is a key part. We understand this.

We're committing to creating a 21st-century, modern long-term-care system that treats our residents with the respect and dignity that they deserve. Any suggestion that there are cuts in long-term care is inaccurate.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is back to the Premier. Ontarians are getting tired of the government's predictable responses. The Auditor General made it clear that the government's current approach in our long-term-care system is not working. The level of funding is simply not keeping up with the pace of demand.

In fact, because of the lack of proper staffing, the Auditor General found that long-term-care residents have made nearly 500 avoidable trips to the emergency room because they were dehydrated.

The Premier knows there's a simple solution to this. It begins with increased funding so that there's enough long-term-care-home staff to care for our residents and our loved ones.

Can the Premier explain why he spends three times more money to cancel green energy contracts than investing in our long-term-care-home system?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again to the member opposite for the question. Our government is absolutely committed to reviewing all the issues surrounding the problems in our long-term-care sector. We've been meeting with our sector operators since the very beginning of a dedicated Ministry of Long-Term Care.

We know the challenges inherent in the long-term-care sector. I look back at the last 15 years and ask, where was the government then? Where was the voice of the opposition then?

We're dealing with the reality—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: We're dealing with the reality—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: We are dealing with the reality that is facing us, and working in a collaborative way with our sector. We know this is absolutely critical. We've been hearing from them, and we represent a government that is committed to making sure that the long-term-care sector is treated in the way it needs to be treated: with attention, due-course process, and respect and dignity for all residents.

CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Health. Seven thousand Ontarians will have a heart attack this year. About 85% of those heart attacks will occur at some place other than home and in a public space. We know that access to portable defibrillators, AEDs, that are administered within a few minutes of a heart attack increases the chance of survival by 50%.

I was here this morning talking with representatives from CARE and the Heart and Stroke Foundation. I'm introducing a private member's bill this afternoon that will increase access, maintenance and training, and establish a registry for AEDs in Ontario.

In fact, there are two private members' bills that are already in front of the House that establish a registry and have other measures, from the member from Eglinton-Lawrence and the member from Nickel Belt. As well, the member from Mississauga-Streetsville introduced a motion saying that we need to do a better job of educating people about CPR and AEDs.

So my question to the Minister of Health is, does the government have a plan for AEDs in this province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. You're absolutely right that we lose far too many Ontarians because of cardiac issues and problems. Time, of course, is of the essence when you're dealing with a 911 call from someone who's had such an event. Despite the heroic efforts of our paramedics, we know that it will take eight to 10 minutes, generally speaking, for them to arrive. During that time, many other events may have happened. Without CPR or a life-saving shock from a defibrillator, those lives may be lost. We want to make sure that we save as many Ontarians as possible.

I know that there have been other efforts—from the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, with Bill 141, the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act; and the bill from the member for Nickel Belt, Bill 140, a related bill.

I look forward to hearing what your bill has to say, because there are lots of components that I believe we can pull together to bring forward that comprehensive plan.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I thank the minister for that answer. The fact is, a registry is going to save lives. It's something that we all know in this House—members from three parties know this. We have four measures before this House. It's a public health and public safety issue. We had a lot of momentum before 2010 on this issue, and then it seemed to slow down.

Here's what I'm going to suggest: We need to take action. Can we bring forward the member from Eglinton–Lawrence's bill to committee? Can we do a thorough consultation on that? Can the minister commit to doing that and to passing a piece of legislation by this time next year?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Certainly, I can commit to bringing this matter forward because it is a very important issue. There's clearly all-party support. I hope that the member from the Green Party also agrees, but I expect that he will, because this is something we will all have heard about from our constituents in our community offices. It is something we have heard from our important stakeholders the heart and stroke association as well. We want to save lives in Ontario. So I would be very happy to make a recommendation that that come forward to committee and that we hear input from all interested parties to develop a very strong system in Ontario for this registry and to make sure we can work on other cardiac issues as well. Thank you for bringing it forward.

EXPENDITURE CONTROL

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Last week, our President of the Treasury Board announced an important fiscal accomplishment made by our government. For 15 years, Ontarians have put up with a government that has wasted their hard-earned tax dollars with little attention placed on fiscal responsibility. We were elected on a mandate to stop this irresponsible behaviour, find efficiencies and restore fiscal balance.

To accomplish this, our government introduced several smart initiatives, like making more services available online, such as renewing driver's licences and vehicle registrations. Another example of our government's fiscal responsibility is placing restrictions on travel, meals and hospitality expenditures for our public sector employees.

My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. Could the honourable member please explain how expenditure restrictions on travel, meals and hospitality have benefited Ontario taxpayers?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I would like to thank the very hard-working member from Perth–Wellington for this question—all the way over there, a long way away.

Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker: Our government is leading by example. That's why we introduced smarter expenditures for public sector employees on discretionary spending in 2018 to ensure that tax dollars go out the door more effectively, more efficiently, and, most importantly, to the front lines and the front-line workers of Ontario. That's why, unlike the Liberals, this government has stopped catering cabinet and committee meetings. It saved \$77,000. But there's more. I'm pleased to say that smarter spending on travel, meals and hospitality resulted in a 34% reduction across government, representing \$25 million in savings. That means our government spent \$9 million less on accommodations, \$7 million less on travel and—

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

Supplementary question.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to thank the minister for his response.

Spending tax dollars smarter allows for more money to be directed towards front-line services like health care and education. One critical aspect of smarter and more responsible spending is the culture around it. Complicated rules, use of outdated technologies and unclear instructions do not just burden public sector employees with unproductive tasks but impede them from achieving savings.

My question goes back to the President of the Treasury Board. Could the honourable member please explain what has been done to build a stronger culture around responsible spending in our public sector?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'd be happy to, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, that means our government spent \$9 million less on accommodations, \$7 million less on travel—you would agree that that's a good thing—and \$2.5 million less on meals than under the previous Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, we owe it to Ontarians to continuously look for efficiencies and better ways to spend smarter, and that's what we'll continue to do.

These changes build on our government's commitment to foster a culture of fiscal responsibility, by enhancing accountability and oversight, modernizing travel rules and practices, and increasing clarity and alignment. Examples of these updates include promotion of digital processes, such as allowing e-receipts—what a concept: e-receipts—less paper, more efficiency, to reduce costs and make it more efficient.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight that every dollar saved on hospitality bills is a dollar that can go to pay a hospital bill.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday's Auditor General's report shows that years of Liberal, and now Conservative, governments turning their backs on health and safety comes at a terrible price for workers. There were nearly 230 reported deaths from

injury or work-related illness in 2018, and that's an increase from the year before. In fact, the number of workplace deaths has been on the rise since 2014. There has been a 21% increase in industrial injuries, when we should be seeing less. This government, quite frankly, should be ashamed.

Does the Premier believe it is acceptable that the number of workplace fatalities in Ontario is rising, not declining?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I commend the member opposite for this very important question.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the Auditor General for all of her work in preparing the report.

As Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, my number one priority is the health and safety of every worker in this province. When people go to work during the day, they deserve to come home safe at night.

While the Auditor General said that Ontario's record is the best in the country, I agree that there's always more that we can do as a government and as a province. That's why we raised, as a government, the number of workplace inspections. We are inspecting 79,000 workplaces every single year. That's 1,500 inspections every week. That's 300 workplace inspections every single day.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Maybe the minister will listen to this one line: Only 1% of Ontario workplaces are inspected each year.

At the same time, this Conservative government cut health and safety standards and resources for inspections. There were 62,000 lost-time injuries last year alone—and we know that a lot of these go unreported.

More shocking was that there was nearly a 30% increase in injuries to health care workers—our nurses, our doctors, our PSWs—who care for our loved ones each and every day.

Speaker, no family should have to go through the anguish that companies like Fiera Foods have caused the Miranda family and four other families. Injuries and deaths like that are preventable.

Again to the Premier: Our province is getting more dangerous and, quite frankly, less safe. Workers are getting injured or killed. Why won't you admit that your cuts hurt workers, and actually put out a plan that protects them so that they can go home to their families?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, again, the number one priority of our ministry is to ensure that when people go to work in the morning, they come home safe and healthy at night. One death, one injury, is one too many.

I do want to highlight a number of the things that the Auditor General brought forward in her report: "Compared to other Canadian jurisdictions, Ontario had ... the lowest worker lost-time injury rates" of any province in Canada since 2009.

Another quote: Ontario has "the lowest or second-lowest lost-time injury rates in the construction, health care, and industrial sectors."

Another quote: Of the records sampled, "inspectors confirmed that employers had corrected ... hazards ... 92% of" the time.

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We always know that there's more to do, but I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, what's shocking: it's the member opposite, the caucus opposite, that voted last week against a bill called the Occupational Health and Safety Day Act—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Christine Hogarth: A little shout-out to Gloria and Oleg, who are stuffing envelopes today.

My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. As we all know, the Auditor General released her value-for-money audit on Tarion. Even before this report, it was clear that Tarion is not doing nearly enough to protect Ontarians as they buy a new home. Many families in this province have struggled to get the support they need from Tarion. New home buyers in Etobicoke–Lakeshore and across this province would like to see this issue addressed.

While our government has committed to introducing legislation before the end of the year to bring changes to the new home warranty program in Ontario, I'm sure the people of this province would be interested to know what actions have been taken to date. Minister, what is our government doing to ensure new home buyers are protected in our province?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to thank the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore for this very important question, because it's important that Ontarians across this province know that our government has already taken decisive action so that Tarion is more transparent and protections for consumers are strengthened.

But I can tell you, Speaker, that this is just the beginning. We've supported the establishment of a separate regulator for new home builders and vendors, known as the Home Construction Regulatory Authority. In September, we increased transparency at Tarion by requiring, for the very first time, the public posting of board and executive compensation. In October, new measures were put in place to help educate and inform prospective buyers of preconstruction condominium projects.

These are just some of the changes our government has made to ensure that Tarion is more transparent and that protections for consumers are strengthened.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank the minister for that answer. I know the people in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore will be very glad to hear that our government has already taken decisive action to right the wrongs of the previous Liberal government on this file.

Our government must ensure that Ontarians can trust in their home warranty system. Buying a home is one of the largest and most significant investments that people make, and as the member from Humber River–Black Creek previously stated, there was a complete lack of oversight over Tarion from the previous Liberal administration.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: How is our government going to ensure that Tarion is positioned to do its job and protect new home buyers in Ontario?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much to the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore for recognizing the decisive action we have already taken. We've done so because our government recognizes that Tarion Warranty Corp. hasn't been doing nearly enough to protect new home buyers. They haven't protected consumers and they left many homeowners with considerable physical, mental and financial hardships.

At the end of October, I accepted, wholeheartedly, recommendations from the Auditor General in her special audit of Tarion. We are working to address these recommendations, especially to introduce proper oversight. Just last week, I ordered that Tarion's board be reduced in size and that the board not represent one party more than another. Since receiving my letter last week, Tarion's CEO and board chair have stepped down to make way for a new leadership team that will be committed to implementing our new mandate focused on consumer protection.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, through you to the Deputy Premier: Yesterday, the Auditor General revealed that the Premier's anti-environment carbon tax ad campaign cost the people of Ontario \$4 million. That's \$4 million in public dollars that could have gone to repairing schools, building hospitals, supporting front-line workers in those hospitals and even a novel idea like actually fighting climate change.

We suppose the Premier will just ask Ontarians to throw the sum on top of the \$231-million tab of squandering public money on his regressive crusade against climate change.

How does the Premier justify wasting four million more dollars on these political ads?

Hon. Christine Elliott: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member opposite for that important question. Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation in this province, as any government does, to make the public aware of the issues of the day. Obviously, the environment is a very important issue. We put out ads throughout the year, as any government would, and we'll continue to do that. I would point out, however, Mr. Speaker, that we spent the least amount of money since 2005 on public advertising, so we are being very wise about how we are spending taxpayer money, and that's what we'll continue to do.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: With all due respect to the President of the Treasury Board, only this Conservative government would pat themselves on the back for wasting half as much money as the Liberals did over the last 12 years.

Speaker, the Auditor General was quite clear in her report. This is an ad that would never have seen the light of day if the ban on partisan advertising were still in place. It looks like the Premier's promise to respect the taxpayer is as empty as his plan for climate change.

If the Ford government isn't going to really deliver a serious plan for climate change, can they, at the very least, not force the people of Ontario to pay for their blatantly partisan advertising?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, through you, thank you again for that question. It's important that members in this House have their earpieces on, because I think this morning I just talked about how we saved \$25 million for meals, travel and accommodation. We cut telephone land lines and we saved \$2.7 million. We ended March madness, the practice of use-it-or-lose-it at the fiscal year-end: \$153 million. These are important numbers, and we will continue to do that.

Let me point out also that centralized procurement may not be the flashiest thing, but systems procurements and supply chain management will save the taxpayer a minimum of \$1 billion within five years. Does the opposition not think these are meaningful savings on behalf of the people of Ontario?

CHRISTMAS CHEER BREAKFAST

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is for the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

'Twas some weeks before Christmas in the city of Ottawa,

We were hit with bad news, shocking and raw;
That the Christmas Cheer Breakfast, a yearly event,
After 68 years would be cancelled—oh lament!

Then all of a sudden, there arose such a clatter,
Some possible good news was the media chatter;
The Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture,
Was stepping in to help—she's a real mover and shaker!

She spoke a few words, and went straight to work,
And secured the Shaw Centre, a responsibility she would not shirk!

So through you, Mr. Speaker, to the fantastic minister:
Can she please explain how she saved Christmas Cheer?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: CTV News was disturbing, there's no Christmas Cheer,

That can't happen on my watch, not after 68 years;
No venue to hold it, that left me quite raw,
We built it, we own it, we gave them the Shaw.

With a venue secured, a really good start,

Together we'll show them, our city has heart;
Another main sponsor, now that would be great,
And then Lockheed Martin stepped up to the plate.

Christmas Cheer is so special, we can't let it end,
Get your tickets, support it, was the message to send;
The good folks, they got it, they answered the call,
The tables sold out, now we're filling the hall.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: So many Ottawa charities rely on Christmas Cheer,

Like the Ottawa Food Bank, that feeds families every year;

And others who focus on giving just a little more,
To the people of Ottawa, who have just a little less.

Such wonderful news for all of Ottawa's citizens,
Who are looking forward to attending, to help raise thousands;

We are happy we didn't lose the chance to attend,
While enjoying a great breakfast with colleagues and friends.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister please let us know,
How teamwork saved Christmas, and she helped save the show?

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Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Great things, they can happen when the people believe

And we all know it's better to give than receive.

The food bank needs our help—now, that's nothing new,

And helping those with little is the just thing to do.

It's really fantastic when caring people step up.

Everyone is a winner of the Charity Cup.

So stop by tomorrow with friends for a bite.

Merry Christmas to all, and good cheer and good night!

LEGAL AID

Mr. Gurratan Singh: My question is to the Attorney General. Yesterday, the Auditor General showed Ontarians what we already knew: Our court system is in crisis. We have a growing backlog in our criminal courts, which increased by over 27% under the previous Liberal government and which will only get worse with the Ford government's cuts to legal aid.

The auditor showed that this backlog is hurting the most vulnerable Ontarians. I was shocked to learn that a quarter of child protection cases are delayed for between 18 months and three years. Three years, Mr. Speaker, is far too long and has, according to the auditor, the "potential to cause psychological and developmental issues...."

Will the Attorney General admit today that our courts are in crisis? And will he commit to fixing these delays?

Hon. Doug Downey: I want to thank the Auditor General for her report and for her recommendations. The recommendations in the audit will help inform our next steps. It's very useful to have a peek behind the system that the Liberals let deteriorate and neglected, with the support of the NDP, who raised no concerns during their time there while the minister of the now party of five was unable to do anything productive—for 15 years of neglect, Mr. Speaker.

That's why our government was elected: to make the system easier, to make it more accessible, to make it more fair. We're going to move forward to protect the people of Ontario. That's why they elected us. We're going to do transparency. We're going to do efficiency. We're going to make it modern. We're going to serve the people the way they expect to be served by their courts.

We're just getting started. As I am working on some legislative proposals, I look forward to support from the NDP, the Liberals and the Green Party for these very progressive changes.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Canadians have a constitutionally protected right to access to justice. Ontarians involved in the court system—civil, family or criminal—deserve to have their day in court. But instead of increasing access to justice, this government has moved ahead with callous and cruel cuts to legal aid, a system that was already chronically underfunded by the Liberals.

Now Ontario's most vulnerable people are far less likely to have legal counsel, so they're left to navigate the complex legal system alone. The result is longer case times, greater delays, higher court costs and less equitable outcomes.

Will the Attorney General admit that the government's callous cuts to legal aid will not only harm Ontarians seeking access to justice, but will cause further chaos and delays in our courts?

Hon. Doug Downey: When I talk to people who are using the system, trying to access the system, people working within the system, what I heard was that the system is outdated, it's complex, it's hard to navigate, it's expensive. There are all sorts of challenges with our system.

When we turn to protecting the vulnerable, whether they be victims or people accessing the system at the most vulnerable times of their life, whether they're going through a family situation or a criminal law situation, we need to make sure that the supports are there for them, that the supports are sustainable, that they're accessible and that they're easier to navigate.

This is why we're going to be bringing forward some proposals in the coming weeks and months, so that we can further protect the people, that we can serve the people who brought us here, and to make sure that we're doing the things they expect us to do.

When I talk to clinic directors, and when I talk to people accessing the system, they're excited about the kinds of

change that we're doing. It's going to modernize our system throughout.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Stan Cho: My question this morning is for my favourite Associate Minister of Transportation. Earlier this week, the Premier met with our provincial counterparts at the Council of the Federation to discuss many topics, from energy to infrastructure. The Council of the Federation promotes, above all, unity amongst our provinces. Just two weeks ago, the Premier met with the Prime Minister to talk about topics ranging from infrastructure to health care to economic development and, of course, transit.

Through you, Speaker, could the associate minister please tell us how we are working with the federal government to advance transportation and transit in the GTA?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you to the member for the question. As I begin, I think it's extremely important to note the great work that Minister Mulroney has done throughout the negotiations with the city and also with conversations with the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been very clear on more than one occasion that we need to work together with other provinces and all levels of government to represent the taxpayer. Earlier this year, we announced a very bold, historic transit plan to the tune of \$28.5 billion that will create a single, unified transit plan in the GTA to get people moving. This is an opportunity to build a lasting legacy for the province of Ontario and for Canada. I know that Minister Mulroney and Minister Scott have recently met with the federal government to move those discussions forward. I am extremely proud to be a part of that team.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to urge all members of this House to encourage the federal government to finally make their financial commitments so that we can get shovels in the ground as quickly as possible.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: In addition to the Premier's meeting with our provincial counterparts, the Premier and the Minister of Infrastructure are currently in Washington to talk trade and to promote Ontario's landmark infrastructure and private-public partnership opportunities. In Ontario, we have a proven track record of using the P3 model to deliver large and complex projects for the people of Ontario.

Through you, Speaker, could the minister please explain how the P3 model is relevant to the historic transit plan that she mentioned earlier?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member for the question. I'm very happy to see our Premier and our Minister of Infrastructure go to Washington to showcase the great opportunities for infrastructure projects right here in Ontario. As the member mentioned, the P3 model promotes private sector design and innovation. I know the private sector is very interested in projects

such as the Ontario Line and other parts of our subway plan, which is why it's so extremely important that we have a strong presence in global markets to let them know that Ontario is open for business and that we want to build Ontario. This is exactly what the people of this great province expect of us, Mr. Speaker.

As we head into the new year, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with our partners as we prepare for these very important projects.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: Today in the gallery, we have a group of anti-poverty advocates here from Hamilton. They're here to talk about the affordability crisis for people receiving ODSP and Ontario Works. We all know that the cost of living keeps rising. The recent Feed Ontario Hunger Report tells us that people on ODSP fall \$500 short of affording basic needs each month, and people receiving OW fall \$900 short a month. These are basics: food, shelter, hydro, clothing and personal hygiene. That is shameful.

This government is intentionally keeping people below the poverty line. Why does the government insist on leaving social assistance recipients to fall further and further behind?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Who are you referring your question to?

Miss Monique Taylor: To the Premier.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, come on, Speaker. That's not fair.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The Deputy Premier.

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

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member opposite for the question this morning. We know that the system for social assistance is broken, and yesterday's Auditor General's report actually reconfirmed the fact that we do need to deliver social assistance in a better way.

Our government already increased rates by 1.5% to those on social assistance earlier this year. We know there's a lot more to do. We have taken the steps to reduce red tape for those who work in the OW and ODSP sector to ensure that they're able to spend more time with their clients and link them with employment where possible. Certainly, we understand that there's more to do on this file.

The one thing that makes me scratch my head is that every time that we have presented policies in this Legislature that were going to drive down the cost of living in Ontario, the NDP have continuously voted against those types of policies. I can talk about some of those policies in the supplementary.

We realize there's more to do in this sector, and that's why we are reviewing the way we deliver Ontario Works and ODSP in Ontario.

1150

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

Miss Monique Taylor: What blows my mind, Speaker, is that this government can cut a 3% meagre increase to people living on social assistance. It's disgusting.

Our guests today know the impossible struggle of trying to get by on social assistance. It's especially hard as housing becomes more and more unaffordable under the Conservatives. Just this week, we learned that 45% of Hamilton tenants are paying unaffordable rent. Hamilton's shelters are bursting at the seams. There are 15,000 people waiting for subsidized housing just in Hamilton. How can we expect people on social assistance in Hamilton or elsewhere to be able to keep up? Why is this government pushing people with disabilities and those in poverty into homelessness?

Hon. Todd Smith: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: I want the people in the gallery to know that strengthening our community housing system is a top priority of our government. That's why, in April, I announced our Community Housing Renewal Strategy. We want to leverage every municipal, provincial and federal dollar in the system, and we want to work with non-profits. We want to make it easier to build more community housing.

I was on the phone yesterday with my federal counterpart, Minister Hussen. I think we share a common fight to ensure that we build more community housing, that we renew the existing stock we have.

We've made some early steps, Speaker. We've indicated to our service manager that we're no longer going to penalize people in community housing who are receiving child support. We're going to allow them to go to university, to go to college, to take that extra shift and not penalize them. These are the early steps we're having to—

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

The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, when I asked about funding consumption and treatment sites—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pardon me. I apologize.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize. The Speaker made a mistake—news flash.

The member for Kitchener–Conestoga has the floor.

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Mike Harris: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Ontario's farmers produce some of the best and safest food in the world. All of us benefit from their work. And yet, farmers are facing challenges with something as simple as feeling safe in their homes and their workplace.

In my riding, there was a story about Lloyd Weber, a dairy farmer. Let me tell you what Lloyd said: "I don't know what to do ... I don't know how they explain it. When they showed up I said, 'I would appreciate it if you

wouldn't go into the barn,' and they just walked right past me and they just kept going." This is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. Every day, the people of Ontario benefit from the great work done by farmers just like Lloyd.

Mr. Speaker, it's time we supported our farmers. This week, the minister introduced legislation in this House. Will he please tell us how this legislation will deal with this issue?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for the question. No one in Ontario should feel unsafe in their homes or in their workplace, and farmers are no different. We've heard from farmers, municipalities and commodity groups loud and clear, and I'm proud to say that we're taking action. We have proposed legislation which, if passed, would keep Ontario farmers and farm families, agri-food workers and farm animals safe by reducing the likelihood of trespassing on farms.

If passed, this legislation will deter trespassers, incurring fines of up to \$15,000 for a first offence and \$25,000 for a subsequent offence. If we expect farmers to provide some of the best food and safest food in the world, we must support them in the great work they do, and our government is doing just that.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the minister for his response. This has been an issue for some time. Farmers have been vocal about their concerns for their own safety, the safety of their families and, of course, their livestock.

