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Mercredi
26 février 2020

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 26 February 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 26 février 2020

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 74(b), the member for Nickel Belt has notified the Clerk of her intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 175, An Act to amend and repeal various Acts respecting home care and community services. The order for second reading of Bill 175 may therefore not be called today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING TRANSIT FASTER ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020
SUR LA CONSTRUCTION PLUS RAPIDE
DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 25, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 171, Loi édictant la Loi de 2020 sur la construction plus rapide de transport en commun et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to rise in this House and debate the issues of the day, and today is Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020.

Before I focus on the bill itself, I would like to focus on something that feeds into the transit act and that's basically our provincial road system. It's very important because without the roads you wouldn't have people on transit.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: We could use more connecting links in Ontario too, the former Minister of Transportation reminded me of that; the connecting links are very important in rural Ontario.

But I would like to just mention that often in my riding—

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Snow clearing.

Mr. John Vanthof: —snow clearing is also very important. The heckling from the government is helping me with my notes. I don't pretend to be an expert on urban transit, but I'm an expert on getting to urban transit.

There is one section of highway that many people use in our part of the province. It's called the Field cut-off—Highway 64 from Highway 11 to Verner. It used to be that the biggest danger on Highway 64 was moose. Now, the biggest danger on Highway 64—and I kid you not, Speaker—is potholes. I think the potholes are bigger than the moose. That's why I'm raising it in the Legislature. It is truly a safety hazard. What's happening is, there's a lot of truck traffic on Highway 64 that doesn't get picked up at any scale—a lot of it. It's called the Field cut-off for a reason.

So I'm urging, as I have this opportunity to speak—and I don't have the opportunity to speak very often—that we should look into doing something on highway—

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Are they avoiding—

Mr. John Vanthof: No, for the trucks coming from Rouyn to Sudbury—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Mr. John Vanthof: And thank you to the former minister for giving me some—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: They're not avoiding anything. It's the shortest route from Rouyn to Sudbury. There's a lot more truck traffic on 64, I think, than people realize. It's treated as a secondary highway; it's a major transportation route. We're going to lose small cars in it soon. I kid you not. I'm just putting that on the record.

But the purpose of the bill today: The Ford government, the Progressive Conservative government, wants to build transit faster.

I'm not from the city, Speaker. I live in the city six months a year, since 2011, because of this job.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Because of the people.

Mr. John Vanthof: Eh, because of this job. Some of the people, like the minister who heckled me across the way, I could live without. No, actually, we're pretty good friends.

I have come to realize, in my part of the world, quite frankly, many don't understand the amount of people here that need to be moved. Urban transit is a necessity. As an Ontarian, I am very in favour of increased urban transit. This city and the cities around it need urban transit.

I am not the biggest user. Actually, the first subway I ever used—I think I've used the subway in Toronto maybe five times.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: And you don't have Presto.

Mr. John Vanthof: And I don't have a Presto card. But the first subway I ever used was the subway in Paris. The subway in Paris is incredibly interesting for a layperson because the way it's set up—Toronto couldn't do this, and

I'm not saying they should. Because Paris has so many very famous—like the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, those things. You can get on the subway and want to go to the Eiffel Tower, and you can just see that you can go from the Eiffel Tower to the Arc de Triomphe to Napoleon's tomb. So every time you get out of the subway, you're—whoa. It's an incredible experience. I recommend it to anyone. It's an easier system to navigate than ours. I'm just saying that from a layperson's perspective.

The one thing that wasn't easy to navigate—we took the train to Versailles. We had a kind of pass for the subway. We thought that the pass probably wouldn't work to Versailles, because that's quite a ways out, but it really wasn't clearly laid out. Luckily, we found the ticket counter, and we paid extra. This was years ago. My wife and I were on the train to Versailles, and there was a British couple behind us who obviously didn't find the ticket counter. Halfway to Versailles, the conductor went by for the tickets. Here, if you don't have a ticket, they usually allow you to pay. At that point, they were ejected off the train. It was not, "Welcome to France." I was quite shocked, and I hope that never happens here. It was a jarring experience.

But getting back to the bill: I think everyone in this House is in favour of improved transit, of more transit, of quicker transit. The problem with the bill—the purpose of the bill is quicker, faster, more, but many of the things in the bill—the government is removing checks and balances. I know this government isn't a fan of regulation—no one's a fan of regulation—but checks and balances are what protect our system.

0910

An issue that's facing the Ministry of Transportation right now, for example—it's a big safety issue—is licence plates. I'm not trying to make a joke with this, but there obviously were no checks and balances on the licence plate issue. I read in the media that the whole cabinet was in favour, so I don't know if you passed the plate around and all went "yay"—

Hon. Jeff Yurek: We made them.

Mr. John Vanthof: Maybe if you had made them they might—but maybe you all went "yay," and perhaps some of you were thinking, "I wonder if anybody has actually shone a light bulb on these things." But where were the checks and balances?

What makes this bill so galling, in a way, is that this government has failed to implement checks and balances on something as simple as creating a new licence plate—which really didn't need to be created. There is total failure of the checks and balances to have a licence plate that can be seen with light on it—total failure; capital F.

Now you're saying, "We're going to build this faster, and we don't need checks and balances. We can just expropriate. No right of appeal, because we have all the answers." You know what's going to happen, guys—people. Sorry; fellow colleagues. What's going to happen is the licence plates are going to be the least of your worries—because the reason you need good regulation and the reason you need proper planning is to make sure that things actually work when you start building them.

There is an old saying in carpentry—now, I don't pretend to be the greatest carpenter. Like, nine fingers; I'm not the greatest carpenter, but "measure twice and cut once." I have a fear that in your hurry to get this done, in your hurry to rip up plans that were already there, because they had something to do with the previous government—who had a lot of problems; I'm not saying they didn't—you're prepared to cut three or four times and then go, "Oh, wait a second. Perhaps we should measure," and that's actually going to slow the construction process down. It's actually going to cost a lot more money. Due diligence is very important here—very important.

The reason I'm focusing on something like the licence plates is that it was so simple, and it became so complicated simply because the process wasn't in place to make sure it was done right. And here, you're potentially creating this, times a billion, times multiple billion dollars. The licence plates can be fixed—we all know that—but there could be things that happen here that might not be fixed. In that, take heed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I appreciate listening to the member opposite on that question. I don't agree with his comments that there's going to be stuff missed through the process with what this government is doing if this legislation passes actually streamlining the process. I think the member opposite would be the first to be jumping up and down yelling and screaming at us if these projects were delayed. We're seeing that with their caucus now.

They can't have it both ways. They can't complain about how it's always delaying the process and we're always falling behind and paying extra, but when the government moves to prevent that from happening—the first government in the history of Ontario that's actually making the changes necessary to make sure this happens—they're upset about that change too. I don't know what they want. I know they're going to be in opposition in perpetuity—but let's get these projects built.

Can the minister tell me: What would you like, delayed projects or projects delivered on time? Please let us know.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I return back to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for response.

Mr. John Vanthof: I appreciate that the minister referred to me as a minister; I'm working on that, but we haven't really got that far yet.

Our goal as opposition is to have projects done right and done on time, and when criticism needs to be given, we will do so.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I want to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his words. We just heard the minister say they want to fast-track to build transit, but something that's always missing is—they forget the north. I'd like to hear from him how this government could improve or fix transit or transportation up north.

Mr. John Vanthof: I think that's known as a friendly question—

Hon. Bill Walker: Lob ball.

Mr. John Vanthof:—which the government is used to, because they do that to themselves all the time.

We don't have a lot of transit in the north. One thing that would link the north to the urban transit system—and we have committed to do it, as the government. We're hoping that in the next budget there will be a chunk of money set aside to bring passenger rail back to northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Niagara West for a question.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: The member opposite gave a very interesting speech. Often, the NDP criticize any actions that the government takes and seem to find fault with them no matter where we're going with things.

I just want to pose a question to the member opposite. I know that he wants to see faster transit built, as well, and that he wants to see transit built fast and safely. What would he do, if he was in government right now, to make sure that those timelines we want to see enacted are met without making the changes that are being brought forward in this legislation?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much to the member across the way.

One thing we wouldn't do is rip up a planning process that has been in the works for years, environmental assessments that have already been approved. We would perhaps use what's already there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question is really on the same line of the kind of waste that we see from this government, despite them talking about being fiscally responsible. In my riding of Hamilton, we have had planning that was 10 years in the making—approvals were in place, property has been expropriated. We're talking about penalties in the hundreds of millions of dollars, with no real evidence from the government as to why they're doing that. Can you speak a little more about not only the costs when good plans are ripped up on the whim of the government, but also about the impact that it has on people's trust and reliance that this government knows what they're doing.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the member for that question.

The Hamilton issue is a very good example. I believe a billion dollars was committed by the government, and then the government backtracked and cancelled and said, "The costs are going to be much higher than anticipated," which is an answer. But when the opposition did their job and asked for the numbers behind that, the explanation behind the cost, that was not forthcoming. The answer was, "Trust us." Well, we don't. To make a decision based on relevant information is credible. If you make a credible decision, you should have no problem showing us the information on which that decision was based.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Hon. Bill Walker: I'd like to commend the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, who brought in one of the most ambitious transportation plans in history for our province.

The member for Mushkegowuk—James Bay was talking about northern Ontario. I think he should ask the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane why he supported the budgets of the Liberals each year he was here and all the damage they did to northern Ontario, and particularly our First Nations communities.

0920

The member from Timiskaming—Cochrane—who I quite enjoy; he is a good guy—was talking a fair bit in his remarks about some of the fallacies of us in power. I'd like to ask him how they missed a minor little thing like \$7 billion in their election platform, and yet he can criticize us about trying to move transit. At the end of the day, Timiskaming—Cochrane, my good friend, can you just tell me about the small little thing that you overlooked? And maybe ask your leader in question period one of those lob questions today.

Mr. John Vanthof: I quite enjoyed that line of questioning.

A person who is very near and dear to me, the Minister of Agriculture, once told me, when I asked him why the government never answered questions during question period: "John, you have to realize that this is question period, not answer period."

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, so that's what you're doing now. You're not going to answer that.

Mr. John Vanthof: I learned from the best.

But getting back to what the minister is trying to do, because I did focus on—I used an example of something very simple that could go wrong and that, when you're dealing with something very complex, how that could be amplified. He asked something about complex issues, and I return with: With all the smart people there, how did you get the licence plate wrong?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciated the remarks from my colleague the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane. I heard him reference the licence plate debacle in his remarks, and also just now in his response to that question. I wanted to hear more about his thoughts as to whether the government's mismanagement of the licence plate fiasco inspires confidence in this government's ability to undertake the transit planning that is outlined in this bill.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you for that question.

Specifically, on public confidence on something as simple as the licence plate issue: If you will recall, when that issue first came up, the government's first response was to deny—"there's no issue"—even though people couldn't see the plate. The second response was: "Even though it doesn't work, it's still much better than the previous government's plate." Up until that point, I didn't know that licence plates were a partisan issue. I really didn't know. Because if I recall, the original plates were white and blue. Am I wrong?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: You're right.

Mr. John Vanthof: Right, white and blue—so more blue. And then the party of business, supposedly, what they do then is throw this company under the bus. They

throw 3M under the bus, saying that it's 3M's fault. Well, 3M built what the government wanted. You can't claim to be—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Time has expired.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): You're welcome.

Unfortunately, we don't have enough time for questions and comments. Therefore, further debate.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: As always, it's a real privilege to be able to stand in this House on behalf of the good people of Niagara West and speak to legislation that comes before this chamber. Today, I have the great privilege of speaking about the Building Transit Faster Act, and making sure that we're able to get things done here in the province of Ontario.

I represent a mixed riding, one that's always a little difficult to describe. I tell people that it's mixed rural and urban. It's not truly suburban, it's not truly urban, but it's also not truly rural. We do have five municipalities with quite dense urban cores in some of the areas. I'm sure many of you have had the chance—I know many of my colleagues over the weekend had to visit Niagara Falls, and as you drove through the Niagara region, you would have passed by Grimsby. Of course, we're seeing construction there now at an unprecedented level: 18-storey towers are going up in Grimsby along the waterfront, across from where the GO train will be going. We're seeing incredible growth in Beamsville as well, which is an area with a significant amount of new people moving in. I believe we had over \$200 million in building starts, new construction starts, last year in the area.

The reason this matters, Speaker, is that as we all know, Toronto once upon a time was also a little town—a little farming village, in fact. The town of York didn't have a lot of transit to its name back in the day. It was, of course, very muddy. It was considered to be a bit of a provincial town, in the pejorative sense. The reason I say that is because the consequences of our actions in legislation such as this today are far-reaching and consequential for generations in the future.

I had the privilege as I was planning this speech this morning of looking at some of the other historic routes not just across North America, but across the world. Some of these, obviously, have had a great history, going back to the 19th century for subway systems in Europe in portions; for example, the London Underground.

But I want to just provide a few statistics for the sake of this House and understand a little bit of context for why this is such important legislation, and why we need to move forward and get transit built. Speaker, there are more than 150 metro systems across the globe. The top 10 largest systems by number of stations include: New York City with 468 stations; the Shanghai metro with 337 stations; the Beijing subway with 319 stations; the Seoul subway, 311; the Paris metro, 303 stations; the Madrid metro, 300; the London Underground, 270 stations—the list goes on, but the sad part is where we see the city of Toronto, with 75 stations.

I want to go by length of track, because we know, as well, that stations don't mean everything. You can build a lot of stations on a very short line; that wouldn't be the only metric. The top 10 largest metro stations and systems by length of track include the Shanghai metro at 548 kilometres; the Beijing subway at 527 kilometres; the London Underground at 402 kilometres; the New York City subway at 373 kilometres; Seoul at 332; Moscow, 328; Madrid, 394—the numbers go on, Speaker, but the number again that I find concerning as someone who has the great privilege of serving in this city at Queen's Park as the elected representative for Niagara West being sent here is that there are, in fact, only 77 kilometres in the subway of Toronto.

The reason this matters is that in our plan, we plan on expanding by over 30 kilometres of additional subway lines. That's a significant amount of construction, something we haven't seen in decades here in this city, something that matters.

Again, to go back to my earlier comment about the growth happening in Niagara, Beamsville and Grimsby, including up the mountain in Smithville, where I live, where we're seeing urban expansion, as well as towers now moving in: These sorts of infrastructure projects don't just matter for us today. It's about generations going into the future and making sure that as we look and move towards a carbon-neutral economy, as we move towards more sustainable forms of transportation, ones that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, that we have the services in place to make sure we're able to reach those targets. I know that's something that matters a great deal for people here in this House.

As you know, our government also made historic announcements with regard to the GO train. Prior to taking office, the GO train went into Niagara approximately a few times a week. We saw on the weekends that there was at first just weekend service in the summer, but what then happened under the watch of our Minister of Transportation—and I want to give a shout-out to those who have served as Ministers of Transportation, including the current Minister of the Environment, who came down to Niagara and announced four years ahead of schedule that the GO train was going every single day, once in the morning, once in the evening, in and out of Niagara. It's an absolutely incredible boost for the ridership and the regional interconnectivity of our transit systems in the Niagara region. That's just one step in the puzzle.

Of course, now in my local riding, people are starting to have conversations about busing. They're starting to have conversations about the need to build transit connected to that GO network, which, as we saw recently this fall, is now also expanded to weekdays, so every single day of the year we have trains going in and out of Niagara—except for right now, of course, due to unfortunate situations with the illegal blockades.

0930

That being said, the reason this type of legislation matters is that for far too long we've played catch-up. For far too long, we've played the role as government—not

this government, but as a government in Ontario—that has said, “Transit matters, but we’ll do it next decade. Transit matters, but we’ll do it after this subject.” Speaker, that time is over.

This is now a government that not only speaks the words of commitment to building transit and not only provides the funding for building that transit, but takes the actions to remove the regulatory burdens and cost barriers that drive up not only the time of building subways and building transit, but also the associated costs that go along with that time. For we know time is money, in particular when it comes to construction. This legislation really guarantees that we’re able to move forward with the priority projects that we’ve talked about, including the Ontario Line and expansions across the GTA.

This is really only the beginning, Speaker, because as we see this growth—as we saw Toronto, Muddy York, turn into a global, metropolitan city—we need to ensure that infrastructure exists. But as we see other cities growing in this province, including of course neighbouring municipalities, but also moving down into the Niagara region, that growth that is now being sustained there means we need to think proactively about what sort of measures need to be in place to remove those regulatory burdens that currently stop the construction of meaningful transit projects. I’m not too worried about having a subway in west Niagara any time soon. I don’t think that’s something that I’ll likely see in my lifetime. I frankly hope we don’t. I hope that we retain much of our small-town agricultural feel. But we are moving towards a more integrated transit system when it comes to buses and when it comes to innovative models of transportation. Our municipalities are working together in very remarkable ways.

But the reason I bring that up is because for far too long we have seen politicians and governments, including the members in opposition, pledge lip service to actions such as becoming carbon-free or carbon-neutral without taking the necessary steps. This is the conundrum I see on this side of the House when we look at not only the opposition but parties in the past, including the former Wynne Liberals, who claimed to want to increase public transit. All they did was address the demand side of the equation. All they did was focus on trying to encourage more people to get onto the trains or onto the buses or onto the subways—the demand side of the equation—but they didn’t actually look at the supply side, which ensures that there’s adequate access to the places people need to go through transit.

That’s of course the work that our excellent Minister of Transportation as well as her parliamentary assistant are now bringing forward with this legislation. It’s a key enabling piece to that proposition of a truly world-class transportation system, including a subway system that we can be proud of and that will be here not just for today, but for future generations, for those who come after us.

Before I end, I want to include in the record a quote from the Toronto Region Board of Trade:

“Construire plus rapidement les transports en commun est une priorité essentielle, non seulement pour les

entreprises mais aussi pour les résidents. Il est essentiel de lever les obstacles inutiles pour garantir que les principaux projets de transport en commun soient réalisés dans les délais et dans le respect du budget.”

These types of endorsements, Speaker, matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thanks to the member from Niagara West.

I think that it needs to be perfectly clear that we understand the need to build transit in this province. We understand that, again, from the point of view of Hamilton, where we’ve lost the LRT. This government callously cut the LRT plan. We’re disappointed. So I want to make sure we understand that we are very, very committed to this.

But this bill, Bill 171, isn’t just streamlining the process; it’s steamrolling the process. As we’ve seen before with this government, you take these bills and give the government and the government’s friends and the government’s connections inordinate powers, beyond what should be considered due process.

I wonder if the member could explain to me why it’s deemed necessary that the minister is given unilateral power to enter people’s properties and that they have been given unilateral power to expropriate properties without a hearing and, in effect, give that power to Metrolinx.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Niagara West for response.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for the questioning with regard to particular aspects of this legislation. I will get to her point in a moment.

One of the key pieces I want to mention, though, is that she talked about the LRT. The reality is—I know they don’t like to talk about it—they’re still getting a billion dollars in Hamilton. They’re still getting the billion dollars that we committed to.

The reality is, we’re not going to put their taxpayers on the hook for north of \$3 billion, if not more from numbers that I have heard—with regard to that cost on the backs of the taxpayers, including those who can’t afford that. That is really why we’re moving forward with these types of actions in areas that are important.

But I want to say, whether it is a property owner or a municipality, our first and preferred approach is always negotiation and partnership—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Further questions?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I listened intently to the remarks from my colleague the member for Niagara West. Like him, I’m also not a member who is actually from Toronto or the GTA. I hail all the way from lovely Ottawa West–Nepean. And while we in Ottawa like to tease Toronto occasionally—tease them for being the only NHL team to have lost to a Zamboni driver—we do also love and appreciate Toronto, and we recognize how critically important this city is to our provincial economy. I’m always stunned to read that Toronto is now the fourth-

largest city in North America. That's an impressive statistic for all of us to know.

As I live in Toronto now, I get the chance to use the subway, and I recognize the importance of getting that built.

I'm curious if the member for Niagara West can elaborate on just how important this bill is not just for the GTA, but for all of Ontario and all of our communities?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Absolutely. Thank you so much to the member for Ottawa West–Nepean for his contribution and for the question.

I think the numbers speak for themselves. I went into a bit of a background earlier in my address with regard to some of the lengths of kilometres on different tracks as well as the various stations, but I think it's very important to also talk about the ridership. These are people who are not driving vehicles in that situation, they're not emitting more carbon—as well as the fact that the convenience and the affordability disproportionately help those with low income and who might be less privileged in our society.

I think it's important to look at those numbers and see that, in fact, when it comes to the largest metro systems by ridership, Beijing, Tokyo, Shanghai, Seoul and Moscow—north of three billion people or north of 2.5 billion people are on their subways every single year. We're not seeing numbers even remotely close to that, which is why we need the subways built—so that we can ensure greater accessibility and ensure people can get to where they need to go by the method they want to use, which is subways.

Thank you to the member.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I find it interesting that the member from Niagara West is assuring the people of Hamilton that we'll be getting a billion dollars, but we are not getting a higher-order transit system. Apparently, we're going to get a billion dollars, but we're just going to have to trust this government, because that decision is being made in private, behind closed doors, by a group of people that was appointed by the government. This proves my point exactly. This is a government that takes power to themselves, makes decisions in private, and doesn't consult with the community.

Again, my question would be, what does this member have to say to a business owner when, if their property is expropriated by Metrolinx, by the province, they have lost the right to compensation if they hinder or obstruct or interfere? How in any way is that business-friendly?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I know what I can tell the member opposite and I know what I can tell the people of Hamilton they're going get: They're getting reduced taxes. They're not going to be put on the bill for \$7 billion, \$8 billion worth of tax increases on their property rate.

We're seeing that they're going to have more money in their pocket with measures such as the low-income family tax credit to make sure that it's easier for them and their families to get ahead. We're seeing moves on the relief from child care expenses tax credit.

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As we approach tax season, I know the people not just in Niagara West, but the people in Hamilton, right next door, are going to be taking advantage of these initiatives to make it easier for them and their families to get ahead.

I want to address the specifics of the question and assure the member opposite that for an obstruction removal, the legislation requires that notice be provided in writing and include the following information:

- the work to be carried out;
- the date by which the work must be completed;
- that the owner shall be negotiated with in good faith to further the work;
- that if agreement has not been reached during the period ending on the day that is 30 days after the day that the notice was served, the minister may carry out an obstruction removal;
- the entitlement to compensation—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Further questions?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'd like to thank the member from Niagara West as well as the minister and the associate minister for working on Bill 171.

As we all know, gridlock costs the greater Toronto area \$6 billion a year and is projected to hit \$15 billion within the next decade.

This bill gets transit projects moving faster.

My constituents in Mississauga–Lakeshore really appreciate this bill. Can the member tell us what his constituents are saying about Bill 171?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Niagara West for a response.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore for his question and, of course, his advocacy on behalf of the people of Mississauga and the greater Peel region. You do fantastic work, and it's a privilege to be in this House alongside you.

To the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore: What I'm hearing from my constituents is similar to what I'm sure you're hearing. The reality is, many of our constituents have experienced the frustration of snarled congestion in the GTA. They have seen how difficult it can be to get from Niagara to Oshawa, or Mississauga to Oshawa. Any of these types of commutes become that much more difficult as we see tens of thousands more cars on the road every single year. Unfortunately, under the former government, we never saw investments in it. So they're very pleased to see this that government is taking it seriously, that we're moving towards resolving some of the issues stopping subways from getting built, and they want to see other transit projects move forward expeditiously, as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I've said it before and I'll say it again: This bill is not streamlining a process; it is steam-rolling a process over the rights of individuals, over the rights of businesses, over communities, not to mention the environment. This is a bill that does not even take into

serious consideration the environmental assessment impacts of this project.

But most disturbing of all is the immunity, the excessive powers, that this government is giving to Metrolinx. Right now, in public accounts, we're considering the Auditor General's report that's looking at the political meddling that took place under the previous government with Metrolinx.