Mr. Speaker, farmers make every effort to ensure that their livestock is well taken care of. Animal welfare is a serious issue, but maintaining sensitive biosecurity protocols is also important, both for the safety of the animals and for Ontario's high food safety standards. And yet, trespassers coming onto farms unauthorized run the risk of harming the very animals they claim to protect and advocate for.

Will the minister tell us more about how this proposed legislation deals with this issue?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for the excellent supplementary. Unauthorized trespassers threaten the delicate balance in the environments that they enter. Protesting is one thing, and we remain committed to the people's right to do that, but interacting with animals brings many more problems.

Farmers know their animals. Farmers know what it means to keep them safe and healthy. The proposed legislation supports farmers and their efforts by creating animal protection zones on farms, processing facilities and other prescribed premises.

Our government has zero tolerance for animal abuse and I encourage anyone who suspects it to call law enforcement immediately. Our legislation is designed to provide law enforcement with the tools to deal with the issue. By supporting the good work farmers do, we are protecting animal welfare, animal safety and the integrity of our food supply.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Niagara Falls has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development concerning the Auditor General's health and safety report. This matter will be debated Tuesday at 6 p.m.

This House stands in recess until 1 p.m. this afternoon.
The House recessed from 1156 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TRUCKING INDUSTRY

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I rise in the House today to speak about the crisis that is currently affecting log truckers in northern Ontario. Log truckers are vital for the sustainability and development of the forest sector. They are the ones who transfer the primary resource from the boreal forests through forest access roads. A large portion of the log trucking companies in my riding are family-owned, which means that they are small, independent contractors.

Log trucking is, to put it bluntly, a family business that is passed on from generation to generation, but the current insurance regulatory framework is killing the industry. Ontario's legislation imposes a three-year benchmark for log truckers, which means that young drivers, or anyone wishing to enter the business, must pay premiums that go as high as five times more than those paid by experienced truckers.

Speaker, these family businesses are simply shutting down because they cannot afford paying thousands and thousands of dollars for insurance premiums every year. The youth in the area are simply quitting their family business because they see how much effort and how little return their parents obtain.

I'm thus calling on the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to listen to the log trucking community. This issue is hurting hundreds of hard-working families in northern Ontario.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Today I rise in the House to talk about an issue that is near and dear to me, which is bullying—more specifically, cyberbullying. Our province has seen an increase in the number of cases of cyberbullying, and sometimes the effects of cyberbullying can cost a life. As a father and parliamentarian, I want my children and everyone in this great province to be protected and empowered against all forms of bullying, especially cyberbullying.

I'm proud of the leadership of the great Minister of Education, who is taking proactive steps to ensure that we end bullying of all forms, including cyberbullying inside and outside of the classroom. Just last week, our government took action to root out bullying in our schools with one aim: keeping Ontario students safe.

On November 27, the Minister of Education assigned a former teacher, the member from Scarborough Centre, to advise the minister on matters with a focus on bullying prevention. This is the right step to stop bullying and cyberbullying. Our government is working to change the culture to one where everyone sees the inherent dignity and the value of a person, irrespective of their faith, heritage, orientation, race or income.

Mr. Speaker, together, we can stop bullying and cyberbullying in Ontario with more education, not just for our youth, but for all on its dangers.

Lastly, I want to thank the minister and our government for working hard to protect Ontarians and future generations.

CONSTITUENCY STAFF

Mr. Jeff Burch: I want to take a moment to acknowledge the people who make all of this possible. I learned a long time ago that you're only as good as your staff. My constituency assistants are in the House today: Mike Haines, Marie Chamberland and Matthew Mengia. Mike Haines became a constituency assistant in our riding back in 2006 with Peter Kormos. Marie started nearly 15 years ago with Kormos in the same office. We were fortunate to have Matthew join our team this year. They joined my excellent EA, Caitlin Hipkiss, and I to form a great team.

In Welland, we have people lined up in the morning, and a lot of the time that line doesn't end all day. They consistently help the most vulnerable in our community navigate some very complex issues. Just this year, we advocated for Joe Seranni, whose four-year-old son has been waiting 10 months for government funding for ABA therapy. They've helped Peter Grampola, who was waiting months for home care services. After a man in our community was assaulted in a long-term-care home, they worked hard to get him relocated to a new home and reunited with his wife. We've helped a person who needed a golf-ball-sized brain tumour removed; he was suffering seizures. Last month, he successfully had his surgery.

Today, I want to thank and acknowledge them for all the hard work they do to ensure that the people of Welland, Thorold, Port Colborne and south St. Catharines receive all they deserve from our government. I'm truly honoured to work with such a great staff.

LAYOFFS AT BOMBARDIER

Mr. Norman Miller: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to share what our government is doing to help families and communities impacted by layoffs at Bombardier in Thunder Bay.

The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development has been working with both Bombardier and union representatives to ensure that every worker gets the services they need to help them quickly rejoin the workforce. Our government has contributed more than \$600,000 to support the Bombardier Transportation Action Centre. This centre will connect laid-off workers with local job

and training opportunities. It will also provide practical assistance with things like resumé writing and counselling. The goal of this one-stop shop is to provide laid-off workers with programs and services that are adapted to meet the unique circumstances of their situation. Supporting these workers involves collaboration. That is why our government is working with our federal counterparts, the local economic development corporation and other provincial ministries to connect affected workers to local and regional job opportunities.

I am hopeful that our government's historic investments in transit will result in new contracts for Bombardier and the recall of these workers, but in the meantime I know that we are doing everything we can to help them access retraining for other jobs. Our government stands shoulder to shoulder with these workers during this difficult time. These workers and the community of Thunder Bay are resilient. We are proud to support them as we continue to build Ontario together.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yesterday's Auditor General's report confirmed that the Ford government is doing nothing meaningful to address the climate crisis. In the best-case scenario, the government's plan will get them only 74% of the way to their target; in the worst case, they'll only make it 36% of the way there. To add insult to injury, the Conservative government's target is 30 megatonnes lower than the previous targets set by the last government. They've lowered the bar for themselves, and still they can't reach it.

The Auditor General published a laundry list of issues where the Conservatives just don't measure up. The number of species at risk is increasing. We haven't met our national or international commitments to protect land. We've lost three quarters of our wetlands in southern Ontario.

What is this government doing about this? They're cancelling green energy contracts, at significant costs to taxpayers. They're ripping out electric vehicle charging stations. They're slashing home retrofit programs. They're fighting a price on carbon in court, a case that they will lose.

Ontario is warming twice as fast as the global average. Inaction jeopardizes our human health, our economy and our collective future. The Ford government needs to start listening to the science and put forward a real plan to tackle the climate crisis. The people of this province deserve so much better.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Mr. Will Bouma: Once again, it's an honour to rise in the House, and today I'm going to bring attention to a great event happening in Brantford. On Friday, December 20, Joan Minnery Enterprises, in conjunction with the Sanderson Centre, will be holding the Gold Box Christmas Concert for Our Homeless. This concert will feature

incredible performances by great local talent, and all of these performers will be bringing their abilities to bring Christmas cheer to the community and help raise funds to help those who need it most. Admission to this event is by donation, and every little bit counts. These at-the-door-donations will go toward Rosewood House, a local charitable organization which provides shelter for the homeless.

Homelessness and the lack of affordable housing is one of the most pressing issues that we are faced with in Ontario.

1310

The money raised by this event will go towards helping those struggling with homelessness, housing and other challenges.

The Gold Box Christmas Concert for Our Homeless is Friday, December 20, at 7 p.m., at the wonderful Sanderson Centre, right in downtown Brantford. This is a great event, with the proceed going towards a fantastic local organization and for an admirable cause. I would encourage everyone, if they are able, to attend if they can.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I stand in this Legislature as a proud educator. I taught abroad and then for many years in Durham district. I started my career at R.A. Sennett Public School in Whitby, where I taught the kids from White Oaks and the neighbourhood. Many of our kids there were new Canadians, and while they learned math and French and social studies, they were also learning to make their way in the community.

Then I taught at Rosebank Road in Pickering. We had a great mix of kids and families, and that little school, much like Sennett, was a tight community. We made sure that the kids who didn't have as many opportunities at home got them at school.

Finally, I taught at Glen Street Public School in south Oshawa. I taught grades 7 and 8 on purpose, because I love the spirit of that age. They believe in fairness and will fight for what they believe in—and, Speaker, so will I.

Every student deserves a path forward. Some have tough hurdles, and they need more from their classroom education. They need support, they need time with their teachers, they need small-group time, and they need resources. Through the years, my kids needed shoes and lunch and money for class trips. They needed backpacks and notebooks, and access to computers that worked.

I will always fight for strong public education.

This Premier wants to throw more kids in already full classrooms. Fewer teachers across schools means larger classes and fewer available courses, whether courses for post-secondary or hands-on trade courses. Cutting thousands and thousands and thousands of teachers is wrong and short-sighted.

Enough with the nonsense about investing more than ever in education, because that's spin. You're throwing teacher attrition money and child care tax credits into the education funding bucket to make it look like it's full, and it isn't. You're planning to starve our public education

system and cheat our kids out of the bright, hopeful future that they deserve.

Shame on you.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to address the steps the Ministry of Transportation is taking to help the residents of Whitby and Durham deal with the tolls on Highways 412 and 418—tolls imposed by the previous Liberal government.

My fellow Durham MPPs and I have been long-time advocates for the removal of the tolls, or a reduction in toll rates, on these highway links. However, the Liberal tolls are difficult to reverse. Minor toll increases were cemented into the Liberal plan to build these highways and are part of their plan to toll these highways for the next 25 years.

Speaker, the Minister of Transportation has directed ministry staff to conduct a study to examine the economic impact of tolls on Highway 412 and the future Highway 418, including their reduction or removal. I'd like to thank the Minister of Transportation for listening to our constituents and undertaking this study. When completed, it will help shape our government's next steps moving forward.

Ultimately, restoring fiscal responsibility to government finances is what we promised the people of Ontario, and we're doing so while improving transportation options across the province, including the region of Durham.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DEFIBRILLATOR TRAINING AND ACCESS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR L'ACCÈS ET LA FORMATION AUX DÉFIBRILLATEURS

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 158, An Act to provide for public access to and training with respect to defibrillators / Projet de loi 158, Loi prévoyant l'accès du public et la formation aux défibrillateurs.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Ottawa South care to explain his bill?

Mr. John Fraser: We know that 7,000 people have a heart attack in Ontario every year and that 85% of those occur outside of their home. Access to defibrillators increases their chance of survival by 50%.

This bill provides for a registry, maintenance and training for public-access defibrillators.

HOT DOCS ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2019

Mr. Stan Cho moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr20, An Act respecting Hot Docs.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

REBUILDING CONSUMER CONFIDENCE ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 VISANT À RÉTABLIR LA CONFIANCE CHEZ LES CONSOMMATEURS

Ms. Thompson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection / Projet de loi 159, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la protection du consommateur.

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 care to inform the House about her bill?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: First of all, I want to recognize that consumer protection is so important in this province and so many people have worked on this particular piece of legislation. I'd like to recognize Michèle Sanborn and her team from GCS, government and consumer services, and I'd like to thank my own team as well for everything they've done.

If passed, this act would amend several key acts, including the Consumer Protection Act, to strengthen protection and promote trust and confidence for the people of Ontario.

In particular, this act would help strengthen protection for new homebuyers and owners, and it would also enhance and harmonize key oversight, governance and transparency requirements for most administrative authorities that are responsible for delivering vital programs and services for the people of Ontario.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I'm seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding notice for private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice regarding notice for private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed. I'll recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that notice for ballot item number 99, standing in the name of Mr. Cuzzetto, and ballot item number 100, standing in the name of Mr. Parsa, be waived, on the list drawn on July 11, 2018.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved that notice for ballot item number 99, standing in the name of Mr. Cuzzetto, and ballot item number 100, standing in the name of Mr. Parsa, be waived, on the list drawn on July 11, 2018.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the order of precedence for private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra is again seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice, this time regarding the order of precedence for private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed. Again, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that a change be made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that on the ballot list draw of November 4, 2019, Ms. Hunter assumes ballot item number 17 and Mr. Gravelle assumes ballot item number 89.

1320

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that a change be made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that on the ballot list draw of November 4, 2019, Ms. Hunter assumes ballot item number 17 and Mr. Gravelle assumes ballot item number 89.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I have a petition entitled "Improve Winter Road Maintenance on Northern Highways."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Highways 11 and 17 play a critical role in the development and prosperity of northern Ontario;

"Whereas the former Liberal government introduced private winter maintenance contracts, and the current Conservative government has failed to improve winter road conditions in northern Ontario;

"Whereas injuries and fatalities are twice more likely to occur on a northern highway than on a highway in southern Ontario, per capita;

"Whereas current Ministry of Transportation classification for winter highway maintenance negatively impacts the safety of drivers on northern highways;

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

"Classify all 400-series highways, the QEW highway and Highways 11 and 17 as class 1 highways;

"Require that the pavement on class 1 highways be bare of snow within eight hours of the end of a snowfall."

I support the petition. I will sign the petition and give it to Luba to bring to the Clerks' table.

FOOD SAFETY

Ms. Christine Hogarth: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many small businesses in Ontario, including many craft breweries, desire to provide a safe and pet-friendly space for their patrons; and

"Whereas approximately 40% of Canadian households have at least one dog and many members of those households like to socialize with other dog owners in pet-friendly spaces in our communities; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario ought to amend regulations to enable business owners the flexibility to allow patrons with dogs on their premises, where food is not being prepared; and

"Whereas many jurisdictions throughout the world allow patrons with dogs to frequent open marketplaces and patios of restaurants and bars. Canadian provinces like New Brunswick, British Columbia and Alberta have all taken the lead in amending provincial regulations in order to give business owners the option of allowing dogs on their premises;

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

"That the government of Ontario amend regulations to enable a private business to permit individuals to bring dogs that are supervised in areas on their premises where no food preparation is taking place."

I agree with this. I have already signed it, and I'm going to give it to Eric.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My petition is from the Disability Justice Network of Ontario.

"The Assistive Devices Program (ADP) is mandated to help people in Ontario with long-term physical disabilities pay for customized equipment, like wheelchairs, walkers, communication devices, hearing aids, and more. The ADP is also supposed to help cover the costs of specialized supplies, such as those used with ostomies;

"There are many problems with the ADP program. Though it is supposed to take six to eight weeks to be able to have a file processed, people with disabilities can often wait for many more months to hear back about an application, and receive the required assistive device. This is due to a chronic underfunding and understaffing of the program;

"We, the undersigned, are concerned residents in Ontario with disabilities or who are allies of" those with

“disabilities. We urge the government of Ontario to take the following actions as it pertains to the Assistive Devices Program (ADP) in Ontario:

“—license all vendors that sell and/or repair assistive devices in Ontario;

“—have all vendors that sell and/or repair assistive devices be subjected to annual reviews by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services;

“—mandate and enforce timely access to assistive devices funded partially or in full by the province of Ontario, including addressing the backlogged files as it relates to” the “Assistive Devices Program;

“—mandate and enforce timely access to repairs as it relates to assistive devices funded partially or in full by the province of Ontario, including addressing the backlogged files as it relates to” the “Assistive Devices Program;

“—mandate and enforce clearer supports as it relates to the transition between pediatric and adult services;

“—mandate and enforce adequate staffing for the Assistive Devices Program, in order to address the backlog.”

I completely agree with this and will be affixing my signature to it and giving it to Emily to take to the Clerk.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jill Andrew: I stand proudly for all residents of Toronto–St. Paul’s on this petition entitled “Affordable Housing.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for families throughout much of Ontario, owning a home they can afford remains a dream, while renting is painfully expensive;

“Whereas consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have sat idle, while housing costs spiralled out of control, speculators made fortunes, and too many families had to put their hopes on hold;

“Whereas every Ontarian should have access to safe, affordable housing. Whether a family wants to rent or own, live in a house, an apartment, a condominium or a co-op, they should have affordable options;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately prioritize the repair of Ontario’s social housing stock, commit to building new affordable homes, crack down on housing speculators, and make rentals more affordable through rent controls and updated legislation.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition, have signed it, and am handing it to Filip.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a very important petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a report from the city of London estimated that over 400 Londoners currently use emergency shelters, and other estimations put the statistic as closer to 800;

“Whereas at least 59% of homeless individuals reported experiencing mental health issues, and 57% said they struggle with addiction. Indigenous people are far more likely to experience homelessness in London, making up 2.6% of the population but 30% of the homeless population;

“Whereas London and area shelters are running over 100% capacity on a regular basis and vacancy rates in London are consistently hovering around 1%;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in a provincial housing strategy, affordable housing, and supportive housing for those experiencing mental health issues; and we ask that the government immediately release emergency funds to London’s homelessness prevention system, including shelters, so that they are able to provide assistance to people in crisis.”

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition from the Family Council Network 4 Advocacy, titled “Time to Care Act—Bill 13.

“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 needs 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 recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard to provide an average of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Ms. Jill Andrew: I stand today and present the petition entitled “Petition to Maintain the Provincial Wage Enhancement Grant for Registered Early Childhood Educators and Child Care Workers in Licensed Child Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant supports staff recruitment and retention in licensed child

care, increases income security among registered early childhood educators and child care workers, and begins to recognize their contributions to Ontario communities;

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

“Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant helps keep parents’ child care fees from rising;

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

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

1330

I support this petition—many, many hundreds of signatures—and I hand it over to Eric.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: “Increase Grants Not Loans, Access for All, Protect Student Rights.

“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 agree with this petition, will be affixing my signature to it and giving it to Johnson to take to the Clerk.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank Esther Ann Davies for sending us a stack of petitions on a very important issue, the temperatures in long-term-care homes.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario requires a minimum but no maximum temperature in long-term-care homes;

“Whereas temperatures that are too hot can cause emotional and physical distress that may contribute to a decline in a frail senior’s health;

“Whereas front-line staff in long-term-care homes also suffer when trying to provide care under these conditions

with headaches, tiredness, signs of hyperthermia, which directly impacts resident/patient care;

“Whereas Ontario’s bill of rights for residents of Ontario nursing homes states ‘every resident has the right to be properly sheltered ... in a manner consistent with his or her needs’;

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

“Direct the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations amending O. Reg. 79/10 in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to establish a maximum temperature in Ontario’s long-term-care homes.”

I fully support this petition and give it to page Lennon.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Burch: “Increase Grants Not Loans, Access for All, Protect Student Rights.

“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 affix my signature and hand it to page Gio.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: What a wonderful day it is today for petitions. I’d like to read that petition again, because it is truly important.

“Temperatures in LTC Homes.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario requires a minimum but no maximum temperature in long-term-care homes;

“Whereas temperatures that are too hot can cause emotional and physical distress that may contribute to a decline in a frail senior’s health;

“Whereas front-line staff in long-term-care homes also suffer when trying to provide care under these conditions with headaches, tiredness, signs of hyperthermia, which directly impacts resident/patient care;

“Whereas Ontario’s bill of rights for residents of Ontario nursing homes states ‘every resident has the right to be properly sheltered ... in a manner consistent with his or her needs’;

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

“Direct the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations amending O. Reg. 79/10 in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to establish a maximum temperature in Ontario’s long-term-care homes.”

I fully support this petition and give it to Filip to deliver to the table.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Here’s another very important issue today that I want to read a petition about. It’s supporting urgent funding for housing in London, Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a report from the city of London estimated that over 400 Londoners currently use emergency shelters, and other estimations put the statistic as closer to 800;

“Whereas at least 59% of homeless individuals reported experiencing mental health issues, and 57% said they struggle with addiction. Indigenous people are far more likely to experience homelessness in London, making up 2.6% of the population but 30% of the homeless population;

“Whereas London and area shelters are running over 100% capacity on a regular basis and vacancy rates in London are consistently hovering around 1%;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in a provincial housing strategy, affordable housing, and supportive housing for those experiencing mental health issues; and we ask that the government immediately release emergency funds to London’s homelessness prevention system, including shelters, so that they are able to provide assistance to people in crisis.”

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

STOP CYBERBULLYING IN ONTARIO DAY ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LA JOURNÉE POUR L’ÉLIMINATION DE LA CYBERINTIMIDATION EN ONTARIO

Mr. Rasheed moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to proclaim Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day / Projet de loi 154, Loi proclamant la Journée pour l’élimination de la cyberintimidation en Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Today I rise in this Legislature to speak on my private member’s bill, An Act to proclaim Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day.

Before I go into further debate, or my speech, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my family members for all their support on this private member’s bill, but also I would like to thank my team at the consti office, as well as at Queen’s Park—my EA, Nadeem Shaikh; my LA, Naila Mahmood; the office manager, Amna Majeed; stakeholder relations, Kasia Kaminska; and my OLIP intern, Clare MacDonald, who unfortunately is not here. They all played a huge role in this bill, so thank you very much to my entire team.

Madam Speaker, our province has seen an increase in the number of cases of cyberbullying. Sometimes the effects of cyberbullying can cost a life. As a father and parliamentarian, I want my children and everyone in this great province to be protected and empowered against all forms of bullying, especially cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying consists of electronic communication that directly or indirectly causes or is likely to cause harm to another individual’s physical and mental health and/or well-being. It can include intimidation, threats and harassment and can have significant and lifelong negative effects on children and adults. Cyberbullying can occur suddenly, cause endless suffering and leave victims feeling hopeless and powerless.

One out of every five teenagers has been the target of cyberbullying and one out of every six has been a cyberbully at some point in their lifetime. The known statistics may not accurately reflect the number of children and adults who are cyberbullied because many are afraid to tell their parents, friends or a person in a position of authority such as a teacher or police officer.

This past year, I had the opportunity to speak to many stakeholders, including members of the community like The Dam, the Police Association of Ontario and Hope 24/7. All agreed that more needs to be done to stop cyberbullying.

Madam Speaker, there is no tolerance for bullying and cyberbullying in Ontario, yet too many kids face this reality.

1340

There are similarities between online and offline bullying, but there are significant differences in the context in which the bullying occurs. Many times, the consequences of cyberbullying can be the same as or even more harmful than bullying. The lack of supervision present on electronic media and social media sets cyberbullying apart from offline bullying, because when people are hiding behind screens, they do not know how detrimental their actions can be online. It also makes it easy for individuals to bully and get away with it.

That is why we are starting the conversation today with Bill 154. This is not just a bill for our schools and youth, but for all Ontarians. I'm proud to say that our government and the Minister of Education have been working proactively to help eliminate cyberbullying. As a father, I have seen first-hand some of the hurtful things that children are saying behind screens to one another. At its extreme, cyberbullying can be responsible for someone taking their own life. Cyberbullying and suicide continue to affect many people and families across Ontario each and every year, including far too many young people and students in communities throughout the province.

Our government is determined to stand up against cyberbullying at every opportunity and to support victims of this senseless behaviour. Our government and the Ministry of Education are doing their part in this conversation about cyberbullying. As part of our government's ongoing commitment to supporting mental health and combatting bullying, we are providing \$245,000 to the Principal Association Projects Service Partners and the Ontario Principals' Council for cyberbullying prevention skills development for school leaders. Our government is taking action to root out bullying in our schools, with one aim: keeping Ontario's students safe.

This bill will be an important addition to the many steps that our government is taking to keeping Ontarians and students safe. On November 27, our government took steps to combat bullying by assigning a former teacher and my colleague from Scarborough Centre to advise the minister on education matters, with a focus on bullying prevention. Our province remains among the national leaders in bullying awareness and prevention, but there is more work to do to address this serious issue, and we will continue to support our province's vulnerable students. That's why we must continue this leadership and recognize Stop Cyberbullying Day in Ontario and this Legislature.