So my question is very simple: When Metrolinx has already shown itself to be not immune from political meddling, when it is a P3 system of building transit that is being shown to be the most expensive way to build transit, why is this government giving all the powers, the keys to the castle, to Metrolinx?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Niagara West for a response.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you, again, to the member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas for her question. I appreciate the chance for some dialogue this morning with regard to my address on the Building Transit Faster Act.

I want to be very clear to those listening, those who may have heard the member's question. Her assertion that our government is not taking seriously the environmental concerns associated with building transit projects is invalid. The reality is, we are taking those concerns very seriously, but we're saying, let's be reasonable when it come to the timelines associated with that. It doesn't mean that you're not protecting the environment or that you're doing anything harmful if you're—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Chris Glover: It's an honour to stand up here today and talk about Bill 171. I have a number of concerns. I think the general intention of the bill, to build transit in this city, is absolutely right. We absolutely need more transit built in this city. The problem with this bill is, it's going to be done through a P3, which will cost us a lot more money and download costs onto future generations. It runs roughshod over the rights of municipalities and individuals and communities. It runs roughshod over the environmental assessment process. And it doesn't measure community impacts. Ultimately, this act will not build transit faster.

I'm actually here today because of Mike Harris. When Mike Harris was in power, my kids were in elementary school. He kept making cut after cut to schools. I was so frustrated I joined a group called the Toronto Parent Network, and we organized press conferences to raise awareness of what was happening in schools. We organized protests out on the steps of Queen's Park to protest against the cuts to schools.

Just one example of some of those cuts: the maintenance backlog in the schools in Ontario was \$6 billion when the former Conservatives were booted out of power—that was increased to \$16 billion by the Liberals—so I was always frustrated with Mike Harris's approach to education and his lack of funding for education.

As a resident of Toronto for the last 40 years, the other thing that I really hated about the Harris government was

their decision to cancel the Eglinton subway. The NDP had already started building a subway line on Eglinton Avenue, and the Conservatives spent \$10 million filling in the hole. They spent \$10 million just filling in the hole so that the subway wouldn't get built. And the reason that I'm so frustrated with the Conservative government's decision to cancel this Eglinton subway at the time is that transit—because the traffic gridlock in this city costs us \$6 billion a year—

Hon. Jeff Yurek: We're trying to fix it with this bill.

Mr. Chris Glover: I don't think you're going to fix this. If you were going to fix this, and if I had confidence in this government in fixing the traffic gridlock—I'll just give you a brief example of how bad the traffic gridlock is in this city. I was taking my kids to the CNE. I was driving to the CNE—my daughter, her friend and my son. I wanted to turn left on King Street—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please. I'm having difficulty hearing the speaker from Spadina—Fort York. I would ask that the members keep their comments to a very, very dull roar. There will be an opportunity for questions and for responses. At that time, if you do have a concern, you will have an opportunity to ask the member. But until then, I would like to be able to hear the member speak, and so therefore I would ask that we remain parliamentary in our approach to debate.

Now I turn it back to the member from Spadina—Fort York to continue.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

So we're driving to the CNE, and I wanted to turn left on King Street. I wasn't able to turn left on King Street; I couldn't get over. So I thought, okay, I'll just go up around the block: three rights and make a left when you're driving, right? It took an hour and 15 minutes to get around the block. At one point, my daughter and her friend got out of the car, walked up to Tim Hortons, got some coffee and doughnuts for us and brought them back. We drank them and ate them in the car while we were still waiting to get around the block. That's how bad the traffic gridlock is in this city.

I was a school board trustee with the TDSB before this, and for every construction project that the TDSB has in this city they have to pay a premium on the construction cost because of the time delays for trucks getting to and from the construction site. That's just the TDSB; that's just one entity within the city.

So does transit need to be built? Absolutely. But if you're going to spend \$29 billion on transit, you better do it in the best way and you better have the best plan. What I have not seen from this government is a cost-benefit analysis of their plan versus any other plan, and that's absolutely essential. If you're going to invest \$29 billion of taxpayer money into a transit plan, you should be able to say, "Well, look, the reason we're building this particular plan versus any other is that this will move the most people for the least cost." I have yet to see that from this government.

The other transit plan that was cancelled by the Conservatives: When the Fords were in power at the city, the first thing they did was to cancel the Transit City plan. If they had let that go ahead, Scarborough would have a seven-stop LRT functioning right now. Instead, 10 years later, they still have nothing. There is this plan for at some point in the future to have a three-stop subway to replace the current five-stop LRT. For that \$5 billion—this is why I would like to see that cost-benefit analysis—you could build a 24-stop LRT in Scarborough. But because the Fords, when they were at the city, cancelled the Transit City plan, Scarborough is waiting an extra 20 years to have transit.

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The other thing I want to mention about the reason that it's so important to build transit is that there is an estimate by HDR Decision Economics that says there is a 12.5% return on investment in transit. But it has to be the right transit, and it has to be provided in the right way and financed in the right way. One of the concerns about this current plan is that it's going to be financed through a public-private partnership. The Attorney General has said that public-private partnerships cost an additional 28% over the—

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Auditor.

Mr. Chris Glover: The Auditor General. Thank you. I thank the government for correcting me there.

The Auditor General has reported that it would cost an extra 28% to build any infrastructure through a public-private partnership, as opposed to just financing it directly. What the public-private partnership allows you to do—or this government to do—is to hide the costs and pass them on to future generations, but it gives the public far less control of what is built, when it's built and how it operates. We've seen an absolute disaster with the public-private partnership transit project in Ottawa. P3s, public-private partnerships, cost more and deliver less.

The other concern about this bill is that it runs roughshod over the rights of municipalities and individuals. This is a deep concern. The government is taking the power upon themselves to expropriate property and to go on to property without due process. They are eliminating that due process. That is a real concern for the municipalities, it's a concern for the utility companies and it's a concern for individuals.

This bill and the government's intentions do not measure the impact that this will have on communities. I'm deeply concerned about that because the zero track, which is a track on the east side of Union Station, is to be built within 15 metres of some of the residences in my riding. When this was being planned, it was originally planned as GO Transit—GO train—but it's been cancelled and now it's going to be coming back. But with this bill, you won't have to compensate the communities for the construction. You won't have to compensate the communities for the impact on their lives.

The final thing I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, is that this process runs roughshod over the environment. It changes the environmental assessment process so that companies can start construction while the environmental

assessment is still being done. It makes a mockery of the environmental assessment process.

A draft proposal outlines a new project-specific, streamlined environmental assessment process for the Ontario Line that would allow Metrolinx to proceed with early works before the EA for the overall project is completed. Early works would still be subject to their own assessment processes, like mini environmental assessments, within the larger environmental assessment. But these early works, what the construction company will be able to start without the environmental assessment, are not defined. So, basically, the environmental assessment process is completely null and void. It loses all of its meaning.

The final thing I would like to say is, will the community impacts even be studied? This is a question to the government: Will the community impacts even be studied as part of this process?

My concern with this bill is that it's not streamlining the process; it's steamrolling the process. It's creating red tape for municipalities and for utilities. We need collaborative planning with municipalities, with communities, in order to build better transit. This will not build transit faster.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Time for questions.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: It's been interesting listening to the member opposite speaking about the plans to get transit built faster in the GTA. As we know, the best prediction of future behaviour is past behaviour. I have to say to the member opposite representing the party that the one time that they were in government, back in 1994, they sold the entire rolling stock of GO Transit to a holding company in Bermuda, owned by a US bank. The one-time revenue of \$425 million reduced the deficit heading into the 1995 election, but 12 years later we had to buy back the whole GO Transit from this company.

Could the member explain why anyone should take them seriously when the one time they were in government they mismanaged everything?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Response?

Mr. Chris Glover: That's an interesting question you're asking. You're asking why we would sell GO Transit to a private operator, and that's exactly what this government is doing. They have got a request for proposal out to privatize the entire GO Transit operating, the expansion of GO Transit and the maintenance of GO Transit. Why would you be privatizing GO Transit when you're criticizing the NDP for selling off or privatizing a small portion of it 25 years ago?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Spadina-Fort York for his comments. Just drawing upon what the member from Mississauga-Lakeshore said in talking about indicators of future behaviour, the member from Spadina-Fort York quite rightly mentioned the billion dollars Mike Harris stripped from the education system and how dividing administrators against educators has really caused a rift that has never healed. We all know

what Snobelen had to say about creating a crisis in education.

My question is, why does this government prefer using P3 models, public-private partnerships such as the one found in Bill 171?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: There is no responsible economist who would say they should be doing a P3, that this government should finance the expansion of transit through a P3, because the private companies that will be borrowing money to build the transit have to pay a higher interest rate than the government would have to pay. Ultimately, those costs will be downloaded on to taxpayers and future taxpayers who will have to pay for that. That's why the Auditor General has said that it costs 28% extra to build public infrastructure through a P3 rather than through the government directly doing it themselves.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. David Piccini: I just wanted to briefly comment on this, just to address my colleague's comment about past behaviour.

I think it's important to look at the last year. I know, being from a rural riding just east of Toronto, that over the past year we've seen an increase in GO Transit by 25%, drastically improving commuting for residents in Northumberland–Peterborough South, specifically on the Clarington portion. That's been huge for our riding.

Specifically, the Ontario Line here—getting this done faster benefits folks in my riding of rural Ontario, too, who are trying to get in for a ball game. People are trying to get in and through the GTA.

It's Dairy Farmers of Ontario day today. I know farmers go through the GTA a lot to get their products to market, to get to the food terminal in Etobicoke. I know when we're taking people off the roads and getting them on to public transit faster, it's better for folks in rural Ontario and my riding as well.

Secondly, on P3s, it's not surprising to see the NDP is unaware that already 80% of the network is private, but they'd be against it because they've never met a project where they wouldn't dip deeper and deeper into the public troughs for more and more money. These are innovative partnerships, and it's better for the taxpayer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: I don't quite understand the question. You're saying we would dig deeper and deeper into the public trough, but that's exactly what you're doing. You're making taxpayers pay a 28% premium on the cost of this transit expansion by having it financed through a P3 rather than if you did it directly as the government. I don't quite understand the question.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Under Bill 171, the minister claims vast new powers to resolve disputes over expropriation, corridor management, road closures and many more things.

I'd like to ask the member from Spadina–Fort York, through you, Speaker: In your opinion, do you think this sets the government up as a nanny state?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: It's deeply concerning the way this government completely disrespects the democratic and property rights of the people of this province, and I'll give you an example. Last year, in the summer of 2018, the government unilaterally decided to change the rules of Toronto's municipal election in the middle of the election campaign. Then, when they were initially turned down by the courts, who said that wasn't allowed, they brought in the "notwithstanding" clause. They threatened to withhold the constitutional rights of the people of this province to get their way.

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So when I see what they're doing with this bill in overriding the municipal and property rights of the people of this province, it's not something that they haven't done in the past; it's something that they continue to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks for delivering your speech today in debate. We don't really agree on that. You're making mentions of previous Premiers; you only have to look back to the one time NDP served in office here—Premier Bob Rae, who ran out of the people's money halfway through his mandate. He even shut down the Legislature for over a year because he had no money to budget for it. He even went forth with his social contract, which caused people to work for free or stay at home and not get paid, costing them wages. Do you know why? It's because they didn't have a financial plan.

It's interesting. The member is talking about costs here, whereas in health care he wants to double spending. In education he wants to triple spending. No offence to that—I'd love to do that too—but you have to do it under a fiscal plan that moves forward. You don't have a plan.

This is the party that voted against the Northlander in northern Ontario, this is the party that's against our south-western transportation plan, and now this is the party against the Toronto expansion of subways. Why are you against transit expansion in this province?

Mr. Chris Glover: We are absolutely for transit expansion in this province, because it's absolutely necessary. It's necessary for people, for convenience, and it's also necessary for the growth of our economy.

But if you want to talk about previous records, the other thing is that this government is just stuck in this ideological mindset where privatization—you think it's going to create better outcomes, but it creates disastrous outcomes. When you talk about the previous Conservative government, when they privatized water treatment, seven people died in Walkerton and 2,500 were poisoned. When you privatized, when you sold off the 407 to a Spanish conglomerate for a hundred-year contract there—we are continuing to pay the cost of that 407. The Conservatives sold it for \$3 billion; it's now worth \$33 billion. So privatization is not the solution.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: To the member from Spadina–Fort York, through you, Speaker: We hear this government drone on about their municipal partners, yet you quite rightly said how we saw this government meddle in municipal elections, going nuclear with the “notwithstanding” clause. Why do this government’s words not match their actions when it comes to dealing with municipalities?

Mr. Chris Glover: I can’t speak to the actions of this government, but the other action they took was that they were going to upload or take control of the Toronto subway. The quote from the bill that they had was to do it “with or without compensation,” so they were going to take control of all of the property of the Toronto subway system with or without compensation, in complete defiance of the property rights of the municipality and the taxpayers of Toronto who actually paid for that subway system.

So I have no idea. I cannot answer for this government. I disagree with the approach that they’re taking. I agree that we do need transit, but not through a P3 and not without environmental assessments or without respect for the rights of municipalities or individuals.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions? I recognize the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, and we have very short time.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Okay. Thank you very much, Speaker. It’s a real pleasure to join debate today.

What I can’t understand about the NDP is that they’re never happy. I wonder, from the member opposite, why they cannot just get behind what every level of government in the province is getting behind, which is this particular project. I think, Speaker, that we have a tremendous opportunity, and as Minister of Tourism, I want to know: Why do they want to continue to have bottlenecks in the city of Toronto, our largest city in the province?

Mr. Chris Glover: We absolutely need to get transit built in this city. I gave the example of the gridlock in this city, and that it costs \$6 billion a year—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. The time for speed dating—sorry, I mean speed debating is over.

Now I turn it over to the member from Whitby for further debate.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker. I’m happy this morning to talk about our proposed legislation, the Building Transit Faster Act, and how it will get people moving in the greater Toronto area, including Whitby.

In the discussions I’ve had with constituents in Whitby, it’s no secret that transportation has been neglected throughout our province. What is also clear is that investment hasn’t kept up with demand and, as a result, there is gridlock, aging infrastructure and overcrowded, outdated transit systems. From Ottawa to Windsor to Kenora, it simply takes people too long to get around, and that’s why our government is making transportation a

priority, as it should. We have a plan that will make it easier for people to get around no matter where they live.

Right across Ontario, we are investing in infrastructure to fight congestion, connect people to communities and jobs, and spur economic activities. Whether it’s adding bus service to connect rural and northern communities, improving major highways to fight congestion or building transit infrastructure, our foot is on the gas. And, of course, our commitment to delivering four new rapid transit lines in the greater Toronto area is a significant part of that plan. Nowhere is the need to get people moving more apparent than in this region.

I hear from a lot of people about the challenges they face getting to and from their work in the greater Toronto area—as recently as a meeting I had with the advocacy committee at the Whitby Chamber of Commerce. People are frustrated and that frustration came through in that meeting with the advocacy committee at the chamber. They are stuck in traffic, wasting hours of their lives sitting on congested highways trying to get in and out of the city, or they’re crammed into overcrowded stations and trains that are often delayed. Anyone who has been at Yonge station during a subway delay, as I often am, taking a GO train into Toronto and up to Queen’s Park, knows what I mean when I say it’s putting people in dangerous situations.

Speaker, when you’re worried about your personal safety or missing appointments or being late for work, it weighs on you, and I know you understand that. The transportation experience has such a profound impact on a person’s quality of life. We need to do better, and we are doing better with this proposed legislation. Our government is going to give it to them. People are suffering because greater Toronto area transit takes way too long to build.

I’m happy to say that our government is taking action. We’ve committed to four exciting new projects for riders, and we’re doing it in record time—the first as early as 2027. Building transit is what our government campaigned on, and we’re delivering on our promise to build a public transit system that the people of the greater Toronto area so desperately need and deserve. People need to get home to their families quicker, and everyone deserves to enjoy all that the greater Toronto area has to offer.

Our subway plan now endorsed by the province, Mayor Tory and city council is realistic, attainable and deliverable. It will bring subway infrastructure to new neighbourhoods across Toronto, Markham and Richmond Hill. That plan includes:

- the signature Ontario Line, delivered as early as 2027, that will bring rapid transit to neighbourhoods such as Liberty Village and Flemingdon Park. It will also address dangerous overcrowding on the TTC’s Line 1 and at Bloor-Yonge station;

- the Yonge North extension, delivered by 2029-30, that will extend the TTC’s Line 1 to major employment centres in Markham and Richmond Hill;

- the Scarborough subway extension, delivered before 2029-30, that will finally bring a subway line for the residents of Scarborough;

—the Eglinton Crosstown West extension, delivered by 2030-31, that will improve connectivity along Eglinton Avenue and enable future access—and this is an important aspect—to Pearson airport.

1010

Speaker, our government is committed to working with the city of Toronto and the Toronto Transit Commission to get shovels in the ground, lay the tracks, buy the trains and deliver more transit for more people, all within accelerated timelines. Those projects and timelines are ambitious, yes, but can we really afford not to be?

I often hear from people—and I spoke about the meetings that I've had with the advocacy committee of the Whitby Chamber of Commerce, but I also hear it from major sectors in my riding as well, from people who are thinking of moving away from Toronto because of the congestion and lost time that has just become too much. It has just become too much for them.

By 2030, there will be over one million more people in the greater Toronto area, bringing the total population to over eight million people. By 2045, that number is expected to hit 10 million. What's clear, Speaker, is that our existing transit network is already overburdened. Clearly something needs to change. We need more infrastructure and we need it immediately. Building transit faster is critical to unlocking the gridlock, relieving congestion and generating long-term economic and employment opportunities in the greater Toronto area.

Speaker, more transit relieves overcrowding, connects more people to places and shortens commutes, but it also has a ripple effect on the communities and roads around it. More people on transit means fewer people on the roads. In the greater Toronto area today, the average commute to and from work is 48 minutes both ways. For many, it can be much longer. Not only is it a significant inconvenience to our daily lives, but it costs our province hugely in loss productivity.

I want to cite a couple of research reports. The C.D. Howe Institute has said that our region loses \$11 billion in productivity each year as a result of gridlock. According to the Toronto Region Board of Trade, gridlock adds \$400 million to the cost of goods in our region. Speaker, just think about that for a moment. Those figures, taken together, are staggering, absolutely staggering, and that's just today. Looking at those figures, these problems demand action. The greater Toronto area needs more transit to cope with the gridlock of today and the growth of tomorrow.

Simply put, we're out of time. We must address our transit capacity as quickly as possible. To do that, Speaker, the status quo is no longer an option. You understand that. Others in this assembly understand that. People who live in the greater Toronto area understand that. The current approach takes too long and doesn't produce transit infrastructure. Changes need to be made. We need to clear the way of roadblocks and commit to doing things differently, and that is exactly what this legislation is all about.

I know I'm running out of time here, so I'm going to wrap up a bit. If passed, the Building Transit Faster Act will cut bureaucratic red tape and break down the silos that

have held up projects in the past. It will help us meet our ambitious timelines for our priority subway projects and deliver the transit network that people desperately need.

Now, Speaker, I know there has been a lot of collaboration with Metrolinx—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. Thank you very much. Unfortunately, the time for debate has expired. I will add, though, to the member that there will be an opportunity for questions and responses the next time that this bill is brought forward.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Therefore, it is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Guy Bourgouin: Malgré ce que le gouvernement dit, l'accès aux services juridiques en français en Ontario demeure plus une illusion qu'une réalité.

La semaine dernière, j'ai été informé que le Tribunal de l'aide sociale de l'Ontario n'offre pas des audiences en français dans la région de Kapuskasing. Selon la Clinique juridique Grand-Nord, trois audiences en français ont dû être annulées récemment, car le tribunal n'a pas de ressources pour desservir la population francophone.

La Loi sur les services en français garantit le droit de recevoir des services en français du gouvernement de l'Ontario dans les régions désignées, et la région de Kapuskasing est une région désignée par la loi. C'est-à-dire, peu importe où se situent les bureaux gouvernementaux, c'est la localisation des clients qui détermine l'offre des services en français.

Il y a au moins 50 francophones à faible revenu qui attendent depuis un an pour faire valoir leurs droits linguistiques.

La Clinique juridique Grand-Nord a déposé une plainte avec le commissaire aux services en français en 2015 et encore une autre récemment. Ni l'ancien gouvernement libéral ni le gouvernement de Doug Ford ont été à la hauteur de faire appliquer la loi. Je demande donc à la ministre des Affaires francophones d'adresser tous les dossiers dans son portfolio, y compris ceux hors des grands centres.

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr. Billy Pang: As many of us may know, on February 8, the Chinese, Tibetan, Vietnamese and Korean communities gathered to celebrate the end of the lunar new year, as we welcomed the year of the golden rat.

Before I continue, it's important to note that the rat is perceived quite differently in Chinese culture. The rat is held with high regard, as it is considered to be quick-witted, resourceful, versatile and, more importantly, kind. Anyone born in this year should be proud to be a rat, including myself.

On February 8, MP Bob Saroya and I hosted a successful lunar new year celebration in our riding to ring in the year of the rat. I was filled with immense joy, as we had many members of our community come out and celebrate even though, back home, their country is working hard to contain the coronavirus. To those impacted, I applaud and admire your strength and your ability to overcome adversity. Our community will continue to stay united and stand with you as we continue to combat the coronavirus. It's events such as these that bring our community together, while celebrating the strength that our province finds through diversity.

A special thanks to the members Lindsey Park and Lorne Coe, the deputy mayor of Markham and city councillors who came out to celebrate the year of the rat with the community of Markham–Unionville.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jeff Burch: I rise today to speak on behalf of 97-year-old Paul Lapointe, who lives in a small, shared fourth-floor room, in a hospital bed, at the Welland County General Hospital. Paul and his family are desperately trying to get him placed into the francophone long-term-care home in my riding, Foyer Richelieu.

Paul and his family wrote a letter that was shared widely in Niagara. He was told he can no longer return to his retirement home, as he requires more care than they can provide. His family has been told by the province that he might face as much as five more years on the waiting list he joined in late 2018.

Paul has a message for this government. “Our government needs to build more nursing homes. They need to take care of their elderly. We were all once very active members of society. We worked hard all our lives and paid our fair share into society.”

When contacted by media, the member from Niagara West stated that over the next decade, Niagara will get 300 new beds. The wait-list for long-term care in my riding is almost 3,000. The 96 beds for Foyer Richelieu included in that number were promised in 2007 by the Liberals.

Seniors like Paul are stuck in the hospital with no alternative options. Niagara has the second-largest aging population in the province. I urge this government to treat this crisis with the urgency that it deserves. As Paul told me when I met with him at the Welland hospital, today's seniors are being treated as the forgotten generation.

1020

WILDFIRES IN AUSTRALIA

Mr. Mike Harris: It is with tremendous honour that I rise today to highlight the great steps our government has taken towards combatting wildfires in Australia. The impacts that these fires have had on Australian families and the environment are absolutely heartbreaking, Mr. Speaker. Over 18 million hectares of Australian countryside were engulfed in flames last year. These flames consumed roughly 2,800 homes, displacing countless

families. And it's not only Australia's human population that has felt the effects of these fires, either; millions of animals are reported to have died over the past year as a result.

Australia needs Ontario's help, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud to say that we have their back. Since December 3, 35 fire management personnel from Ontario have travelled to assist Australia in their firefighting efforts. These fire management personnel range from operations and logistics chiefs to helicopter base managers. I would encourage everyone to keep the people of Australia in their thoughts during this difficult time.

In this vein, on a lighter note, our family has recently added a new addition, a bearded dragon, a native species to Australia, and we have affectionately named her Bondi. She now shares a name with one of Australia's most popular destinations, Bondi Beach, which I have had the pleasure of visiting.

Australia is truly a treasure and I'm proud of the work our government is doing to support them.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I want to read part of a letter from Lesley Scherer, a mom from Newcastle, to the Premier:

“Dear Mr.” Premier....

“Tonight I had to call 911 because my 12-year-old son with autism ran away from home.

“He ran into traffic....

“My 12-year-old wanted to die.

“Now I know from your past that you aren't a big fan of people with ASD—may I remind you of your own words, ‘My heart goes out to kids with autism. But no one told me they'd be leaving the house.’ Disgusting yes, but they are your words, sir.

“Let me tell you something, Mr.” Premier. “My son is one of the sweetest, most imaginative, and loving people in this world. He is bright and he is caring and he makes the world better by being in it. He thinks in ways you can't imagine and his memory is extraordinary. He is inventive and generous. He has good days and he has bad days, and tonight was the worst he's ever had.

“You see, Mr.” Premier, “my son is out of routine. He missed several days of school last week because his teachers are busy fighting for his future....

Mr. Premier, “you are so busy making cuts to education, mental health services and autism supports in my son's school ... that you are literally cutting every service that my child needs to succeed!

“You are cutting the supports he needs in school to learn not only the curriculum, but also the most important thing, how to live! You are cutting the supports that help teach him social skills and how to be a productive member of society.... Your cuts to special education, planned increased class sizes and mandatory e-learning are quite literally stealing my son's future. And while his teachers are fighting for these things my son is mentally falling apart!

“And I blame you....”

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Michael Coteau: Today is Pink Shirt Day, and I'm so happy to be here today in the Legislature and to see so many of my colleagues wearing pink. We know that in 2007, in Nova Scotia, there were two young people, David and Travis, who stood up for a fellow classmate who was being bullied for wearing pink.

I was proud to be part of the government that brought forward the Accepting Schools Act in 2012. It was the first legislation of its kind in Canada to protect students.

I just want to say, considering it is Pink Shirt Day and it's an expression of anti-bullying, today I have a young person who is actually joining me, Nate Manis, and I hope we can all put on a very good show and demonstration that we can work together.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

DURHAM REGION HOSPICE— CLARINGTON

Mr. David Piccini: Providing compassionate end-of-life care is the right thing to do, and hospice beds that do this are critical to addressing the challenges facing our health care system. I'm pleased to announce, Mr. Speaker, that on February 6, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, joined me, MPP Lindsey Park and MPP Lorne Coe for an announcement of \$800,000 in additional one-time capital funding to support the construction of four additional beds at Durham hospice, Clarington.

With the recent announcement of these four beds, Ontario is investing a total of \$1.8 million in capital funding to support the construction of nine beds. It has expanded hospice bed coverage. Through this coverage, our government is ensuring that Durham hospice, Clarington, will be able to provide even more residents with the compassionate end-of-life care that they deserve.

I'd like to congratulate the entire Durham hospice, Clarington, team for their work to make this a reality, including the board of directors: Melodie Zarzeczny, Guy May, Terry Hofkirchner, Rev. Deb Foster, Kirk Kemp, Debbie Lodge, Anita Mazzara, Rod McArthur, Marlene McCall, Jill Richardson, Marian Timmermans, Willie Woo.

All of our residents and families deserve access to dignified end-of-life care that respects the wishes of patients and their loved ones. I'm pleased to say, in Clarington region, that's happening.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Wayne Gates: On Monday, the Premier told us that he won't stop his vicious cuts to the education system. He claims that parents are telling him that they agree with him and support their kids' education being slashed, but the Premier won't show us any proof of any of these messages.

So I asked the people of Niagara what they think, and it turned out that their message was a lot different than the

Premier's. Instead, they overwhelmingly said no to firing thousands of teachers, no to Alabama's failed e-learning, no to cutting services for children with special needs, no to slashing funding for children with autism and further decreasing their school supports, and no to increased class sizes, in some cases as many as 35 kids in class. These parents aren't alone. If the PC Party hadn't been hiding inside the Scotiabank centre on Saturday in Niagara Falls, they would've seen 5,000 people—the largest labour demonstration in Niagara's history—standing shoulder to shoulder with every education worker across the province as they say no to cuts to education and yes to their children's future.

I come from a background in bargaining. I can tell you very clearly, 98% of all negotiations end in collective agreements. The parents of Niagara and the 5,000 supporters who came to Niagara Falls from all over Ontario are wondering: Why is this government in the 2% that can't get a deal done when 98% of collective agreements settle without a strike?

UNIVERSITÉ DE L'ONTARIO FRANÇAIS

M. Jeremy Roberts: J'aimerais souligner un grand moment pour la francophonie ontarienne. Ce matin, la ministre des Affaires francophones ainsi que le ministre des Collèges et Universités étaient sur place avec d'autres dignitaires au dévoilement des lieux physiques de l'Université de l'Ontario français. En plus de constituer un espace physique et virtuel d'apprentissage à l'image du XXI^e siècle, l'UOF sera un levier de développement économique pour les francophones de l'Ontario et d'ailleurs.

Ce projet n'aurait pas vu le jour sans le leadership et le travail sans relâche de la ministre des Affaires francophones, qui a travaillé étroitement pendant 16 mois avec Dyane Adam et son équipe pour que ce rêve devienne une réalité. Avec l'appui du premier ministre et du ministre des Collèges et Universités, notre gouvernement a finalement réalisé ce projet très important pour les francophones en Ontario, ce que les libéraux étaient incapables et refusaient de faire pendant 15 ans.

L'UOF a maintenant un lieu pour prendre racine. Ce dévoilement aujourd'hui n'est qu'un début pour les mesures positives que prendra notre gouvernement pour les francophones en Ontario. Bravo à tous les gens qui ont travaillé sur ce projet.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Our government has been working hard since day one to make Ontario open for jobs. While the previous government lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs, we've created the conditions for over 307,000 new jobs since June 2018. Thanks to the actions taken by our government, Ontario is once again the economic engine of Canada. In fact, demand for talent is so strong that more than 200,000 jobs are going unfilled every day.

However, while there are many jobs without people, there are also people without jobs. This is because previous governments poured taxpayer dollars into employment services that delivered incredibly poor results. In fact, the Auditor General concluded that only 14% of job seekers were finding work in the field that they had trained for. This is unacceptable.

While the opposition defends the status quo, our government has launched an open and comprehensive process to select the best managers for employment services. Beginning in three communities, including mine, the region of Peel, these managers will be driven by the only result that matters: people finding long-term and stable employment in quality jobs.

Speaker, jobs give people a sense of dignity, and I'm proud that we are doing everything we can to help people succeed.

1030

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for members' statements. Now we're going to do introductions of visitors.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Paul Calandra: I rise on a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, as you are aware and as my colleagues know, there is a large snowstorm, apparently—a large snowstorm by southern Ontario standards, I appreciate—that is going to hit tomorrow morning, so I'm rising to notify the House that, pursuant to standing order 9(f), no government business will be called tomorrow morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): As a result of the government House leader's announcement, when the House adjourns today it will stand adjourned until 10:15 a.m. tomorrow morning.

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a number of people here who helped with the cystic fibrosis media conference this morning: Chris MacLeod, Dr. Elizabeth Tullis, Sasha Haughian, from my riding, Jamie Larocque, from my riding, Madi and Beth Vanstone—everybody knows Madi—and Lynn Nichol, from London. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the privilege of welcoming to the Legislature today a constituent from Wainfleet, a dairy farmer, Albert Fledderus. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to welcome to the people's House Danielle Weil, who is representing Brantford's cystic fibrosis community.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to welcome all the members from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario here with us today.

I would also like to recognize Josh Underwood, who is sitting in the gallery. He's from the great riding of Oxford.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to welcome Kelly Grover, president and CEO of Cystic Fibrosis Canada. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'd like to welcome a constituent, a board member of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, who is with us here at Queen's Park. Welcome to John Wynands.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It is my pleasure to welcome today Romeo Gordon, Evan Back and Janice Hayes of Youth-Link from my great riding of Scarborough-Guildwood.

Mr. David Piccini: It gives me great pleasure to welcome two constituents of mine: Dan Kelly, from Port Hope, and Adam Petherick, board member at Dairy Farmers of Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I'd like to welcome Pat Sanagan, Claire Thornton and her adorable six-month-old to Queen's Park. Welcome.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to introduce to the whole House an amazing dairy farmer from Bruce county, Mark Hamel.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: There are a lot of student parliamentarians in the House today. I'd like to welcome Yasden Nikoo, from Riverside high school in my riding, and all the other students who won't have a chance to be introduced this morning.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: It gives me honour to introduce some constituency members from Pickering-Uxbridge. I'd like to introduce Stephanie and Demetrios Stavros. I hope you both enjoy your time here today, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'd like to introduce Nate Manis, a grade 10 student, who is visiting today and shadowing me for the afternoon.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to welcome two young people who are here today from London West for the youth Parliament: Tyrus Kalanyos, who is also a member of my London West Youth Cabinet, and Loïs Mang-Benz. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I would really enjoy welcoming an amazing delegation from my riding of Kanata-Carleton, the Kanata North Business Association: Jamie Petten, Vicki Coughy, Guy Levesque, Grant Courville, John Luszczyk, Martin Vandewouw and Patrick Ferris. Welcome.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to welcome, as a member of youth model Parliament, Archana Jagannathan, a grade 10 student at O'Neill CVI in Oshawa. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I would like to welcome Tammy Strong and her father, Don Strong, to the Legislature. Tammy and Don are residents of my riding of Flamborough-Glanbrook. They are here today representing the cystic fibrosis community. Tammy's teenage daughters Mikayla and Madison both live with cystic fibrosis.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to welcome, from the Ontario Autism Coalition, Michau van Speyk, and all of the students who are here for youth Parliament.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming Nancy Turner, a tireless advocates for cystic fibrosis from the great riding of Dufferin-Caledon.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to welcome Tegan Elliott and Kate Folsetter, who are here from Hamilton Centre for model Parliament. Welcome.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: On behalf of myself and the member for Etobicoke Centre, I'd like to welcome Reid Alexander and Sullivan Pearson here, from the ridings of Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Etobicoke Centre. Welcome to model Parliament.

Mr. Chris Glover: Here for a press conference from the cystic fibrosis community, I'd like to introduce my constituent Emily Lyons and her family, Gail Lyons and Ryan Clark. They are joined in their advocacy by Dr. Elizabeth Tullis, Erick Bauer and Stefanie Cali. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the members who have not had an opportunity to introduce their guests. On their behalf, I would like to welcome everyone who is here to the Legislature today and to thank you very much for coming.

I need to take a moment to explain my methodology this morning, because there were some members who were unhappy. Yesterday, I started recognizing people for introductions at this end of the chamber and worked my way down. We got everybody introduced, alternating on both sides of the House. Today, we started at the other end of the chamber and worked our way back. If that's not fair and some feel that they didn't get a chance to introduce their guests, I sincerely apologize. We'll try better tomorrow.

Interjections.

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

We have with us in the public gallery high school students from across the province participating in the seventh annual Legislative Assembly of Ontario model Parliament. Please join me in warmly welcoming our future parliamentarians to the Legislature today.

QUESTION PERIOD

HOME CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Acting Premier. It has been over 20 years since the last Conservative government announced their plans to mess with home care and introduce competition and more privatization, and we're still living with the results today: private sector providers making healthy profits while personal support workers make little more than minimum wage and are leaving the field in droves for more job security, while wait times for home care services can stretch for years and years.

What patients heard yesterday was the same Conservative government using the same language that they heard before. Why would they believe anything would change?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member for the question.

The reason why we have introduced the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act is to make sure that people receive the care that they expect and deserve.

Right now, there is a disconnect between our primary care system and our home and community care system. We want to bring it together so that when people who require home care leave the hospital, they will know who is providing the home care, what home care is being provided and when it's going to be provided. That doesn't always happen now, and people end up back in hospital with complications.

We want to make sure that when people are discharged from hospital, they have the home and community care support that they need to get well.

1040

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, patients are still living with the broken home care system created by the Harris Conservatives and kept in place by the Liberals. The results speak for themselves. One study showed that nearly 80% of personal support workers were unhappy with the job. Yesterday's Patient Ombudsman report said this: "Patients and caregivers often reported that they had no notice that services would not be available on a given day and they were left on their own to put contingency plans in place."

Like the Liberals before them, the Ford government says that it will deal with the chronic shortage of personal support workers. When will patients actually see a change?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I appreciate that personal support workers are an important part of home and community care, but there's a much bigger picture here.

However, let me just read a quote from Miranda Ferrier, the president of the Ontario Personal Support Workers Association: "The proposed changes announced for home and community care in Ontario will provide personal support workers..., patients and clients a new opportunity to work together to make Ontario Health Teams a success. Streamlining and modernizing the scheduling and funding process will offer Ontarians greater access to supports while also promoting continuity of care." The association "hopes that these changes will work to stabilize and modernize the PSW profession." We know that it will.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Hope springs eternal when it comes to the way Conservatives deal with our health care system.

I have to say that what the minister isn't recognizing is that it's the front-line workers who make all of the difference, and in this home care system, that's the PSWs.

Last October, I asked the Premier about Maria Konopeskas, an Ottawa resident who has been living—literally living—in the hospital since 2017 because the personal support workers and home care that she needs

aren't available to her. She's still in that hospital. She is still waiting. She's one of many Ontarians who have been let down by a broken home care system that the Liberals had in place and that remains in place.

No one is fooled by the government's plans for more for-profit operators and a new mega-bureaucracy. The simple question is this: When will patients like Maria get the support that they need?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would say to the member that should this legislation that was introduced in this chamber yesterday pass, people will see immediate improvement in the supports they will receive, because we are working on a number of fronts. The leader of the official opposition has indicated that personal support workers are an issue that we need to deal with. We recognize that. We are looking at the health human resource strategy across the board. My colleague the minister of personal care is looking at it in long-term-care homes. We are looking at it in hospitals and home support.

Let me just read you another quote with respect to one of the key players in this whole transition—Sue VanderBent, the CEO of Home Care Ontario: “Home Care Ontario welcomes the government's move to modernize home and community care. Today's changes will allow patients to better access the right care, at the right time, and in the right place. These changes will make the system work more efficiently, and ultimately will allow local health teams to better work together to keep people healthier”—

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

The next question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Acting Premier, but I can say, if this government can't get licence plates right, how are they going to get home care right?

Yesterday, the Premier insisted that real people backed his plan for education cuts and classroom conflict. Was the Premier briefed on the results of his own government's consultation on education?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, it is the voices of parents and students that have guided our government in this negotiation. That is precisely why we have confirmed that we will keep class sizes low in this province for students in Ontario.

In fact, under our government and under the Premier's leadership, we are keeping classroom sizes the smallest in the nation for the earliest years. We are doing that because we are listening.

What we've also heard loud and clear is that parents want us to stand strong to see more money in schools, not in entitlements, in benefits, in wages for educators, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last year, the Premier bragged that the Ford government consultations were the largest consultations in Ontario's history. Yesterday, the result of that consultation went public. Among other things, the secret internal government report said there was “virtually no support” for larger class sizes.

How can this government claim that they're on the side of parents, teachers and students when they're literally doing exactly the opposite of what they were told by parents, students and teachers?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, we're on the side of parents and students by ensuring that the best educators are at the front of the class. This government is on the side of parents and students by suggesting that more money entering the system ought to go in schools and ought not to go in a higher benefit ask by the teachers' unions.

We respect our educators. We value what they do. We pay them well. But the priority of the government—listening, heeding the advice of parents and taxpayers in Ontario—is to put more money where it counts. That's in mental health. That's in STEM education. That's in math. That's in the priorities that people want. It's what we're going to deliver in this negotiation, Speaker.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier and the minister can't have it both ways. While the Premier was standing here yesterday spinning tales about make-believe people who want cuts in the classroom, he was sitting on a government report that showed exactly the opposite. No one believes him anymore. No one believes the education minister anymore.

Will the government stop talking about their imaginary supporters, take the advice of parents, teachers and school boards—the advice that was given to them during the government's own consultations—cancel the cuts and get to work on actually making a deal that works for our classrooms and our kids?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The deal that we seek is one that keeps kids in class, a good deal for students that puts their interests ahead of union interests. That's what we believe is so important to advance in this negotiation.

In this negotiation, we're going to keep classroom sizes low. We're going to maintain, in writing, full-day kindergarten. We're going to commit 100% investments in special education to help the most vulnerable kids in our schools. Speaker, this is a good plan for kids.

What you can't have both ways, Speaker, is small classroom sizes or more investments in kids and heightened compensation. We choose not to raise taxes, to keep them low, and to invest the taxpayers' dollars where it matters, and that's in the success of our students.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is actually to the Minister of Education on a similar topic. Time after time, in committees and here in this chamber, we've asked this government to table the results of that education consultation, and now we know why they did everything in their

power to stop it from coming to light. The Premier knew Ontarians opposed his plan. Before making a name for herself in the licence plate business, the former education minister knew as well. And the current minister knows it, too. People do not want more children jammed in fewer classrooms with less supports.

Will the minister finally admit that this plan has nothing to do with modernizing education and everything to do with saving money on the backs of the next generation of students?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It is this government that is investing more in public education. That's why we believe in the defence of education. But we also believe in getting more out of the system. We also believe that more money should be flowing in schools.

In this negotiation, let me just confirm what we're fighting for with precision: We're committed to keeping classroom sizes low for elementary and high school students in this province—in fact, the smallest classroom size in the federation for the earliest years. We're committing 100% investment in special education to support those with needs in our schools. But we're also committed to maintaining our position on a fair 1% increase in benefits and wages for our workers. We think that is in the public interest, to put our money where it counts in the success of our students, and that is precisely what we're doing in this negotiation.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, the only folks in this province benefiting from this government's plans to cut classrooms are the private school companies with ratios of 14 to 1.

As the details of this top secret, apparently, consultation report come out, we're hearing even more voices who told the government not to do this: school boards, the Black educators association, directors of education, superintendents, the list goes on. They made it clear that increasing class sizes was going to hurt our kids. Submission after submission said this would negatively affect courses available, increase safety issues, limit achievement and limit career pathways for our students.

Will the minister finally stop using our children as pawns in this bargaining game and reverse his cuts to education?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The government side has to come to order.

Restart the clock. Minister of Education to reply.

1050

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, we went to the negotiating table on Monday to get a deal. We tabled what I believe to be positive proposals for students: keeping classroom sizes low, 100% investment in special education and, more importantly, a commitment, in writing, to maintain full-day kindergarten.

We also asserted that we will maintain the line on a 1% increase in wages and benefits. And what was the response from the union? They want higher benefits, and if we do

not give in, they will continue to strike. That is unacceptable to the people of this province.

We're going to hold the line in the defence of putting more money in schools, in our students. That's what parents expect.

COVID-19

Mr. Vincent Ke: My question is to the Minister of Health. For months, we have seen news reports from around the world about COVID-19, the novel coronavirus. This illness has been spread within Hubei province in China, and other jurisdictions have been taking steps to protect their citizens.

Here in Ontario, we learned a great deal from the SARS outbreak in 2003, which saw the Toronto public health system put under significant strain. We have seen close relationships and co-operation between all of our health authorities as Ontario and the rest of Canada prepare to respond to this outbreak. Can the minister tell us more about Ontario's approach to COVID-19?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member from Don Valley North for your question, which I know is important to all Ontarians.

Our public health authorities have responded to COVID-19 with all of the hard work and professionalism that the people of Ontario have come to expect. When dealing with an illness like COVID-19, co-operation and transparency are key. Ontarians should continue to look to public health officials for updates as the situation evolves. We are working with the federal government to ensure that our public health care system will respond appropriately.

I would like to thank all of our skilled health workers, who have brought their considerable experience and professionalism to deal with this situation. We all owe them a big debt of gratitude.

Protecting the health and well-being of the people of Ontario has been and will always be our top priority.

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you to the minister for the update. I would also like to thank our health care providers for the excellent care they provide in our communities each and every day.

Ontario is approaching this situation by prioritizing transparency and open communication. I appreciate the regular updates from public health officials providing accurate information to the public on this situation. Thanks to these updates, we know that there are many measures in place to help contain the virus. Can the minister speak to some of the other steps that have been taken to protect the public from COVID-19?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Since learning of the virus, Ontario has responded to COVID-19 by monitoring hospitals for potential cases of the virus in individuals with a travel history from some of the affected areas. Public health units have quickly and effectively taken all necessary measures to investigate, complete tests and prevent further spread of the virus. Emergency health

services communication centres across Ontario have implemented enhanced screening protocols. The Ministry of Health has also met with hospitals, paramedics and public health units near Pearson international airport to provide further information on federal border screening measures.

We're also continuing to collaborate with the federal government and, of course, with the other provinces and territories. Our government will continue to actively work with our health care partners to monitor for, detect and, if needed, contain any cases of COVID-19.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Speaker, Ontario families are still waiting for answers from the Ford government about the shadowy Vaughan Working Families group and their advertisements attacking teachers. Global News Toronto reports that they have yet to receive a response to four simple questions put to the minister regarding recently appointed vice-chair of the LCBO, Quinto Annibale. Mr. Annibale, we now know, received the invoice for these dark money ads. He also joined the minister on his junket to India last year. I'd like to give the minister a chance to answer these questions on the record.

Did the minister or anyone in his office have any knowledge of Mr. Annibale's connection to the ad campaign and any role in its placement prior to it being reported in the media?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Ontario businesses engage in a rigorous, open and fair application process whenever we lead missions overseas. In fiscal 2018-19, nearly 800 small and medium-sized enterprises participated in our government-facilitated business missions. Participating delegates are required to cover their own expenses, including flights, accommodation and delegate fees.

I have not had any contact with Mr. Annibale in regard to the education advertisements that appeared in newspapers earlier this month.

As my colleague the Minister of Education has stated, our government remains focused on keeping kids in the classroom.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is clear that the minister had a relationship with Mr. Annibale, and a strong one at that, because it's not every day that a newly appointed vice-chair of the LCBO gets invited to travel the world on a trade mission.

Did the minister have a relationship with Mr. Annibale while he was the mayor of North Bay, or at any point before this trip? And, if so, was it disclosed to any member of cabinet before his appointment to the LCBO?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: As I said in my previous answer, I have not spoken to Mr. Annibale regarding the advertisements the member is referring to.

As with any participating delegate on a business mission, all businesses are responsible for covering their

own expenses, including flights, accommodations and delegate fees.

Speaker, we're proud of the tangible events that came out of our mission to India, now that the member has mentioned it. VVDN Technologies announced they'll be opening a new facility in Kitchener-Waterloo, employing 200 engineering jobs. I'm surprised the member hasn't asked about the 200 new engineering jobs in Kitchener-Waterloo. VVDN Technologies is already located in Kitchener with their office, and they will be starting their hiring in the next couple of weeks.

Speaker, I can go on for hours about the success of the mission in India. We're very proud of our record of job creation and leading the nation in job creation.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Today, I'm joined by representatives from children's mental health organizations. Our children and youth mental health care is in crisis. Over the last two years, we've seen a doubling of the wait-lists for child and youth mental health services in this province. We've seen rising suicide rates and an increase in avoidable hospital visits for mental health care.

Our youth are benefiting from decreasing stigma and seeking care in higher numbers for anxiety and depression. However, despite the Conservatives campaigning on matching federal mental health investments, they have not kept their word. Can the Deputy Premier explain why this promise to the youth of this province has not been kept?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Our government is delivering real action by investing an historic \$3.8 billion over the next 10 years to build a comprehensive, integrated and connected mental health and addictions system, one that is evidence-based, data-driven and meets the needs of patients and their families. We're committed to building a system where services are easier to access, high quality and focused on better outcomes for everyone, including children, youth and their parents. Under the leadership of our Premier, our government has invested an additional \$10 million annually in child and youth mental health core services funding in communities across the province; nearly \$40 million targeting mental health supports for Ontario students; \$6 million in intensive services for youth with addictions, including withdrawal management services and residential treatment; \$3.5 million for early psychosis intervention services; and \$1 million for a new provincial eating disorders prevention and early intervention program.