Stop Cyberbullying Day is an internationally recognized day of awareness, activities and campaigns, both online and offline. It is currently not recognized in this province. Annually, every third Friday in June, Stop Cyberbullying Day encourages people around the world to show their commitment towards a truly inclusive and diverse online environment for all, without fear of personal threats, harassment or abuse. This day also coincides well with the end of the school year, making it a great reminder to students to be kind, even outside of the classroom. Stop Cyberbullying Day will help bring together corporations, educational institutions, media, non-profit organizations, governments and community leaders to speak out against cyberbullying and digital abuse of any kind. It will defend our human right to freedom of speech, while adhering to the basic principles of mutual respect and empathy for others.

With this bill, we will be able to work with communities across the province to help create campaigns of awareness and prevention on cyberbullying. Many community organizations, like The Dam, Hope 24/7 and the Police Association of Ontario, offered their support to our bill.

The Dam is a local organization that partners with youth to create an inclusive community where all are welcomed, valued and respected. Carol Reist, executive director of the organization, said, "Cyberbullying is so common that it often isn't recognized, leaving the victim to suffer silently. Awareness is a step towards prevention in starting the conversation on how we want to treat each other online."

The Police Association of Ontario also offered their support. The PAO are the official unifying voice for over 18,000 sworn police officers and civilian police service employees from 47 local police associations across Ontario. Bruce Chapman, president of the Police Association of Ontario, said, "Our front-line officers and civilian staff far too often see and hear first-hand the impacts that cyberbullying can have on the public and, notably, on our children and the long-term effects it has on their well-being. With technology—especially social media—playing a larger role in society, the rates of cyberbullying unfortunately only continue to increase."

Through this Bill 154, we will be working together with schools, regional police services, community groups and individuals to increase awareness. All of us have a part to play in ensuring that everyone remains safe in our increasingly digital world. As this debate progresses, we will see the need for Bill 154 to become a reality. Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day will create awareness of the problem of cyberbullying and help lead to its prevention. It will give our children and adults the tools they need to protect themselves from cyberbullying by encouraging discussion in schools and in workplaces.

Madam Speaker, I remember watching my own daughter. She's 11 years old. She was on her tablet, and I noticed there were students from her school group and the amount of bullying that was going on in the chat group towards my own daughter. At that point, I said to myself, "We need to do something. We seriously need to take some action against bullying," because it's not only our children, but I also see organizations, corporations and employees bullying each other in cyberspace.

As individuals, as parliamentarians, I feel that it is our responsibility, and we should make sure that our next generation is proud of what we do. Even though it's just recognizing cyberbullying as a day, let's start having this conversation about bullying. We should make sure that we are actively speaking about bullying and bringing awareness. This is all about awareness.

In conclusion, together, we can stop cyberbullying in Ontario with more education—not just for our youth but to all—on its dangers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise today and speak to this motion. I've spoken about bullying in this House before and the devastating effects it can have on young people.

Bullying in all forms, including cyberbullying, can leave long-lasting physical and emotional scars. We know that those who experience bullying often experience social

anxiety, loneliness and low self-esteem, and kids perform badly in school due to bullying. Youth experience bullying every day in our schools and on our playgrounds as well. Research shows that one in three people report being bullied at school, and when it comes to cyberbullying, as many as one in five teens say they've experienced it.

1350

Kids used to be able to feel a reprieve from their bullies when they left school and they went home. Now, with social media and access to new technology, kids have no escape from their tormenters. This creates even more anxiety and more mental health issues. Not even home is safe from bullies. That's why we need real action.

Recently, in Hamilton, we saw the worst-case scenario of bullying. This fall, a 14-year-old boy died at the hands of his bullies at school. My heart is broken for Devan Selvey and his family. I've said this in the House before: No family should have to experience this. No young person should be tormented at school, or online while they're at home. All of this trauma is preventable.

This bill proposes a Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day, which I'm happy to support, but it cannot be the end of this conversation. This bill from the Conservatives has to be the start of a bigger plan to tackle cyberbullying. We already have a Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week under the Education Act in November of each year, so what we really need after this bill is a real strategy to tackle bullying and cyberbullying. We need this government to make sure that young people feel safe and included at school. We need more adults in the classroom, not less. We need more opportunities for young people to report that they're being bullied online and get actual help. We need more mental health resources for young people in schools. We need more opportunity for teachers to be able to learn best practices for bullying prevention.

I'm glad to support this bill. I urge this government to do the work required and to get serious in order to tackle cyberbullying, and to provide the funding needed to complete that work.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'm very pleased to rise today to support my friend's motion to stop cyberbullying with an awareness day.

There has been an increase in anxiety rates in recent years; we all know about that. There are many reasons for this. Social anxiety is certainly one of those reasons, and it often goes hand-in-hand with autism or ADHD. My own daughter has autism; she's on the spectrum, and she has the social anxiety that comes with it, which creates a lot of problems and it creates a lot of suffering, frankly, for her and for other kids in similar circumstances.

I've really been thinking about this anxiety for quite some time, and the number one reason that—I always ask people, especially young people, why kids are anxious: "What are you anxious about?" The number one reason anybody offers, adult or child, is social media. That's the number one thing they say. Obviously, they're not talking

about nice social media; they're talking about the social media that is attacking or negative.

We've all experienced some cyberbullying, I think. Politicians are, strangely, not immune from cyberbullying. We've all seen it on Twitter feeds or whatever. It seems, however, that the impact is much worse for young people. I've also thought about why that is. Why is it worse for young people?

I think one reason, obviously, is that they just have less experience with the world; they can't put it into perspective, maybe. Another thing is, maybe they're just not sure about who they are, and so they're more susceptible to people saying negative things about who they are. Often, I just sort of ignore it, but then, I'm in my fifties—I won't say exactly how old—so it's probably easier for me. Another thing, maybe, is that they have less ability to ignore that nonsense on social media than we do.

When my children were younger, I read a great book by Barbara Coloroso about bullying. It was called *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander*. I know we teach our children not to bully; maybe we need to show them what online comments that are bullying look like, and tell them why that's inappropriate. Coloroso also recently updated her book to call it—the new version—*The Bully, the Bullied, and the Not-So-Innocent Bystander*.

Parents really have a role to play in this. They need to demonstrate by their actions and words that bullying is unacceptable, even online bullying. I think our children need to see us standing up against bullies, even online, and calling out inappropriate language—or at home in gatherings. I think that's a very important thing. It takes some courage.

I think this is a good first step to increase awareness of the problem, and I'm really happy to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Marit Stiles: It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 154, An Act to proclaim Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day, put forward by the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville. I want to start by acknowledging the member for bringing this important issue to the floor of the House.

I also want to stop, early on, and acknowledge all of the victims and survivors of bullying, and cyberbullying in particular. I'd like to particularly acknowledge Glen Canning, the father of Rehtaeh Parsons, who I had the pleasure of meeting here at Queen's Park a little over a year ago, when he came to help protest and urge the government to update and not roll back the health and physical education curriculum in this province and he lent his voice to that important call. I really want to thank Glen for doing that.

I do want to use the time I have today to highlight the ways in which this bill falls far short of what's needed to root out cyberbullying and keep kids safe. While greater awareness is a big part of combatting bullying faced particularly by youth, simply proclaiming a day of awareness ignores the real origins of this behaviour, behaviour that can have devastating consequences, including lost lives.

For Ontarians who have been reeling from this government's education cuts, this bill is largely a symbolic gesture. It's a particularly difficult one, especially given that it has been put forward by a government MPP, the same government that is creating incredibly stressful circumstances for our youth. It was one year ago this month that the government unilaterally cut funding to programs in the education ministry designed to support vulnerable and at-risk youth. The tutoring and literacy programs, the Focus on Youth afterschool program, the Daily Physical Activity in Elementary Schools Program: all cut on December 21. Happy holidays, indeed. Then came the full rollout of the government's plan for education, a plan that will see thousands of caring adults vanish from our schools while kids from grade 4 up will see their classes grow.

We know that bullying, whether it be in person or online, thrives when kids don't have the supports they need, when they don't have the one-on-one attention of a teacher to let them know what's happening to them or when kids are frustrated and feel lost in the system. When they can't turn to a guidance counsellor or another caring, trusted adult, when that person has been cut, they're going to act out, and sometimes they're going to target their peers.

But it's the government's mandatory online learning scheme that is perhaps the most relevant to the discussion about cyberbullying. Under the government's plan, as teaching positions are cut and course selections are taking a hit, kids are now going to be forced into online courses, a style of learning that can further isolate vulnerable kids and has limited credit completion rates. By taking an axe to our school system, this government is causing turmoil in the very place kids spend most of their time.

In closing, I want to thank all members here for speaking up against cyberbullying. I want to thank my executive assistant, on a similar note, for his help in preparing for today.

I want to challenge the government to go further than simply awareness about the problem. I want each member opposite to take a stand for the kids in their communities and to choose investment over cuts in our education system.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 154, An Act to proclaim Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day. The reason why is because it's a new day; it's different than when we grew up. Internet is everywhere, and kids are on the Internet, so they need to know what's going on.

Members from all parts of Ontario have seen the damage caused by cyberbullying, particularly amongst teenagers. As a step-parent of teenagers—and I know that people in this House are either grandparents or they're aunts and uncles or they're parents. We are concerned about what we see online as we do, as politicians, see what's spread online. I'm sure we all know of someone who has been bullied online. We need to start by raising awareness with our children—all children—and make

sure that children are aware of the life-long damage that can be done from cyberbullying. They may not be cyberbullying, but they may be cyberbullied. So we have to make sure we are aware of what's going on with our children and our families.

A recent survey in a paper called *Young Canadians* in a *Wired World* found that 23% of Canadian students from grades 4 to 11 have said or done something mean or cruel to someone online, while 37% reported that someone has said or done mean or cruel things to them online that made them feel bad. That's a really sad fact. I have a feeling that's a pretty low stat.

The key is the difference between cyberbullying and bullying—very different. When you're cyberbullying, you don't actually have to say who you are. You can be a fake name. Kids who are not supervised can be out there bullying because they are not monitored, and we all know how fast information is disseminated through various social media channels. Our world relies so heavily on the Internet, and the prevalence of social media is more important than ever. It is so important to raise awareness of cyberbullying.

1400

So I just want to commend the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for your initiative today. I thank you, and I fully support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm glad to rise to share a few words on Bill 154, the government's bill, the Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day Act.

I do support this bill. Bullying of any type, including cyberbullying, has no place in any school in our province or our country.

However, I do need us to remember that this is a one-day acknowledgement, education, awareness campaign, intervention and prevention on bullying. What we need is a long-term, systemic approach that looks at the underlying causes for why bullying of any nature—and today, we're talking about cyberbullying—happens.

We need to invest in education, as our education critic, the MPP for Davenport, said. Cuts to education actually amplify environments where bullying can happen. So, when we have 10,000 fewer teachers, when we have less child and youth workers, education workers, we don't have eyes on our students, and students don't have eyes on us, and therefore they cannot run to us for help.

In this House, I've mentioned Arka Mukherjee, who died by suicide. Reportedly, a day before his passing, he was bullied at school.

Clearly, a day is a good start. It's certainly something I can support. Heck, I myself have got Bill 61 in this House, calling for a week of acknowledgement around eating disorders. In my previous life, I created Body Confidence Awareness Week, another week of significance, to look at body-shaming and discrimination.

They're great starts. But it has to have a systemic plan. I think what is missing here is that we have to acknowledge the 10,000 teachers and education workers who have been cut. Cuts hurt kids.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Lindsey Park: It's a privilege to rise and add some thoughts to this debate.

This bill is one that, unfortunately, hits home for many of us, for our children and our families. Bullying can take many forms, and it ranges in severity, whether it's physical, verbal or emotional.

However, cyberbullying isn't like other forms of bullying, that are limited to the schoolyard, the workplace or any other public place. Cyberbullying happens in online chats as students work on projects from home with their fellow classmates, or on social media when they post pictures on their profiles and then receive a barrage of nasty comments.

We also see this—and this was really disturbing—in the sharing of intimate images online without consent. Not only is this a form of cyberbullying; it's a tool that is used as part of, and can lead to, human trafficking.

Many young people are the target of troubling online interactions, such as receiving threatening messages, having private messages and embarrassing pictures forwarded without permission, or having rumours about them spread online.

I know the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville has spoken about how this has affected his immediate family.

She's not alone. There was a study by Stats Canada in 2016 that found that about a fifth of young Canadians aged 15 to 29 say they have experienced some form of cyberbullying or cyberstalking. That's something that we all need to take seriously—every level of government, school boards, the provincial government.

This is just going to be the start of our action at the provincial level, but I also call on the federal government to update the definitions in the Criminal Code. People that know this area well are working around it and are sharing intimate images because they know they can get away with it right now. This is going to take all levels of government.

I want to thank the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville for his initiative on this file.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I, as well, would like to congratulate the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville on this initiative, because many times, we come up with legislation designed around a personal experience or someone we know or a constituent, or it's become a big issue in the province.

Cyberbullying is very pervasive, and we need to address it early on. I think we're probably a little too late in our society, because when the Internet hit the world, there were a lot of good things, of course, but with some of those good things came some evil things. I think we're behind the eight ball. So this is a beginning to start the conversation, and I applaud the member for that.

But cyberbullying—any kind of bullying, in any form—can truly devastate lives. Worst-case scenario, it causes people to die by suicide, and that is just completely

wrong. I really feel strongly about bullying, because I think when people decide to attack someone else, whatever media choice that they pick, they're really trying to diminish someone else's self-esteem and confidence and they really want power over people.

So I urge all of us as legislators, parents, relatives, grandparents, all those spectrums that we have in our connected relationships, to teach and talk about how to stop bullying, how to stand up to bullies and how to be kind to each other. Because oftentimes, when someone does come forward to say that they've been bullied, it takes a lot, so we have to have those pathways. When someone says that they've been bullied, we provide those supports around them, and we make sure that the perpetrator is also addressed in that equation so their behaviour changes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I rise to speak on a very important bill, and I wish to thank my colleague for bringing it forward. The member has been such a strong advocate for not only his riding but for important issues such as this.

I believe I have the unique privilege of being able to speak to this issue from a unique position in the chamber, being the only member of Gen Z here in the chamber. As the only member from that generation, I believe I'm the only one here who's grown up in a world where I cannot remember life before the Internet at all. I've grown up in a world where fast, high-speed Internet has been ubiquitous among my generation, and because of that, there have been great advances, I believe, in being able to access knowledge, but there have also been great risks inherent in that.

There's a unique quality to cyberbullying, because you can't put away the phone when it comes into your home. You can't run away from the bullies. If you're at the schoolyard or wherever you are, you can physically leave, but you can't leave the Internet. Nowadays, it's on our phones, it's online, it's on our laptops. So there's a uniquely destructive quality to cyberbullying. We've seen how much impact that can have on people's quality of life and their ability to succeed going forward. I've seen it with my own friends and family as well.

So I want to thank the member for raising this. I know it's something that's very important. It's also why we're addressing it in our health and physical education curriculum. I believe it's so needed to have a conversation about this more broadly as well, moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Sara Singh: It's an honour to rise here, and I wanted to just start by congratulating the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville on this bill to proclaim a Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day. As we've heard from many of the members throughout the debate, this is a great first step, but there is so much more work that really needs to go into this.

Previous to becoming an elected member, I actually used to go into schools and talk about anti-bullying through art-based workshops with young people. The

forms of cyberbullying that they would share with us were the most difficult for them to overcome, because they didn't know how to report it. They didn't have resources in order to actually tackle those forms of bullying.

1410

I myself, as an elder millennial, if you will—I know the other member just shared that he's a Gen Z, but I call myself an elder millennial—grew up with the transition of the Internet coming into our daily lives, where Facebook wasn't an everyday thing. But I was a victim of cyberbullying relentlessly once. We got into those groups and people would use the Internet as a guise in order to attack you, and you couldn't address that.

While this bill does a good thing here to recognize this, I think we really need to embed this into the education system so that we can prevent cyberbullying from happening. We need to make sure that young people have the resources to identify what they're experiencing, that they know that within the education system they can address those concerns.

As the member from Durham also indicated, we need to update the Criminal Code to ensure—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further debate?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: It is my pleasure to be in the House today and speak on a serious and widespread issue that affects many people across Ontario.

Cyberbullying can be devastating to those on the receiving end of online harassment. As was recently announced by the Minister of Education, I will be advising him on education with a special focus on ending bullying. I, along with my fellow colleagues who have spoken on this matter today, will be fighting hard to end cyberbullying in this province.

This bill, an act to proclaim a cyberbullying prevention and awareness day in Ontario, introduced by my esteemed colleague Kaled Rasheed, will recognize the first Friday in June of each year as Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day and will help fight cyberbullying in our province. Stop Cyberbullying Day is already an internationally recognized day to end and prevent cyberbullying. However, it is currently not recognized in Ontario. This is something that we are going to change today.

It consists of electronic communication that causes or is likely to cause harm to another individual's physical and mental health or well-being. The stats show that approximately one out of every five teenagers has been the victim of cyberbullying and that one in every six has been a cyber bully themselves. I would actually wager that these stats are much higher, but they are not accurate due to inadequate reporting practices, which we will also be tackling.

In Ontario, we have seen an increase in cyberbullying, and I have certainly seen it in the classroom as a teacher. By recognizing this day, we are taking action and raising awareness about this growing issue. This bill will encourage Ontarians to seek out the tools they need to protect themselves from cyberbullying and online exploitation.

I am proud that under our Minister of Education we have added critical knowledge on cyberbullying to the

health and physical education curriculum. This will help keep our kids safe.

This bill aligns with our government's priority to increase supports for mental health. If passed, this bill will help raise awareness that will help safeguard victims from further abuse. I know that Ontarians agree more needs to be done in regard to cybersecurity and cyberbullying. It is a shame to say that many cases of cyberbullying have resulted in the suicide of those victimized. With this bill, we hope to deter cyberbullies from escalating their attacks and ultimately we hope to save lives.

By supporting an act to proclaim cyberbullying prevention and awareness day in Ontario, we will be bringing Ontario in line with the international community and we will be one step closer to making real and lasting change in our province. I hope that all of my colleagues from all sides join me in supporting this bill and in protecting Ontario's children.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Mississauga East–Cooksville has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Kaled Rasheed: I want to thank the members from Hamilton Mountain, Eglinton–Lawrence, Davenport, Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Toronto–St. Paul's, Durham, London–Fanshawe, Niagara West, Brampton Centre and Scarborough Centre for their remarks. It truly means a lot to me and my team. Thank you for all your insights and thoughts on this legislation. It is evident that everyone in this Legislature is at a united front to help end cyberbullying. I completely understand that just a day is not a solution, but I will say that it's just the beginning.

Madam Speaker, this bill will help bring awareness to children and adults about the tools they need to protect themselves from cyberbullying by ensuring it is discussed in our schools through awareness campaigns as well as in workplaces and homes.

This beginning is like many of the great bills and policies our government is implementing to make a better Ontario that protects Ontarians and works for them. Ontarians agree that cyberbullying is a serious issue. This bill will help bring awareness to cyberbullying and help lead to its prevention.

Madam Speaker, I want to personally once again thank all the members and all speakers today, the members of this Legislature and my team for working hard to protect Ontarians and our future generations.

COPD AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION À LA BPCO

Mr. Kanapathi moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 157, An Act to proclaim COPD Awareness Day /
Projet de loi 157, Loi proclamant la Journée de
sensibilisation à la BPCO.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to rise today to speak on behalf of Bill 157 to recognize COPD Awareness Day. Thank you to my colleagues for your support.

Madam Speaker, in the course of drafting this bill I spoke to many general practitioners, doctors, respiratoryologists, specialists in lung disease, and organizations such as COPD Awareness Canada and the Lung Association—Ontario. All expressed their support for this initiative to recognize a day for those living with COPD.

Before I discuss the purpose of this bill, I want to introduce Mr. Andy Martin and his family, who have joined us here today in the gallery. Thank you for being here. Mr. Martin is the president of COPD Awareness Canada. His story is one that thousands of Ontarians share across the province. His father, Charlie Martin, was diagnosed with COPD in 2000. The disease sadly took his life in 2009. What troubled Andy, looking back, was that it was clear that his father had been living with COPD for many years. He had the symptoms but was unaware he had the disease.

Madam Speaker, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, known as COPD, is a progressive but incurable lung disease. It is characterized by the narrowing of the airways that limit airflow and make breathing increasingly difficult over time. Every day, simple tasks we take for granted—walking up the stairs, getting dressed in the morning, carrying groceries from your car to your house—can feel extremely difficult for those living with COPD.

COPD is diagnosed most often in people over 35 years of age. It tends to affect men more than women; however, rates of COPD are rising among women as well.

The most common symptoms include a cough that lasts longer than three months; coughing with mucus; feeling short of breath when doing routine activities such as climbing the stairs or getting dressed in the morning; lung infections such as the flu or the common cold that last longer than normal; feeling tired all the time; or losing weight without exercising or dieting.

Cigarette smoking is the number one cause of COPD and accounts for approximately 80% to 90% of all COPD cases. Other causes of COPD include genetic disorders such as alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, environmental and workplace pollutants, second-hand smoke, and frequent lung infections during childhood.

Workplace pollutants such as dust, exposure to chemicals and other fumes account for approximately 10% to 15% of COPD cases. Occupations for increased risk of COPD include construction workers, skilled trades workers, front-line health care providers, and farmers. Across Canada, COPD affects more than two million Canadians. It's the fourth-leading cause of death in the country.

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The number of Canadians aged 35 years and older living with diagnosed COPD increased by 82%, from 1.1 million to a little over two million, between 2001 and 2013. This increase in the number of diagnosed COPD cases is being driven primarily by our aging population. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, 50%

of seniors aged 65 to 69, and nearly 30% of seniors over 85, were living with COPD.

In Ontario, approximately 10% of adults over 35, or 900,000 Ontarians, according to the Lung Association, are living with COPD.

The statistics are staggering.

The problem is that most people, or more than half, are unaware that they even have the disease. That is why it is important for our government to raise awareness about this serious and deadly lung disease that impacts so many lives, not just here in Ontario but in Canada and all around the world. In fact, it is estimated that COPD will become the third-leading cause of death in the world by 2030.

By recognizing COPD Awareness Day, we can encourage more Ontarians to understand COPD, to recognize the symptoms and seek early detection.

While there is no cure for COPD, it is possible to treat and manage it. A diagnostic test called a spirometry test can detect the presence of COPD. It's a reliable method that measures lung function, or how much air your lungs can inhale and exhale. A doctor will determine the appropriate treatment and medication to help control the advance of the disease and limit acute lung attacks caused by COPD.

However, the best way to avoid this deadly disease is to encourage more Ontarians to quit smoking and live a healthier and more physically active lifestyle.

According to a recent study by the University of Waterloo, over 1.5 million Ontarians continue to smoke tobacco today.

Overall tobacco use continues to decline in Ontario and across Canada. This is surely a good-news story.

For smokers, quitting is the single most important step you can take to improve lung health and overall quality of life. Although quitting is not a cure for COPD, it is your best chance to avoid developing the disease.

For those living with COPD, this bill will help encourage more Ontarians to get their flu shot, to be more cautious around people with a cold or flu, to wash their hands more frequently to avoid infection, and to avoid irritants or allergens that might worsen the symptoms.

Many of these initiatives are already a priority of our government and the members sitting here: offering free flu shots to Ontarians, banning materials that promote e-cigarettes or vaping products, and encouraging Ontarians to exercise regularly and live a healthy lifestyle.

Research is currently under way to determine if there is any link between vaping and COPD. Early research suggests that the chemicals contained in vaping products—apart from already documented research establishing a link between vaping and lung disease—cause similar symptoms as found in people living with COPD.

Given that COPD is a progressive lung disease, it is still too early to say with confidence that vaping causes or leads to COPD. However, this will be critical to watch for as further evidence emerges over time.

With increased public awareness, more Ontarians will understand the seriousness of COPD and the importance of early diagnosis and treatment. It will also help to raise

awareness about the link between smoking and COPD, which many people unfortunately don't know.