1100

Our government is also providing \$3.3 million over four years for a pilot to test an integrated youth services approach. Mr. Speaker, we are making—

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I thank the minister for his response. But Children's Mental Health Ontario estimates that the investment we're asking for today would pay for itself by saving thousands of dollars in avoidable hospital visits per year.

While this government is looking for savings on the backs of children and youth in this province, there is a real human cost to inaction. In the past 10 months, the University of Ottawa has seen five students die by suicide. Our kids can't wait two and a half years on a waiting list for services and for supports.

Bibi, a student at the University of Ottawa, says, "I am outraged with the way that mental health has been handled on campus. It's critical that institutions, especially government and universities, adopt meaningful and effective mental health policies and provide adequate resources to those in need."

Speaker, I'm asking this minister to commit today to—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Thank you. Please take your seat.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please take your seat.

The minister to respond.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Today, as you all know, is Pink Shirt Day, anti-bullying. It's important that we recognize, as members of the Legislature, and support our students, our youth, because it is another issue that affects mental health as well. Bullying is something that's very serious and affects many, many people.

Mr. Speaker, we inherited a system under the previous government that was plagued with issues. There are problems of accessing services. There is a fragmented system. There are barriers to accessing those services, whether you're a child, a youth, an adult or a senior, for that matter. What we're trying to do is look—and we've met with stakeholders. We've met with youth organizations. We've met with people with lived experience. What we've done is we've worked diligently to create, and soon we'll be launching the mental health plan for the province.

We take the youth suicide rates very seriously. We are working to create—

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

The next question.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Ontario is leading the way on small modular reactor development to create a more competitive business environment and a clean, reliable energy future. SMRs have the potential to generate clean, low-cost energy, and drive job creation, economic growth and export opportunities.

Can the minister tell this House how he's promoting Ontario's existing nuclear supply chain and experienced nuclear operators to support SMR development and deployment?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Whitby, part of the Durham four, who not only wear the coolest sunglasses and throw the greatest parties, but are big fans of the nuclear sector and this exciting next generation or chapter for the nuclear sector, and Ontario is going to lead the way.

Last December, the Premier led the charge with a memorandum of understanding. We were joined by the provinces of Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, who have raw materials implicated in this development, who have technology implicated in this development. Already we're hearing from other provinces and territories who see real science and real opportunity for Ontario to lead the charge for this exciting technology.

I'm heading up to Ottawa for the next couple of days to join people with the Canadian Nuclear Association conference. We're going to be hosting panels and talking about the exciting opportunity that Ontario has to move small modular reactors forward, lead the world and make safe, clean energy for this province, across this country and around the world.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the minister for the answer. I can see the importance in expanding our nuclear industry here in Ontario. Can the minister explain the benefits of this small modular reactor agreement to our local industry?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I thank the member for that question.

Let's start with some important statistics or facts here, Mr. Speaker. First of all, nuclear generation accounts for 62% of our supply in this province, but only 45% of its cost. Contrast that with wind and solar: a combined 9% of our electricity generation, but over 25% of its cost. It turns out the answer isn't blowing in the wind. It's about investing in 76,000 people who are employed in the nuclear sector, with science, technology, engineering and mathematics backgrounds; a high prevalence of women leading the charge in this exciting sector; an opportunity for small modular reactors to be the solutions for off-grid opportunities, remote and isolated communities and resource projects in Canada's remote parts.

Ontario is going to lead the way, and I'm so grateful that the Premier last December signed that memorandum of understanding so we have a clear path forward.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier threw away years of planning and hundreds of millions of public dollars when he suddenly cancelled the Hamilton LRT without warning. Hamilton chose an LRT as their transit priority. They want the Premier and the federal government to work together to find a solution.

If there is a deal to be made with the federal government to fund the Hamilton LRT, will the Premier agree to resume the RFP process and get the LRT back on track?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA).

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member for the question.

Our Premier, our government, this side of the House, have been very clear that we remain committed to providing Hamilton with \$1 billion. We have formed a task force of very credible individuals who are working very diligently to make recommendations to our government, which the Minister of Transportation and myself are very eager and excited to review. They have asked for a small extension to lead into March, but we are very excited to look at the recommendations. Our government has been very clear: \$1 billion to the people of Hamilton.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, it is the case, Speaker, that the Premier's appointed task force is running out of time for a recommendation, and he may just be faced with a choice if they recommend what everyone already knows, which is that the investment that Hamilton needs and deserves and will see will come with an LRT. So he can continue on his current path, wasting hundreds of millions of dollars in scrapping years of planning for the Hamilton LRT, or he can work with the federal government to find a funding solution.

Yesterday, the federal government said that they would be a willing funding partner, if only the province would make a formal request. Will the minister make a formal request for funding to the federal government to get the Hamilton LRT back on track?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member.

I want to be perfectly clear: It was the chair of the task force that requested an extension and, of course, our Minister of Transportation accepted and approved that request. We know they are working very hard. We support them in our efforts.

That being said, we have been very clear: We have committed \$1 billion to the people of Hamilton. But transportation—we've made it very clear on this side of the House that it is a top priority for this government. The previous Liberal administration ignored transportation infrastructure for 15 years. We have shown our commitment. We are investing \$28.5 billion to build subways in the city of Toronto, we are helping Mississauga build the Hurontario line, we are supporting Ottawa in building their LRT and we will support the people of Hamilton.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Health. Speaker, 18 other countries have negotiated a deal with Vertex in order to allow patients with cystic fibrosis to access life-saving medication. Canada is the only industrialized country that lags behind. Ontario approved Kalydeco five years ago. People like Madi Vanstone from my riding, who received this medication, are now thriving. In fact, Madi hiked the Great Wall of China last year to increase awareness about the desperate need for these cystic fibrosis drugs.

Madi is proof that these medications work, and the only difference between her and other patients with cystic fibrosis is that they have a slightly different gene type, and therefore require a slightly different medication to treat the disease.

1110

My constituents and many others here today want to know: Will the minister make a firm commitment that she will sit down and negotiate a deal with the pharmaceutical firm Vertex for these life-saving drugs, save these patients all the stress and despair they're going through, save the expense on the health care system and do the right thing?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. I know that this is something that has been a very important issue for you and for many of your constituents for a very long period of time.

We take the struggles that cystic fibrosis patients and their families deal with on a daily basis very seriously. Like everyone else in Ontario, we hope that these new medications provide the promised relief. We recognize that access to new drug therapies is important, especially in less common diseases where there are significant health impacts and where there are limited treatment options.

We are in discussions with our health partners. We are in discussions with Vertex. We know that the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance has also been in discussions with Vertex, with a meeting having been held in January. This is something that all of us are actively working on. I know there are concerns with respect to timing, and I will deal with that in my supplementary answer.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Minister, for the answer to that question. In November, as you know, I made this House aware of two brothers from my riding, Andre and Joshua Larocque—their parents are here today—aged seven and nine. They have cystic fibrosis. One brother has access to a gene-modulating drug made by Vertex through a drug trial; the other brother does not.

When the two brothers had a cold recently, the boy on the drug trial was able to shake the cold like a normal child would; the boy who wasn't on the drug trial was sick for weeks. He coughed non-stop for hours and days at a time. He coughed up blood and lost significant weight. His lung function dropped by over 20%. Every time this seven-year-old gets a simple cold, he loses more lung function. He will eventually become resistant to antibiotics and require lengthy hospitalizations, and he could, and very much probably will, ultimately need a lung transplant without drugs like Kalydeco, Orkambi and other gene-modulating drugs.

Minister, I guess my constituents—because we raised this; it goes back to 2014, when you and I chased around the former health minister under the Liberals on the same issue. Can you do everything in your power, with the Premier beside you, to speed up these negotiations and get these life-saving drugs to these people—

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: There are very significant health consequences here. We are certainly very well aware of that, and we are doing our best to move this forward. Part of the issue, as you will be aware, is that there are both provincial requirements that have to be completed and federal requirements in order for a drug to be approved to be put on the formulary and to be available to people.

One of my roles is as co-chair of the provincial-territorial-federal group. It is something that I intend to bring forward at our next meeting this spring, to see if some of these approval processes can be run concurrently instead of consecutively to speed up the process. We know that there are certain levels of safety and effectiveness that we have to prove, but it shouldn't take years and years for this to be completed. I'm very concerned about the time frames as well. I do intend to bring this forward.

With respect to the specific drugs themselves, Orkambi, Symdeko and Trikafta: Orkambi is approved in pediatric circumstances in exceptional cases; Symdeko is still going through, as I understand, the CADTH—

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

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Jim McDonell: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. On this side of the House, we know that being open for business and open for jobs means being open for trade. As the MPP for a riding that has an international border, free trade with the US is a key concern to my constituents. If Ontario were a country, we would be the third-largest trading partner of the US, with nearly \$400 billion in two-way trade.

Given the importance of this relationship to businesses in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, would the minister please inform the House what efforts are under way to ensure that NAFTA 2.0 is ratified by the federal government as quickly as possible?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we live in a globally competitive world, and our government knows that we must take a proactive approach to international trade. Throughout the negotiation of NAFTA 2.0, our government's top priority was to protect jobs for the hard-working people of Ontario, and our work continues.

In our submission to the federal Standing Committee on International Trade, we urged all federal parties to work together and ratify the agreement as quickly as possible. We outlined that one in five jobs are US-trade-related.

A successful NAFTA 2.0 agreement is the critical next step in providing certainty to businesses around the world. That certainty will add to the over 300,000 new jobs already created here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I'm glad to hear the minister is continuing to take a leadership role in ensuring the ratification of NAFTA 2.0.

Today, nearly one in five jobs in Ontario depend on trade, so that's more than 1.3 million hard-working men

and women whose jobs are supported by exports in our province. We are now the number one customer in 19 US states and the second for nine others, and account for more than one half of the total merchandise trade between Canada and the US.

I hope all members of this House, regardless of party, are able to appreciate the importance of NAFTA 2.0 to the stability of our economy.

Can the minister please explain to the House in more detail how Ontario is continuing to pursue increased trade with the US?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Earlier this month, Premier Ford led a trade mission to Washington and Dallas. We met with a number of US governors and business leaders to build on our multi-billion dollar trade relationship.

However, Speaker, we know we cannot take these relationships for granted, so we are focused on ensuring Ontario has the right tools to strengthen US economic partnerships. As part of our new strategy for US trade, Ontario will now pursue first-of-their-kind strategic investment and procurement agreements with key US states. These agreements will expand important economic relationships. They will ensure Ontario companies are on a level playing field for government procurement opportunities.

As free traders, we have a fundamental obligation to ensure Ontario companies have the greatest market access possible. We will continue to push for free trade and fair trade with our US partners.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier. This government's half-baked plan for involuntary e-learning is just as unpopular among London North Centre parents as it is in the rest of the province of Ontario. The government needs to put on its listening ears.

Mark is a father in my riding who says that having educators in class is essential for his son's learning, because when his son "reads something, he often has a difficult time understanding what's required.... The fact remains, he does much better with more one-on-one instruction.... Online courses would be horrendous for his learning style."

Teachers who administer e-learning tell me that the student success rate for those who willingly take these courses is just over half. That's with dedication and consent.

Why is this government so committed to making learning more difficult for Ontario students, and life more difficult for families like Mark's?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The government is committed to providing more course offerings for students right across Ontario. That's why, when we've seen a 144% increase from 2012 in enrolment, when we see young people turning digitally, knowing that the future of jobs is online and the future of jobs is embracing the fluency required in

the marketplace, we think providing more offerings, providing Internet in every school, providing exceptions for children who otherwise ought not to be in that program—perhaps with those individualized learning plans, for example—this is a plan that works for all young people. It's a plan to ensure our kids are modern and are learning online, giving them the skills to succeed for the jobs of tomorrow.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Back to the Premier: The minister—through you, Speaker—talks about more courses, but what he's really saying is “fewer caring adults.” Students don't need forced screen time.

The minister needs to check his watch; e-learning is not 21st-century learning. Collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving are highly prized skills in our workforce, and best delivered face to face by our excellent Ontario educators.

Students learn best in classrooms with their friends, not alone with a computer. It's a superior learning environment and better for their mental health.

1120

Jen is a mother in my riding who works as a 911 dispatcher. She hears the struggle of teenagers with mental health and behaviour issues every single day. Jen told me that e-learning is not the answer for students with mental health needs. She wrote, “I know first-hand the isolation teens already face, the struggles they have with mental health. Hiding them behind a computer will only make this worse. I don't want my daughter's future education to be jeopardized by these completely disturbing and unnecessary cuts to education.”

Will this government take the mental health of students seriously and cancel its online learning scheme?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: This government is very committed to the mental health and strength of every young person in the province. As the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions said in this House, today, we are all standing together as legislators to combat bullying in all its forms.

That's why I was really proud to be at WE, the education centre, earlier today, virtually with young people in Peel region, students in school who are sharing their stories and lived experiences, where I announced and we launched an anti-bullying survey to empower young people to have a voice and be part of the solution to combat this challenge that manifests not in one school, but across this country. We're going to take this seriously. We're going to continue to invest, continue to listen and ensure children are safe in schools in this country.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Will Bouma: My question today is for the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. Minister, constituents in my riding of Brantford–Brant have told me that for too long, they felt lost and unsupported by the previous government when it came to

accessing mental health and addictions care in their communities.

I know that the minister has recently been travelling across the province to hear directly from those with lived experience and experts within the mental health and addictions sector about the changes they expect to see within the province's mental health and addictions system. I was proud to be able to host the minister for one of these engagement sessions in my riding, where we heard directly from community leaders and experts in the field on mental health and addictions care. Following the session, I heard from many participants who were pleased to see that our government is taking action to address mental health and addictions in the province.

Minister, could you please update the members of this Legislature about what you have heard during your travels across the province?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member for Brantford–Brant for the excellent question and the great work that he's been doing, and for welcoming me into his community so that we could have a frank conversation about the needs of the community.

Last year, we began travelling across the province to hear directly from mental health and addictions system leaders, experts, community and municipal leaders, Indigenous leaders, people with lived experience, first responders and many others that were continually neglected under the previous Liberal government. Since June of last year, I've travelled across the province, from large cities to remote fly-in communities, to hear directly from those who have been struggling to navigate a complex and confusing system caused by the neglect of the previous government.

The reality is that our mental health and addictions system has been challenged by extensive wait times, barriers to access, inconsistent quality of care and a lack of standardized data. That's why we've continued to make mental health and addictions a priority. Ontarians across all stages of life need and deserve quality mental health and addictions care, and our government will deliver that care.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to thank the minister for his response. I am thrilled to hear that our government is continuing to listen to the many Ontarians who struggle with mental health and addictions challenges across the province.

It is clear that our government is engaging directly with system leaders and individuals with lived experience, among many others, who will directly inform our government's plans for the system.

I know that the residents of my riding of Brantford–Brant are looking forward to hearing more about our government's plans for mental health and addictions in the province.

Could the minister please explain to the members of this Legislature what Ontarians can expect to see in our plan for mental health and addictions in Ontario?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you again for that question.

Our government is very much looking forward to sharing more about our plans for mental health and addictions in the province of Ontario. Since the start of our mandate, our government has held extensive consultations, spanning the entire province. We recognize there are unique considerations related to the provision of mental health and addictions in communities across Ontario, and they need to be taken into account in our strategy. That's why, together with the Ministry of Health's work on mental health and addictions, it's being conducted in a way that brings all partner ministries together. We are working with the Ministries of Children, Community and Social Services and Municipal Affairs and Housing, among others.

Mental health affects all of us, Mr. Speaker, whether it's our children or our seniors. We will continue to make mental health and addictions a priority for our government and look forward to delivering real and meaningful change to the system, not just for us, but for our children and the many generations to come.

EDUCATION FUNDING

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The government side will come to order.

Start the clock. I apologize to the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who has the floor.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to thank the government side for the reception. I'm not even one of the all-stars over there.

My question is for the Premier. This government wants to pretend that everyday Ontarians support their plan to make life worse for students and teachers, but they can't show us the receipts from anyone who agrees with them.

So let's hear from another parent who, unlike the Conservatives, is fighting for what matters: a good education for their kids. Heather, a mum in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, reached out to me to say that thanks to the Conservative course cancellations, her grade 12 daughter almost didn't have enough classes to graduate this year.

Heather supports teachers because supporting teachers means supporting students. Why doesn't the government?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share a story from Melissa, who wrote in to one of my caucus colleagues. She's a parent with three school-aged children who is struggling and growing weary of the union job action. Her message was clear: She's taking more days off, her husband has no more vacation days to take and the impact on her family of this escalation is real. It's impacting so many young people and their parents in this province.

Her message was that she thinks "the time has come to put an end to this ... parents are in dire straits and they need

help. The continued pressures of juggling child care needs is not helping anyone." She believes that teachers are well-compensated, and she wants them to stay at the table to get a deal. We agree.

Our aim in this negotiation is to fight for Melissa and every child and parent in this province so that their children remain in class.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Heather is also concerned about the Conservative plan to force kids out of the classroom and into mandatory online learning. She said that if this plan had been in place this year, her daughter might not have passed at all or graduated. She, in her career in high school, had failed two online courses, and that was an option that she didn't expect. Like many parents, Heather agrees that mandatory e-learning isn't just a bad idea, Mr. Speaker; it will be devastating for students like her daughter.

Again to the Premier: Why does this government care so little about families like Heather's that they're willing to put the futures of hundreds of thousands of kids in our province at stake?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, we're fighting hard so that Heather's child remains in class. That is the government's mission. It's what we're trying to do at the negotiating table. However, it requires a willing partner.

As we hear from Miguel, another individual taxpayer, citizen and parent who shared their story through one of my caucus colleagues, he believes that teachers are well-compensated and they should not be striking because of "higher benefits" on the backs of taxpayers. He says that the government is offering a fair deal. He wants them to accept it. He wants the children in class. He believes the teacher, too, wants to be back in class.

And so, the question is: How can we work to ensure that they remain in class? It's by putting a fair deal on the table, which is what we did: low classroom sizes, protecting full-day kindergarten, investing 100% in special education and offering a fair 1% enhancement to wages and benefits. It's a good deal for students. It's about time the unions accept that.

1130

JOB CREATION

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. On Monday, the minister spoke to the Toronto Region Board of Trade, reiterating our commitment to being open for business while outlining the importance of Ontario's trade strategy.

Ontario is leading the nation in job creation, with over 300,000 jobs created in Ontario since our government was elected in June 2018. This is a made-in-Ontario success story and speaks to the tremendous efforts made by our government to create a business environment that enables Ontario to compete for jobs and investment in the global market.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister update the Legislature on how our plan is creating opportunities for businesses right here in Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the member is correct. Over 300,000 new jobs have been created in Ontario. But to put a finer point on that, three quarters of all new jobs created in Canada were created right here in the province of Ontario.

This did not happen by accident. It's because we lowered the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$5 billion last year and \$5.4 billion this year. We've removed red tape, reduced the regulatory burden and, Speaker, now we want to build on this momentum and maximize our trade advantage.

To compete and win, Ontario will help businesses unlock new economic opportunities. We will focus on three trade areas: interprovincial, right across Canada; into the US; and all across the world. This new strategy is an exciting new chapter for Ontario as we continue to create the climate for job creation.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the minister for that answer. It is clear that making Ontario open for business and open for jobs is a top priority for our government.

Because of the action taken by our government, Ontario has seen an increase in trade and investment. By creating the conditions necessary for businesses to succeed, our government is laying the foundation for a growing economy that will provide good jobs for Ontario workers. Results matter, and our government is delivering for the people of Ontario.

Back to the minister, Mr. Speaker: Can he provide some context on how Ontario is faring in a globally competitive market?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, Ontario is leading the nation in job creation. In fact, Ontario created more jobs than Michigan, New York and California combined.

When we meet with businesses and investors at home and abroad, they understand that Ontario is an island of stability in an uncertain geopolitical landscape. Since 2002, Ontario's worldwide market access has grown from five countries to 49 through new trade agreements around the world. Doing business in Ontario means that businesses here have preferential access to over one and a half billion customers worldwide.

Speaker, we will continue our efforts to create the right conditions for growth, and send a message to job creators around the world that Ontario is open for business, open for jobs and open for—

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

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: My question is to the Premier. On May 28, 2019, Fort Albany First Nation's council declared a state of emergency in relation to a widespread

epidemic caused by drugs and alcohol that is greatly affecting the community. Lives have been lost, families are torn apart, and children and elders are left on their own because of this pandemic.

Speaker, having visited the community a few weeks ago, Fort Albany's chief confirmed that after nine months—nine months—the emergency is still ongoing. Why does this government refuse to listen to the people of Fort Albany and, once and for all, take action?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, we continue to work closely with First Nations leadership regionally and at the community level to ensure that their fair share of economic prosperity—which will solve many of the problems in these communities—is on this government's agenda.

My colleague the associate minister responsible for mental health and addictions has done a great job of engaging with Indigenous communities, ensuring that they have a say in the design and the development of community-based support. In fact, we've taken a whole-of-government approach. I recently visited a couple of the isolated communities with the minister of child, youth and social services, and we saw great examples of how those communities are making fundamental changes in outcomes for young people.

We're interested in a future for Indigenous people that offers economic prosperity, and we're focused on the kinds of policy options that will create just that.

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Speaker, to this day, Fort Albany has received absolutely no help to manage this addiction emergency.

Chief and council want to open a mental health and detox centre to treat people near their loved ones and according to their traditions. My office has reached out to the minister's office on multiple occasions, to repeatedly receive the same answer: The federal government is leading the response to this emergency.

Why does this government continue playing jurisdictional Ping-Pong instead of standing up for the people of Fort Albany First Nation and doing what is right?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that very important question.

Our government takes the development of a mental health strategy very seriously. We have done many consultations with numerous Indigenous communities around the province. What we're trying to do and what we will do is establish a connected system that will look after access and providing services when and where they are needed: in the local communities.

We will continue to work. I would like to hear a little bit more from the member opposite with respect to Fort Albany. We had met yesterday, for instance, with many of the chiefs from Ontario and many of the support workers

around Indigenous communities. We heard overwhelmingly the problems that exist.

These problems weren't created a year ago; these problems have existed for a long time, over previous governments. But, rest assured, our government is doing everything it can, and will do, from the standpoint of all of us working together with the—

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

HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

Mr. Vincent Ke: My question is again for the Minister of Health. Yesterday, our government introduced the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act. This bill includes many changes that, if passed, would improve the coordination of home care services, making them more accessible for Ontarians who need them.

Right now, there are patients who are well enough to leave the hospital, but can't do so because they are unable to access appropriate home care services. Fixing this problem is an essential part of ending hallway health care.

Can the minister tell this House how the act, if passed, would help solve long-standing issues with the home care sector?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for the question.

If passed, the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act will solve many of the problems caused by the current outdated legislative framework. We intend to help our home and community care service providers respond to the needs of patients and families in communities around the entire province.

This proposed legislation would remove restrictions on the model of delivery, including care coordination. This would support flexible home and community care that is connected with both acute hospital care and with primary care.

As we debate this bill, we look forward to further discussions on how our changes can help more patients access home care and, of course, improve their quality of life.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Question period has concluded.

This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 141, An Act respecting registration of and access to defibrillators / Projet de loi 141, Loi sur l'accès aux défibrillateurs et leur enregistrement.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SIKH GENOCIDE AWARENESS WEEK ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA SEMAINE DE LA SENSIBILISATION AU GÉNOCIDE DES SIKHS

Mr. Singh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to proclaim Sikh Genocide Awareness Week / Projet de loi 177, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la sensibilisation au génocide des sikhs.

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 Brampton East care to explain his bill?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: The Sikh community is still suffering from the trauma of the genocide we've experienced at the hands of the Indian government. From the attack on the Harmandir Sahib to the organized violence carried out against Sikhs in the streets of Delhi to the mass disappearances of Sikhs by Indian security forces, thousands of Sikhs were murdered. Many Sikhs fled this violence to start a new life here in Ontario, but the trauma stays with us, either as direct survivors, through the loss of those close to us, or through the pain of intergenerational trauma.

This bill will designate November 1 to 7, when Sikhs were burnt alive in the streets of Delhi, as Sikh Genocide Awareness Week, a time for them to reflect, to learn, to create awareness and, most importantly, heal from this pain and suffering.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BLACK HISTORY MONTH MOIS DE L'HISTOIRE DES NOIRS

Hon. Todd Smith: I'm pleased to rise in the House to formally recognize February as Black History Month. I'll be sharing my time with the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Black History Month was first proclaimed in Ontario in 1993, marking the 200th anniversary of a law banning the

importation of slaves into Upper Canada. In 2016, Ontario passed legislation to formally recognize February as Black History Month each year.

Celebrating Black History Month is about honouring the important contributions and legacy of black individuals across Ontario, Canada and around the world.

La célébration du Mois de l'histoire des Noirs consiste à rendre hommage aux importantes contributions et au patrimoine des Noirs de tout l'Ontario, du Canada et du monde entier.

It's also about sharing and learning from the successes, the stories and the rich heritage of the Black community.

Il s'agit aussi de partager les succès, les histoires et le riche patrimoine de la communauté noire, et d'en tirer des enseignements.

The diversity of experience within this community has made, and continues to make, Ontario a better, more inclusive place. We know that Ontario is home to a wide diaspora of individuals with Black heritage from those who can trace their ancestry back to the first Black settlement in Africville, Nova Scotia, to those from Africa, the Caribbean and various other parts of the world. Mr. Speaker, that includes my beautiful wife, Tawnya, who is of Antiguan background.

I want to take this moment to highlight that Toronto is home to one of the largest populations of Jamaicans outside of the island. There is even a neighbourhood just north of here that's referred to as "Little Jamaica." For over 40 years, the business of Little Jamaica has contributed significantly to Canadian culture and heritage. I'd be remiss in not mentioning the ever-popular and eventful annual Caribbean carnival that fills Toronto with so much excitement.

One notable person of Caribbean ancestry whom I would like to acknowledge is a Toronto native, the Honourable Lincoln Alexander: a lawyer, a war veteran, and as a Progressive Conservative he became the first Black member of Parliament in Canadian history and Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. Throughout his illustrious career, he highlighted not only his successes, of which there are many, but he was not shy about shining a light on the roadblocks that he faced as a result of institutional racism and prejudice. Lincoln Alexander has paved the way for Black Canadians for years to come, and has left an incredible legacy for us to remember.

While this is a month of celebration, it's very important to acknowledge the painful memories associated with the transatlantic slave trade, racism, segregation and the history of anti-Black legislation and policies. But we know that in the face of this adversity, Ontario's Black community has always remained resilient and determined.

Over the years, many Black Ontarians, those born here and those who have immigrated here, made important contributions and continue to make important contributions to our province's social, cultural, economic and political landscape—those like Chatham-born Ferguson Jenkins, who was the first Canadian enshrined in the baseball hall of fame. Colchester-born inventor Elijah McCoy held 50 patents in Canada and the United States.

Richard Pierpoint, sold into slavery in Africa in 1760, was the driving force behind what was known as the "Coloured Corps," an all-Black company of militia from Niagara and York districts who fought alongside the British during the War of 1812 and played a key role in the Battle of Queenston Heights.

A couple of weeks ago, I had the opportunity to join Chief Mark Saunders and the Toronto Police Service for their Black History Month celebration with the Jamaican Canadian Association and the Caribbean African Canadian Social Services. This year's theme was to celebrate the achievements of Black Canadians in music. This year's award recipients included Oscar Peterson; Salome Bey; Wes Williams; Tiki Mercury-Clarke, who actually performed at the event; Denise Jones; and Vivian Barclay. Those are just a few of countless Black Ontarians who brought their experience, talents and commitment to our province.

I look forward now to hearing from my colleague the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Many notable Black women have been also trailblazers who overcame enormous societal barriers and helped make Ontario what it is today. It's important to not forget their stories as we celebrate this important month. There are many women who have had a remarkable impact on our province, such as:

—Harriet Tubman, a former slave who was a leading abolitionist and personally guided many in person to their freedom by the Underground Railroad;

—Ottawa-born Lori Seale-Irving, the first Black female commissioned officer in the RCMP; and

—Toronto-born Jully Black, known as Canada's queen of R&B, a Juno Award winner, a supporter of many worthy charities and a vocal advocate for LGBTQ communities.

I'd also like to take a moment to recognize and celebrate the phenomenal Black women in this Legislature. Although we may not always agree, you're on an inspiration to young women and girls across this province, and I personally value the different perspectives you bring to the Legislature.

But while we celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of these and many other impressive Black people, the sobering reality is that racism, and specifically misogynoir—misogyny directed towards Black women—still exists here: here at home; ici, chez nous; across our country; dans tout le pays; and around the world; et dans le monde entier.

1510

While we no doubt have come a long way, we still have much further to go. Equality remains elusive, and here in Ontario, some Black people, including Black children and youth, do not have the same opportunities as other Ontarians to reach their full potential.

Et ici en Ontario, certains Noirs, y compris des enfants et des jeunes Noirs, n'ont pas la même chance que les autres Ontariens et Ontariennes.

Our government is committed to giving young Black youth the support they need so that they, too, can make a

difference. We are doing this in part through the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan. Through this plan, 70 agencies are delivering important programs designed to improve outcomes for Black children, youth and families in Ontario across all life stages, from early childhood to the transition to school and/or work.

An excellent example is the Industry-Led Career Initiative. This program gives Black youth who have completed post-secondary the training, supports and work placement opportunities they need to have a competitive advantage in securing high-quality employment and long-term career advancement. To date, over 80 young people have received support in fields such as digital animation and visual effects, film and post-production, technology and software development, and construction.

While these results are encouraging, we know that our work is far from done. As we celebrate Black History Month, I encourage all Ontarians to join the members of this House in recognizing and paying tribute to our province's rich Black history. Doing so will help us to continue to build an Ontario that is inclusive and strong.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

PRÉVENTION DE L'INTIMIDATION

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to rise in the House today in support of Pink Shirt Day.

Monsieur le Président, il me fait plaisir de prendre la parole à la Chambre en faveur de la journée de la chemise rose.

On Pink Shirt Day, people are encouraged to wear something pink to raise awareness and to symbolize that we will not tolerate bullying anywhere and in any form, and I'd like to thank my many colleagues today, as well as our staff members, for participating.

According to a 2015 report by the government of Canada, nearly one in four Canadian youth reported being bullied as frequently as twice a week, and almost half of Canadian parents report having a child who has been a victim of bullying. While we have many differences in this House, I know we can all agree that this is completely unacceptable. Bullying happens in many forms. It can be physical, it can be verbal, it can be in person, and it can be online. But no matter what form, bullying is very intentional.

There is a deliberate effort to hurt someone when bullying occurs. But doing something about it is just as deliberate. We do not have to stand by while someone is being bullied. We do not have to tolerate someone purposefully hurting another, but we need to stand united with those who are targeted. That's exactly what two grade 9 students from Nova Scotia did in 2007 when someone at their school was being bullied. They supported the student who was being bullied by standing with them, and they encouraged others to stand up as well, and that's how Pink Shirt Day began.

The power of what those students did, the power of that act of compassion and solidarity, was to tell that student

and all victims of bullying that they are not alone. That feeling of loneliness, of isolation, is a feeling many people have felt, especially those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer or two-spirited, or any individual who may be perceived as just being different. Being unique is not an excuse to be bullied, however. There is never an excuse to bully someone else. Our government will not tolerate bullying, discrimination and hatred.

Notre gouvernement ne tolère pas l'intimidation, la discrimination et la haine.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud that our government is instead working to lift children and youth up, which is the theme of this year's Pink Shirt Day, and that we are delivering that message through our words and actions. For example, the Stop Now and Plan program—or, as it's referred to, SNAP—is an evidence-based cognitive behavioural model that operates across the province, administered by the Child Development Institute, a fully accredited children's mental health organization. The program helps children between the ages of six and 12 who may have engaged in aggressive, anti-social behaviour—including bullying—learn self-regulating strategies and problem-solving skills.

Furthermore, with our support, youth outreach workers help young Ontarians to communicate their needs and learn about the wide range of services and supports that are available to them. These workers help youth build stronger connections to their communities by connecting them with opportunities that promote civic participation and the development of skills like community and peer leadership.

Putting a stop to bullying, whether in our schools, over the Internet or in our communities, takes all Ontarians being deliberate and doing something. We need to speak with one voice and act with one purpose. We need to make the lives of our young people better and to give them hope.

I'm encouraged by the number of members from all parties wearing pink today in support of this great cause. Thank you for showing your support. Thank you for standing up to bullying.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I'm proud to rise to talk about Black History Month as the first Black MPP for Peel region as well as a member of the Black caucus.

When we talk about Black history in Ontario, we have to think of it as part of the Canadian identity—not separate but as part of the Canadian identity.

We've heard stories about some of the great cultural sports and music activities from Black Canadians Fergie Jenkins as well as Andre De Grasse, more recently. I'm sure the younger generation would know who he is.

When we talk about music: Jully Black, Oscar Peterson and, of course, some new music from the great Drake as well.

When you look at the Canadian identity, we are intertwined with the Canadian identity.

The NDP were able to form the first Black caucus in history. I'm proud to be here with some of my colleagues: Jill Andrew from Toronto—St. Paul's, and several others.

When we think about Black history, we also have to talk about the elephant in the room. There's still anti-Black racism, which is going on and still continuing in our schools. So when we talk about the education file, we have to look at students who are being streamlined into courses which are deemed non-academic. When we look at the health care system, we're still looking at anti-Black racism in terms of long-term care. Look at the justice system: too many Black youth are still in our justice system—and in our criminal justice system.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end by talking to the young people who may be watching and listening right now, just to let them know that the Black caucus will continue to fight for them, and to let them know that they should not feel any different than anybody else because of the colour of their skin. We'll continue to fight for them in terms of discrimination.

We also want them to take the baton, to join groups, to join community organizations and to continue the fight for what is right, because the world is their oyster, Mr. Speaker. Regardless of the colour of their skin, they should feel that they have opportunities here in Ontario and Canada as well.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Miss Monique Taylor: I am grateful to respond on behalf of the official opposition to recognize Pink Shirt Day.

By now, the origin of Pink Shirt Day is well known: When a student in Nova Scotia, in high school, was being bullied for wearing a pink shirt, fellow students went out and got a whole bunch of shirts and handed them out to their peers and truly created an inspiring story of a community banding together to protect someone who was vulnerable.

Now, Pink Shirt Day serves to remind us of our duty to protect the vulnerable by eliminating bullying. The work is far from over. Bullying continues to be a persistent problem in our schools, communities and online. Racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism—discrimination of all kinds drives violence and bullying, and it must be recognized and confronted.

The victims of bullying must be supported as well. As legislators, we are in a unique position to make change. Like the students in the Nova Scotia high school, we must show solidarity with victims.

We must invest more in children's mental health. The wait-list in Ontario has doubled; that is unacceptable. Now, 28,000 kids are waiting for mental health supports.

1520

Further, we need more adults in our schools, not fewer. We need more support systems in our schools, not fewer. We should be working to provide students with more people that they can turn to, like teachers, EAs and social workers.

Finally, we need to strategically confront the various forms of discrimination and prejudice that drive bullying. They will not go away on their own. Our anti-racism, anti-homophobia and other efforts must be deliberate.

Pink Shirt Day is just a reminder to make sure that we know it is our duty to end bullying in our communities and in our schools, and ensure that we have a safer world for young people in Ontario. We need to keep working to make that a reality, and we need this government to put real investments into mental health, into real investments into true strategies that are going to tackle the bullying and racism that's happening in our communities. That's when Pink Shirt Day has finally won: the day that we can have the conversation that we've made our province a better place.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm pleased to rise to speak on the importance of Black History Month. This is a month when we reflect on the adversity, the courage and the triumphs of the Black experience across our province. We honour and celebrate all the everyday heroes who have fought for justice and equality and who have made a lasting impact on Ontario's life and culture, enriching our collective experience.

Black History Month is a time to learn and to celebrate, but it's also a time to acknowledge the legacy of slavery and segregation in this country, and it is a time to commit to combatting anti-Black racism at every turn. As lawmakers in this House, we have a responsibility to break down systemic barriers. We have an opportunity to fund programs that combat anti-Black racism.

Speaker, I want to close by just recognizing my Black colleagues in this House. You have undoubtedly faced barriers that I have never had to face, and I want to thank you for your courage, your leadership and your strong voices.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm also pleased today to rise and speak on the importance of Pink Shirt Day. It's so inspiring to see all the photos online today of schools, offices, health clinics, police forces, city halls and, yes indeed, this Legislature, with so many people wearing pink as a sign of solidarity against homophobia, misogyny, transphobia and so many other forms of bullying. It's a symbol of support for those who have been made to feel different, ashamed or like they don't belong because of their identity.

I have two daughters, and seeing them grow up, I know we have made significant progress towards combatting discrimination and bullying, towards creating more inclusive spaces for people with LGBTQ+ and two-spirited youth.

But I also know, Speaker, that we have so much more to do. One in three Canadian adolescents reports being bullied. These experiences can be traumatic and have

impacts that last a lifetime. That's why days like today are so important.

But it's much more than just wearing a pink shirt. It's also about showing empathy, kindness and understanding, it's about recognizing our responsibility as adults to be role models and it's about our responsibility as lawmakers to invest in the services that combat bullying. That's why we need more investments in our schools to provide them with the resources to combat bullying.

It's why we need to invest in mental health services, to reduce the wait-lists for the 28,000 young people waiting to access mental health services. It's why we need a school curriculum that teaches children about gender identity, cyberbullying and respect for everyone in our community.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that all of us in this House remember the pink shirts we're wearing today each and every day, because we can make a choice every day to lift each other up rather than tearing each other down, and that's the legacy of Pink Shirt Day.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Suze Morrison: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

“Invest in Schools and Students. Stop the Cuts.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government has announced over \$1 billion in funding cuts to our schools, which will result in bigger class sizes in grades 4 to 12; significantly less support for the most vulnerable students, including those with disabilities, special needs, and English-language learners; mandatory e-learning for high school students; and cuts to badly needed school repairs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose these damaging cuts and implement:

“(1) Full funding to our public education system at existing levels, and no mandatory e-learning for any students;

“(2) An education funding formula that (a) increases support for special education; (b) reduces class sizes in kindergarten and grades 4 to 12; and (c) increases capacity to deliver front-line services by paraprofessionals;

“(3) An Ontario-wide state of good repair standard for all public schools so they are safe, healthy, well-maintained buildings that provide environments conducive to learning and working;

“(4) An evidence-based review of the education funding formula every five years to determine its effectiveness in supporting high-quality public education.”

I fully endorse this petition. I will be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Finnegan to deliver to the table.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: This petition is entitled “Petition for Smarter Justice.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas after 15 years of neglect under successive Liberal governments the justice system grew outdated and unnecessarily complex;

“Whereas Ontario's class action legislation has not been significantly updated in more than 25 years. The current system is outdated, slow and doesn't always put people at the centre of class actions in Ontario;

“Whereas lives can be—and have been—destroyed by serious crimes like sharing intimate images without consent. Cyberbullies can communicate broadly and quickly, making targets feel like they have no escape and often causing enduring mental and emotional harm;

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

“Proceed as effectively as possible to stand up for victims and law-abiding citizens, provide better, more affordable justice for families and consumers, and simplify a complex and outdated justice system to better serve the people of Ontario by immediately passing Bill 161, An Act to enact the Legal Aid Services Act, 2019 and to make various amendments to other Acts dealing with the courts and other justice matters, so that:

“(1) A flexible, sustainable and accountable legal aid system is built...;

“(2) Ontario's outdated class action legislation is updated...;

“(3) Criminals don't profit from crimes...;

“(4) How a small estate is handled is simplified...;

“(5) Notary and commissioner services are modernized...;

“(6) It is made easier for cyberbullying victims to sue their offender...;

“(7) In the tragic death of a loved one families are given closure...;

“(8) Who can perform marriage ceremonies is expanded...;

“(9) Lawyers and paralegals are held to the highest ethical standards...;

“(10) Juror privacy and security is protected...;

“(11) Reappointing case management masters is more efficient...;

“(12) Taxpayer dollars are no longer used to pay legal fees for judicial officials removed from office....”

I will affix my signature onto this petition and give it to page Jaxon.

1530

VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My petition is entitled “Support the Highway of Heroes Tree Campaign.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas during the war in Afghanistan, Canada lost 159 military personnel;

“Whereas those brave souls were driven along the Highway of Heroes between CFB Trenton and the coroner’s office in Toronto;

“Whereas since Confederation, 117,000 Canadian lives have been lost in military conflict;

“Whereas there is a recognized and celebrated plan to transform the Highway of Heroes into a living tribute that honours all of Canada’s war dead;

“Whereas that plan calls for the planting of two million trees, including 117,000 beautiful commemorative trees adjacent to Highway 401 along the Highway of Heroes;

“Whereas this effort would provide an inspired drive along an otherwise pedestrian stretch of asphalt;

“Whereas the two million trees will recognize all Canadians who have served during times of war;

“Whereas over three million tonnes of CO₂ will be sequestered, over 500 million pounds of oxygen will be produced and 200 million gallons of water will be released into the air each day, benefiting all Ontarians in the name of those who served our country and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice; and

“Whereas there is a fundraising goal of \$10 million;

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

“That the current government of Ontario put its financial support behind this fundraising effort for the Highway of Heroes Tree campaign.”

I support this beautiful petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Catharine.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Ms. Jane McKenna: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the agri-food industry employs over 2.3 million Canadians and one in eight jobs in the Canadian economy; and

“Whereas the agri-food industry contributes over \$47.7 billion in GDP annually to Ontario’s economy; and

“Whereas Canada’s rich culinary culture is worthy of celebration; and

“Whereas fresh, nutritious, locally grown food is necessary for daily life and for proper health and wellness; and

“Whereas locally grown food is an essential component of Ontario’s agriculture sector; and

“Whereas the Food Day Ontario Act would encourage restaurants and consumers to purchase locally produced ingredients and to support our local suppliers; and

“Whereas Food Day Ontario will unite our communities, create jobs, and boost our economy; and

“Whereas the day will promote culinary sovereignty by emphasizing local food, local producers and local businesses; and

“Whereas an annual Food Day Ontario will recognize the hard work and dedication of Ontario’s agriculture sector workers put in to providing nutritious and healthy food for our communities;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass Bill 163, Food Day Ontario (Food Day Canada in Ontario) Act, 2020.”

I am very supportive of this. I will sign my name and pass it to Nathan.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to present this petition on behalf of Gary Krauser of Barrie, signed by people from across the province. It reads as follows:

“Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly: Invest in the Schools Our Students Deserve. Stop the Cuts!

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government has announced over \$1 billion in funding cuts to our schools, which will result in bigger class sizes in grades 4 to 12; significantly less support for the most vulnerable students, including those with disabilities, special needs, and English-language learners; mandatory e-learning for high school students; and cuts to badly needed school repairs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose these damaging cuts and implement:

“(1) Full funding to our public education system at existing levels, and no mandatory e-learning for any students;

“(2) An education funding formula that (a) increases support for special education; (b) reduces class sizes in kindergarten and grades 4 to 12; and (c) increases capacity to deliver front-line services by paraprofessionals;

“(3) An Ontario-wide state of good repair standard for all public schools so they are safe, healthy, well-maintained buildings that provide environments conducive to learning and working;

“(4) An evidence-based review of the education funding formula every five years to determine its effectiveness in supporting high-quality public education.”

I very much support this petition. I’m going to affix my signature and hand it to page Juliana to table with the Clerks.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I’m so pleased today to present a petition entitled “Food Day Ontario Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the agri-food industry employs over 2.3 million Canadians and one in eight jobs in the Canadian economy...; and

“Whereas Canada’s rich culinary culture is worthy of celebration; and

“Whereas fresh, nutritious, locally grown food is necessary for daily life and for proper health and wellness; and

“Whereas locally grown food is an essential component of Ontario’s agriculture sector; and

“Whereas the Food Day Ontario Act would encourage restaurants and consumers to purchase locally produced ingredients and to support our local suppliers; and

“Whereas Food Day Ontario will unite our communities, create jobs, and boost our economy; and

“Whereas the day will promote culinary sovereignty by emphasizing local food, local producers and local businesses; and

“Whereas an annual Food Day Ontario will recognize the hard work and dedication Ontario’s agriculture sector workers put in to providing nutritious and healthy food for so many communities;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass Bill 163, Food Day Ontario (Food Day Canada in Ontario) Act, 2020.”

I am pleased to affix my signature to this and to present it to page Jessica. Might I suggest to all of my colleagues as well—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Further petitions?

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Roxanne Beaulieu from Hanmer in my riding for those petitions. It reads as follows:

“911 Emergency Response....

“Whereas, when we face an emergency we all know to dial 911 for help; and

“Whereas access to emergency services through 911 is not available in all regions of Ontario but most Ontarians believe that it is; and

“Whereas many Ontarians have discovered that 911 was not available while they faced an emergency; and

“Whereas all Ontarians expect and deserve access to 911 service throughout our province;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To provide 911 emergency response everywhere in Ontario by land line or cellphone.”

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

HOME CARE

Mr. Lorne Coe: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas after 15 years of neglect under successive Liberal governments, the demand for home care services has far outstripped the ability of care providers to coordinate these services;

“Whereas decisions about home care are currently often made in bureaucratic settings using a siloed approach that does not allow for individual patient circumstances to be taken into account;

“Whereas care plans can currently have service maximums for set hours that result in patients receiving

insufficient care, care scheduled in ways that are sub-optimal for patients and providers;

“Whereas Ontario health teams are set to transform health care in Ontario with a greater focus on the patient and on easing transitions between different kinds of care;

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

“Proceed as effectively as possible to support the improvement of home care services and the coordination of these services so that Ontarians can receive the support they need....”

I agree with this particular petition. I’m going to affix my signature and provide it to page Nyle.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to present these petitions on behalf of parents and students across our province. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government has announced over \$1 billion in funding cuts to our schools, which will result in bigger class sizes in grades 4 to 12; significantly less support for the most vulnerable students, including those with disabilities, special needs, and English-language learners; mandatory e-learning for high school students; and cuts to badly needed school repairs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose these damaging cuts and implement:

“(1) Full funding to our public education system at existing levels, and no mandatory e-learning for any students;

“(2) An education funding formula that (a) increases support for special education; (b) reduces class sizes in kindergarten and grades 4 to 12; and (c) increases capacity to deliver front-line services by paraprofessionals;

“(3) An Ontario-wide state of good repair standard for all public schools so they are safe, healthy, well-maintained buildings that provide environments conducive to learning and working;

“(4) An evidence-based review of the education funding formula every five years to determine its effectiveness in supporting high-quality public education.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Finnegan to deliver to the Clerks.

1540

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Dave Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over the last 15 ... years under the previous Liberal government costs for businesses skyrocketed; and

“Whereas the Ford government has been eliminating thousands of regulations and ensuring regulation to the point of integrity by introducing the Making Ontario Open For Business Act, Restoring Ontario’s Competitiveness

Act and the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act; and

“Whereas the government has reduced business premiums for the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board; and

“Whereas the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade has been travelling to Asia and the United States on trade missions with business and political leaders; and

“Whereas our government has scrapped the job-killing carbon tax; and

“Whereas our government has reduced the costs of energy by passing the Access to Natural Gas Act and the Fixing the Hydro Mess Act; and

“Whereas since June of 2018 Ontario has added” more than 300,000 new jobs; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario has added more jobs” during this 12-month period than any other “12-month period since statistics on job numbers have been recorded;

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

That the government of Ontario “continue its efforts to reduce the cost of doing business in Ontario with the goal of building on the record-breaking job number of the past 18 months.”