Madam Speaker, we are dedicated to encouraging a smoke-free province, a healthier province. Most importantly, with this bill, our government is dedicated to stemming the rise of COPD. If we work together in this chamber, I believe we can accomplish this goal.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: It's an honour to get up and contribute to the debate on this subject. I want to thank the member for having brought it forward, because it's very important, and I think it's something that is becoming even more important now that vaping has made its way onto the scene.

For anybody who has known somebody who has suffered with COPD, it's really important that we have a day of awareness, and I completely endorse it. However, I think it's also really important that the government consider what ongoing, sustained and systemic measures can be taken to ensure that we don't end up with a society in which many more people have the disease and die of the disease.

It's not a disease that comes only from smoking. People can have it who have a genetic predisposition for it, or who have absorbed other contaminants in the air, in their workplace or in particularly polluted areas. However, folks who have been smoking are at a particular risk for it.

With the sudden, dramatic and very frightening rise of vaping onto the scene, it's all the more important that we get on top of that, that we really jump on it; that, perhaps, we pass the member from Nickel Belt's upcoming bill, Bill 151, which is a bill to limit vaping. It will come into second reading in a number of weeks, and I think it's really important that the House pass that and be serious about it, because there is no reason for there to be flavoured products that are getting kids into inhaling something into their lungs that is going to poison them. It's just a terrible idea.

The other point that I want to make is that it is really important that we pass pharmacare in this province. There are many people who can't afford inhalers, and the fact of not being able to get hold of inhalers is capable of killing them. So I implore the government to please step up and understand that pharmacare is absolutely crucial. There are many, many people who don't have access to benefits, who don't have access to drugs they can afford, and who desperately need that pharmacare.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today and speak in support of this amazing private member's bill coming forward from the member from Markham-Thornhill.

I wanted to be here today to show my support because COPD is something that we need to address. There are a lot of little aspects that we need to understand and appreciate, but we also need to recognize the organizations and the groups that have come together to recognize that

we do need to, indeed, increase awareness about chronic obstructive pulmonary fibrosis, the disease—the two sometimes can be mixed up, go hand in hand.

I have to tell you, Speaker, and you may recall, as well: There have been advocacy days in this House whereby amazing people who have lived with COPD or pulmonary fibrosis showed, advocated and explained why we need to ensure that people are aware of this particular lung health issue, and I think having an awareness day is absolutely the path to take.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is a type of obstructive lung disease characterized by long-term breathing problems and poor airflow, which includes emphysema, chronic bronchitis and refractory asthma.

In Durham county, we have an organization, Gateway Centre of Excellence in Rural Health, and over the last number of years, they have been focused on lung health in farmers. They have done an assessment and they have done work, because COPD—certainly, a root cause is from smoking, but also, farmers run the risk. Because of the dusty environments they work in, they can contract this particular disease as well.

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It's estimated that by 2030, COPD will be the third-leading cause of death in the world. In Ontario, approximately 900,000 people are living with the disease, which accounts for approximately 10% of the adult population. In fact, COPD affects approximately 2.5 million Canadians. Speaker, my dad was one of them.

An awareness day is so important because it would allow people to understand what it's like to extend your life by living permanently on oxygen and expand awareness around why it's so important to be your own health advocate. An awareness day for COPD would also generate support and awareness of the caregivers who support the people that work so hard to live their lives as best they can. So kudos to the member from Markham-Thornhill. Thank you so much for this particular bill.

Just to close, I want to share with you another intent of this bill, and I really hope it happens. I agree with the member when he said that we need to use this bill to educate young people about the effects of vaping. We really need to get that awareness out there, because we've seen in the media time and again that young people as young as 14 and 15 are showing symptoms of COPD because of vaping. This is wrong.

I am so happy to be in a government here in this province of Ontario where we can stand together and say, "You know what? Creating awareness is so important because COPD is the third-leading cause of death in Canada and it's very prevalent"—900,000 people in Ontario. We need to stand by them, help them achieve the best quality of life they can, and make sure that people don't start bad habits that could cause them to have COPD as well.

Thank you very much, and thank you to the member from Markham-Thornhill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Sara Singh: It's an honour to rise here today to speak in support of the bill that has been presented by the member from Markham–Thornhill. The member and I usually have some good conversations in the hall, so I'm really happy to support your work here today. I think it's a very important piece of legislation.

But as is with any day of awareness—awareness days are wonderful. It's great for us to talk about what's happening and what people are experiencing. But we really need this government to do more than just raise awareness about illnesses that people experience. We really need this government to think about what someone with COPD experiences on a daily basis. We need them to think about access to medication, to make sure they get the adequate time off, for example, if they need it.

As we heard from previous members, COPD impacts people who are smoking or vaping, but non-smokers are also susceptible to COPD. My own grandmother, actually, suffered from COPD, and she never smoked a day in her life. So it's important not to create this causation of blame for why someone might have an illness, but to have a larger conversation about how these illnesses may come about.

As we heard from the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, people in workplaces can also be susceptible to these illnesses because of the types of environment they work in. That might be a farmer. That could be a miner, for example, up in the north. It could be our firefighters, who are rushing into buildings in order to save other people's lives and who are putting their own health and safety at risk every single day in order to perform these essential job functions. We need to think about improving not only awareness, but we need to think about: How are we proactively addressing these concerns? What types of workplace safety measures are we putting in place to prevent someone from acquiring a workplace-related illness like COPD?

I think we also need to have a serious conversation about access to medication. New Democrats have advocated for decades now for a pharmacare strategy here in the province of Ontario and in our country, because we understand that people need their medications. I watched my grandmother try inhaler after inhaler in order to stay alive, in order to take the breaths she needed to continue living. If we didn't have the financial means to support my grandmother in testing out medication after medication, she would maybe not have had the opportunity to extend her life the way she did because she had access to medication.

I want us to think about the people who don't have access to medication, who can't afford it, who are already cutting up pills to get some form of medication into their system. Let's think about how we're going to make sure they get the supports they need and the medication they need to stay alive. We need to improve access to health care, health care services, and health care in terms of prescription medication that's needed.

Speaker, I recognize that my time is up. We're happy to support this. I think it's a good first step, and we definitely need to do a lot more.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Awareness of COPD is very important. It has a way, frankly, of making itself vividly known to people. I found out about it more than 20 years ago on a cold January day when my mother was waiting for me on a corner because she wanted to borrow my car. I was driving my daughter to school. I was going to go to work after that, and my mother was going to take my car. As she got into my car from the very cold January weather, she could not catch her breath. She tried for a minute—it seemed like forever—to catch her breath. It was truly a terrifying experience. I'll never forget that moment. I thought she was going to drop dead there in the car in front of her granddaughter and beside me. The next thing we did was drive her immediately to the hospital because we didn't know what the problem was.

It really is important for everybody to be aware of it. It has a few strikes against it. Let's face it, having an acronym as its name, COPD—people say it very quickly—most people don't know what that is, so it sort of goes by. I don't think that helps really to promote understanding or awareness. Maybe the president of the association might want to think about that. But it also contains the word “pulmonary,” relating to lung function, which, let's face it, is hard to say, and some people don't understand the word. Finally, like lung cancer, since a major risk factor is smoking—although we know that's not the only cause—it's sometimes hard to generate sympathy for this particular disease because people blame smokers. But judging people with COPD or lung cancer or anything else, frankly, is really not helpful.

Let's face it: When my mother started smoking—probably when the Minister of Government and Community Services' father started smoking—it was actually cool and advertised as good for you at that time. They weren't doing anything that they thought was bad at the time, but then they became addicted.

Increasing public awareness, I believe, will help people who are experiencing COPD. It certainly will help people get diagnosed earlier. It will help people get treatment earlier. It will help people be aware of what it's like to have to take oxygen with you wherever you go and will make people more understanding of that. I think that is very important, and a good step. It's a step in the right direction, frankly. Because we know these numbers are increasing and it's going to be more and more prevalent, it's also an important time for us to raise awareness about this disease.

Frankly, it's important to have the discussion with young people, to make sure they see one of the results of smoking and/or vaping, that putting things into your lungs can be this progressive disease for which, for now anyway, there is no cure. It is a terrible thing to have your breath taken away.

I applaud the member from Markham–Thornhill for bringing forward this important awareness day for COPD, and I look forward to supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: As the critic for long-term care and home care, it's important that we address COPD, which is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, because we know many, many people who have breathing issues. It's a chronic disease, and they suffer for almost their whole life. As we age in place, that can be more problematic. As people enter long-term care, we know there are more acute illnesses that front-line service workers have to cope with.

It's important that we have this legislation but also other measures in place in order to address the disease, such as the medication, the pharmacare, the puffers and the oxygen machines.

1440

What I do want to point out—I have to say this, because I remember when we were in the Legislature and there was a question around some cancellations of an anti-smoking program. It was called Leave the Pack Behind, and it was directed to young people, to youth. What happened was that they cut a program that was in operation for 19 years. It was \$1 million. Therefore, it ended up costing people not accessing that program.

This is all well and good, but when a government is cancelling programs that help youth, and then talking about how we need to have a day to educate youth, it's counterintuitive.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I'm very happy to rise today to support my colleague the member for Markham–Thornhill's bill, Bill 157, the COPD Awareness Day Act.

This bill has more than one purpose. Firstly and most importantly, it's to raise awareness by dedicating a day to COPD. The second is to encourage Ontarians to get themselves tested for COPD, because more than half of those with COPD are actually unaware that they have it.

COPD stands for "chronic obstructive pulmonary disease." It is a term that covers two types of chronic or long-term diseases where the airways in the lungs become swollen and partially blocked. COPD gets worse over time. It cannot be cured, but it can be treated and managed.

COPD consists of two major breathing diseases: emphysema, and chronic bronchitis. Emphysema damages the tiny alveoli, or air sacs, at the tips of our lungs. Normally, these air sacs stretch like balloons as you breathe in and out. Emphysema makes these air sacs stiff. Because they cannot stretch, air gets trapped inside of them. This makes it very difficult for people to breathe in, and it also causes chronic fatigue.

Chronic bronchitis makes airways red, swollen and irritated. Glands in the airways make excessive mucus, or phlegm, which blocks some of the air from passing through. This causes productive cough and shortness of breath.

Many people with COPD have both diseases, and more than 2.5 million Canadians have COPD. COPD is the fourth-leading cause of death in our country, and more than 900,000, or 10%, of the adult population have COPD.

As I said earlier, more than half of those people who have COPD are not aware of the fact. This is why an

awareness day is so important. There are Ontarians who are living with a chronic disease that, while it cannot be cured, can be treated to alleviate some of the symptoms, and therefore improve the quality of life.

By generating greater awareness, COPD can be managed by a doctor visit rather than a visit to the emergency room.

Madam Speaker, as an emergency room nurse myself, I have seen my fair share of COPD patients coming to the ER because they literally cannot breathe. It is a very scary moment for them and their loved ones, and we do our best to treat them in the ER.

The number one cause for COPD is smoking, which is believed to account for about 80% to 90% of all cases, and working around airborne pollutants or genetic conditions account for most of the other cases.

Quitting smoking if you are a smoker, or not starting, are obviously the best ways to avoid COPD. This is especially important to do before the age of 40. The majority of those diagnosed with COPD are adult smokers, and by quitting early, you can significantly reduce the risk of developing COPD.

One of the other potential causes is vaping, as was mentioned by many members of this House. While the use of e-cigarettes has not definitively been linked to COPD, vaping is not a safer alternative to smoking, as it was initially believed to be. Researchers are still working on discovering the full impact of vaping on the respiratory system. That is why I would like to applaud the government for removing advertisements for vaping products, outside of specialty stores. By doing so, the government is aligning restrictions on vaping closer to the restrictions on smoking.

By having an active lifestyle, and avoiding or quitting vaping and smoking, you can reduce the chances that you develop COPD. This House should do its part by supporting this bill. It raises awareness, encourages more Ontarians to get tested, and will hopefully put a spotlight on some of the consequences surrounding smoking and vaping.

En adoptant un mode de vie actif et en évitant ou en arrêtant de fumer, vous pouvez réduire les risques de bronchopneumopathie chronique obstructive. Cette Assemblée doit faire sa part en appuyant ce projet de loi.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the member from Markham–Thornhill for his important private member's bill to create a day of awareness on COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, here in Ontario.

As you heard, COPD is one of the leading causes of death and hospitalization in Canada. I didn't know it, but emphysema is a form of COPD, and it was the cause of death of my very own grandfather, John Kellett—may he rest in peace.

But as ubiquitous and insidious as COPD is, I would wager that many, if not most, of us haven't even heard about it. I was one of those until I met my friend Andy Martin. Andy is here today and joined by his wife, Joan

Wyatt, and Jessica Sopher from the Lung Association of Ontario.

Andy and I both worked at city hall, and in 2015 he became a new old friend of mine, always smiling; always something on the go. There he was, coming into the office at lunch showing me the latest draft of his upcoming board game called Hurricane. That day, he came into the office and showed me his own homemade MacGyvered heating system for the family pool, and it actually worked. Yeah, he's a bit of renaissance guy too, I guess.

One day, near the beginning, he told me about COPD and about how his dad, Charlie Martin, died because of it, and how, if they had only recognized the symptoms sooner, he might have had more time with his dad. He told me that even though over a million people know they have COPD, over a million others don't.

So in early 2016, he did something about it, and he did it Andy-style. What do I mean? Well, he was a broadcast audio-visual technician at city hall who had a large quantity of old VHS tapes that needed to be recycled. Andy decided to rip them in half and then recycle them—not one or two tapes, but all of them, everywhere; huge stacks of them. And, man, did he rip those stacks of tapes lickety-split.

Since he is a health and safety guy too, he found appropriate gloves and an ergonomic technique. He even worked out the appropriate muscle groups, and, in the spirit of the successful ALS bucket challenge, my friend Andy Martin became the VHS tape ripper. People tuned into his YouTube channel and they saw him on CTV News, on CP24 and even the Discovery Channel ripping tapes, and, in so doing, they learned about COPD. Andy even got the Guinness World Records to accept a title request for tape ripping. I'm looking forward to him formally attempting that title.

When I heard about a PMB to spread awareness of COPD, I immediately thought of good old Andy. I gave him a ring—we hadn't spoken for a bit of time—and, sure enough, he was all over this. I should have known. But this was all part of a master plan. Andy's non-profit, COPD Awareness Canada, has now become a registered charity, and every year he pushes the yardsticks further and further in his goal to save lives. Today is a big day here in Ontario for COPD awareness. Congratulations, Andy. Congratulations to the member.

Andy is a great guy, but perhaps above all, he's a great son. We are the living legacy of our parents, but Andy's love for his late father is now a legacy too. Thanks to him, many more of us will have more time to spend with our moms and dads.

One last thing: I just realized that it's too bad we're not allowed to have props, because, if I did, I would have had a tape in here, Andy, in my desk, and I would have ripped it and got thrown out. Sorry I don't have it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Markham–Thornhill has two minutes for his reply.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the minister from Huron–Bruce, the member

from Eglinton–Lawrence and the member from Mississauga Centre, and also my colleagues from the other side: the members from Beaches–East York, Brampton Centre, Humber River–Black Creek and London–Fanshawe. Thank you for your kind words and support. I really appreciate your thoughtful comments.

1450

Madam Speaker, this bill to recognize COPD Awareness Day will help bring attention to a very serious and deadly lung disease. This is particularly important to me, given that so many people are unaware they are living with an incurable lung disease. By encouraging more Ontarians to quit smoking, to live a healthier lifestyle and to go to the doctor if you are concerned about your lung health, we can help stop the rise of the disease that currently impacts over 900,000 lives in this province.

I also believe this will help raise awareness about the increasing concern surrounding vaping and the effect it has on lung health and lung disease.

You know, this bill is very close to my heart, Madam Speaker, because my grandma was a severe asthmatic patient. She passed away a long time ago with asthma. My mother is a severe asthmatic patient. She's dying with dementia now, and she's bedridden.

This type of bill not only brings awareness and education for the people; it makes a difference and improves the quality of life of all walks of lives. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to everyone supporting this bill.

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 second 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 Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'm happy to rise to debate my first private member's bill here today, the Northern Health Travel Grant Advisory Committee Act, Bill 144.

Our health care system is a pillar of our identity as Canadians. It allows people to live within the protection of a universal health care system. Whenever I hear the horror stories from south of the border about people taking on crushing debt from basic routine medical needs, I am so thankful for our coverage. I'm thankful for the decades of

work that established medicare, so that if my grandchildren need to see a doctor, they can, and my family does not have to worry about their budgets.

I know, and you do as well, that our health care is a system, and no system, especially one spread around our vast geography and addressing something as complicated as health, is perfect. Sometimes there are gaps, and sometimes people fall through those gaps, which is a metaphor for saying that the system didn't work for them. Even though we're promised equal universal care in the Canada Health Act, sometimes the systems fail and the people we love suffer.

In northwestern Ontario, we have a large hospital in Thunder Bay, full of caring staff and modern equipment. Sometimes, though, all that isn't enough, and people need to travel to have their health care needs met. Our hospital is a regional hospital, and those throughout northwestern Ontario have to travel there for care.

In an effort to maintain that promise of equal access to health care, the Northern Health Travel Grant Program was established. In my time as an MPP, though, I've found that there are serious issues with it. These issues have developed under governments who chose to ignore our remoteness and the stress of being sick far away from home, far away from our families, and above all, the financial burdens. Unsurprisingly, it's people with lower incomes and fixed-income seniors who are undergoing the most hardship, as many of them don't have the means to pay out of pocket for their travel expenses.

When I was running for office, people would ask me why I was running. I told them that I spent my life working one-on-one with people on their problems, and I soon realized that many problems were with the systems. The systems were broken.

The Northern Health Travel Grant is emblematic of a broken system. The travel grant should represent the right of people in the north to access health care regardless of where they live in Ontario. It came about because of the hard work and advocacy of many people over decades, such as former MPP Jim Foulds. I believe all of us owe him our thanks and our respect. Thousands of people's lives have been improved or saved because the travel grant helps people afford to get the health care they need.

But there are serious problems with how it works. If you spend any time in the north, especially as an MPP, you will hear a lot about it. Claims take a long time to be processed, and the amounts reimbursed are just not enough. Staffing shortages caused by this and previous governments' hiring freezes have made matters worse.

This is a systematic problem. The program is designed so that people pay for upfront costs and then wait for the money to be sent to them. People who don't make a large income, or who are seniors on a fixed income, face a major financial barrier to accessing care. Paying for costs up front is a serious barrier when you just don't have the money to pay. Waiting for reimbursement for one appointment can be hard, but think of those who are waiting for money back from multiple appointments, all while trying to get better.

Added to the wait is the struggle with the amount that the grant reimburses. Travel costs have risen considerably over the years, yet the amount covered has not gone up enough. People receive much less than the amount they spend. That can be hard on anyone's budget.

Think of all the people who don't have savings. Nearly half of Canadians are only one \$200 expense away from financial crisis. How can they make ends meet and still access health care? Many people find the costs are way too high and decide they simply can't afford the care they need. That's unacceptable. We have to do better.

Dr. Sarah Giles, a locum who works throughout northwestern Ontario, wrote to me. She said: "Unfortunately, I am intimately aware of the shortcomings of the Northern Health Travel Grant. [It] fails to provide enough money for people to pay for their trips.

"It does not provide people with money up front so those living with poverty are often unable to get to their appointments in the first place. It fails to take into account urgent appointments where people are asked to present at a ... clinic ... the next day at 8 a.m. when that clinic is a 6-hour drive away—thus requiring a hotel stay the night before and, often, after an appointment.

"It fails to consider the lack of public transportation options that allow patients to get to appointments on a specific day at a specific time. It fails to recognize the increase in costs faced by patients who can no longer use Greyhound.

"Finally, it doesn't take into account the fact that people have to miss work and get child care when those who live in bigger centres can access appointments without the financial costs."

We also have to talk about the problems people face with the grant as soon as there are any complications. If there is an issue with an application, it is very hard to get someone on the phone. If there is a clerical error or a simple mistake, applications are returned to the sender by snail mail, only to start the process and the waiting all over again. They will not even take an inquiry about a claim before eight weeks have passed, and if you send your application back, those eight weeks start again.

I think of Cheryl and Patrick in my riding. They travelled from Thunder Bay to Toronto for an OHIP-approved surgery, but the wrong box was checked on the form by a clinic. The claim was rejected and an appeal had to be filed, but they had to wait over a year and a half for an answer.

Patrick told me: "I called the travel grant numerous times, they never sent the form back, too bad so sad.

"Finally, when I went to the travel grant they told me I was past the one year to appeal. But OHIP paid for the procedure, the travel grant should pay, the review committee should fix this, but a year and a half later, I get another letter that denied it.

"One person marked one box wrong, it wasn't sent back to her, and so it couldn't be corrected. It's almost like they do everything in their power not to help you. How many people just give up?"

There are issues with coverage of travel companion costs. How many of us would want to be all alone in a hospital far away from our home and our families, especially when we're not feeling well?

1500

I spoke with Scott Foster from Timmins. Scott estimates his family paid over \$1,000 out of pocket for costs that the travel grant would not cover. Scott's wife had health complications during her pregnancy and went to the local hospital. She was sent to Sudbury urgently by helicopter. Scott drove down separately right away.

Scott wrote: "Although I was permitted to travel with her as an escort on the helicopter, I opted to drive to Sudbury ... so I could have a vehicle ... for our two-week expected stay" when the baby was supposed to be coming.

"I called the claims office ... I was informed that, because I was not travelling with my wife, I would not be approved for any funding....

"My hope is that you ... look into these matters for future parents, and consider a change in the policies that would allow more spouses to be available without the worry of financial hardships ...

"I could only imagine that many other people have been burdened with an unexpected financial impact, all while preparing for the arrival of their child."

Then there are the non-OHIP services, like autism services, that are not covered by the grant. We need to pay attention and work with families to help them with the financial barriers they face. Last week in Thunder Bay, I had a local press conference about this bill, and one of the people who came was Alina Cameron. Her child is on the autism spectrum.

Alina said: "Because our region is so vast, because travel is expensive, most providers are now, under the new Ford Ontario Autism Program, unable to bring services to many families.

"The cost of travel falls completely on families, and in the case of autism families, it can be catastrophic. It can lead to financial hardship to the point where they are simply not able to travel for care.

"So they don't go.

"Being included in the travel grant would help lift that barrier, and help make things more equitable for those in the north....

"The current Ontario Autism Program, which is comprised of very limited childhood budgets, doesn't give families room for travel. We all get a set amount of money, and if travel ends up eating up most of that budget, which it absolutely can and does, our children end up getting less services like ABA, speech therapy, occupational and physical therapy."

I was also informed by so many stories about patients being discharged from hospitals here in Toronto, with no way to get home, or having to drive home when they are feeling frail after an operation, because they can't afford to stay.

It is important that we do something about all these problems, that we do something to ensure that people in the north have access to health care services they need,

regardless of the distance. No one should have to fight with a bureaucracy for reimbursements, especially when they are sick.

Let's think about new ways of doing things. Suggestions poured in when I had a town hall about the northern travel grant in Atikokan. They came up with things like:

- direct deposit options;
- a system for people with repeat appointments;
- the ability to request payment in advance;
- coverage for meals and taxis;
- better coverage and customer service; and
- easier rules to follow.

The list went on.

There are systematic solutions to systematic problems. It's time to fix the Northern Health Travel Grant, so that it reflects today's realities. It's time to listen to the people who use the grant, and health care workers. It's time for northerners to be heard.

Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Norman Miller: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about the Northern Health Travel Grant. This is an important program to all northern Ontarians, including those in the Parry Sound district, the northern half of my riding. My Parry Sound constituency office staff often work with constituents to help them access this program. In most cases, it seems to work quite well. Like all programs, the Northern Health Travel Grant isn't perfect. But from my experience, it seems to work for most people who need it.