I’ll affix my signature to this and give it to page Rachel.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for petitions has now expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TRUST IN REAL ESTATE SERVICES ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA CONFIANCE ENVERS LES SERVICES IMMOBILIERS

Ms. Thompson moved third reading of the following bill:

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): To the minister.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I am very, very honoured today to stand in this House to introduce third reading of something we’ve waited a long time for. I’m going to be very, very pleased to share my time with a champion of this bill, the parliamentary assistant from Sarnia–Lambton.

It’s all about being champions of what makes sense in Ontario when it comes to trusting real estate services. Again, I look forward to hearing what the member from Sarnia–Lambton brings to the floor of this House because it has been a few years now since he first introduced his private member’s bill with regard to making sure that the real estate industry in Ontario moves forward. That’s what we’re doing today.

Before I get into the details of the bill, though, I would like to thank the numerous people who have made a difference in getting this bill once and for all over the finish line, because I have to recognize that realtors in Ontario have waited since approximately 2005 for this day to come. I want to thank everyone in the House, all parties, for recognizing that trust in real estate services in 2020 needs to come forward with all-party support, and I thank them sincerely for that.

I also want to thank the officials from the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services as well as my entire team over at GCS. They have all worked so hard in facilitating consultations with stakeholders and in getting feedback. The information that was mined during those consultations was so valuable in getting us to this point today. There have been many late nights and weekends to get this bill through to the House.

Why are we doing this? Real estate transactions are an important part of Ontario’s economy. In 2019, there were over 86,000 registered real estate brokerages, brokers and salespersons, and home sales of approximately \$107.9 billion in Ontario. That’s pretty significant.

Ontario’s government for the people is looking at and recognizing the need to modernize laws governing real estate brokerages, brokers and salespersons to better deal with today’s business practices and today’s business climate, as well as consumer expectations, all while reducing red tape for business and strengthening consumer protection. The real estate industry in Ontario—I’m sure we can all agree in this House—has changed dramatically since the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002, first became law.

So what are we doing with this bill and why did everybody agree that it was time to ensure that this particular initiative got across the finish line? Well, our government is proposing to amend the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act—known as REBBA through the years—to specifically enable regulatory changes that would give consumers more choice in the purchase and sale process, and improve the information consumers receive about what a real estate professional and brokerage must do for them.

Also, with this legislation, if it is passed, we will improve professionalism among real estate professionals and brokerages by allowing for regulatory changes to enhance ethical requirements. Also, we’ll be updating the Real Estate Council of Ontario’s—known as RECO—regulatory powers, including allowing it to levy financial penalties, also known as administrative penalties, for the purpose of promoting compliance with the act, and allowing RECO’s registrar to consider a broad range of factors when considering eligibility for registration.

Also with this legislation, if it should pass, we’re going to be creating a stronger business environment. This is going to be well received from one end of this province straight through to the other, because a stronger business environment will be realized, accepted and celebrated by laying the foundation for allowing real estate professionals to incorporate, and to be paid through the corporation, while maintaining measures that protect consumers.

Speaker, I'm sure you will very much recall that, throughout the last nine years or so, we have heard very loud and clear the ask from real estate professionals for this very thing to happen, and I'm so proud that, in this House, we're agreeing to make it happen.

We also, through this legislation, if it should pass, enabled the creation of a specialist certification program that may be developed by government or by RECO to ensure that real estate professionals and brokerages holding themselves out as specialists in a particular type of real estate—for instance, commercial real estate—are certified as specialists in the relevant area.

Also, it's important to note that by bringing this legislation up to date to reflect the realities in 2020, we are going to be reducing regulatory burdens as well. I know that too is very well received.

We've considered a wide range of options to land where we did, and the GCS team undertook countless hours of critical analysis for each one. I always knew that for every recommended course of action, I appreciated the fact that there were so many others that were considered, and I've always admired, again, the thoughtfulness, the professionalism and the dedication of the entire team at government and consumer services.

So what's this bill all about? Let's take a look at that. The bill is about realizing the need to bring the real estate industry in Ontario up to 2020 standards that have been asked for for so long. There have been numerous times that our champions, our organizations representing this industry, have advocated and met with so many of us throughout this House, to bring forward, in a very professional manner, their asks.

I want to take a moment to thank the Ontario Real Estate Association, the Real Estate Council of Ontario, the Toronto Real Estate Board and the other stakeholders whom we have worked with on this legislation. OREA and RECO have had a very strong working relationship with government and consumer services for a number of years now, and I'm very much appreciative, as we all are, of their ongoing support.

In addition, thousands of people took the time to respond to our consultations, and those conversations helped guide us and verify that we indeed were heading in the right direction. Those conversations were not only part of consultations last winter, but they also continued over the course of public hearings at the Standing Committee on General Government.

1550

I would like to take this moment to particularly thank all the individuals who took time to submit written submissions or actually appear before the committee in person. There has been—and we need to celebrate this—very patient work that led to improvements in this bill, and I want to thank everyone who participated in that. More than 2,700 consumers responded to our online survey. Overall, including the industry stakeholders and organizations that took part, we got almost 7,000 responses. Speaker, that's a really impressive number.

In addition to the online survey, people were asked to provide more detailed and thorough feedback in response to a formal consultation paper located on the regulatory registry. This is an online repository that the Ontario government uses to facilitate feedback from the public and stakeholders on potential regulatory changes. During these particular consultations, we received 144 submissions in response to the consultation paper. Some 59% of those were from real estate professionals, but it's important to note that 28% were from consumers, while 11% were from other organizations.

It's important to recognize that there has been so much collective effort for this particular trust in real estate services legislation. I am very humbled that we're here with all-party support. I can't stress that enough.

First of all, when we start thinking about specifics in the bill, Bill 145, we need to recognize that this piece of legislation will improve consumer protection and choice by enabling regulatory changes to improve the information consumers receive about what real estate professionals and brokers must do for them. Through regulations, we could, for example, look at requirements for consumers to be given a guide about consumer relationships. This clarity is critically important. Consumers should always know who a professional is representing or serving in a transaction; what their rights are; what their responsibilities are, as well; and, most importantly, what their options are.

We are also proposing to remove the term “customer” from the act and replace it with the new term of “self-represented party.” We heard during the consultations that consumers are often confused about what it means to be a customer versus a client of a brokerage, so we're going to clean that up.

A client is someone who has entered into a representation agreement with a brokerage, and the registrant is required to promote and protect the client's best interests. A customer, on the other hand, is allowed limited obligations, but a real estate professional must still treat them with fairness, honesty and integrity. Because the differences between the two categories are not clear through the previous legislation, some customers may be under the mistaken impression that the realtor, real estate agent or broker of the brokerage they are working with owes them a higher level of obligation.

To address this specific confusion, we are proposing to eliminate the current “customer” category and enhance disclosures to clarify the different options available to the public and what real estate professionals and brokerages must do for them. The bill, if passed, would also enable regulatory changes to give consumers more choice in the purchase and sale process by permitting real estate professionals and brokerages to disclose details of competing offers. Taking this option would be the choice of the seller. I can't stress that enough and I will repeat that: Taking this option would be the choice to the seller. Of course, when looking at regulatory changes, we would consider the issues of consent and the privacy rights of all parties, including the buyer.

Secondly, the bill would, if passed, improve professionalism in the real estate industry. It would do this by enabling regulatory changes to streamline and modernize the code of ethics that real estate professionals and brokerages must follow. This would enhance ethical requirements for this sector. Currently, the code of ethics regulation can be confusing for real estate professionals and brokerages, as well as consumers. That's because it combines ethical, principle-based requirements, such as fairness and honesty, with technical and procedural requirements, such as detailed requirements for the content of written agreements. If amendments to the act are passed, we would consult with the stakeholders to seek their input on proposed regulations including changes to the code of ethics regulation.

Thirdly, as a related point, we would propose to update the powers available to the Real Estate Council of Ontario and its registrar to promote compliance. Specifically—and I know this will be well received from one end of this province to another—this particular aspect of the legislation that we're proposing will address bad conduct and improve regulatory efficiency in four main ways.

That's why, if this bill is passed, it would make changes that would allow RECO's registrar to consider a broader range of factors, including past conduct and the public interest, when considering registration eligibility.

It would give RECO the authority to levy a financial penalties, also known as administrative penalties, for failure to comply with the requirements, such as filing late documents.

In addition, it would allow RECO's discipline committee to consider a broader range of issues and provide it with the authority to revoke or suspend a real estate professional's or brokerage's registration or to impose conditions on a registration, and it would give RECO's registrar the authority to require real estate brokerages and professionals to provide data about real estate transactions to support risk-based enforcement.

Our fourth main goal for this bill, if passed, would be to create a stronger business environment. This would happen by laying the foundation to allow real estate professionals to incorporate.

Again, we have heard this loud and clear for years, and I want to thank everyone in this House for helping not only this piece of legislation advance to third reading, as we have today, but for intending this legislation to pass once and for all.

This is an issue that is very, very important to the industry, and it would enable a real estate professional to be paid through a corporation but still maintain strong measures to protect consumers.

In addition, if passed, this bill would enable the creation of a specialist certification program. At the consultation held in my riding of Huron–Bruce, I really appreciated President Karen Cox of OREA coming and hosting and facilitating a consultation where we heard loud and clear that consideration of a specialist certification is valid.

Depending on whether you're down in Chatham-Kent, as the member who sits typically behind me is from and

does a great job representing, it could be a specialist in greenhouses, or along the shoreline of Lake Huron or in the Peterborough–Kawartha area there could be a summer home/cottage specialist, or, as I mentioned earlier in this debate, a commercial real estate specialist. The list just could go on and on.

This is something that, collectively across the province, our real estate professionals have been looking for and waiting for.

If such a program were created, it would help ensure that real estate professionals and brokerages who say they specialize in a particular area, such as farmland, are truly certified as specialists in that relevant area. This could also give consumers more confidence that the condo specialist they're working with, for example, really has special expertise and education in that field.

Speaker, we recognize that this is an issue that the real estate association has identified as a high priority for their members. We are listening. Should the bill pass, we would conduct further consultations on this issue to determine the most appropriate approach.

Again, we heard this time and again, and we look forward to further discussion with our professionals and with our team to make sure that as we consider specialist certification, we get it exactly right.

The fifth and final main goal of this bill is to bring legislation and regulations up to date and to reduce the regulatory burden on the real estate industry as well as the Real Estate Council of Ontario.

For example, we are proposing to simplify brokerage procedures by aligning the length of time that brokerages must hold onto trust money under various circumstances. In addition, we are proposing to update the language in the act to make it more consistent with other laws. Although this may be a simple thing, it would help businesses save time, effort and costs by making it easier for them to understand the applicable law. Those are just some of the particulars of the bill.

1600

I know that no bill is ever perfect, and that's why I am so thankful for everyone who participated in the Standing Committee on General Government for their thoughtful work in considering the details of the bill. During the course of their deliberations, the general government committee made amendments that are now part of the bill. I believe that these have improved the overall legislation, so I would like to discuss those for a few moments.

Section 12 of the bill has been amended to require that decisions made by a RECO discipline committee to revoke, suspend or impose conditions on a registration take effect immediately, even if the order is appealed to the Licence Appeal Tribunal. This would happen unless the decision specifies another date or unless a stay of order is granted pending the result of the appeal. Without these amendments, the bill would be silent with respect to whether an order of the discipline committee would take effect immediately. As a result, the Statutory Powers Procedure Act would govern. Under that act, an appeal from the discipline committee would serve as a stay unless

another act or regulation provides otherwise. By the same token, the tribunal or court could order differently.

In contrast, Bill 145 and similar statutes, such as the Regulated Health Professions Act and the Law Society Act, provide that the tribunal orders related to revocation, suspension or conditions placed on a registration/licence take effect immediately. We believe that if the discipline committee determines that a registrant has violated the act, and that this is the appropriate order, a registrant should not be able to continue working as a real estate professional until the appeal is resolved. Again, this is something that we heard during our live consultations, and it's something that our professionals hold near and dear.

I would like to continue on and share that, secondly, during the Standing Committee on General Government, the committee made a minor technical amendment that would make the reference to minister's regulations consistent throughout the bill.

Thirdly, amendments were made to balance flexibility for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations to enhance consumer protection, with measures to increase certainty and reduce burden for the real estate industry. I know that some forms and agreements can be complex and may not be easily understood by consumers. This change would allow the government to make regulations to permit the registrar the authority to approve specified forms used by real estate brokerages and professionals in their dealings with consumers. This amendment would ensure a balance between the need for flexibility to enhance consumer protection and measures to create greater certainty for the industry, all the while reducing burden.

Lastly, the final amendment made by the standing committee is a technical change to separate two provisions which create regulation-making power in relation to personal real estate corporations and those that relate to administrative penalties. These are separate provisions, and the amendment allows them to be brought into force at different times. The real estate industry has indicated strong support for the development of regulations related to the proposed exemption of personal real estate corporations as a first priority. Should the bill pass, we would prioritize regulations related to personal real estate corporations in an early phase of regulation development, while those related to administrative penalties are expected to be brought forward at a later date. This change would simply allow each paragraph to be brought into force at the appropriate time when the regulations for each provision are made.

Mr. Speaker, those are the main points and goals of the bill as well as the changes that have come forward to the House following clause-by-clause deliberations in the Standing Committee on General Government.

Again, I want to thank the members of that committee and the deputants who spoke when they had the opportunity to present their view on this particular piece of legislation. In particular, representatives from the Ontario Real Estate Association spoke about their impression of the bill. In addition to their remarks at the standing

committee, here's what they had to say in their publicly released statement during the clause-by-clause hearings:

"The Ontario government's Trust in Real Estate Services Act (TRESA) will ensure that the realtor at your side," meaning the consumer's side, "during the largest financial transaction of" a person's "life has the highest professional standards, training and modern tools in North America." Ontario will be leading in this regard, and I'm so appreciative of everyone that has allowed us to set that bar so high.

"Ontario realtors have been pushing for changes to our province's broken real estate discipline system and outdated real estate rules for over a decade"—Speaker, we listened, we consulted and we have taken action through this legislation—"and we are thrilled that this important piece of legislation is now one step closer to passing. TRESA will make Ontario a leader when it comes to consumer protection, education and business tools in real estate, such as personal real estate corporations."

We also heard from the real estate industry across the province that the ability to call themselves "realtors" or "real estate agents" is very important to them. I am so happy to say that we have found a solution to allow real estate professionals to do just this. Currently, the existing code of ethics regulation under the act sets out alternative terms that could be used for advertising purposes by salespersons, brokers or brokerages. As of right now, they are currently allowed to call themselves "sales representatives." We are proposing to expand the advertising requirement in section 36 to allow real estate professionals to use the terms "realtor" or "real estate agent" for the purposes of advertising. We want to ensure that real estate agents are able to use a term that best fits the role they play when helping people make the biggest decision in their lives.

For years, OREA—as well as my parliamentary assistant, from that amazing riding of Sarnia—Lambton—has led the charge for modern legislation, because we believe Ontario should be a leader when it comes to trust and professionalism in real estate services. The TRESA legislation is a huge win for our province's homebuyers, sellers and realtors. This legislation will greatly strengthen the already robust real estate landscape in Ontario, ensuring that "the realtor at your side during the largest financial transaction of your life has the highest professional standards, training and modern tools in North America."

Speaker, I'm so pleased to say that, out of the concerns, one has been addressed in the committee amendments that I've already talked about, with respect to specifying forms of agreements in regulation.

The other, I'm confident, can be addressed when we consult again with stakeholders during the regulation development stage. If the House passes Bill 145, I intend to consult on the changes to the code of ethics regulation that would allow real estate salespersons and brokers to use additional terms such as "realtor" or "real estate agent" for advertising purposes. We've heard the industry loud and clear, and I'm very proud that we have found a path forward together in this particular regard.

I think about all of the realtors in my riding of Huron–Bruce that I’ve have met with. Sue and Gwen have been very meticulous and consistent as they have advocated for these changes for my entire tenure here at Queen’s Park.

I think of Michael McIntee, who was on one of the original working committees that brought REBBA into action.

I think about the realtors we met with in Peterborough–Kawartha. They, too, wanted to make sure that their industry had the right legislation with the right terms to allow them to go out to represent people to the best of their ability, with the correct professionalism and the correct legislation to support them in doing just that.

I think all of the members of this House have probably met with representatives themselves, in terms of their local real estate boards and realtors—I see a nodding head behind me. In fact, last fall, just before introducing this bill, there were a lot of consultations happening.

I think today is a great day because it has all culminated: all of those discussions, all of that advocacy, all of the sweat and effort that has gone into ensuring that the real estate industry in Ontario becomes a leader in North America. It is finally realized.

It’s all about enabling people to help others. Passing Bill 145 through third reading is an amazing way to help a lot of people to ensure that when they make the largest purchase of their lifetime, it is done with honest and ethical real estate professionals.

Speaker, during my statement during earlier debate in second reading, I talked about the massive increase in property values in Ontario. Stats Canada, for example, showed that the total value of all homes in Ontario more than doubled between 2005 and 2015, up to more than \$2 trillion. That’s double the value when the Bank of Canada says overall inflation was less than 20% in that same period of time.

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The Ontario Real Estate Association pointed out to us that the average price of a house in Toronto when the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act was introduced in 2002 was \$245,000. In 2002, the average house price in Toronto was \$245,000. If we were to search for a house at \$245,000 in Toronto today, we would come up with zero. That reality no longer exists. In fact, this past August, the Toronto Real Estate Board said that the average price for a house in Toronto now is more than \$800,000.

As we’ve said before, this increase in values underscored the need to update the legislation and ensure that we stand with this industry in terms of enabling them to promote themselves to the best of their ability and to ensure that the bad actors that happen in any sector are held to account in a very formal and effective way.

I am sure we can all appreciate how much business has changed over the past 17 years or so, when the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act was first brought into force. It’s not just in the real estate industry, but in the world generally, the change of pace has been enormous. The use of technology, including e-commerce, has disrupted traditional business models. This is part of the evolution

of the real estate sector that REBBA did not envision. Even consider for a moment the way we work in a faster, more interconnected marketplace. Social media, cloud computing and even smart phones were barely in use when REBBA was brought into force.

I’ll save all the old clichés about typewriters and fax machines and rotary-dial phones, but we know it’s time—Bob remembers those—to make sure that the real estate industry in Ontario is modernized and reflective of the needs not only in 2020 but going forward as well. That’s why I thank the honourable members for their time and consideration of this bill, because one last point I would like to address is why we’ve spent so much time on this legislation.

We often hear about the importance of real estate as an investment, as the largest purchase most people will ever make in their lifetime, and that’s true. I don’t want to take anything away from the financial importance of real estate, but it’s also so much more than that. As I said during my statement following the introduction of the bill, real estate is not just about the square footage and great floor plan. It’s about that kitchen table where homework gets done or where you have your Thanksgiving dinner or where you just catch up with your family. It’s the spaces with the cozy corners that look out from a window on a winter’s day—like maybe some people will be doing tomorrow—and it’s about the living room where dreams are hatched.

It’s those things that make real estate not just the largest purchase a person will ever make; it’s about homes. Protecting consumers and the industry that supports them will be an ongoing imperative. We must remain vigilant to keep track of the changes in the marketplace and make sure that we don’t fall behind again.

Even though we’ve already had multiple conversations about the details of this bill, our work is not done yet. I encourage members of this House to pass this bill so that we can get on to the next stage, which is the even more detailed work needed to develop regulations so we can put the bill into force.

As is the tradition in my ministry, we will be again consulting and working with stakeholders and consumers to make sure we get those regulations right. We’ll continue to consult with stakeholders because we know that these details matter, and we’ll also be talking to consumers and real estate professionals about how the regulations will affect them. Almost 7,000 individuals and organizations responded earlier to our consultations, and I hope that we can count on those people again to provide us with their thoughtful input.

In closing, and just before I hand the debate over to that amazing member from Sarnia–Lambton, my PA who works so hard and connects with everybody in this province, I want to thank one more time all the people who worked so hard to contribute to this bill. You know who you are.

I believe that we have struck the right balance in bringing forward proposals that would, if passed, create stronger rules and greater confidence in the marketplace for our consumers. At the same time, I believe that if this

bill is passed, we will help reduce some of the administrative burden on real estate professionals and make for a more efficient and productive business environment. Overall, I think it's fair to say that, if passed, the proposals in this bill would benefit everyone in the real estate market, including buyers, sellers and the real estate professionals who work with them. But even further than that, I think this particular piece of legislation, Bill 145, the Trust in Real Estate Services Act, benefits families, businesses and communities, to whom real estate is so important.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and all the members in this House for your time and attention today. I encourage everyone to pass this bill so that we can get on with the remaining details and put it into effect.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Sharing your time, I now turn to the member from Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the minister for those kind words. I hope I can live up to them.

I'm extremely pleased and proud to rise today as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services and add to the third reading debate on Bill 145, the Trust in Real Estate Services Act, 2019. I want to commend the Minister of Government and Consumer Services for her leadoff remarks this afternoon, and also all of the staff at the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, who worked very hard on this important update, and who are really proud of this bill as well.

Getting to third reading is never a certainty, even with government legislation. I know I've got a number of bills to third reading in opposition and it's never even certain in government—I can see, after being with the minister, and the work we went through. So, I want to extend my congratulations to the minister and staff at the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. As the parliamentary assistant to the minister, I know just how hard everyone works at the Ministry of Government of Consumer Services on behalf of the citizens of Ontario.

Bill 145 is an important update to the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act. It's something that was long overdue, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my previous remarks on Bill 145, the minister sat down with her staff to look at updating the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act as a way to improve consumer trust in the real estate sector. The minister's goal was to bring the sector up to the standard of consumer protection and professionalism we in Ontario would expect in 2020. The minister and her team focused on five key principles to do that. The five principles they focused on were: consumer protection, increased professionalism, efficient and effective regulation, creating a strong business environment, and reducing red tape and regulatory burden on businesses.

Bill 145, the Trust in Real Estate Services Act, was drafted with those principles in mind, and those principles reflect the feedback that our government receives through open consultations with more than 7,000 consumers and real estate professionals across this great province. I think, in my opinion, we have delivered on all five of those key principles.

I also want to make a special point of mentioning that Bill 145, if passed at third reading, will lay the foundation to allow real estate professionals to incorporate. That's something I have personally heard about and worked on for a number of years, and introduced in my private member's bill in the recent past. In fact, back in the fall of 2018—here it is here—I introduced the Tax Fairness for Real Estate Professionals Act as a private member's bill in this Legislature. It was an issue that had been raised in this House many times and had all-party support. So I was very happy that the minister and her team decided to take the substance of my private member's bill and weave it into the Trust in Real Estate Services Act, thus allowing Ontario realtors to form personal real estate corporations that will align the realtor profession with most other professionals in Ontario who already have the ability to incorporate. It's an aspirational goal. Not everyone will choose to do that, but the ones who choose to do it and meet all the criteria will be rewarded. It will also align Ontario with six other provinces in Canada where realtors are already allowed to incorporate.

Allowing realtors to incorporate gives these professionals a modern business tool they can use to reinvest their savings back into their businesses and create jobs. This is all real good news for real estate professionals all over this province. They have been very big advocates for this measure and the other updates we find in Bill 145.

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As a member of the Standing Committee on General Government, I had the opportunity to participate in the committee hearings that the minister referred to on this bill, Bill 145. We heard from a number of real estate professionals, from the Toronto Real Estate Board and from the Ontario Real Estate Association as well. Their remarks were very positive and supportive of Bill 145 and the updates that we have laid out in this bill.

I was really pleased to hear from my former colleague Tim Hudak, the CEO of the Ontario Real Estate Association, at those hearings. Mr. Hudak has been a real champion of updating the legislation that pertains to real estate transactions since stepping into the CEO's role at OREA a number of years ago.