I recall when I was elected almost 19 years ago—and there was a Red Tape Commission at that time—going into a Red Tape Commission meeting with 30 rejection letters from the northern Ontario heritage grant, more about the bureaucratic system of the program—this person who had cancer treatment received a separate letter for every single trip that they were turned down for. Hopefully, we've improved since then.

I have spoken to the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Health. She's going to be speaking, and I know that our government is working to further improve the program, so I look forward to her comments.

I want to take this opportunity to raise one way in which I believe the program can be improved, regarding a local issue that has happened in the past year. I've heard from constituents struggling with an addiction who are unable to get visits to an addiction specialist covered by the Northern Health Travel Grant. As I understand it, the Northern Health Travel Grant only applies to visits to specialists who are medical doctors, and neither the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada recognize addiction medicine as a formal specialty—but rather as an area of interest. I've had constituents who are struggling with addiction and haven't been able to receive the grant as a result of this technicality. Given our government's emphasis on mental health and addictions,

and given the number of Ontarians struggling with addictions, I would ask the parliamentary assistant to take that concern back to her minister and ministry.

I want to take this opportunity to point out that our government is doing other things to help northern Ontarians, including looking for ways to increase bus services between communities in the north. Our government recognizes that people in the north need to have reliable transportation options to travel between communities.

A few years ago, I was in Hearst, Ontario, and I think there was only one bus a week coming in and out of Hearst at that point. The mayor made a point of telling me just how few buses there were between Hearst, Timmins and Sudbury, the main centres people would need to travel to for medical appointments.

I certainly want to recognize the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade for his advocacy for intercommunity transit in the north. Just last month, the minister announced that the province will explore options to enhance intercommunity bus services to ensure that underserved and unserved northern communities are connected so people have access to critical services like health care.

I'd also like to point out, of course, that even in the fall economic statement, it was noted that the aviation gas tax is going from 6.7 cents to 2.7 cents, to reduce the costs of travelling in the north. Of course, this especially applies to the remote fly-in communities, but it affects the cost of groceries, so the average family could save as much as \$230 in groceries—and, of course, for the huge geography of the north and travel, it will make a difference in the cost of living in the north.

Once again, I do want to express just how important the Northern Health Travel Grant is for people living in northern Ontario. Parry Sound district is really at the southern end of northern Ontario, so I know it is even more important to those living in the Far North, where people have to travel even further to access medical care.

Thank you, members, for the opportunity to be able to speak.

I want to thank the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for bringing forward this bill and for raising awareness of the importance of the Northern Health Travel Grant.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I will remind all members that it's very distracting to hear all the side conversations. I didn't want to interrupt the last member who spoke—but going forward, please.

I recognize the member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, I want to say up front that obviously New Democrats will be supporting this motion, especially those of us from northern Ontario. I think the concept is a really good one, because part of the problem we have with the travel grant is that it's a bit of a one-size-fits-all for everyone. It may be that a policy is good for a particular situation, for a family to travel, for whatever type of treatment or whatever type of appointment, but it doesn't always fit every situation. Having a mechanism that allows us to review what's going on with the policies of the northern travel grant—

everything from what is approved as official travel for the northern travel grant to how people are repaid. My colleague raised—and it's very important—that a lot of people don't have the money for the upfront costs to go to Toronto or Kingston or Hamilton, or wherever it might be, when it comes to some of the specialties that are not found in northern Ontario. Unless the government is going to provide specialty hospitals in all of our communities across the north, we're going to need the northern travel grant program in order to bring the patients from the communities to those particular services. So I think that's a really good idea, so that we can, on an ongoing basis, look at the policies of the northern travel grant program and adjust it accordingly.

1510

The other thing I want to say is that a lot of constituency casework that we get in northern Ontario is centred around the whole northern travel grant issue. I'll tell you, there are some really hard-to-deal-with cases that we have to deal with at times, because people don't have the money to be able to get there, but as I said, sometimes they get down here and they have no way of being able to get back, because they've been shipped by air ambulance. If you're on an air ambulance into treatment in Toronto, or wherever it might be, you might not be able to get back. It creates a whole other problem for those people to be able to travel back.

I'm glad to support this motion. I'm looking forward to the vote.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for this. Just a couple of personal experiences myself: About a year and a half ago, I had a horrific chainsaw accident. A branch snapped back and my right index finger was nearly severed. It was hanging by a little bit of skin and a little bit of bone—my bad. I had to have it packed, and I ended up having to go for surgery in Winnipeg. Then, consequently, because we don't have occupational therapists—or we didn't at the time—in Kenora, I had to go to Winnipeg every time I wanted occupational therapy. In this case, in an effort to bend the finger or get the use back somewhat, I had to go every single week. So I've had that experience.

My hockey knees, about five or six years prior to that, sent me to Thunder Bay for the MRI that I needed. They like to do both knees, just to compare. My left knee was scheduled for 4 o'clock in the morning on the Saturday, and my right knee was Sunday afternoon at 5 p.m. So I drove 550 kilometres and had two MRIs over the course of a couple of nights.

I raise these to highlight, as the member has said eloquently in her efforts, through this private member's bill, to remind us all that there are significant challenges in regions across northern Ontario, not just for surgeries, not just for advanced treatments in complex illnesses, but sometimes in fairly ordinary therapies that most people come to expect.

I think this is an important conversation. There are problems, in my mind, with advance payments. I can think

of how that would go sideways from time to time and cost the system more when appointments, for reasons beyond the patient's control, were cancelled and the like.

I also want to identify, just to fill out the debate—yesterday, I was in Kenora to announce Kenora's Ontario health team. It's one of the 24 communities identified. This integrated health care system that we will have in Kenora now will hopefully attract more health care practitioners. It's a recruitment tool. It's also an opportunity to bring other services there, so that we don't have to travel.

There are important things going on in the system that I hope colleagues from across the way can appreciate we're endeavouring to do.

I do want to thank her for raising this, because we have an opportunity here to raise the profile, and the issues, and consider some opportunities.

I should say that there is a majority of the elements of this private member's bill that I appreciate very much and generally support. I want to thank her for bringing it to the floor for this debate, and to just share and relate some of the things we've experienced out in northwestern Ontario that speak to her bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to rise today and support my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for a review of the northern Ontario health travel grant.

I've always been opposed to the word "grant" because it actually isn't a grant; it's an equalization. I appreciate the Minister of Northern Development. To hear personal—it's a good thing. It kind of bonds us. But for us, when we have a medical emergency or a medical condition and it can't be treated in a small regional hospital, it's no choice. We have to go.

For many, it's not something that we do on a regular basis. When I had my accident, I had never really been in Toronto, and neither had my wife. The first thing you have to do is to find out if you can actually find the money to travel, because you haven't been saving up for this, because in my case it was an accident, right? We need to look at how people can actually be served.

The goal of our health care system is to have everyone in the province have access to the incredible medical resources we actually have in this province, and that's the goal of the northern travel grant. There are obvious problems with it. Overall it has been a successful program, but there are obvious problems. There are people being left behind. This review will allow us to identify what those problems are and—we may disagree about the mechanism—to make sure that we can try and make this better, so that every Ontarian has equal access to the medical resources that we all pay for.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'm pleased to speak on Bill 144 this afternoon, brought forward by the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, which, if passed, would require the Minister of Health to establish an advisory committee

on the Northern Health Travel Grant. I want to thank the member for bringing these concerns forward to the floor of the House, and to assure her that our government is listening to the issues she has raised by tabling this legislation.

To support high-quality, transparent decision-making, the northern travel grant program has two appeals processes, including an internal program review committee to assess based on program eligibility criteria. You mentioned a number of times people getting back something with a small error on it. They've changed this now, so that they are trying to assess and fix small errors over the phone quickly, so that doesn't happen again. That's one step forward. The other thing is an independent review by the medical appeals committee, and that has two independent clinicians and a northern Ontario resident familiar with local geography on it. That is also an improvement on the prior processes.

The Ministry of Health regularly reviews its programs, processes and procedures to continue improving the quality and value, to sustain these programs for generations to come. That of course includes the Northern Health Travel Grant program, to identify ways to deliver the program more efficiently and effectively for the people of Ontario. For example, the option to enhance payment delivery by way of electronic bank deposits is currently in a planning phase, so we're hoping to get there soon. It's expected that this enhancement will offer greater convenience for members of the public, as well as increasing processing efficiencies for the ministry and allowing us to redirect resources from the backrooms to the front line of care, which is what we want to do.

The northern travel grant program is also working on communication improvements to address and reduce confusion and frustration experienced by users, and by improving clarity, consistency and integrity associated with direction and messages being communicated. In addition, the ministry is working on improving the Northern Health Travel Grant experience for clients. For example, the program is working with clients who have submitted those incomplete applications and fixing those, as I mentioned earlier. This has actually already resulted in a significant drop in the number of applications returned to clients, so that's a good-news story.

The Northern Health Travel Grant is also currently undergoing an operational process review to correct inefficiencies and process bottlenecks. These changes and improvements will go a long way to addressing the concerns and improvements proposed by the member opposite in Bill 144.

But, Speaker, the northern travel grant program is just one of a range of northern health programs that the Ministry of Health delivers to help address regional disadvantages faced by northern residents due to the vast land mass and the relatively small and widely scattered population; to improve access to primary care for northern rural Ontario communities, which historically have experienced difficulties recruiting and retaining primary care providers and other providers; and to support First

Nations rural and remote communities with programs and services that meet their unique needs.

Speaker, you know our intention is to build a connected system of health care, and we believe that the new Ontario health teams are going to make it much better, to get providers to actually be in all of those communities. We're looking forward to seeing how that will improve the situation even further.

1520

I thank the member again for bringing forward these important issues to the floor of the Legislature. We are always looking for ways to improve things, and this is introducing some ideas to be considered. It's helpful for me to hear of the experiences of your constituents and the constituents of our northern members on this side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to speak to the Northern Health Travel Grant presented by the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

As a northerner, I know that the cost of living in the north is very different from down here. I always talk about the price of fuel, the price of hydro, the price of food. And offering programs, offering services, is very different from here to the north.

I know, even with access to health care, we need equitable access to health care. Some of the specialty services that are required in the north do not exist, so our communities have to travel far, whether it's to Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, Kenora—wherever the physician services are available.

One of the things that some people don't realize is, when I talk about the cost of living, sometimes when the funding is provided, the remoteness factor is not considered, the remoteness coefficient—the cost of doing service in a community. It is very important that we consider that.

Again, the member spoke about equalization. I think that's what it is, and we need equitable access for our people in the north. I know I have the most remote riding in northwestern Ontario. Again, we need to have that equitable access. Chi meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I have four quick points that I want to raise and bring to attention.

I want to thank the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for bringing this idea of the advisory committee forward.

Imagine you're living in White River and you are roughly four kilometres outside of that entitlement, in order to be granted a travel grant. Imagine you're a senior in Wawa, where you're two and a half hours away from Sault Ste. Marie. You have to travel there, but you can't drive, because—you just can't drive. Those roads are terrible. And you have to bring a partner with you, and what normally takes three hours to drive now takes you four or five hours to drive. Why? Because the roads aren't plowed. There are some challenges that are there: The road

is closed and coming back is very difficult; you have to spend an extra night. Those are some of the challenges.

Now imagine you're that same senior, and you not only have one, two, a dozen—you have 44 active travel grants, and most of them, because you're with your husband, you have them in his name. So then here's the worst part, Speaker: Your husband passes away. The travel grants come home, and she can't cash them because they're in his name, because they were on his credit card.

This advisory committee will go a long way to having those challenging discussions that we absolutely have to have.

There are other ideas that have come forward in order for us to consider things from a northern Ontario lens. I would hope that these ideas are going to be taken seriously by this government.

Again, there are so many other issues in regard to northern Ontario, and the travel grant is just one of those challenges.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Jamie West: It's an honour to rise in support of this motion.

I think we all agree, on both sides of the aisle, that no one should have to go without going to the doctor because they can't afford it, that no one should have to rack up credit card debt to go to health care appointments. And I think we all agree that medicare in Ontario should provide everyone with the health care they need, and that nobody should have to take out their wallet to see their doctor. However, many people in northern Ontario, as we've heard already several times today, who need to travel outside of their community to see a specialist or to have a procedure, have to spend significant amounts of money, sometimes thousands of dollars, to get the care that they need.

The northern Ontario grant was created in the 1980s. It was created to help northern Ontario residents access OHIP services that may not be available in their community. It was created to reduce barriers to accessing care. It was created to reimburse certain costs that might be incurred while travelling to access care.

But too often, Speaker, the northern Ontario travel grant has failed families in my riding of Sudbury and across northern Ontario. I know the struggles that we face in Sudbury, so I can imagine the struggles of the constituents in Thunder Bay–Atikokan, which is 11 hours further, or of the member opposite, who is even further away than that.

Over time, Speaker, these barriers to access have grown. The cost of accommodation and the cost of travel continue to increase and are now greater than what the grant covers. Because of this, people end up waiting for months for reimbursement that doesn't even cover the full cost. Because of this, low-income working families who can't pay out of pocket and who can't wait for the rebate face massive barriers to accessing care. Decades of Conservative and Liberal governments have let northerners down.

I'm proud to support this bill, Speaker, from across the aisle—or from the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Across the bench.

Mr. Jamie West: Across the bench.

We know that people are unable to access treatment; we need to fix the northern travel grant, Speaker. I ask all members of the House to join me and to support the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan's motion. Together, let's ensure that no one in this province needs to take out their credit card to get the care they need.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ça me fait plaisir de me lever pour parler du projet de loi des subventions en santé pour les voyages du Nord.

Vous avez entendu mes collègues parler. L'approche que ma collègue a amenée, je pense que c'est une bonne approche : de demander un comité consultatif, de voir—je pense que c'est mon collègue d'Algoma–Manitoulin qui l'a dit aussi—d'une loupe du Nord.

J'ai eu la chance—et je vois que j'ai une de mes assistantes qui est ici, puis Melanie Goulet pourrait vous raconter les horreurs qu'on entend. On voit, maintes et maintes fois, des membres de ma communauté, des commettants, qui viennent à nos bureaux. Puis je peux vous dire que—je regarde tous mes confrères du Nord—mes confrères vont tous vous dire la même chose. Si on n'en a pas 10 dans une semaine—on en a tellement qui viennent pour cette fameuse subvention-là. Il y a des problèmes qui n'arrêtent pas de surgir. Vous avez entendu ces horreurs-là : une petite erreur sur le formulaire, et ça prend encore combien de temps?

Ce n'est pas pire quand tu as de l'argent; tu peux patienter et tu peux attendre d'avoir cette subvention, ou attendre d'avoir l'argent. Mais une grosse majorité du monde—peut-être que vous ne le croirez pas—ne sont pas capables d'attendre. C'est du monde sur un salaire fixe. C'est du monde qui a un travail précaire. C'est du monde qui a besoin de beaucoup d'aide. Puis attendre pour un montant d'argent, pour eux autres, fait la différence entre peut-être manger cette journée-là, pour une semaine où ils ont de la misère à arriver à mettre les deux bouts ensemble et qu'ils essayent de nourrir leur famille en attendant une subvention.

C'est pour ça que l'approche est tellement importante. Si on pouvait avoir le dépôt direct ou avoir que ça arrive à temps pour voyager ou pour la question de l'hébergement—c'est très important. C'est pour ça que j'approuve ce projet de loi et je le supporte, parce que je pense que c'est la bonne approche que notre collègue a faite.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan has two minutes for her reply.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I would like to thank the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Kenora–Rainy River and Eglinton–Lawrence, and my colleagues from Timmins, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Kiiwetinoong, Algoma–Manitoulin, Sudbury and Mushkegowuk–James Bay for your comments and suggestions around this bill.

I sincerely hope that we are able to pass this bill, because I believe that we're in a time of transition in health

care. We're looking at new technologies like Telehealth; people are accessing virtual care. There are interesting experiments going on in the north around health care. But it still remains that there are going to be folks who are going to have to travel for specialty types of treatments. There are also treatments and new technologies in health care that may not be covered by the traditional college kinds of services of doctors. That needs to be addressed. People in northern Ontario should have access to those services as well.

I am excited that there are things happening. I've heard of some of those things that are—that they're looking at things, but I don't want it to stop. So I think an advisory committee would assist in ensuring that progress on the Northern Health Travel Grant actually comes to fruition.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

STOP CYBERBULLYING IN ONTARIO DAY ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LA JOURNÉE POUR L'ÉLIMINATION DE LA CYBERINTIMIDATION EN ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will deal first with ballot item number 91, standing in the name of Mr. Rasheed.

Mr. Rasheed has moved second reading of Bill 154, An Act to proclaim Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Social policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed.

COPD AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION À LA BPCO

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Kanapathi has moved second reading of Bill 157, An Act to Proclaim COPD Awareness Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Social policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed.

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Monteith-Farrell has moved second reading of Bill 144, An Act to enact the Northern Health Travel Grant Advisory Committee Act, 2019. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1532 to 1537.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All members will please take their seats.

Ms. Monteith-Farrell has moved second reading of Bill 144, An Act to enact the Northern Health Travel Grant Advisory Committee Act, 2019.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Hogarth, Christine	Roberts, Jeremy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Jones, Sylvia	Romano, Ross
Baber, Roman	Kanapathi, Logan	Sabawy, Sheref
Babikian, Aris	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bailey, Robert	Ke, Vincent	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Begum, Doly	Kernaghan, Terence	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Khanjin, Andrea	Schreiner, Mike
Berns-McGown, Rima	Kusendova, Natalia	Shaw, Sandy
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Lecce, Stephen	Simard, Amanda
Bisson, Gilles	Mamakwa, Sol	Singh, Gurratan
Bouma, Will	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Sara
Bourgouin, Guy	Martin, Robin	Skelly, Donna
Burch, Jeff	Martow, Gila	Smith, Dave
Calandra, Paul	McDonell, Jim	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Cho, Stan	Miller, Norman	Stiles, Marit
Coe, Lorne	Mitas, Christina Maria	Tabuns, Peter
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	Morrison, Suze	Taylor, Monique
Dunlop, Jill	Mulrone, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Elliott, Christine	Natyshak, Taras	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Nicholls, Rick	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Oosterhoff, Sam	Vanthof, John
Gates, Wayne	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Park, Lindsey	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Pettapiece, Randy	West, Jamie
Gretzky, Lisa	Rakocevic, Tom	Yarde, Kevin
Harris, Mike	Rasheed, Kaled	Yurek, Jeff
Hassan, Faisal	Rickford, Greg	

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 83; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee, please?

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like it referred to regulations and private bills.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is a majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills? Thank you.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to enact the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019 and make consequential amendments with respect to animal protection / 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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER FOR PEOPLE,
SMARTER FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 POUR MIEUX SERVIR
LA POPULATION ET FACILITER
LES AFFAIRES

Mr. Sarkaria moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking various Regulations / Projet de loi 132, Loi visant à alléger le fardeau administratif qui pèse sur la population et les entreprises en édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois et en abrogeant divers règlements.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the associate minister.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I'm very happy to rise today to speak to third reading of the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. I'm going to be sharing my time with my two parliamentary assistants, the member for Flamborough–Glanbrook and the member for Mississauga–Streetsville. I want to take a special opportunity to thank the member for Flamborough–Glanbrook for all of her hard work through committee and for meeting with many individuals throughout the process since we tabled this piece of legislation. She has been absolutely great, and I want to commend her for all of her hard work on this piece of legislation.

Madam Speaker, this piece of legislation is focused on making Ontario more competitive. We know that a more competitive Ontario will produce a more productive

Ontario. Higher levels of productivity will lead to higher levels of income and a better standard of living for everyone across this province.

Report after report has called on governments, and especially in Canada, to reform their regulatory framework. When we look at the World Economic Forum's report on global competitiveness, Canada yet again fell two spots. When it comes to regulatory compliance, we are ranked 38th in the world. That is unacceptable, because we are robbing future generations in this province of opportunities that, under the previous government, we saw flee the province, in terms of over 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

I had the honour of introducing this piece of legislation when the House resumed on October 28. Since then, ministers from across the government have led a series of announcements highlighting specific actions in the package, many of which I've had the pleasure of participating in. We've held events at a church-housed food bank, a university preparing our students for the jobs of the future, a waterfront park displaying the beauty that is Ontario, and a mining industry event hosted by the hard-working people in our natural resources sector.

We've also held them at small businesses, those who are providing services and jobs to our communities. In my hometown of Brampton, the Minister of Finance made an amazing announcement to reduce the small business tax rate to 8%; a brewery in Uxbridge, with the member from Pickering-Uxbridge; a dirt-bike dealership in Bradford from the Minister of Transportation. It has been great to visit so many of these individuals, these businesses across our province that truly signify what small businesses are, what businesses are and how they are contributing to the economic landscape and prosperity of this province.

Madam Speaker, this wide-ranging list of announcements displays something that is essential about red tape: how widespread it is and how pervasive it truly is. Unnecessary regulations aren't a problem for just a handful of business sectors. They don't affect just a few groups of individuals. Under previous governments, the regulatory burden has grown over the years and decades to become a persistent problem across our province.

Red tape causes frustrations, delays and complications for individual Ontarians in a wide variety of circumstances. It gets in the way of people making choices that suit them. Red tape also adds massively to the cost of doing business in Ontario. It holds back investment. It holds back job creation across sectors. In a global economy that is more competitive than ever, it makes it harder for Ontario companies to compete with products and services beyond our borders.

The impact of red tape goes beyond individuals and businesses. It also affects municipalities, colleges, universities, hospitals and school boards. It forces them to allocate too much of their budgets to administrative overhead at the expense of the services we rely on for them. That is why we introduced the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. This legislation is the next big step in our plan to make Ontario work better for people and smarter for business.

Mr. Speaker, our plan empowers people and will help make life easier for everyday Ontarians, and it makes life easier for businesses by getting out of the way of job creators so they can continue to create opportunities for the hard-working families across this province. We're working to deliver smarter government for the people of our province through a modern and outcomes-focused approach to service, and we're working to unleash the full potential of workers and businesses to grow Ontario's economy by creating an environment where companies can flourish, invest and create good jobs. Reducing regulatory burdens is a key part of our government's plan, because getting that right matters to families, businesses and Ontario's bottom line.

The problem we have in Ontario with red tape wasn't created overnight, and it won't be fixed overnight. Untying the regulatory knot will take time and persistence. That is why the government created the office of small business and red tape reduction. Our team is working with ministries across the government to bring regulatory relief to everyday people and the businesses that they rely on to get ahead.

I'm going to talk now about something that is fundamental to getting Ontario's regulatory framework right. Regulations are fundamental to the quality of life we enjoy in our province. Ontario families expect clean air and clean water. They expect and deserve safe products and safe working conditions, and regulations are there to ensure these things. They are essential to protecting public health and safety, and the environment. That is why in every action we are taking to address unnecessary regulations, we are maintaining standards to keep workers and families safe and healthy and protect the environment.

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Mr. Speaker, in my introduction of the package, I outlined five guiding principles. The top among them was protecting public health, safety and the environment. No government can accomplish both simultaneously and pass measures to help Ontario while sacrificing these critically important priorities. That is why, for the first time in this piece of legislation, we are enhancing environmental protections so those individuals who are polluting are actually punished. Currently, there are only 140 facilities that can be fined. After this piece of legislation, if passed, that will ensure that over 150,000 facilities can then be fined. This will ensure that those who are polluting will be fined—punishing polluters, not families for heating their homes; punishing polluters and not taxing families driving to and from work.

Mr. Speaker, all too often, companies are required to spend time and money complying with rules that go well beyond what's needed to achieve the goals of regulations. We are taking a different approach. We are making regulations effective, targeted and focused. Most managers and owners of companies want to be in compliance with regulations, but they also have a business to run. They would rather spend their time filling out their order books than filling out government forms. That's why we're working to make it faster, easier and cheaper for companies to comply with regulations so that businesses will

comply with them without sacrificing the jobs, growth and opportunities Ontarians rely on to get ahead.

Now I would like to focus on how the provisions in this bill will make life easier for everyday Ontarians. Our government recognizes that red tape isn't a problem just for businesses. Unnecessary regulations also make things harder than they should be for individuals. Ontario has far too many ineffective regulations that don't achieve the outcomes they were intended to but that impose a cost on people in time and money. We are rewriting regulations that were created with one situation in mind but have instead led to unintended consequences. We are modernizing regulations that no longer reflect the world we live in. We're fixing regulations that create barriers to people making the choices that suit them.

Here's an example of how we're expanding choice: When they go out for a meal, some pet owners would like to have the choice of having their dog next to them on a restaurant patio, but currently, they aren't allowed to do that, except in the case of service animals. It's not only pet owners who miss out. Restaurant owners also miss out on potential customers. That's also true of tasting bars at breweries, where only beverages and low-risk, pre-packaged foods are served, and at places where wine, cider and spirits are made. Dog owners know how frustrating this can be, especially since dining rules are more relaxed in other provinces, such as British Columbia and New Brunswick, and in other parts of the world, such as Paris, Tokyo, London and New York. That's why we're moving to ease these restrictions. We're making it easier and more enjoyable for dog owners to have a meal out by giving them a choice of patios and tasting bars that do and don't welcome dogs.

As I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, I visited a brewery in Uxbridge in connection to this bill. The President of the Treasury Board, who has been a champion on this issue, and the member for Durham were presented with a situation where the individual business, which, at that point, had never been told to comply with this piece of legislation, was all of a sudden facing many instances of lost revenue from customers. The ownership was keen on serving a segment of the population that they were actually prevented from serving. Customers were also keen on having a place that would welcome the four-legged members of their family. Our regulatory changes will leave it to them to make their own decisions, not the government.

Here is what Rob Garrard, co-founder and owner of Second Wedge Brewing Co. in Uxbridge, had to say about our proposed changes: "The Ontario government is creating the right environment for local businesses to succeed by removing ineffective regulations. They are championing companies like ours by allowing us to make smart, responsible and popular decisions that communities are asking for—like allowing people to bring their dogs with them on patios, and indoors where food isn't being prepared."

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share another example of how we're addressing unnecessary regulations that make things harder than they should be in Ontario. Much of our work

on red tape focuses on the regulations themselves and on how we're eliminating ones that are unnecessary and modernizing ones that we do need.

But that's not the entire story. We are also tackling a big problem that our government inherited, and that's the issue of outdated regulatory processes. These processes impose significant costs in time and money that go well beyond what is needed to achieve the goals of regulations.

Here's an example of an action we're taking to speed up our regulatory processes, helping to protect seniors and their families. Ontario is home to some of the biggest prescription drug makers in the world, but regulatory processes make it difficult for patients to gain access to the medications that they need. Ontario has a process for adding a new drug to the formulary, which lists the drugs the province pays for under the Ontario Drug Benefit. We're streamlining this process to eliminate steps that duplicate ones already done at Health Canada. We are no longer requiring drug makers to submit forms that no other provinces require. This will benefit patients by speeding up their access to innovative and lower-cost generic drugs.

I'd like to share with you a quote supporting this action from Jim Keon, president of the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association: "Streamlining Ontarians' access to cost-saving generic prescription medicines after they have been reviewed and authorized for sale by Health Canada is a smart way to reduce unnecessary red tape and save money that can be better invested in patient care." Jim Keon understands the need and value of our regulatory change in this area.

I'm proud of the fact that this bill stands up for patients and will help expand Ontarians' access to prescription drugs.

The next example I'd like to talk about reinforces how wide-ranging our government's work is to improve Ontario's regulations. It concerns chronic wasting disease, or CWD, which kills deer, elk, moose and caribou. This is a case where speed is of the essence, because CWD is a fatal brain disease that spreads fast, and a disease that, once established, is almost impossible to eradicate. Fortunately, Ontario is thought to be free of this dreadful disease. However, it was recently detected in a part of Quebec near the Ontario border, as well as in six neighbouring states. We are moving to give the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry the power to move fast to establish a wildlife disease zone, so that if there is an outbreak, the ministry can eradicate the disease in that zone before it spreads. Eliminating red tape that would slow the government's response to an outbreak of this disease will benefit hunters and is important for wildlife. It would also protect Ontario's biodiversity.

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Listen to what Keith Munro, a wildlife biologist at the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, has to say on this very important matter: "We are pleased to see the government laying the groundwork for a rapid and aggressive response if CWD is never detected in the province.

"While prevention is of paramount importance, the ability to act quickly in the event of a positive case is a critical component of a comprehensive response plan.

“We are committed to working with the government to identify and address pathways through which CWD could enter the province.”

Madam Speaker, there are many areas that this piece of legislation touches. One of the areas that I am most proud of in this piece of legislation is community-feeding organizations. Under previous regulations, we heard loud and clear that many community-feeding organizations, those who are helping those in need, were forced to comply with regulations to the same extent as any fast-food restaurant. This would include industrial dish washers; special requirements on the number of sinks, even if they were only serving once a week, if they were only serving 100 people; and special requirements on flooring. Some of these community centres received bills in excess of \$100,000 to comply. Regulation never took into consideration the uniqueness of what they were doing and was forcing them to comply with something that a Boston Pizza or a fast-food restaurant like McDonald's or Burger King would have to do.

Our government is taking action by ensuring that we work with community-feeding organizations, that we work with our stakeholders, to ensure that we can modernize our regulations to take into consideration the great work that these organizations are doing, without compromising public health, safety or, in other circumstances, the environment.

We are making tremendous strides in the mining industry in this piece of legislation by introducing service guarantees on planned closure amendments.

We are making sure we that we are supporting our forestry industry by including many provisions in this piece of legislation to make forestry more competitive, after seeing thousands of jobs leave the province under the previous government.

We are ensuring higher safety and more environmental compliance through our transport truck industry. Hard-working transport truck drivers and those operating those businesses, employing thousands of people across this province, will now have a streamlined way of testing their vehicles, with more, enhanced ways for us to protect the environment.

We are implementing administrative monetary penalties to ensure that those who are polluting are punished for polluting. Those who are contravening legislation and who are making an economic benefit from contravening environmental legislation are then also charged a fine for that environmental benefit and then also referred for further prosecution.

We are taking measures to improve the competitiveness of our farmers, our agriculture industry.

We are taking measures to help many of those museums, specifically in relation to cultural objects that are coming from across the world.

And, Madam Speaker, we are revolutionizing the way we conduct some of our environmental assessments in relation to manufacturing plants, OEMs, starting with a pilot project at Ingersoll with GM.

Everything that we have outlined in this piece of legislation is an attempt to make Ontario more competitive, an

attempt to restore Ontario as the competitive place that we know it can be, to ensure that Ontario once again becomes the economic engine of this country.

So far, the work that we are doing is working. Since being elected, we have seen over a quarter million new jobs being created right here in the province due to the reduction of red tape, investing \$5.4 billion back into the economy—whether it's making sure that we have frozen the minimum wage, while at the same time giving the most progressive tax cut to anyone earning \$14 and making sure they pay no income tax at the provincial level; whether it's making sure we reduce the cost of WSIB premiums; whether it's ensuring we reduce the small business tax by 8%, as we announced in our fall economic statement.

Many steps are being taken by this government to ensure that Ontario is more competitive, that future generations of this province continue to have access to good, high-paying jobs, that we remove barriers for economic success and that we continue on the path of economic prosperity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to put on the record that the minister who just spoke to Bill 132, in my view and in the view of the people who came to committee in London, in Peterborough and in Toronto, is clearly talking about a very different piece of legislation than the concerns we heard at committee. I want to get those voices on the record, because I think it's important for the people of this province to understand that when a government moves forward with a piece of legislation like Bill 132 without doing their due diligence, without following even the very processes that are outlined on ministry websites around consultation, then you get a flawed piece of legislation.

In fact, one fellow in Peterborough told us that you should put some yellow tape around this red tape bill, that it requires some caution.

Another delegate told us, when he thinks of the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, that he thinks of an oxymoron: a group of words that don't go together. I would concur with that one.

I want to get on the record one delegation that was not able to come to London. Her name is Kathy Lee. She apologized for not being able to make it there. In fact, a lot of people couldn't make it there. A lot of people, for some reason, couldn't get on to the lists, although this was a bill that was travelled. I think it was a good idea to travel the bill; I just think it would have been better to travel the bill beforehand versus after the fact.

Kathy Lee says, “To start with, the name of the bill is an insult to the people of Ontario. Passage of such a bill will result in the degradation of our water resources and line the pockets of heavy industry. A \$200,000 fine for contravening the Environmental Protection Act is a drop in the bucket for an industry which sees pouring chemicals and waste products into our rivers and lakes as a cheap way of disposing of toxic substances.”

One person referenced in a comment afterwards—after hearing a whole day's worth, essentially, of environmental

groups who had not been consulted on the bill—that they should put a new sign on one of our licence plates. You remember, Madam Speaker, that the Premier was considering putting Open for Business instead of Yours to Discover. This individual said, “Yours to pollute in,” because there’s a clear sentiment: that by loosening the environmental regulations through legislation—

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Increasing.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No, no. You’re not.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The associate minister will come to order.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We are clearly talking about two very different pieces of legislation. For some reason, I just wasn’t buying what the minister was selling. The good news, though, is that neither is the rest of the province.

We took our evidence, we took our research, we took our documents and we tried to make the bill a palatable bill. Because who doesn’t like dogs on brewery patios? Except for the people who are allergic to dogs; they do have an issue with it. And of course, the 24-hour-a-day drinking in airports: We set that aside, for the most part, because it’s really not a priority for the people.

But you know what is a priority for the people of this province? Clean drinking water. Because when townships and municipalities find themselves in a position where their source water is not protected, that’s bad for business. It’s bad for the economy. It’s bad for the environment. It’s bad for progressive planning principles.

Before I move ahead, I want to say that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario came here to Queen’s Park. They brought a briefing paper, which I’m going to get on the record. Their president, whose name is—he’s a very nice guy—Jamie McGarvey, gave a very strong deputation around the Aggregates Resources Act because the schedule that’s affiliated with the ARA, schedule 16, is probably one of the most problematic pieces of Bill 132.

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He says, “However, in the area of aggregates reform, we believe the bill needs critical amendments in key areas.

“First, as written, municipal council members can be held personally liable for decisions made not by them but by the province.” Once again, you have a government that is overriding democratically elected councils.

He goes on to say, “We recognize that requiring an application”—this is when an aggregate comes into a municipality—they say, “rather than just an amendment—to extract aggregate below the water table raises the bar; it is a higher standard of requirement.

“However, there is no companion amendment to the Safe Drinking Water Act which would indemnify municipal councillors if municipal drinking water is contaminated because of extraction below the water table.

“Municipal council members must not be held responsible for provincial decisions that result in drinking water source contamination. That simply isn’t fair....”

Quite honestly, I’ve never, in all my years, seen the Association of Municipalities of Ontario come to Queen’s Park and asked to be relieved of their legal responsibility around source water protection. They are on the front

lines. They offered two solutions to the government. They said, “Either don’t allow extraction below the water table”—we would support that; we would—“or indemnify municipal councillors from decisions they do not make.

“As you know, municipal governments have to demonstrate due diligence to protect drinking water sources in order to comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act.”

So you have municipal councillors in the province of Ontario trying to uphold their legal duties. The province can override those duties, and then the local municipal council would be held responsible.

He goes on to say, “To demonstrate due diligence without indemnification, councils would have to appeal all below-water-table applications to the LPAT, given the potential of such activity to contaminate drinking water sources. This would have the unintended effect of increasing the administrative burden for LPAT and municipal governments.”

I want to be really clear. AMO came to Queen’s Park. They asked you to change this piece of legislation. They asked you to amend it, and ironically they’ve said to you that it will create more red tape. You have municipal councils appealing decisions made by the provincial government. It makes no sense—not even the Common Sense Revolution kind of sense of a former Premier here in the province of Ontario.

“Second,” it says, “the proposed amendments would remove the ability of the minister or the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal to consider road degradation that may result from proposed truck traffic to and from the site.

“This would create significant hardship for municipal governments, which are responsible for maintaining safe roads.

“There is no other viable tool for municipal governments that would make sure aggregate operators contribute their own fair share.” This is another download, Madam Speaker.

Municipal councillors “are the first responders to residents’ concerns.” It’s their “job to work with the province and business to mitigate concerns for all,” but the bill “proposes that changes to site plans would require minister’s approval. Yet it’s the municipal government that has to deal with the negative outcomes....”

I thought the presentation from AMO would have been something that the government listened to. Instead, it fell on deaf ears.

We have a pit that’s proposed in Wilmot township. Waterloo region gets their water from—what’s it called? It’s a source water protection—it’s an aquifer. Seven per cent of the water in Waterloo region could be contaminated if an aggregate company goes below the water table in the Hallman pit. The municipal council isn’t going to have a say in that. Even the ministry is allowing, through an amendment to Bill 132, the aggregate companies to revise the site plans without ministry overview. It’s like a free-for-all. So this causes concern obviously for us, because when Gravel Watch came to the committee—it begs the question: Who is this government listening to? Who has the ear of whoever is in the backrooms running the show for the PC government?

Gravel Watch came in—and this is from their deputa-tion—and they said, “After the current government was elected in June ... we did what we traditionally do and reached out to the newly appointed MNRF minister to congratulate them and ask for an opportunity to engage with them. We did this by written letter, emails and phone calls. We never received any response.” There was a change in the minister—you remember that little shuffle very soon after the budget was dropped—and Gravel Watch, an environmental group that has extensive history with the Aggregate Resources Act, which has been a partner with governments of all stripes, historically, in the province of Ontario, never got a call back. What they did learn, though, was that on February 20 of last year—the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association had their annual meeting and they had their March summit: “The March summit event came and went, and we became aware that our exclusion from the event was far from unique. Environmental groups, other citizen groups, top aggregate-producing municipalities from across Ontario: All these organizations were excluded from the summit. The attendees were almost exclusively members of the aggregate industry.”

This is hugely concerning, because if citizens can't get into those backrooms, they won't be heard. So even when they come to committee, as they did here at Queen's Park—they raise serious concerns.

This is Gravel Watch again: “While Bill 132 explicitly removes the ability of municipalities to zone for above or below groundwater table extraction”—first of all, given the history of the PC Party in Ontario and the history of Walkerton, I can't believe that this government is moving forward by removing the responsibility and oversight of municipalities—“it does not provide any information on the proposed ‘more robust application process.’” It leaves it all to regulations.

This is what the Liberals used to do. Remember? They'd give it a nice, fancy name like “smarter people, smarter air,” or something like that. I don't even know who was writing those titles. You've continued this, and you've left it all to regulation.

In case you haven't noticed, there is a real lack of trust with your government and the environment, and given yesterday's Auditor General's report, the people of this province have very good reason to not trust the direction that this government is going in.

AMO put an amendment. They said, “Please make sure that you remove the part of schedule 16 which takes away our responsibility.” They asked to be relieved, indemnified, of their legal responsibility. This is not a good bill when the 444 municipalities in Ontario are asking to be alleviated of their responsibility.

Another voice that really was ignored—and I have to say, one of the saddest but also angriest moments for me in this entire process was when the Matawa First Nations came to committee and they expressed their concern, as did the Chiefs of Ontario, because they were not duly consulted. They reminded the government of the fact that they should be regarded as partners in any new legislation

that addresses mining or the north. The member from Peterborough–Kawartha, in his section where he was talking to Chief Yesno said, “But we're strengthening the consultation. Isn't that what you want? Isn't that what you've always wanted?” The chief was furious. They felt insulted to be spoken to in a patronizing manner whereby—they clearly weren't at the table because their concerns are not reflected in the legislation.

They made two very strong points, and I want to get these on the record. They said, “It is in the best interest, it's in the economic interest, it's in the environmental interest for First Nations, for Indigenous communities to be part of any revision or any amendment that has to do with the Mining Act.” That will instill confidence in the entire process. This is what the Liberals messed up time and time again. This is why the Ring of Fire is essentially the ring of smoke. They spent most of their time sidelining First Nations communities and ended up in court. So that's what the Matawa Chiefs Council and the Chiefs of Ontario have said to this government. They said, “Listen, we are partners. It's not just a duty to consult. We don't want to be over here in the side room, being viewed as some people you just have to talk to for a short amount of time.” They deserve to be at the table. It's in the best economic interest of the province. It's in the best environmental interest of the province.

1620

It defies and runs counter to the entire goal of the legislation that you're talking about—you are actually going to be creating more red tape. You're going to be slowing down the whole mining application process because you're forcing Chiefs of Ontario, and in this case the Matawa First Nations, to go to court just to be regarded as a partner, which they have a treaty right to. They have a legal right to be at the table. They shouldn't have to come all the way down here to Queen's Park and say, “What about us?” There shouldn't be a “What about us?” clause for Indigenous communities in 2019.

This is what they said: “Bill 132, schedule 8, related to the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines's proposed amendments to the Mining Act legisla-tion policy and regulation [should] be removed from Bill 132.” You didn't do that.

“Bill 132, [schedule] 16, related to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and proposed amend-ments to the Aggregate Resources Act and Crown Forest Sustainability Act legislation policy and regulations be removed.” You didn't do that.

“[C]onduct an Ontario crown obligation assessment for First Nations' information purposes that any and all proposals contained within Bill 132, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act ... be reassessed for Ontario's crown obligations to First Nations.” You didn't do that.

Finally, “[T]he government of Ontario proceed in an innovative approach to including Matawa First Nations not only as partners but as the investors of certainty required for economic and social prosperity.” You didn't do that.

It defies all common sense that you knowingly craft a piece of legislation that will end up in court. It's like you

have something personal against the north, like you don't want to see the great northern Ontario sector ever be successful, because the Ring of Fire and any future mining and resource extraction in a sustainable way—forget the fact that we should be consulting with Indigenous communities because we want sustainable resource extraction in Ontario. Forget that. Why do you continue to go down a road where you end up in court? It really, truly does not make any sense.

So on behalf of the legislator—and our MPP Sol Mamakwa came out and spoke to the chiefs at that time. They understood what was happening, that they were being talked down to. They see this place as still in full-throttle colonialism. They have a court case against the Minister of Energy right now. They brought us the court case. This government seems to be very content, almost at peace, with the fact that more lawyers are getting more jobs in the province of Ontario. It's not in the best interests of citizens of this great province.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association really summed up—they came to Peterborough. It was quite ironic: At one point, one of the committee members was trying to explain the law to them. The Canadian Environmental Law Association has a focus on equity, justice and health. They have been fighting successive governments to strengthen environmental laws. Schedule 9 of Bill 132 moves exactly in the wrong direction. Moving away from administrative monetary penalties, otherwise known as AMPs, as an alternative to prosecutions in appropriate cases—AMPs are a way to hold the sector accountable around pollution. “AMPs have existed in the Environmental Protection Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act for ... years. They have proven to be a useful compliance mechanism for holding polluters accountable without ... going to court.

“Schedule 9 of Bill 132 proposes to amend and expand the AMP regime to three other environmental laws.”

At the end of the day, what is going to happen is that the availability of AMPs under the three other laws depends on regulations that have not yet been made. Once again, you moved a good portion of the penalties, which you say are going to be stronger, to a regulatory schedule, but don't expose them. Even if the regulations are quickly developed, even if we knew what the regulations were, schedule 9 proposes to change AMPs from a per-diem penalty to a per-contravention penalty. This is a rollback from current AMP provisions, which state that AMPs can be imposed for every day that the offence continues. In our view, the current per diem approach should be retained since it can result in higher penalties for multi-day offences, which will have a greater deterrent effect on polluters.”

When people come to us after these committee sessions and they say that it is going to be easier to pollute in the province of Ontario, they are not wrong. They are right, because the government will say, “Well, we're raising this fee to \$200,000, but just for one time.” If a polluter, if a company, has a spill, they are very motivated to clean up that spill when it's \$100,000, \$100,000, and \$100,000, every single day. This just makes common sense.

“Finally, in cases where an AMP is issued, schedule 9 will make it easier for polluters to appeal the penalty by removing the reverse onus that exists in the current AMP regime. This onus correctly puts the burden on polluters to prove on appeal that the alleged facts did not occur; however, schedule 9 proposes to remove this onus. In our view, this is a major step backwards....”

So not only are they going to make it easier for some companies to pollute, but they're not going to hold the company accountable even to expose the process.

“For these and other reasons, CELA cannot support the proposed AMP reforms....” In fact, nobody came to this committee across the province—we didn't get one positive message from environmental, or business groups, for that matter, that said, “You know what? This is a good idea.” Because you know what? It's not. It's not a good idea.

They have made changes to the Pesticides Act. This is a government that just fired the Ontario pesticides advisory council. This was a council that provided non-partisan expert advice to the environment minister since the 1970s, so to New Democrats, to Conservatives, to Liberals.

If there was ever an environment minister who needed some advice and guidance, it would be this minister, in this environment. Honestly, yesterday, when he was responding to the Auditor General's report, he essentially said, “Well, the auditor didn't say our plan is the worst plan.” Is that really where we are in 2019, saying, “We're not the worst?”

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The worst is Alabama, and we know what we're getting from Alabama in the education sector.

There was no good reason to fire the Ontario pesticides advisory council. This is a government that needs all the help they can get.

The changes to the Aggregate Resources Act are key because they really tie in the entire narrative of where this government is going and who you're working for and who you are listening to.

CELA goes on to say that they've “been involved in countless pit and quarry cases over the years. In our experience, aggregate extraction can cause a number of serious environmental and nuisance impacts in the short- and the long-term, especially if the sites are not properly rehabilitated.” They are rarely rehabilitated in Ontario. There's really no onus to actually rehabilitate a quarry pit.

“Unfortunately, schedule 16 of Bill 132 contains amendments to the Aggregate Resources Act that weaken or remove some important safeguards that currently exist in law. For example, schedule 16 proposes to make municipal by-laws ‘inoperative’ if they restrict the depth of” the aggregate. So we already know the risk to source water protection in this manner.

It goes on to say, “extraction in order to protect groundwater. Schedule 16 also proposes to expand the ability of aggregate companies to self-file their own changes to site plans without ministerial approval.” So imagine: giving an aggregate company the right to self-determine their site plan without municipal oversight, without ministry

oversight. What could possibly go wrong here? What could possibly go wrong?

We tried to pull schedule 9. We tried to pull schedule 16. We tried to address the concerns of First Nations and Indigenous communities in schedule 8. But there was another—this is the topper—and I'm running out of time. Schedule 2 was around the Line Fences Act, and so the government addressed that. They voted against their own schedule 2 in its entirety, which, for us, demonstrates that they didn't do their own due diligence around that piece.

They are also undermining the local planning appeals centres. Now, these LPATs were brought in by the Liberal government to address the power imbalance with the Ontario Municipal Board. I have to say, they didn't give it a chance, really, to even be successful.

1630

But citizens—I'm thinking in particular of this one lovely lady from a rural community just south of Peterborough. She and her community have been fighting the site plan for a quarry for nine years. She said, "You know what? We've been baking cookies for a long time."

She actually asked the committee something very interesting. She wanted one cent from all aggregate profits to go back into a coffer so that the citizens' groups could fight the aggregate industry. That's where we are right now in Ontario: We've got the bake sales going. We're trying to skim off a little bit of profit to make sure that citizens have the recourse to fight poor planning decisions. When you think of rural and northern communities and the potential for below-water-table extraction in aggregates, and the fact that a lot of those communities are on wells—you can undermine the whole economy of a community by not ensuring that source water has some protection.

The groups that came to see us—I just want to let them know that they were listened to. They were from all over the province. They were from Citizens for Safe Ground Water. The Federation of Tiny Township Shoreline Associations came to see us, and the Grand River Environmental Network, thank goodness; Gravel Watch Ontario; and the London Environmental Network, who made the connection between the economy and environmental protection.