In his remarks, Mr. Hudak noted that the changes to the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act have been an ongoing ask of Ontario realtors since as early as 2005. Personally, I can't understand why the previous government didn't act on this request and give realtors the modern tools so consumers could benefit during, probably, the biggest transaction in their lives; things like requirements for the highest professional standards, the best training and modern real estate tools, and the ability to incorporate and leverage that advantage to benefit their clients. I am personally pleased that when we formed government, we were able to pick up the ball for the hard-working realtors across this province and get those important updates across the goal line.

Again, in addition to allowing realtors the ability to incorporate, Bill 145, the trust in real estate professionals act, will amend the real estate and brokers act to, among a number of things:

—enable regulatory change that would give consumers more choice in the purchase and the sale process and improve the information consumers receive about what a real estate professional and brokerage must do for them;

—improve professionalism among real estate professionals and brokerages by allowing for regulatory changes to enhance ethical requirements;

—update the regulatory powers of the Real Estate Council of Ontario, otherwise referred to as RECO as its short form, including allowing it to levy financial penalties, also known as administrative penalties, for the purpose of promoting compliance with the act, and allowing RECO's registrar to consider a broader range of factors when considering eligibility for registration—this is something the industry has asked for, for a long time; and

—enable the creation of a specialist certification program that may be developed by government or by RECO to ensure that real estate professionals and brokerages holding themselves out as specialists in a particular type of real estate are actually certified as specialists in that relevant area.

This would bring the legislation up to date and reduce regulatory burdens as well. These are all great initiatives, and I hope all members of this Legislature show their support of the real estate professionals in Ontario and back in their own constituencies when we vote on this bill at third reading.

Mr. Speaker, given the changes to the real estate industry, technology and regulatory practices over the last two decades, it's essential that the rules for real estate brokerages and professionals reflect those contemporary business practices.

I'm sure every member of the Legislature either has a family member or friend who is a real estate professional. I could give a shout-out right now to a number in my riding. I'll only mention three or four—I can't remember them all—but of course, John McCharles from the town of Petrolia; Lou Longo, who is my landlord in Sarnia—got my office space for me, and very co-operative in helping me finding that spot; Donna Mathewson, the president of the Sarnia Lambton Real Estate Board; and the young man who helped my daughter purchase a home, Bob Metcalfe. So that's just a small number of the very competent and professional real estate members that are back in Sarnia-Lambton.

Certainly everyone who has ever sold or purchased a home can talk about his or her agent almost becoming an extended family member. I recently went through the experience of looking for a house with one of my family members; that's that daughter I was talking about. The real estate agent in that case did an excellent job of guiding us in the process and making the transaction as smooth as possible.

Even in Sarnia-Lambton, we are seeing a tight market for homebuyers. New listings move very quickly. There's a lot of positive news in our community, and new people are moving in because of all the work in our area in Sarnia-Lambton. Nova Chemicals, for example, is spending over \$2.2 billion in the local community over the next

three years. A number of other companies are expanding, rebranding, and, of course, the green energy, hybrid energy, biochemistry—that's taking place as well. So there's lots of positive news back home. Real estate professionals and buyers need to be prepared for that, and this will help them—I feel strongly about it—in our community as well.

Home prices are rising, and the minister spoke about the average price of a home—I think it was 2002—in Toronto of \$245,000. The now-average price of that home, if you can find one, is over \$800,000. That's an amazing change in the price of real estate.

She made a few comments there when she mentioned about a home and things. Well, we were all the same. I grew up out in the country, in a small town, in the village, and it was a two-storey Insulbrick. Probably nobody in here knows what I mean by Insulbrick. I see the Speaker is nodding his head. Everybody else is a little younger here. They probably don't know what I mean by that.

My bedroom was on the second floor, and I was telling somebody one day about my father, who would have late-night meetings with a couple of political colleagues. I had to go to bed, but I would go upstairs and lie on the floor by a ceiling grate, if anyone knows what a ceiling grate is. The member behind me from Hastings-Lennox and Addington: He's obviously old enough. He remembers that too.

The times have changed so much. I think of the home I live in today. My father, later on, built a new home, but I only was in it about a week and I moved out because I got married, so I didn't get to spend any time in this new home. He'd been all his life working and in rentals, and then finally had a home of his own and then he built this new home. When I think of that today, when the minister mentioned those comments about sitting and looking out the window, I think of how much life has changed for me. I know that a lot of other people have been very fortunate. When I think of growing up in that home I lived in there, a very simple home, I've been very fortunate. Where I live now, it's totally different. I know a lot of other people find themselves in the same boat thankfully. When they're making that most important purchase in their life, they need to be able to trust a real estate agent to work with them in those transactions.

Home prices are rising. Of course, everyone wants to make sure they're making a sound investment. Those guys who had those homes in 2002 in Toronto probably figured that if they hung on, they would have really make a good investment because I don't think you can make that kind of money in the bank.

Clients may feel a lot of anxiety about their home search. I know I've gone through that myself with my family member and ourselves, and then wondering if we were doing the right thing, which I realize now I did. Many people will tell you that buying a home is one of the most stressful things in modern life. I know what they mean by that. I speak to that as well. People want to make sure they have a certain level of protection when entering into a real estate contract. That's part of the reason we're making these important updates to this legislation.

The changes we are making in Bill 145 would enhance consumer protection and confidence in that real estate sector that's so important. We're going to do it through better information and disclosure for consumers, increased choice in the purchase and sale process, strengthen professionalism or real estate professionals and brokerages, and stronger enforcement tools for the Real Estate Council of Ontario. These updates will allow consumers to have the confidence that the industry is being operated professionally and with accountability.

The best part is that this is not something that we are forcing on the industry. No, the real estate professionals of Ontario asked for these improvements, came to government, asked for changes, knew that they needed to have updates because the legislation was antiquated, and they asked for these changes. That's the nice part: that it's been willingly received and that, as the minister acknowledged, all parties support it. As we travelled, we heard all kinds of stories on the road. I travelled with the committee as well, and I'm proud to say that we had all-party support and general agreement. We'll see when it comes to third reading vote.

Through it all, our real estate professionals are there with us at our side to offer advice, counsel us and, finally, to get the deal done. Real estate professionals really do become ambassadors for the communities they live in. Those number of real estate individuals I mentioned are all involved in minor hockey, Scouts Canada, different professions and volunteer organizations in their own communities. I know I speak for a number of other members here in that they could each speak about real estate professionals in their community just as well.

1630

During the second reading debate of my private member's bill on tax fairness for real estate professionals, we heard a lot about how real estate professionals are so giving of their time in their communities. After all, real estate professionals live in the communities in which they work. In order to be successful, they need to be active, engaged members of the community. They're everywhere, from coaching and sponsoring youth sports teams, to serving on local community boards, to fundraising for important local charities. Real estate professionals really do come to embody the positive spirit of the communities in which they dwell. I've certainly come to notice that with the professionals in my community, and I am sure that that is the same for every other member of this Legislature.

As I've talked about many times at Queen's Park, in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton I have some really great members of the Sarnia-Lambton Real Estate Board that I meet with on a regular basis. They keep me updated on the market and how their industry is doing locally. In Sarnia-Lambton, there has been very positive growth in our real estate market for the last few years. The latest stats from January 2020 show that home sales are up over 9% from last January, and the average sale price is up 15.5% from a year ago. That is very positive news if you're a seller, and very optimistic news if you buy a home and hope to stay in the market. With the changes that we are making in

the Trust in Real Estate Services Act, and the strong local housing market, I'm excited by the possibilities for the real estate industry in Sarnia-Lambton.

Bill 145 is really going to mean more confidence for first-time homebuyers, more opportunity for energetic, creative real estate professionals, and more trust in the entire process of buying or selling a home.

It has been almost two decades since the last time the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act was updated in a meaningful way. The government heard from many stakeholders in the industry and the regulator, the Real Estate Council of Ontario—otherwise known as RECO—that the act needed to be updated in order to better deal with today's business practices and consumer expectations, reduce red tape for business, and strengthen consumer protection.

In addition, the results of the consultations conducted by our government indicated that consumers and real estate professionals feel that the rules governing real estate salespersons, brokers and brokerages, as well as RECO's powers, need to be updated to enhance consumer protection.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the Ontario government is delivering on its promise to update the real estate brokers act, through the passage of Bill 145, the Trust in Real Estate Services Act. Given the changes to the real estate industry, technology and regulatory practices over the last two decades, it is essential that the rules for real estate brokerages and professionals reflect contemporary business practices. If this bill moves forward and is passed, our government remains committed to continue consulting with consumers and stakeholders to develop proposed regulations that will help consumers make more informed decisions and reduce the burden on the real estate sector.

As well, Mr. Speaker, you might ask what administrative penalties are. Well, administrative penalties are civil, financial penalties imposed for failure to comply with specified legal requirements. An example would be failing to display required information in their advertisements.

Regulations would also be developed to ensure that real estate professionals who choose to incorporate would continue to remain accountable and would have to abide by all the existing professional obligations, including education, insurance, professional liability, and a code of ethics, and a number of other requirements. I think that would relieve a lot of people's concern about incorporation. I did hear from some people, "Oh, it's just a tax dodge." No, it's not. They'll still be paying their taxes. It will give them an opportunity to flatten out their income if they have a couple of big years, and then if there are a couple of years when their income falls off, they'll be able to draw on that. But at the end of the day, they'll still pay all their taxes.

The regulatory changes would give consumers more choice about where they buy and the sale process. They'll give them an opportunity to include that information.

The specialist certification program under this will be developed by the government or RECO itself to ensure that real estate agents and brokerages that hold themselves out as specialists in a particular type of real estate—for

example, either commercial real estate or to sell summer homes on the lake—are certified as specialists in those relevant areas—or in agriculture, where they’re selling farms—so that they actually know what they’re talking about in the agricultural industry, which is so important.

The government is proposing to change the name of the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act to the Trust in Real Estate Services Act. The proposed name change is to more accurately reflect the intended scope of the act that is to govern the conduct of the real estate brokerages and salespersons that provide these services.

I had some people in my riding ask why we are doing so many of these changes in regulations rather than making them through the act. The reason for that is the government is proposing to address many of the proposed changes through amendments to the regulations rather than to the act to provide the government with the opportunity to consult with the public and industry stakeholders when they were doing this.

The reason we’ve proposed these amendments, Mr. Speaker, is because the last time the act was updated in a meaningful way was over 20 years ago. The government has heard from many professionals and stakeholders in the industry and from the regulator, RECO, that the act needed to be updated to better deal with today’s business practices and, of course, the rapid changes in electronic transactions. That’s another reason we went that way.

You might ask, Mr. Speaker, how these changes would enhance consumer protection. This will inform the real estate customers who are going to actually sell or buy a home through better information and disclosures for consumers, increased choice in the purchase and sale process, strengthened professionalism of real estate professionals and a number of other changes.

The code of ethics that is being promoted will focus on the essential ethical obligations that real estate professionals must follow. The current code of ethics regulation can be very confusing for the real estate professionals themselves and the brokers—as well as consumers, who at the end of the day are the ones that really need the protection—because it combines ethical, principle-based requirements, such as fairness and honesty, with technical and procedural requirements, such as the detailed requirements when you’re writing a written agreement. These changes would amend that, and the minister will consult with stakeholders to seek their input on improved changes to the code of ethics.

Someone questioned the act about housing affordability. This bill would put rules in place to protect consumers and ensure real estate professionals conduct themselves when they’re doing business. It doesn’t address housing affordability or market conditions; however, at the end of the day, our government believes everyone deserves a place to call home. We want to put affordable home ownership in reach of more Ontario families and provide more people with the opportunity to live where they work.

Our government had significant consultation on the Housing Supply Action Plan, with over 2,000 submissions, 85% of which were from the public. This includes an innovation forum with over 200 attendees.

The other clause in here is on “bully offers” and “escalation clauses.” The act does not govern the behaviour of buyers and sellers—for example, decisions made by a seller about the offer process. The act and its regulations set out rules that govern Ontario real estate brokerages, brokers and salespersons. These rules are in place to protect consumers and to ensure real estate professionals and brokerages conduct themselves ethically when they’re doing business.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity today to comment on this bill. Once again, I want to commend the Minister of Government and Consumer Services for her leadership on the development of this bill. I want to commend the minister’s team back at the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services for all the work they did researching, consulting and drafting this bill.

I also want to take a minute to thank the Ontario Real Estate Association and its many thousands of members who have been great advocates not only for their own profession but also for increased consumer protection in Ontario. They followed this bill; they were in constant contact with the ministers and each member of the House. I know that a number of the other members were approached by their local members as well as the Toronto Real Estate Board to suggest amendments and to work with them.

1640

Real estate professionals really do go that extra mile at the end of the day to represent the best interests of their clients. They’ve shown that trait once again with their advocacy for the changes we see in Bill 145. I encourage all members to show your support for the hard-working professionals in your ridings by voting to support this bill at the conclusion of third reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It’s now time for questions and responses.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I’m proud to rise and ask questions about this piece of legislation. I wanted to congratulate the minister on her work here, and the ministry staff as well.

I’d like to ask if she could talk or elaborate a little bit on whether there was collaboration from all sides of the House on this piece of legislation.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: To the member opposite: absolutely, there was collaboration. I appreciated it very much. This was about getting it right for realtors across Ontario. This wasn’t to be coloured by a stripe or a polka dot. We needed to ensure that once and for all, after they had been ignored, essentially, for 10 years, we collectively, in 2020, could find a way to work together. All parties worked very diligently to make sure that the realtors’ voices were heard.

I want to thank the member opposite, our opposition critic. He did a great job in terms of understanding why it was important for this legislation to go forward. I appreciated your support and leadership in the standing committee as well. Thank you very much for that.

Of course, this is a great day for realtors across Ontario, because the Trust in Real Estate Services Act has come to

light, into third reading, because everybody did collaborate in this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: As they say, good things happen to people who work hard—in this particular case, my colleague. We share the same apartment even—the same building; excuse me. I'll correct that. He has been a strong advocate for this for many, many years, and to see it come to fruition—the parliamentary secretary and, of course, the leadership of the Minister of Government and Consumer Services are finally making this thing happen.

So, so long—there have been no changes since 2002; dramatically outdated. The calls for action over the years from the previous government went unanswered, unanswered, unanswered. Now we're finally making this thing happen.

Of course, what it does is give us choice. It improves professionalism. The updating on the compliance: I've been pleased to have had the honour of working on the committee with it and hearing the testimony coming forward from our realtors. Of course, I hear it daily from the realtors in my riding as well. They are just delighted with this. It's so, so long overdue.

Of course, we're a government that's open for business. We've maintained that. And so—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: —my question to the minister—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Now I return to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the opportunity to address the question in terms of how this particular bill, for example, Bill 145, ensures that we are making Ontario open for business under the leadership of Premier Ford.

I can tell you that the changes we've proposed actually modernize the legislative framework so we can better focus on consumer protection, industry integrity and viability. I think that's the biggest thing.

Again, we have taken strong steps to strengthen the oversight of the industry in terms of ensuring that RECO and the registrar have the ability to call out bad apples, if you will, that could taint the industry, and maybe have in the past. We've heard examples across Ontario of that happening.

In terms of being open for business, we have reduced regulations, and we're going to get it right as we continue to consult with our stakeholders to ensure that what we bring forward through regulation is not burdensome.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you very much to the minister for her kind words. I appreciated the technical briefing the ministerial staff provided me.

We don't have access in the opposition—you had mentioned thousands of different letters that had come in and whatnot, so some of the things that you heard, we

would not have access to, though the NDP opposition did spend a lot of time talking to stakeholders on this particular bill and all other bills. Are there any things that you might have heard that might not be encapsulated in this legislation—maybe next steps or what the future might look like that might not be encapsulated in the legislation today?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: This legislation, Bill 145, was very targeted to some very pointed things, such as enabling regulatory changes that would give consumers more choice, improving professionalism amongst our real estate professionals, updating the Real Estate Council of Ontario's regulatory powers, creating a stronger business environment, enabling the creation of a specialist certification program, and bringing legislation up to date to reduce burden.

While all of that was very paramount in our focus, it's in regulation that we hope to learn more, because as you know—the member from Humber River–Black Creek knows that we'll be consulting on all the regulations as we go forward. Certainly we've hit the point—the priorities—that we heard from the industry very clearly in this legislation. But going forward, as we consult on the regulations that will help put this into force, we certainly welcome other ideas and remarks in terms of our path forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. David Piccini: Minister, thank you for this. You've worked exceptionally hard on this piece of legislation. So my question to you is: We know that this is big for consumers, in what is for many the largest purchase in their life, but it's also good for real estate agents. I think to a recent chamber event I just had in Port Hope in my riding, where there were a number of real estate agents in attendance. These real estate agents are major contributors in our local community: the first to step up to support our hospital, the first to step up to support local charities like Rotary and local initiatives for youth in our community.

So talk to me about how this modernized piece of legislation supports our government's open-for-business agenda and will support real estate agents, not only in supporting consumers but in giving back to their community.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the question very much, because again, it's important that when we say that we're open for business in Ontario, it takes into consideration every sector in this province. In terms of modernization, let's be real: The last time legislation came forward in this House under REBA, almost 18 years ago, realtors, real estate agents, had to use fax machines to facilitate the transaction of the purchase and sale of a house.

Recognizing that we've come a long way getting to 2020, I think it's safe to say that we are recognizing the e-commerce opportunities that exist and we're allowing our professionals in the real estate sector in Ontario to be able to be recognized in advertising as a realtor or as a real estate agent. That has been a long time coming, because

they are so well respected in our communities. As the member pointed out, they're a great sponsor of teams. They're a great sponsor of community initiatives. For goodness' sakes, they should be able to be finally recognized under the terms that they are proud of: "realtor" or "real estate agent."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: To the minister: As you're very well aware, during committee I was very prepared to put forth an amendment that would address one of the main issues that OREA had, which was to change the name "salesperson." What realtors are looking for is to be referred to as realtors.

I stood down my amendment because I was told by OREA that there was a commitment by the government to deliver on the term "realtor." Will the minister give a commitment in the regulations to deliver on having realtors be referred to as realtors thenceforth?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: In short: Absolutely, yes. We'll be working on that, and it will be through advertising that they will be able to be recognized using the term that they choose: "realtor" or "real estate agent."

As I shared with our member from eastern Ontario—he's got a great network, and he hit the nail right on the head: These people are incredibly well respected, not only through their activities and through their communities, but their sponsorship and their support. The reality is that we need to ensure that the terms by which they want to be recognized are enabled. That's exactly what we're going to be doing, and we look forward to working further on that. Thank you very much.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Unfortunately, we don't have enough time for further questions and responses. Therefore, further debate?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It's an honour to rise and speak to this legislation. I think the minister did a good job in explaining what the bill was about, and I will talk a little bit about that as well. I've always felt myself as a parliamentarian to be a conduit for other people, so a lot of what I will be talking about is sharing the direct words of those who've spoken on this bill.

But before I get into that, I would like to talk about—and it's a bit ironic. When I spoke to my first lead, which was when this bill was here for second reading, it was purple scarf day, and today is Pink Shirt Day. The first thing I want to talk about is something that has always struck me since I came to this building and began to work here as an MPP. Everywhere we turn within this prestigious place, there's a story behind every tile, everything. In fact, as I rise and I look just up here, there's an eagle, and it's here to remind the opposition that we must always be watching, that we must be vigilant, to watch what the government when we oppose and when we critique what they do. What they face is an owl. The owl reminds us to be wise.

I think it was wise to collaborate on this particular piece of legislation. I wish there was more collaboration on this side of the government, because outside of what's

happening for realtors, there have been a lot of things that we have had to strongly oppose: cuts to education, workers' rights being ignored, issues around tenancy. In fact, I was a tenant growing up in my community and spent over 30 years as a tenant. There's a lot of things that we require collaboration on.

But I would like to talk about the fact that just as there are stories behind everything here, often when MPPs sit down and when you watch question period—and I know that millions are watching right now as we're speaking—

Ms. Suze Morrison: Your son; he's watching.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My son is watching. I got a picture from my wife showing that my son was watching, and he may have heckled the television, but yes. Thank you.

Sometimes when we get up, today you may have noticed that the parliamentarians who are standing here today are wearing pink. Today is Pink Shirt Day, and there's something that I want to share with everyone here, because it's interesting how these things happen.

CKNW, a radio station in Vancouver, founded the CKNW Kids' Fund, which came out of the Pink Shirt Day campaign to raise awareness about bullying. When you look around at those of us who are wearing pink today, we're talking about bullying. Their mission, and this is in the words of CKNW, is, "Bullying is a major problem in our schools, workplaces, homes and online. Over the month of February, and throughout the year, CKNW Kids' Fund's Pink Shirt Day aims to raise awareness of these issues, as well as raise funds to support programs that foster children's healthy self-esteem."

"A movement celebrated across the globe, Pink Shirt Day has humble beginnings. Inspired by an act of kindness in small-town Nova Scotia, CKNW Kids' Fund, working with partners Boys and Girls Clubs and 980 CKNW, was inspired to raise funds to support anti-bullying programs."

Here's an article that talked about the original incident: "David Shepherd, Travis Price and their teenage friends organized a high-school protest to wear pink in sympathy with a grade 9 boy who was being bullied" for wearing a pink shirt. "They took a stand against bullying when they protested against the harassment of a new grade 9 student by distributing pink T-shirts to all the boys in their school."

This is unfortunately the closest thing I have to a pink shirt in my wardrobe. I'm going to be buying a couple more, and I know my colleague here had a pink scarf she took off before, so I shouldn't have sprung this on her before she came to sit down. But, "They took a stand against bullying when they protested against the harassment of a new grade 9 student by distributing pink T-shirts to all the boys in their school."

This reminds me, actually, of a cleanup that I did at my old middle school, Elia. In my former work with a city councillor, we used to organize cleanups. I remember there was a student who was bullied. We were actually out there in a field, picking up litter and talking to young people about the importance of leadership and not littering, caring about the environment. I think the government should listen to that one, too.

But one of the things that happened at the time was that there was a student I saw who was bullied. It was kind of a tear-jerker moment, where I remember one student put his arm around the other student and stood by his side. That's what this initiative aims.

Just to remind those who are watching, every time you get up, you'll notice sometimes a pink ribbon, a pink shirt—it could be anything; it could be a button. It all has meaning here in this chamber.

I was lucky enough to be able to purchase a home in the city of Toronto. I don't think I could purchase a home in the city of Toronto today with the way the market is going—certainly not in downtown Toronto. I live in the suburban riding of Humber River–Black Creek, which is just right on the edge of Vaughan within the north end of Toronto. But I grew up as a tenant. Home ownership was something I aspired to. I lived in an apartment. We did not have money. My father was ill, and he passed when I was younger. We could never scobble together the money to be able to put down a down payment, but we wanted—and I always wanted a place to call my own. I think I mentioned this when we spoke about it at second reading, but just the concept of having stairs where I lived—I don't know why. Sure, we had them in the building, but just to have a home where there was a floor or two—I don't know; it meant something to me. I didn't know if I would ever be able to do that.

I lived a very, I think, fiscally prudent life. We watched every penny that we counted. Certainly we didn't have that many. My mother worked tooth and nail every day for myself—I'm an only child—and my sick father. I didn't know if we'd ever own a home—it was something we aspired to—but we were together; we were a team. Eventually, just about 10 years ago, I was able to purchase my one and only property, a home together with my own mother. Today, I live there with my wife and little one-and-a-half-year-old son, who is hopefully watching if we were able to peel off the French cartoons he's watching in the morning. But I mentioned that the dream of home ownership for me and my family came through because of a realtor, because of a professional who understood exactly what we were looking for, knew where to look and was able to work with me—someone we completely trusted, and that trust was well deserved in our case. We were able to find a home at a fair price. We still live there today.

Trust is an important part of this legislation, trust in real estate services. Now the reason that was established and why we talk about that—I will mention a couple of reasons because, like in all industries, nobody's perfect. We're politicians. We hear every day—I'm sure all of us on all sides of this House—stories about politicians, about how much you can trust them and stories like that. So when anything ever happens that's negative to any of us, it affects all of us. In the case of realtors, it's no different.

I also want to move on by sharing my story of what it's like as a critic to be able to get here. I know when it came to second reading, it wasn't that many more hours before where I was told, “Guess what? You've got to go up for

the first time ever and speak for an hour in the Legislature.” That was totally an interesting thing to contemplate. For those who are first-time members here, I know how that must have felt for you, but all of you were first-time members at some point.

I have quite a bit of papers here—aha, here it is.

Interjection.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank my good friend and colleague for allowing me to use some of her desk for some of the papers I have spread out here as well.

Stakeholders were very proactive. OREA was very proactive. I would also like to personally recognize Tim Hudak, a former MPP, a former Conservative leader. He reached out to me quite some time ago—not too long after I took office. He is leading OREA, and it's interesting because the original legislation, REBBA, was his work as well. He played a large role in the modernization of it. Of course, as a New Democrat and an opposition member, when he came to me for the first time, it was rather novel. I had wondered what the meeting was going to be like, but I want to say that he was very open, he was a gentleman and he answered many questions. We had a long conversation, and we had many conversations. In fact, we spoke today and he sent his best wishes to all of us in the House and apologized that he couldn't be here because of OREA's AGM in Niagara Falls.

1700

I'd like to share a little bit about what OREA talked about at the time of their first meeting, and to talk about what sort of consultation they did within their own membership. They say they received 4,000 responses—and they actually put forth 40 recommendations. Many—maybe most—of those recommendations were encapsulated in legislation. I was pleased, because something I talk about with all stakeholders, as critic for government and consumer services, and primarily for consumer protection—because that has always been something personally dear to my heart. Consumer protection is dear to the hearts of all New Democrats.

One of the first things they talked about was—and I guess this was forward-thinking—in part 1: Let consumers choose real estate professionals they know and trust. This had to do with multi-representation and double-ending. That was an interesting part of how our conversations happened. As with everything, life is quite grey. The realities of different real estate markets are very different. If you live in Toronto, you're in a hot real estate market, where you put something up for sale and there are lots and lots of bids. It's not the same, perhaps, if you live in a more rural part of the province, where if you have a piece of land that's up for sale, it might be up for sale for years and years. If you have a realtor who can find someone interested to purchase that parcel, that might be a very different reality. This was something that OREA talked at length about.

“Keeping homeowners in the driver's seat when it comes to transparency”—their own words. “OREA supports giving consumers the option of an open offer process and strongly opposes forcing people to gamble their life

savings in an experimental government-mandated open offer process.” This does go back to trust. To purchase a home—I know that in the case of my family, that purchase was the largest purchase my family ever made—does put a lot of risk out there. You’re going into a large amount of debt to live where you’re going to live.

As soon as next week, perhaps, but certainly in committee, we will be talking about another MGCS omnibus bill that will talk about Taron reform. When I talk about the amount of risk, there are individuals out there who have purchased not pre-owned homes but new homes. In cases where you’ve purchased a new home, in cases where that new home suffers major defects—the government, the opposition, we’ve all been hearing what the current system is. Do people receive protections? I spoke at length with the Bellefeuille family in Cardinal Creek about their new home purchase and how a dream became a nightmare. Their story is in the media.

There are people out there, perhaps people who are purchasing homes today, who pay a set value for a home, but if they find huge problems in that home, the value of that home might not be the same following purchase. That’s wrong. So trusting your real estate agent, trusting your realtor is key, because if you don’t have that trust—and I will get into some examples as to why this is important.

Bad things can happen to families. Nobody wants that. OREA didn’t want that. It was very key, in their conversations with me about ensuring that realtors were the most educated, that their specializations were recognized, and that they were held to the highest standards. As this government moves forward, when they give more powers to the regulator to be able to put forth penalties when realtors break rules, it’s going to be up to the regulator to have the strong stomach to go through when those penalties are warranted. We haven’t seen that in other cases. We haven’t seen that, sometimes, with delegated authorities in this province. So I hope the government will ensure that the regulator will be doing the right thing with the additional powers you’re giving them.

They talked about a strong business environment. “Fair tax treatment for real estate professionals: An outdated piece of red tape is preventing real estate salespeople/brokers”—of course, we will now call them realtors—“from operating their businesses through professional corporations that would allow them to reinvest in their business, hire more staff and contribute to the local economy.” Well, this concept is something that New Democrats have pushed for in the past. The concept of collaboration on the issue of realtors and the rights of realtors is not a new one; it wasn’t introduced today. I’m proud to say that the amazing member from Waterloo co-sponsored a bill that was entitled the Tax Fairness for Realtors Act. This happened in 2017.

I’m going to read a little bit from the Hansard, her own words, because New Democrats have been pushing for the rights of realtors, not just now, not just under me as a critic, but for some time. That’s what we’ve been pushing for.

She said it was a pleasure to speak in support of Bill 104, the Tax Fairness for Realtors Act: “I’m so pleased to

be co-sponsoring this piece of legislation.” She said, and I say it here too: “We don’t do this very often; it’s a very rare occasion. But sometimes it takes our collective efforts to get something done in this place. I’m very pleased to be standing in my place in support of Bill 104,” just like I, today, am pleased to be standing in support of Bill 145.

“I know that we’re joined this afternoon by real estate professionals from across Ontario. Thank you for making the trip to Queen’s Park.” And at second reading, the galleries were full of realtors, and if it weren’t for the AGM today, I know it would be the same case today.

She wanted to acknowledge former parliamentarian Tim Hudak. She said that he was “weathering his ‘recovering politician’ status very nicely.” I can concur with that. He actually showed all of us that there certainly is life after politics, right?

She also mentioned two realtors in particular from Kitchener–Waterloo: Charlotte Zawada and Bill Duce.

She said, “I would like to start by talking about the important work that real estate professionals do in the province of Ontario. As anyone who has bought a home or leased a property knows, the relationship that you have with your realtor is not only critical, it’s very, very personal, and there’s a great deal of trust involved. We are pleased that you have placed your trust in us, as legislators, to balance the scales for realtors with Bill 104.

“At the root, this is about fairness.” The fairness she’s talking about is allowing realtors to incorporate. “Many other regulated professionals can incorporate their businesses personally, like doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants, mortgage brokers, insurance agents, social workers, architects and engineers”—the list goes on. “For too long, realtors have been left out of this group. Ontario is overdue to harmonize its rules with BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec and Nova Scotia, all provinces that have made changes since 2008 to allow personal real estate corporations in their provinces.

“We know the important role that realtors play in our local economies. I wanted to take a little time just to talk about that role and what this bill will mean to local realtors, from the perspective of a real estate professional in Waterloo.

“Chris Stanley is a young realtor, five years in the business, and he works out of McIntyre Real Estate Services in Waterloo. It’s a small brokerage firm, and each member of the team relies on their areas of expertise to be successful.

“Forming personal real estate corporations will make it easier for Chris and his colleagues to invest back in refining their areas of expertise, particularly with a focus on technology. Because they’re smaller, they are constantly trying to keep up with the needs of their clients, and that means having to come up with ways to keep track of what they need. They are investing in software that will make that easier and faster for them.” So as the minister mentioned, no more fax machines, I guess, for them as well. No, I’m sure they still have a fax machine in their office.

“The other thing that a personal real estate corporation will allow Chris to do is to think about hiring someone new

to his team. He's looking at young people"—that's very important for us; in fact, our wonderful critic for youth, the fabulous member from York South–Weston, had a PMB about hiring thousands of youth as well in this province, and so that's something New Democrats are thinking about, and I'm glad the member for Waterloo is supporting Chris in doing that as well—"people from outside the real estate world who are looking for a new career or an opportunity. This is, by all accounts, a rewarding career. Charlotte just told me over lunch today that she doesn't feel that her work as a real estate agent is work. It's a career that helps other people reach their potential, and it's a lifestyle and it's very rewarding. That's exactly the kind of thing this Legislature should be finding ways to do together. It doesn't happen nearly enough."

I can attest to that. Realtors aren't working nine-to-five jobs. They certainly are not. Being a realtor is pretty much a 24-hour-a-day job, especially when you're going to close a deal. They're on their phones—I mean, it's work. It's absolutely 24-hour work.

1710

"At the end of the day, Chris said, even in a hot housing market like the one we are reminded of daily here in southwestern Ontario and in Toronto, a realtor's job is an emotional one. Clients who have had their third or fourth offer rejected are in an emotional place, quite often. Part of what realtors do is help give clients more faith in the process and in Ontarians searching for a new place to call home. I should also mention that Chris told me that a personal real estate corporation will give him more of an opportunity to give back, and we've already heard about the generosity of real estate agents across the province.

"Chris is already on the board of Reception House in Waterloo, helping with the resettlement of Syrian refugees. He already knows the importance of giving back, but he wants to do more. Bill 104 would help him, even just a little bit. That's important, and I think it's worth getting on the record...." I believe that too.

She goes on to mention that "Chris shares something in common with two members co-sponsoring this bill. Not only does he live and work in the fine community of Waterloo, he was born and raised in Belleville...."

In the member's opinion, "The impact that this bill will have on what real estate agents can do in their local communities is even greater than the estimated \$9 million to \$24 million that a study suggested that personal real estate corporations could add to Ontario's GDP. After all, real estate agents live in the communities in which they work. In order to be successful, they need to be active, engaged members of their communities. From talking to Chris and other realtors from Kitchener–Waterloo and across the province, Bill 104 will make it just a little bit easier for them to give back to their communities."

I will be reading again from a submission from realtors who reached out to me. One of them is a great friend, Mike Verrelli. He's a great friend. His father, Steve Verrelli, is a great friend of mine. He is actually a very charitable individual in the community of Humber River–Black

Creek. Just like Chris here, realtors in our community are giving back every day.

"I'm proud to stand in my place today to offer my support for Bill 104 for real estate professionals like Chris Stanley, like Charlotte and like Bill. We can do something positive here today together as legislators. Let's get it done and let's make it law."

Those are the words, a small excerpt and a little bit of paraphrasing from our fabulous member from Waterloo, a New Democrat who has been pushing, like many New Democrats, for the reform of realtors and laws governing them.

I'm going to move on to some of the executive summary.

"Modern real estate rules

"Review term limits for buyer and seller contracts: As the market continues to become more complex and consumers more sophisticated, contract provisions should be reviewed to ensure that they reflect the modern real estate market."

I mentioned this in my questions, and I was happy to hear from the minister that she would be recognizing the term "realtor" and working in the regulations to be able to move forward. That's something that the New Democrats believe in. That's something that I was pushing for, and I'm glad to see that will happen, moving forward.

"Replace the term 'registrant' with 'licensee': Replacing the term 'registrant' with 'licensee' will align real estate with other professions and make the legal description of a real estate licensee in Ontario easier to understand for consumers."

I'll move on to another one: "Greater transparency for the regulator: The Auditor General should be permitted to conduct value-for-money audits of RECO and all of its programs to ensure that registrants' fees and other sources of revenue are being used efficiently.

"Create an internal RECO ombudsman: An independent ombudsman within RECO would help instill confidence in registrants and the public in the regulator's programs and processes."

I know there are lots of things that I hope, through regulations, will be addressed by this minister and by the ministry.

"Enhanced professionalism

"Specialty licensing classes for registrants: REBBA should be amended to permit specialty licensing classes for commercial, agricultural, condominium, and other forms of real estate."

People will go out there, and they're going to say, "I'm an expert on this. This is my specialty." This will actually enable a very formal process to make this happen, to make it so, and that's something we support. I was glad that OREA spoke at length to me about that in preparation for this.

"More brokerage mentorship of students in the articling phase of their education: The existing articling program should be strengthened to place a heightened emphasis on direct brokerage involvement and practical experience...."

So when new registrants work with their first client, they're providing the optimal level of service.

"Stand-alone specialty courses for new registrants." It's interesting, the amount of work that stakeholders—and I did speak at length not only with OREA, and I've been focusing on them, but with the regulator, as well as TREB, the Toronto Real Estate Board, in preparation for this. But even OREA goes on to talk about an even tougher final exam: "Implement pass/fail for continuing education"; "In-class exams for continuing education"; "Ensure a fair offer process."

They were very prescriptive, very specific in what they were looking for.

Part 5—this, again, is near and dear to the heart of all New Democrats: "Better consumer protection.

"Prohibit the use of escalation clauses: Escalation clauses should be explicitly prohibited in REBBA." I don't believe that that's happening here, but that might be part of further discussion.

"Eliminate the two-tier system of consumer protection. The government should eliminate the existing exemption for builders in REBBA. Similar exemptions for auctioneers should be eliminated."

This is something I talked about earlier. One thing I would have liked to have seen included in the bill is to have the exemption to allow builders of new developments, whether they are condos or subdivisions, to facilitate their own sales of new units removed from the bill.

Something that consumers may not be aware of is that in the case of newly built units sold by the builder, the salesperson who sells you the unit and is an employee of the builder is not subject to the realtors' code of ethics and has zero responsibility to look after the interests of the consumer. So while many consumers might think that they walked into the sales office of a brand new subdivision or condo project, they might not know that the salesperson who they are purchasing from—and this is that distinction we talked about in the case of "realtor" versus "salesperson"—isn't a realtor, and they might not even know the difference.

A realtor, for example, would by law have to provide the consumer in writing the choices of representation that they would be able to offer. This means that if you hire a real estate agent to help you purchase a home, you will know whether or not the agent will be looking after your interests as the buyer, or the interests of the seller. Either way, the role of the realtor is clearly outlined.

However, in these cases, the salesperson working for the builder does not have to make any such declaration. If the consumer does not understand this or perhaps is under the false impression that the salesperson is looking after their interests, or maybe that the salesperson is even a realtor, the salesperson is under absolutely no obligation to disclose anything to the buyer at the end of the day. They only want to make a sale.

For example, it would be against the interests of the builder if the seller were to disclose items with the contract that might make the consumer think twice about whether

or not to purchase a newly built home. One item that the builder or salesperson doesn't have to disclose is the fact that a homeowner must disclose any builder defects to Tarion within the first days of moving into their home.

I had an amendment, because in other MGCS legislation—and we heard about this in a lot of the criticisms against Tarion, that in incidences like this, you're not buying a pre-owned home; you're buying a new home. There are tough deadlines to be able to follow in the event that things go wrong, and we've seen that. We saw that happen in Cardinal Creek, in a riding a former MGCS minister was representing, who was not addressing the concerns, leaving many people to this very day in a state of crisis. I'm looking forward to dealing with that in committee and hoping that it will return speedily back to the Legislature so that we can move on with some wholesome reform of Tarion.

But things like the 30-day deadlines are difficult. These need to be gotten rid of. If you don't meet any of those dates, Tarion won't accept and act on the first 30-day form that is properly submitted on time, and only one 30-day form may be submitted. Salespeople won't be telling you this.

Now, if you'll bear with me—

Ms. Suze Morrison: You really like to spread out, eh?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Totally, totally.

I am going to find—all right, here we go. Now, following their submission, the bill came back here. It went to second reading, and OREA actually broke down the bill themselves. While we heard from the minister, from the government side, what the bill is, this is the actual breakdown by OREA. The first thing that they pointed out: no more REBBA. Bill 145 proposes to rename the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002—that's what REBBA is—the Trust in Real Estate Services Act, 2002.

"OREA analysis: The name of the new legislation is important, given that it is often quoted in the media, as well as various OREA, RECO and other stakeholder communications for real estate professionals regarding matters of compliance.

"The ministry has informed OREA that the new bill name is intended to better capture the intent of the legislation and the importance of trust in the relationship that exists between real estate professionals and consumers."

Now, that's important. We talked about excellent examples, and I can tell you that in my own personal example of dealing with a realtor, she made my dream come true. The friends I've spoken to: Many of them who have had their own realtors—they were excellent. They were amazing. But there have been situations.

The reason that we're in the situation—I mean, for instance, "Ontario Tribunal Rules to let Realtor Accused of Theft Keep Licence.

1720

"A quasi-judicial appeals tribunal has rejected the Real Estate Council of Ontario's proposal to revoke the licence of a realtor it accused of theft, leaving the industry regulator mulling whether to seek judicial review in

Divisional Court.” This was published just in 2019. This was published by Shane Dingman in the *Globe and Mail*.

Here’s a quote: “RECO continues to believe that there are grounds to revoke the registrations of both’ the individuals. ‘We are disappointed about the decision that’ was ‘handed down, and we are considering whether to appeal.’

“In 2015, RECO issued a notice of proposal to revoke the registration of” a Mississauga realtor who used a shortened name in their business and “is also a broker of record.”

If you do the searches, if you look into the media, there are instances where bad things happen in the case of all industries. It’s no different in the case of realtors. To see OREA, the real estate association, come forward and look for strengthening and giving the regulator more power to deal when issues of discipline are required—it’s something I think everybody in this House wants to see.

When you go, especially as a first-time homebuyer—I was a tenant. My family were tenants—my mother and I together. We didn’t know all the rules, so the trust that we put in the realtor was so important. When you hear stories, it’s scary.

I’ll give another example. There was another example, but I actually won’t get into details about it. There was an example, actually, where a realtor went on to help a family member purchase a home way under the price that was entitled. Such things can occur, so I’m hoping that with the enhanced powers that this bill is going to be providing to the regulator, we will never see that sort of thing happen again here in Ontario.

A further breakdown by OREA of the bill:

“Tax Fairness for Realtors.... Bill 145 creates a new exemption regarding personal real estate corporations ... that will permit real estate professionals to form personal real estate corporations.” This is something that I mentioned that the fabulous member from Waterloo, a New Democrat, pushed for in a bill that she co-sponsored earlier on. New Democrats have been on the side of realtors for many years in pushing for reform.

“Multiple Representation.... Bill 145 does not propose any changes to multiple representation.” Again, that was mentioned earlier on. In the words of OREA, it was about consumer choice. They “will continue to have the right to work with a real estate professional of their choosing.”

OREA went on to say that they were “concerned that the province was going to restrict or possibly ban the practice of multiple representation.” They said it would have “hurt consumers and real estate professionals, especially in smaller rural areas in northern Ontario.”

“Stronger Discipline”—this is what I got into. “Bill 145 updates the powers available to RECO and its registrar to increase professional standards and enhance compliance across the real estate sector by proposing the following changes:

“—Providing RECO with the authority to levy financial penalties, also known as ‘administrative monetary penalties’ ... for failure to comply with a legal requirement specified in regulation;

“—Reaffirming the ability of the regulator to impose a maximum fine of \$50,000 for a registrant or \$100,000 for a brokerage for non-compliance with the act”—let’s hope that that’s a serious deterrent;

“—Expanding the scope of RECO’s discipline committee to provide it with the authority to suspend or revoke a real estate professional’s or brokerage’s registration or impose conditions on a registration; and,

“—Providing the minister with the authority to appoint the members of the discipline committee.”

The analysis of OREA: “OREA proposed three out of the four changes described above in an effort to fix the broken RECO discipline system. AMPs are a modern regulatory tool that will allow RECO to deal with less serious matters ... more efficiently. The increase in fines affirms a change that was made in 2017 by way of Bill 55, the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2017. The expansion of the scope of powers of RECO’s discipline committee was a priority recommendation by OREA and will, if passed, help address the problems that have existed historically with respect to weak rulings by the Licence Appeal Tribunal.”

In dealing and debating with the issue about reform of new home warranties in Ontario, it’s not been the first time we’ve heard about weak rulings by the Licence Appeal Tribunal. Again, these new powers—regulators have to have the guts to enforce them. In the case of Tarion, the measures they had to be able to deal with, let’s say, bad builders, update information on their website on the builder directory, all sorts of stuff—they had to have the stomach to go through with those types of actions. So the power that’s being given over to the regulator—let’s hope that the government will encourage the regulator to do the right thing and to push for those, because they are being given additional powers and we support that.

Specialist certification: “The proposed legislation will enable registrants to hold a specialist certification, provided certain criteria have been met. These criteria shall be set out in regulation.”

The analysis: It was a priority recommendation for OREA. In my conversations with them, increasing professionalism for realtors was something they definitely talked about. “The new legislation enables the creation of a specialist certification program for registrants, provided certain criteria have been met. The program/required criteria will be set out in regulation. RECO ... will work with OREA and other stakeholders on the specific education requirements and additional criteria, as well as the overall design of the program.” I do look forward to working with them as well. I’m excited to see what they come up with. “The ministry has informed OREA that the first specialist certification they would like to see created is for commercial real estate.” Great.

“Bill 145 sets out a very clear prohibition with respect to any registrant holding themselves out as a specialist in trading in any type of real estate, unless the registrant has met specific criteria. The specific criteria are yet to be developed, but shall include education requirements as well as other criteria. Once created, this criteria will be embedded in regulation.”

Transparency in the offer process: “Bill 145 enables regulatory changes that would permit registrants to disclose details of competing offers, at the seller’s choosing. A mandatory open-offer process is not proposed under Bill 145.”

In the original ministry consultation paper, there was a proposal, but OREA did push back on the proposal and proposed amendments to the provisions of the REBBA code of ethics, which currently prevents real estate professionals from disclosing the content of offers.

Updates to the REBBA code of ethics—“regulatory changes to streamline and modernize the REBBA code of ethics to improve professionalism among real estate professionals and brokerages.”

Analysis: “The province has not committed to any specific changes at this point.”

“Customer” and “self-represented party”: This was something that the minister talked about. This does provide transparency, I think, a bit. Of course, still, if you’re a layperson and you’re dealing with professionals, they certainly know a lot more. If you go to a realtor and you’re a person who is purchasing your first property, chances are they’re going to know a lot more about the rules. This is important: “Bill 145 proposes the deletion of the term ‘customer’ and replaces it with ‘self-represented party,’ which is defined as a ‘party that meets the prescribed criteria’.” So I think it does provide a little bit more information as to whom the realtor’s fiduciary duty is to.

Branch offices: “Bill 145 proposes the addition of regulations pertaining to ‘Branch Offices’.”

So there were a number of things they talked about when they broke down the bill.

When the bill came forward, I asked realtors that I had been in contact with—I put it out there to my community and to others, and I said to them and to many people, “If you have something to say about Bill 145, let me know. Talk to me about it, and I would be happy to be a conduit to share your words.” I did get information from them—

Ms. Suze Morrison: These ones?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Yes, thank you. I want to thank my colleague again for allowing me to rent her desk for the purposes of my response here.

This comes from Michael Verrelli. I spoke with Michael Verrelli at length—and I talked about him; he’s a very charitable individual in the riding of Humber River–Black Creek. He said, “Thanks for reaching out to me regarding the bill changes.

“As a realtor for over four years with Royal LePage Real Estate Professionals, it is exciting to see the governing bodies have reviewed and implemented changes to the REBBA act.

“The real estate industry is always changing, and it is crucial that our legislation is up to date with consumers’ wants and needs.

“Further, as realtors, our professionalism and ethics is an intricate part of what makes the realtor-client relationship a success.

“Reviewing legislation, ethics, standards and continued education keeps any industry accountable and as a result will provide the consumer with a valued professional.

1730

“I am excited the governing bodies have implemented change to the current act after 17 years, and looking forward to further improvements in the future.

“Buying and selling real estate is one of the biggest decisions in any individual’s life, and I believe we should all work together to improve the industry’s credibility.” That was from Michael Verrelli, a realtor from my community.

So Norma Manfrini—

Hon. Todd Smith: Tom, just wrap it up.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I would like to share a couple of words before I move on, just from some of the realtors in my community as well.

“Bill 145 continues to allow multiple representation of real estate transactions, thus giving Ontario consumers the right to work with the real estate professionals of their choice.... Bill 145 updates and expands the powers of the real estate governing body, RECO. It allows RECO to levy administrative monetary penalties ... on realtors and brokers, and gives RECO the power to suspend or revoke registrations when the law is broken. Higher penalties and more severe fines will help weed out the few in the industry that are not conducting themselves properly.”

In addition, I did have submissions from others, such as Tina