The Thames River Anglers Association came to see us, and their concerns were around aggregate development. They made the point that the changes and the amendments around Bill 132, specifically around schedule 9 and schedule 16, have the ability to hurt eco-tourism. Eco-tourism is a growing industry. I've never actually had anybody come from the anglers' association to fight a piece of legislation. I was really happy that they were there, for sure.

The other piece that came into the committee session was around the overall health and well-being of citizens in this province. I want to thank the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario for coming to talk about toxins and to talk about air quality.

What I learned through this process is that there is no safe amount of particulate around quarries. This came from the Oxford Environmental Action Committee. They

gave us some very good research. I don't know if it was listened to or read by anybody, because no changes were made to the act. Why go around and listen to people if you're not actually going to make any changes? It defies logic. This is from Dr. Nosal, who is the Halton medical officer of health: "It is commonly understood that there is no level of exposure to coarse (PM10) or fine ... particulate matter that is without negative health impacts."

A couple had written to us and said, "We have been living with a quarry for years." The noise, the way that the whole aggregate industry has negatively impacted the tourism of that community, and the dust that's in their house, in their car, and obviously the dust that's in their lungs has given them some serious cause for concern over the years. They're an elderly couple. They can't pick up and move their house, and so what they asked the government for were stronger regulations around aggregate development. They're not looking to remove their voices at local municipal councils.

In fact, local municipal councils want the LPAT to actually exist, to have financial resources for communities to fight now-provincial decisions. We've really gone full circle on that.

Environmental Defence came as well. They made a very strong point around the administrative monetary penalties: It makes sense to hold polluters to account; it does not make sense to let polluters get away with polluting, not to the economy and not to the environment.

Their concerns around aggregate go back to the whole public consultation process. This bill dropped in this Legislature while consultation was apparently still going on. So the bill was already drafted. That doesn't build a lot of confidence.

I heard the minister say very clearly that this is going to be really good for business. Businesses didn't tell us that. They didn't. They said these are a discombobulation of various schedules in Bill 132. Ultimately—and this will be realized at one point in this province—when you loosen the rules around environmental protection, that actually is not good for business. In fact, it comes back on the taxpayer at all times. And as AMO pointed out, this bill ironically creates more red tape.

I'll leave you with the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, who came to the committee. They said what they really need help with is calling on the government to "focus on creating more manufacturing jobs by implementing significant measures to lower electricity costs, introduce new tax incentives to help companies scale up, adopt new technologies, improve company training and environmental performance, and announce more measures to ensure more fairness" and progress.

If you came to us with these kinds of measures and you introduced regulatory schedules that would strengthen the manufacturing sector and actually make it a clean-tech or a green economy, we could probably work with you. What we can't work with you on is introducing schedules which undermine our local democracies, our democratically elected municipalities, which undermine the ability to hold polluters to account—which is schedule 9—and finally,

which will ultimately undermine the value that we have around source water protection with the changes to the Aggregate Resources Act.

We're not against aggregates. We need aggregates. But we're for clean drinking water, and this was made clear by multiple people who came to this committee. I want to thank those citizens for showing up. I want them to know that they were listened to, that their voices were respected on this side of the House, and that as soon as we get a chance to, we are going to reverse the changes, particularly in schedule 9 and schedule 16.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Donna Skelly: A big thank you to the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction for introducing the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act as part of our government's plan to fix Ontario's broken regulatory framework.

The regulatory knot that was stifling economic growth in Ontario wasn't made overnight, so untying it carefully and effectively is going to take time and perseverance. We are clearly making progress toward reducing the regulatory burdens on job creators right across this province. The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, along with regulatory changes and policy announcements, contains over 80 actions to reduce regulatory burdens and lower the cost of doing business in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, this is a huge package, and I'm going to list just a few of the sectors that will benefit from these actions. This act will spur investment, growth and job creation across sectors that include manufacturing, forestry, mining, agri-food, transportation, life science, energy and waste recovery, and main street sectors such as restaurants, barbershops and dry cleaners. The benefits of these actions will go well beyond these sectors.

Getting out of the way of businesses will allow them to do what they do best: create jobs and opportunity for hard-working families. Madam Speaker, this work is critical because we have a real problem in Ontario with red tape impeding business. Our government inherited a regulatory burden that over the years has grown into the heaviest in the country. As of June 2018, businesses in Ontario, on average, had to deal with 100 legislative and regulatory requirements while Quebec had 77, Alberta 43, and BC just 20.

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Businesses told us that far too many of Ontario's regulations were outdated, onerous, resulted in duplication or simply didn't fit the purpose. This regulatory burden has reduced the business investments that drive job creation.

The province has seen report after report from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the University of Toronto's Ontario 360 and, most recently, Deloitte. All of them state that our regulatory burden is out of step with other provinces and with US states that we compete with for good jobs and growing wages. In the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2019, Canada was seen to have dropped two spots to 14th place.

We know that economic competitiveness is a major driver of a rising standard of living in Ontario, but it all comes down to productivity. The more productive our labour force is, the higher the wages. This results in higher incomes for hard-working families and a rising standard of living. If regulations aren't serving the public interest, if they impose excessive burdens on businesses, if they duplicate federal or municipal rules or if they cause excessive costs to the economy, that harms our competitiveness.

Madam Speaker, we have already made a strong start to fixing that problem. Over the past 16 months, the government has taken more than 100 actions to modernize and streamline regulations, simplify complex regulatory processes and eliminate overlap with federal and municipal rules that are already on the books.

The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act is the fourth red tape package that we have brought forward. In November 2018, the Legislature passed the Making Ontario Open for Business Act, which repealed onerous regulatory burdens introduced by the previous government. This included pausing an increase in the minimum wage to give small business a chance to reassess their resources and their labour costs.

Last April, the Legislature passed the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, which is taking 31 actions to cut red tape in 12 sectors of the economy.

In June, the government announced the spring regulatory modernization package. It's eliminating regulatory irritants in the auto sector and other manufacturing sectors.

We announced over 30 actions to make it easier for businesses to create jobs and for people to find them, and we're also reducing red tape as part of broader legislative packages that don't have the words "red tape" on their label. For instance, the Ontario budget included the Putting Drivers First auto plan, which is allowing auto insurance companies to offer more innovative products, such as pay-as-you-go insurance.

In May, the Legislature passed the Simpler, Faster, Better Services Act. This includes actions to reduce red tape, such as allowing the government to send notices by email instead of paper. There are dozens of provincial laws governing multiple ministries that require hard-copy signatures on documents and rely on inefficient processing methods, such as fax machines or traditional mail. The government is making changes to processes and access to meet people's expectations for service delivery.

"Digital first" does not mean "digital only." We are expanding access to meet people's expectations for service delivery, whether it's between 9 to 5 at a ServiceOntario centre or at 10 p.m. from the comfort of your own home.

In June, the Legislature passed the More Homes, More Choice Act. The changes are intended to eliminate unnecessary steps, duplication and barriers to constructing the housing Ontarians need. This legislation is speeding up the approvals process for companies before they can build and begin construction. While cutting red tape, the government is holding firm to our commitment to maintain protections for health and safety and, of course, our environment. This legislation will lay the groundwork

needed to tackle Ontario's housing crisis and help build more homes that meet the needs of people in every corner of our province.

One of the changes would help increase housing options by making the upfront costs of building housing a little bit more predictable. Allowing development charges for rental and not-for-profit housing to be paid over a five-year period instead of upfront would encourage the development of new apartments and affordable housing. So one of our most significant steps toward reducing red tape has been through a housing bill.

In November, the government announced more than 20 actions on red tape as part of the Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review. This new package will take over 80 additional actions to reduce regulatory burdens on businesses and individuals. That will bring the total, since the government took office, to over 200.

Madam Speaker, we are committed by 2020 to saving Ontario businesses at least \$400 million in the cost of complying with regulations, and we're off to a great start. Early estimates suggest that by June 2019, we had achieved \$126 million in savings through actions completed by then. This total will increase substantially once these changes are fully enacted. By June of this year, we had reduced fees, charges and levies on businesses by an additional \$160 million, and now we're adding to these savings. The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, along with regulatory changes, is expected to further reduce costs by \$52 million. This will bring the total savings to business to \$338 million. And our efforts are being recognized.

In January, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business gave Ontario an A- in its 2019 red tape report card. The CFIB was pleased with our government's goal to cut 25% of all regulations by 2022 by conducting an annual review of what laws and rules are on the books. The CFIB recognized our government's commitment to broad structural red-tape reduction as a pillar of our open for business vision for Ontario. This was Ontario's highest grade ever and a significant jump from the C+ the previous government received in 2018. The CFIB gave Ontario an A- because our government is tackling red tape right across the board. It also said that improving from a C+ to an A- after just six months in office was a particularly impressive accomplishment. As a result of our actions, Ontario companies will be more competitive and able to attract new investments, growing jobs and growing the economy.

Madam Speaker, we're not opposed to regulation; we are opposed to over-regulation. A research paper from the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy shows that Ontario has the highest cost of complying with regulations of any province—that's \$33,000 per year per business. This is well above the average of \$26,000 in most other provinces. The action that our government is taking is about cutting the red tape that is holding businesses back, while maintaining the regulations that protect consumers, workers and the environment. These changes are not just about reducing regulatory burdens on businesses; they are also about improving the lives of everyday

Ontarians, because making it easier to do business also improves people's lives and it broadens opportunities by getting government out of the way of job creators.

Let's talk about the trucking industry, an industry that employs more than 100,000 people in Ontario. Currently, professional truck drivers are required to take their vehicles off the road twice a year for government-mandated inspections. The Ministry of Transportation first requires an annual safety inspection, which can take up to three hours. Following the safety inspection, transport trucks are then subject to emissions testing to ensure they are meeting Ontario's high environmental standards. Both tests are important, but doing them separately doesn't make any sense. We are going to take a common-sense approach by combining these tests into one single inspection. The result will be one place, one test, one result for truckers to complete their three-hour annual safety inspection and their 30-minute emissions testing. Completing both tests at the same time will save truckers time and money so they can keep goods moving, while maintaining the necessary protections of our environment and road safety.

Now I'd like to read a quote in support of this action from David Carruth, who is chair of the Ontario Trucking Association: "OTA would like to applaud" Minister Yurek and Minister Mulroney for their "leadership on ... cleaning Ontario's air and focusing enforcement on the minority of trucking firms that require attention. Everyone who is looking for effective and common-sense leadership from governments in making significant environmental impact on transportation emissions should be applauding this" action.

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The next action I'll highlight is about the waterpower section, which generates jobs and economic activity as well as electricity. We are moving toward a one-window system to reduce regulatory duplication and overlap by streamlining approvals for the industry. This will reduce delays on new hydropower dam projects that are important to communities and businesses while ensuring that strong, environmental protections remain.

Here's a quote from Paul Norris, who is the president of the Ontario Waterpower Association: "I strongly commend this government's leadership in removing the unnecessary costs and burden of being regulated by duplicative pieces of legislation.... This elimination of overlap will both boost investor confidence and ensure that investment is made in projects rather than in process."

Here's another example of how reducing regulatory burdens will benefit individual Ontarians. Our package includes a number of proposals to modernize the administration of pension plans. Currently, it is unnecessarily costly and complex for employers to set up and run pension plans. Ontario has a much lower threshold for requiring pension plan audits than, for example, BC and Alberta. The threshold here is simply lower than it needs to be. We are proposing to raise the threshold from \$3 million to \$10 million in assets. This step alone would reduce costs for small business employers by \$10 million

a year. In total, the actions that we are proposing on pension plans would save businesses over \$35 million a year, and that would benefit workers by making it easier for employers to provide good pensions.

Let's take a look for a moment at the agri-food sector. This area is enormously important to rural communities across the province, including the farmers in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook. This bill includes a number of actions that will help ensure that we will continue to put food, locally grown in Ontario, on our tables. Our government would reduce paperwork for the 14,000 farm businesses enrolled in the AgriInsurance Program. We are making the Farm Business Registration Program more farmer-friendly. The government is committed to cutting red tape and reducing the regulatory burden for accredited farm organizations. Changing the length of time an AFO is accredited would save them money and time on preparing paperwork and it would allow them to dedicate more resources to supporting farm businesses right across Ontario.

Crop insurance is a crucial support to farmers. It lets them sleep better at night by allowing them to manage events beyond their control, such as pests, disease and, of course, weather. We are simplifying the forms that they need to fill out for crop insurance claims. We are reducing the length of these forms by 65 pages. We're saving farmers an average of 140 hours of their valuable time. This will allow more time to do what they do best: produce some of the highest-quality food in the world.

Madam Speaker, the next action highlights how regulations written with one issue in mind led to some unintended consequences. Our government is fixing regulations that have created an unnecessary burden on Main Street businesses. These businesses—barbershops and hair salons—employ thousands of people right across Ontario. In the spring of 2018, health regulations were put in place for businesses in a category known as “personal service settings.” They include tattoo parlours, nail salons, barbershops and hair salons. The regulations were designed to protect the public from the risk of disease transmission from procedures that can cause exposure to blood or bodily fluids. These businesses had to obtain the name and contact info of every single client. This would allow a business to quickly contact clients if there had been a failure in following practices that reduce disease transmission, like keeping equipment clean and sterile. The problem is, Madam Speaker, that these requirements also applied to barbershops and hair salons where services don't routinely or intentionally involve cutting or puncturing skin. In rare instances where this does happen, there are requirements in place to sterilize and clean their equipment. The amended rules will no longer require these businesses to collect information that simply isn't necessary. There will be no requirement for people to share their personal contact information for something as routine as a haircut.

The next proposal is an example of how main street businesses are held back by being subject to both federal and provincial regulations in the same area. Our government has consulted and listened to business owners as part

of a thorough review of Ontario's regulatory system. We've learned that it is surprisingly common for two levels of government to regulate the same thing or the same practice. There are few things more frustrating for business operators than spending the time needed to comply with federal regulatory requirements, only to be asked to do the same thing—just slightly different—to satisfy provincial requirements.

That's the case for dry cleaners, a small business that operates in every corner of the province. Dry cleaners are required to have someone on staff who has completed provincial training in the environmental management of waste and contaminants from the cleaning of equipment. But stringent federal regulation of dry cleaners rendered the provincial training unnecessary. Evidence shows that the federal rules have been effective at reducing the environmental impact of dry cleaning, so our government has proposed to do away with a layer of provincial regulation that has become redundant in protecting workers' health and the environment.

Madam Speaker, as I've said, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, along with regulatory changes in the policy announcement, contains over 80 actions to reduce regulatory burdens and to simply lower the cost of doing business in Ontario. We know this act will spur investment, growth and job creation in numerous sectors: in transportation, in life science, in energy, in waste reduction and, as I've just mentioned, in main street sectors such as restaurants, barbershops and dry cleaners. The benefits of these actions will go well beyond these sectors. As I've stated, getting out of the way of businesses will allow them to do what they do best, and that is to create jobs and to create opportunity for hard-working families.

We know this work is critical because, as I've said and as my fellow colleagues have said, we inherited a real problem in Ontario with mounds of red tape. Businesses told us that far too many of Ontario's regulations were outdated, onerous, and resulted in duplication. They just didn't work any longer. This regulatory burden has reduced business investments that drive job creation.

Reducing the regulatory burden is, as I've said, a key part of our government's ongoing plan, because getting this right matters to families, matters to businesses and matters to Ontario's economy. Building on our successes over the past year, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act is the latest in a series of red tape reduction measures that will continue to deliver significant and meaningful results for Ontario. By lifting unnecessary regulatory burdens on businesses and opening more doors to new opportunities for hard-working Ontarians, we will set the economy up for success in the months and the years ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

1700

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise today to participate in the debate on third reading of Bill 132, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. I want to

begin with an observation of how interesting it has been, watching this government respond to the chastening that it got in the last federal election since we returned to this Legislature on October 28. Certainly, I think the message was received that there was a need for this government to appear to be more open, more collaborative, more transparent, to provide more opportunities for the public to participate in the decisions that are made in this place. So we saw this bill go on the road—first time.

We had a lot of examples, since this government was elected, of bills that not only did not go on the road; they didn't go to committee at all. We saw several bills go straight from second reading to third reading with zero opportunity for public input, zero opportunity for citizens, experts, stakeholders to come even to Queen's Park, even for an hour, to offer some input on the bill. To its credit, this government decided they were going to travel this bill. But there's a lot more to being open and consultative than travelling a bill if you're not going to listen to a word you hear when you are on the road.

My colleague the member for Waterloo shared some of the input that was received as she sat on the Standing Committee on General Government as it received deputations on this bill. Today, as the member for London West, I'm going to focus on the input that was received from the people in London, who actually had an opportunity to speak to the members who were on this committee when the committee travelled to London earlier this month.

The first thing I want to do is just quote some of the things that were said to the committee, because I think that it's instructive when we contrast the kind of input that people provided to the remarks that we heard from the minister and the parliamentary assistant about how great this bill was going to be for the economy, how it was going to really relieve the red tape burden for citizens, and everything was going to be great.

The first quote I want to share is from Robert Case, who is from Wellington Water Watchers. He appeared before the committee when it was in London. He said, "How pollution penalties can be treated as red tape that needs to be eliminated in the pursuit of growth and prosperity, let alone to make things better for people, is really beyond me. Current penalties are important as an economic deterrent from polluting in the first place so that they also create an economic incentive for dealing with the problem immediately and thoroughly. I don't think that this particular part of Bill 132 will be seen as progress towards prosperity but rather as a sellout to the most polluting industries interested in Ontario." That's one example of some of the input that was received when the committee went on the road.

Another interesting quote was from Richard Lindgren, who's from the Canadian Environmental Law Association. He noted, "I tend to be a bit bemused by the titles of legislation these days. This one is supposed to be 'better for the people.' It may be better for aggregate producers. It's not necessarily better for the people that I represent..." That was a comment from the Canadian Environmental Law Association.

The third comment was an interesting one. This was from the Urban League of London, which is a unique organization in the province. It has been established for more than 50 years and represents the voices of citizens and neighbourhood associations. Shawna Lewkowitz from the Urban League of London pointed out, "We understand that part of the intent of Bill 132 is to reduce red tape and make it easier for decisions and planning to move ahead. Removing this centre"—and here she's referring to the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre—"does not accomplish this. What it does do is deter certain groups from participating in the process and make it harder for them once they do. This can lead to a longer appeals process and more animosity between municipalities, developers and residents, overall slowing things down and creating greater potential for future conflicts and more appeals."

Clearly, this bill is failing to achieve what the government claims it is intended to do. In fact, it is actually moving us backwards. It's taking us from bad to worse, actually, Speaker, in terms of the ability of citizens in this province to challenge development decisions that are made, and also in terms of the ability of developers to override municipal decisions in the case of the Aggregate Resources Act, and polluting businesses to shirk their responsibility under the Environmental Bill of Rights and other environmental protection legislation and look at fines that they might have to pay for polluting, look at it as the cost of doing business. It lets them off the hook, so to speak.

The other points that were made—and I think this government has to really reflect on this. Some serious concerns were raised about process. This is an omnibus bill—17 schedules, 80 acts, and citizens were given virtually no time. We, as legislators, as MPPs, were given very, very limited time to analyze the changes that are set out in this bill and to really thoroughly understand what the impact of those changes will be.

When the Canadian Environmental Law Association appeared before the committee they started out right upfront and said, "In particular, Bill 132 proposes to change 14 different environmental laws. However, only a 30-day public comment period has been provided under the Environment Bill of Rights for all of these significant legislative changes. CELA submits that this fast-track approach is both unacceptable and unwarranted, and that it is inappropriate to bury the proposed changes in a 100-page omnibus bill containing 17 different schedules."

It's an insult to the people of this province when this government, all of a sudden, says, "Oh, we want to hear from Ontarians." They go on the road, hear from Ontarians and ignore everything they hear. But also, they take a bill that is almost impossible for people to provide meaningful input on because it is so packed with such a myriad of changes that affect so many different parts of our economy and the way we live in this province.

A similar process concern was raised by Nature London when they appeared before the committee. Gordon Neish from Nature London began his presentation by saying,

“We request that the government of Ontario allocate additional time for public hearings and the acceptance of written submissions—we would suggest at least an additional month—so that stakeholders can analyze this proposed legislation. This could result in the avoidance of unintended consequences resulting from a possible inadequate understanding of how the various aspects of Bill 132 will interact with one another. It will also permit a more in-depth analysis of whether the proposed repeals and revocations are, in fact, eliminating unnecessary red tape, or are instead undermining and weakening protections for our air, land, water, and habitat and species diversity.”

I think that is an excellent point, Speaker. Let’s just think about what happened when the Standing Committee on General Government went through clause-by-clause on this bill. Do you know—and my colleague the member for Waterloo pointed this out—that one of the amendments that the government brought forward—the government—was to repeal schedule 2 of this bill? What kind of analysis did the government do when they were developing schedule 2 of this bill? During the clause-by-clause process, they realized, “Oops, we need to repeal an entire schedule of this bill” that they had worked on in the first place. That’s a perfect example of how packaging legislation like this, bringing together 80 different acts into a single piece of legislation, can cause problems.

1710

We saw that recently in another omnibus bill, in the fall economic statement, this government had to bring in an amendment to Bill 108, which was legislation that it had hastily rushed in earlier, because they hadn’t thought things through. And then they realized with the fall economic statement bill, “Oops. We have to bring in an amendment because we goofed when we brought in the legislation in the first place.”

These are very legitimate process concerns, and I hope this government learns from that. I hope they think twice about bringing forward these very, very thick omnibus bills that really undermine the ability of MPPs, as the voices of the people we represent, to participate in the debate and to bring forward concerns and raise issues. It undermines our ability, but it also undermines the ability of citizens, and surely that is what this place is all about. It’s about making good decisions that enable all the people of this province to live their best lives. If we have processes that are counterproductive to that, then that is not helpful to democracy. It doesn’t serve any of us well when our processes are not enabling a real responsiveness to the needs of the people that we represent.

I want to share, verbatim, several of the comments that were made when the legislative committee appeared in London, because it’s only by me sharing them here in this place that anybody will have any idea of the kind of input that was provided. As I said, this government basically ignored everything that was said to the committee when the committee was in London, and I suspect it was the same in Peterborough. I didn’t have an opportunity to review the input that was received in Peterborough, but I

listened to my colleague the member for Waterloo, and I heard her refer to some of the other input that was received from very substantive organizations, organizations that have extensive reach and represent the voices of hundreds and thousands of people in this province—organizations like the Association of Municipalities Ontario, which submitted input and did not, in any way, shape or form, see their input reflected in the amendments that were brought forward to the bill, and the version of the bill that we are debating here today during third reading.

I want to quote some more from Shawna Lewkowitz, who was representing the Urban League of London during the committee hearings. The Urban League of London really focused their comments on two schedules of the bill, schedule 3 and schedule 9. Schedule 3, as I mentioned, is the schedule that eliminates the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre.

Shawna began by talking about the unrealized potential, really, of the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre: “The centre has been in operation for a very short time, having been implemented in 2017,” under the former Liberal government, but she says that from the perspective of the neighbourhood groups who were involved in it—the Urban League of London, the grassroots, citizen-led organizations—the “purpose and potential” of the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre “has only just begun to be realized.”

Then she goes on to say that the ability of residents and neighbourhood groups to participate “in the planning decisions of their communities is vitally important.” She says, “Planning decisions can be contentious, particularly given the complex and sometimes competing needs of developers, municipalities, residents, community groups and business owners. A process to equitably appeal these decisions is important to ensure that the needs of everyone are met and that we get the best planning decision outcomes.”

She goes on to say that planning decisions and planning processes are complex and navigating appeals of those planning decisions can be “challenging and often out of reach for many residents or community groups.”

The Local Planning Appeal Support Centre was set up to address this gap, this imbalance between the developers who have access to lawyers and staff who understand complex planning processes and the small community organizations. It’s the David and Goliath imbalance that we see so often. The Local Planning Appeal Support Centre was designed to help provide the public with support on a wide range of types of applications and appeals under the Planning Act.

She says that with the elimination of the support centre, “many groups will be forced to hire expensive lawyers”—if they can afford them—“which will prevent some from participating, given they lack the necessary funds. It will deter others from participating in the process in the first place, knowing that if a decision goes to an appeal, they lack the expertise and knowledge to navigate the process on their own.”

She also notes that taking away the centre “sends a message to residents that the government is more

supportive of developers and those who have the means and the money to be able to pay to navigate what is, we all know, an extremely complex process.” That echoes that comment that I shared earlier that was made by the representative of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, that this is a bill that is not better for people; it’s better for aggregate producers—

Ms. Catherine Fife: For some people.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes, it’s better for some people, if you’re an aggregate producer or if you are a developer.

The other issues that the Urban League of London focused some attention on was schedule 9. Schedule 9, of course, is the schedule of the bill that makes significant amendments to a number of pieces of environmental legislation, and in particular, it amends the fines that polluters will face if they violate certain environmental provisions and it broadens the system of administrative monetary penalties and it puts a cap on the maximum monetary penalty that a polluter can face.

One of the members of the Urban League of London is called Antler River Rally. This is a very small community-based organization that has been working to improve water quality in Doshkan Ziibi, which is the Indigenous name for our local Thames River. Antler River Rally has pulled hundreds of tonnes of garbage out of the Antler River, worked with hundreds of citizens and community partners to improve river habitats and water quality.

Antler River Rally is completely opposed to schedule 9 of this bill because they recognize that letting polluters off the hook is putting our waterways at risk. They are advocating for legislation that will “restore our natural heritage, not aid in its destruction.” As the seven grandfather teachings tell us, Antler River Rally “believes that Ontario rivers, streams, habitats and environmentally important areas are not ours to plunder but ours to protect for future generations.” So Antler River Valley is opposed to Bill 132. They “encourage the government to go back to the drawing board and create legislation that is environmentally responsible and just.”

1720

Another organization that appeared before the committee in London is Nature London. I already mentioned some of Dr. Gordon Neish’s testimony, but one of the other issues that was raised by Nature London is around the changes to the Pesticides Act and the concern that the proposed changes will provide the opportunity to open the door to undoing the cosmetic-use-of-pesticides ban that was implemented in 2009.

Speaker, as a school board trustee way back around 2004 or 2005, we had an issue with the cosmetic use of pesticides on our schoolyards. I was very proud as a school board trustee to bring in a motion to the school board to ban the cosmetic use of pesticides on school board properties. I was really pleased when shortly after, the city of London also implemented a municipal bylaw on the cosmetic use of pesticides. But it shouldn’t be up to a municipality here and a municipality there. It was clear that this was not the way to protect children, to protect families, to protect citizens from potential health risks

associated with pesticides. We needed a standard provincial approach, and so it was a very important step forward in 2009 when the cosmetic-use-of-pesticides ban was brought in.

And now, with this bill, with Bill 132, we see the potential for that change to be reversed. This bill, Bill 132, eliminates the Ontario Pesticides Advisory Committee, and that is a huge concern to environmental activists, to families who are concerned about health and access to nature. It has the potential to turn back the clock. We don’t need to be turning back the clock in the province of Ontario.

One of the other issues that Nature London raised was around schedule 16 and the changes to the Aggregate Resources Act. They made a very interesting point. They pointed out that “many of the changes in Bill 132 to the Aggregate Resources Act were included in a September 20 notice on the Environmental Registry of Ontario. However, even before that consultation closed on November 4, the government put changes into proposed legislation on October 28, meaning that the government put the changes on the table before the public commentary was completed. This is highly problematic and a little bit underhanded... Further, the changes to the ARA represent a move to take municipalities out of the aggregate decision-making and weaken the safeguards in place to protect local ground-water and communities.”

Are we surprised? Are we surprised that the government ignored its obligation under the Environmental Protection Act, under the Environmental Bill of Rights, that they put something out for public consultation and then wrote legislation before the consultation period had even closed? Sadly, Speaker, we’re not surprised, because we saw the Auditor General yesterday slam this government for its complete lack of accountability to its obligations under the Environmental Bill of Rights. Not even the Ministry of the Environment is complying with the Environmental Bill of Rights, so why should other ministries comply? I guess that’s the view over there. Nobody seems to be in charge. Nobody seems to care about whether they’re complying with their environmental obligations. Certainly that was identified by the Auditor General, that across the board—across the board—all the ministries in this government uniformly display a lack of respect for legally mandated requirements under the Environmental Bill of Rights. Unfortunately, I guess it wasn’t a surprise that the government would do this, but it is a huge concern.

My colleague the member for Waterloo talked about the fact that the changes that are proposed can override decisions that had been made by municipalities. That is a very dangerous precedent that we are setting, when municipalities are charged with source water protection and the province can just swoop in and override municipal decisions—decisions that are being made in the best interests of the local people who reside within that municipality.

I just want to conclude with a couple of observations that were made by presenters to the committee about the

negative economic impact of these changes that are being made in Bill 132, which is purportedly to reduce red tape and make things better for certain people in the province. Skylar Franke from the London Environmental Network talked about the impact on local businesses that rely on ecotourism or rely on access to our waterways, our rivers and other natural areas in the city. She said, “The economy relies on having healthy resources and people. By making it easier and cheaper to pollute, the bill allows for more destruction of ecosystems and resources that our economy relies upon, like clean drinking water, the tourism industry, the commercial fishing industry and many other local industries that rely on the government to enforce environmental violations to protect their businesses.”

She gives the example of a local business called LondonSUP, which is a stand-up paddle board shop. She says LondonSUP is “probably going to be closing their shop because not enough people are buying the recreational devices to go on the water, because they’re not allowed to go on the water because there are algae blooms.” The changes that are being made in this bill will make it even more likely that we’re going to see more algae blooms as polluters can just write off spewing toxins into our waterways as the cost of doing business.

I am a little out of time, but I wanted to make one more very important point: We talked a lot about the fact that the per-day penalties are being replaced with a per-contravention penalty with a cap of \$200,000, and how this is going to minimize the deterrent potential of that cap. The representative from the Canadian Environmental Law Association said, “In my experience, it’s very rare for a maximum AMP to be imposed. Usually the AMPs are on the lower end of the scale, so I don’t think we should pretend or delude ourselves into thinking that the Ministry of the Environment ... will be ready to issue \$100,000 or \$200,000 AMPs each and every time. I fully expect that even if they’re imposed”—because the AMPs are now voluntary—“the AMPs will tend to be on the low end of the spectrum.”

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Speaker, this bill is not good for people. This bill is bad for people, and it is also bad for our economy in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to contribute to the debate on Bill 132. I just want to say that I had the privilege of being on the committee that travelled around southern Ontario to listen to what people had to say about this bill, and I can tell you, Speaker, that we heard an earful. We heard from a number of people and organizations who don’t consider laws and regulations that protect the people and places we love in this province as red tape.

I wish the government had worked with us to fix some of the real, serious problems in this bill at committee, but unfortunately they did not. In many respects, it’s unfortunate that they didn’t fix some of the serious flaws in this bill, because there are actually some things in this bill that make sense, like making it easier for food banks and soup

kitchens that operate safely to serve people. Extending the hours for alcohol sales at airports isn’t even necessarily a bad thing, or allowing dogs on patios, or speeding up the approvals for colleges to have their programs approved. Nobody came to committee to oppose removing real red tape.

But buried in this omnibus bill with 17 schedules are serious threats to public health and environmental protections. That is where we heard an earful of both written and oral submissions, with people saying that protecting our drinking water and the places we love is not red tape. I’d really encourage the members opposite to actually start listening to the people.

We heard from farmers, municipalities, environmental groups, lawyers, citizen groups and First Nations who said that this massive omnibus bill, especially schedules 9 and 16, is wrong-headed. After listening to them, it’s clear to me that the snappy title the government has given this bill, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act—it should be renamed the “better for polluters, worse for environment act,” especially schedules 9 and 16.

I’m going to focus most of my comments on schedules 9 and 16, but before doing that, I want to start by asking the government what they want their environmental legacy to be. It’s really a simple question: Do you want to be remembered for safeguarding our air and water, for conserving our farmland and our natural resources? I ask because conserving nature used to be part of the Progressive Conservative government’s legacy. As a matter of fact, it was Premier Bill Davis who brought in the first Ministry of the Environment. I ask because it feels like, over the last year and a half, this government has chipped away at almost everything that the Ministry of the Environment stands for, and unfortunately, schedules 9 and 16 contribute to this legacy.

Speaker, the climate crisis rightly gets a lot of attention when we talk about environmental issues—and yesterday’s Auditor General’s report removed any doubt that the government has any semblance of a plan to address the climate crisis.

Let’s set climate change aside for a second and talk about other issues that this government claims to care about: clean air, water, lakes, rivers, green space—classic environmental conservation that directly affects our public health and our quality of life. It’s so important to place Bill 132 in the context of the government’s legacy on these issues over the last year and a half. They’ve cut funding for conservation authorities that do this important work on the ground. They’ve taken an axe to the tree-planting program. They’ve eliminated the Toxics Reduction Act. They’ve cut funding for flood management. They’ve opened the door to the loss of forests, farmlands and wetlands to urban sprawl with changes to the growth act. They’ve gutted the Endangered Species Act which protects habitat and species at risk. And who can forget the Premier’s repeated attempts to open up development in the greenbelt?

Schedule 9 and schedule 16 of Bill 132 build on this legacy. I will say it again—and I will repeat it over and

over in this House—that holding polluters accountable is not red tape. Protecting water and farmland is not red tape. Protecting our communities and people’s public health is not red tape. And keeping dangerous chemicals out of our air and food is not red tape. That’s exactly what people told us at committee.

I challenge the government to listen to them. The first thing they told us was that one of the overarching problems with Bill 132 is that people were not given sufficient time to comment on the bill. You simply cannot produce legislation of this magnitude, which affects 14 environmental laws, and decide to post it on the Environmental Registry for the minimum amount required. It actually suggests that you might have something to hide, that you’re maybe not too proud of what you’re trying to accomplish, and it confirms what the Auditor General said yesterday about the way in which the government is undermining people’s rights established under Ontario’s Environmental Bill of Rights. These rights were established because environmental protections directly affect people’s health and quality of life.

Most notably, the Chiefs of Ontario said that the massive changes to environmental protections in schedules 9 and 16 require much more than the minimum 30 days of consultation. The Chiefs of Ontario, as well as the Matawa First Nations, not only expressed concerns about the lack of consultation, they also expressed concerns that schedule 8 actually undermines the government’s duty to consult, which ultimately undermines our commitment to truth and reconciliation.

British Columbia just passed a bill implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and now the Ford government is pushing forward with a bill that First Nations chiefs worry is undermining the duty to consult in the North. I don’t think this is acceptable. It’s going to undermine the government’s efforts for economic development in the North, because it’s likely going to put that development in the courts. We have seen how the inability to properly consult with First Nations has delayed a number of resource development projects in Ontario and around the country.

Citizens groups also raised concerns with the lack of consultation and how it affects them. I want to quote the Concerned Residents Coalition, a group of citizens in rural Wellington county who I think summed up what many organizations said: “We were shocked that some of the proposed changes to the Aggregate Resources Act that we commented on last week were the subject of Bill 132 before the comment period had even ended.” Speaker, I ask the government, did they actually consult and listen to people?

I would like to turn my attention now to some of the content of schedule 16 of Bill 132. We had a number of groups argue that schedule 16 is a direct attack on municipalities’ ability to protect local water resources. The very people who are responsible for protecting our drinking water will no longer be able to produce bylaws to protect that water, because schedule 16 will make those

bylaws inoperable around any limits on the depth of aggregate extraction below the water table.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association had this to say about it: “In CELA’s view, the proposed ARA changes in Bill 132 are short-sighted, counter-productive, and clearly intended to favour the interests of aggregate producers over those of local residents and municipalities that will be burdened with the environmental and socio-economic impacts of increased aggregate extraction.”

Does this government not understand the risks to our drinking water if we give free rein to below-the-water-table aggregate extraction? These municipalities are rightfully concerned about the liability they face, because they’ll be on the hook if the water is contaminated. To quote the city of Brampton, “Staff is concerned with the removal of any provisions that allow municipalities to place restrictions on the depth of extraction in specified circumstances in zoning bylaws.”

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The Association of Municipalities of Ontario is so concerned about schedule 16 in Bill 132 that they actually asked for indemnity from their legal responsibility to protect water. Think about that for a second. Can you imagine AMO coming and saying, “You know what? You guys have taken our ability to protect water away from us. We want our legal responsibility to do that—we want to be indemnified from it.” It’s shocking, actually.

I’ll quote AMO on this, because it also, I believe, undermines the government’s ability to actually reduce red tape in this bill. To quote AMO, “This will greatly increase red tape and administrative burden for the LPAT and municipal governments—not to mention delay decisions for aggregate businesses which would risk new investment in the industry.”

Speaker, if this government’s objective is to reduce red tape, I believe schedule 16 is counterproductive.

Speaking of the LPAT, schedule 3 of the bill removes the citizen support centre for LPAT appeals, which Sue Munro of the Citizens Against Melrose Quarry raised as a serious issue, because they’re having to have bake sales to raise the money to be able to come up with these appeals. As a matter of fact, she suggested that maybe aggregate companies should be charged a one-cent fee in order to help citizens cover the costs of such appeals.

I would also like to raise concerns about the section of schedule 16 that allows companies to self-file changes to their aggregate application, which is essentially like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse. The Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario raised some serious concerns about this, and I want to quote them: “The risks of mining on community air quality in Ontario are great, and regulations must be both cautious and proactive.” According to the RNAO, they are worried that the changes around self-regulation will threaten air quality because companies will no longer have to refile applications when they expand operations.

I also want to mention the concerns municipalities raised around road degradation being taken out of LPAT considerations with aggregate resources. I want to quote

the North Dufferin Agricultural and Community Task-force: “Road degradation is a very real and very costly concern for local municipalities and taxpayers. It is unfair to expect taxpayers to repair roads that have been damaged due to the actions of a private business”—this, coming from the very farmers who fought the Melancthon megaquarry battle about eight or nine years ago.

They would argue, and I would agree, that instead of weakening Ontario’s already weak regulations around the Aggregate Resources Act, we should be strengthening them. One of the reasons a Boston hedge fund actually looked at creating the largest aggregate mine in North America in Ontario, in Melancthon township, was because Ontario had some of the weakest aggregate resource laws in North America. And now the government actually wants to weaken them more.

I want to sum up by just speaking on a few issues related to schedule 9. So many people came to committee with concerns around schedule 9, because it will make it cheaper and easier to pollute, and I don’t see how this can be better for people or for business. I especially want to take issue with the removal of the reverse-onus clause that shifts the burden of proof off of polluters, and therefore will make it harder for government to hold them accountable. I know the government talks about expanding the administrative monetary penalties to a larger group of industries, but if you actually expand them but then weaken the ability of the government to hold them accountable, it actually undermines the expansion effort in the first place.

I’m also opposed to the removal of per-day fines and capping those to per incident, the reason being that per-day fines provide the incentive for industry to stop polluting, when there’s a toxic spill, as fast as possible.

I would remind the government that this regime was brought in place in response to the Imperial Oil spill in 2005 that dumped 250,000 litres of volatile chemicals into the St. Clair River, a contamination so bad that a number of local municipalities had to shut down their water intake systems.

So imagine if we move to a penalty system that actually reduces the incentives for companies to not have these kinds of spills in the first place, and to clean them up as quickly as possible.

I also worry that schedule 9 will undermine Ontario’s world-class pesticide regime. In particular, we should not be dismantling the Ontario Pesticides Advisory Committee, a non-partisan committee of experts who, since the 1970s, have advised governments on pesticide use.

I also want to raise concerns that changes in the schedule will hurt Ontario’s ability to protect pollinators. I want to quote the Ontario Beekeepers’ Association, the David Suzuki Foundation and Environmental Defence that these changes will “kick the teeth out of a central pillar of Ontario’s pollinator health strategy and will deprive the government of basic information for making good decisions.”

This is a big step backwards for pollinator health in Ontario. I want to remind the government that beekeepers

are farmers. Beekeepers contribute over \$900 million to Ontario’s economy, and in addition to that, the crops they pollinate contribute over \$500 million to Ontario’s economy. So I want to ask the government why they would have this in schedule 9 of their bill, threatening such an important contributor to Ontario’s economy.

In conclusion, I want to say that it’s unfortunate that the government didn’t give us an opportunity to work with them on the things that are good about this bill, and that they buried such negative schedules into the bill that threaten Indigenous consultation, that threaten public health and that threaten environmental regulations.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Good afternoon, Speaker. I stand here very proud to support the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act.

I’m going to focus on what the government is doing to reduce regulatory burdens on businesses across a broad array of sectors. The amazing diversity of these sectors shows how wide-ranging the problem of red tape actually is, and why the government is taking action in so many different areas.

The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, along with regulatory changes and policy announcements, contains over 80 actions to reduce regulatory burdens and lower the cost of doing business in Ontario. I’m going to list just a few of the sectors that will benefit from these actions.

The act will spur investment, growth and job creation across sectors including manufacturing, forestry, mining, agri-food, transportation, life science, energy and waste recovery, and main-street sectors such as restaurants, barbershops and dry cleaners. The benefits of these actions will go beyond these sectors. Getting out of the way of businesses will let them do what they do best: create jobs and opportunity for hard-working families.

The actions in this package build on the extensive work by the government over the past 18 months. The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act is the fourth red tape package we have brought forward. In April, the Legislature passed the Restoring Ontario’s Competitiveness Act, which cut regulatory burdens across a dozen sectors. In June, the government announced the Spring Regulatory Modernization Package, which is eliminating regulatory irritants holding back businesses in the auto sector as well as right across manufacturing. Many members opposite have large auto sectors in their ridings, so this package speaks to their constituents directly.

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Much of our work to reduce red tape has been part of broader packages that didn’t include the words “red tape.” For example, the budget included provisions in the Putting Drivers First auto plan to allow auto insurance companies to offer more innovative products, such as pay-as-you-go insurance. That’s just one example. The Simpler, Faster, Better Services Act, which passed in May, included actions to reduce regulatory burdens, such as allowing the government to send notices by email instead of on paper—

a huge savings in time and taxpayers' dollars. In November, the government announced more than 20 actions on red tape as part of the 2019 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review. This package will take over 80 additional actions to reduce regulatory burdens on businesses and individuals. As I've stated, this new package will also take over 200 actions to help us deliver on our commitment to save businesses at least \$400 million in the cost of complying with these regulations by 2020.

We're off to a great start. By June 2019, according to preliminary estimates, we had achieved \$126 million in savings through these actions completed. This figure will rise substantially once these changes are fully in place. Now we're adding to all of these savings. The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, along with regulatory changes, is expected to reduce costs to businesses by an additional \$52 million. This will bring the total savings to about \$338 million.

I'm going to talk about a number of examples of how we're addressing regulatory burdens across a broad array of sectors. Speaker, no one set out deliberately to tie regulatory knots that make it harder to do business in Ontario, but over the years, many practices were introduced that just don't make sense. We're taking a careful and common-sense approach to untying those regulatory knots.

We heard from my colleagues about how professional truck drivers are currently required to take their vehicles off the road twice a year for government-mandated inspections—once for an emissions test and then again for a vehicle safety inspection. So we've created a one-stop approach: one place, one test, one result.

I'd also like to talk about an example of how we're eliminating regulation overlap that subjects businesses to both federal and provincial regulations in the same area. Employers are currently required to notify both levels of government when they bring new chemicals into their workplace. This means businesses must go through the same costly and time-consuming regulatory process twice. We're ending this unnecessary duplication while maintaining strong protection for the environment. This will save companies time, money and effort while continuing to ensure these hazardous products are treated safely—and I emphasize: safely.

I'm going to read a quote in support of this action. The first is from Robert Roth, technical/regulatory affairs manager at Arkema Canada, a chemical manufacturer and distributor: "Notifications under section 34 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act provide no value, are an unnecessary administrative burden and offer no additional protection to workers. We are not aware of any follow-up request from provincial officials to any concerns arising from a section 34 notification. It is unique to Ontario. No other provinces require notification of new substances."

The second quote is from the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada: "The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada supports the action to repeal section 34. Federal regulations under the Canadian Environmental Protection

Act, known as CEPA, place the onus on industry to prove that new substances are safe for their intended use and do not introduce unacceptable risk to workers, consumers and the environment. Moreover, decisions on approving new substances and any conditions placed on the use of such substances are published regularly in the Canada Gazette and the CEPA Registry. These long-standing and effective regulations remain in place and are deemed sufficient by all other provinces, and in our experience, section 34 notices have provided no additional protection to workers. Following many years of reporting, there is no evidence that such reports have ever been reviewed, nor follow-up actions initiated. They are simply an administrative burden that can and should be eliminated."

In the interest of time, I'd just like to say to the members of this House that by supporting businesses with this bill, if passed, savings can be passed on to consumers. They can use these savings to reinvest in their businesses and, best of all, they can hire more people.

I'm going to give an example of what's really important to all of us: the health of our constituents—for example, if we have a family or a loved one who needs a specific drug. As drugs are evolving, sometimes there's a minor change to ingredients. In the past, Ontario required that they submit over 200 pages by hard copy to notify the province of this change. No other province was requiring that; for most of them, it was just one page, online. This is something that we took swift action to change.

We met with numerous stakeholders across this province prior to drafting this bill, and we heard time and time again how duplication was slowing down businesses, slowing down our economy and making it difficult to do business here in Ontario. Our responsibility, as a government, is to create the environment for businesses to succeed, keeping safety as a top priority, and then getting out of the way. Our plan is working. Confidence in doing business has allowed our companies to grow, to succeed and to hire to the tune of over 256,000 more people. I urge all in this House to support this bill and to grow this confidence, to attract investment, to grow business, but most of all, while keeping Ontario safe.

I want to talk a little bit about water power and how this bill really supports this sector. Where water power is such an important part is where it creates jobs and economic activity. We're moving towards a one-window system to reduce regulatory duplication and overlap by streamlining approvals for the industry. This will reduce delays on new hydro-power dam projects that are important to communities and businesses, especially in the rural sector—all of this while we must, and continue to, ensure strong environmental protections.

Here's a quote from Paul Norris, president of the Ontario Waterpower Association: "I strongly commend this government's leadership in removing the unnecessary costs and burden of being regulated by duplicative pieces of legislation. This elimination of overlap will both boost investor confidence and ensure that investment is made in projects rather than in process."

In conclusion, I'd just like to talk a little bit about the next example, which is an illustration of the law of unintended consequences. The Healthy Menu Choices Act, passed in 2015, introduced menu labelling requirements to help people make informed decisions when they order food in a restaurant or buy it in a grocery store. It's not a bad act, by all means, but it left an ambiguity when it comes to fresh produce like bananas. Does a banana sold at a food counter in a grocery store require a label showing the number of calories and a

nutrition facts table? Can the same banana be sold in the produce department without a label? We're clarifying the rules to get rid of this discrepancy—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10:30 on Monday, December 9, 2019.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
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

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
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**

Chair / Président: Amarjot Sandhu
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

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari
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

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Rudy Cuzzetto, Parm Gill
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Marit Stiles, Vijay Thanigasalam
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Roman Baber, Will Bouma
Lorne Coe, Parm Gill
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Gurratan Singh, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
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**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Jill Andrew, Toby Barrett
Stan Cho, Stephen Crawford
Catherine Fife, John Fraser
Goldie Ghamari, France Gélinas
Norman Miller, Michael Parsa
Nina Tangri
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Will Bouma, Stephen Crawford
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Billy Pang, Dave Smith
Jamie West
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**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie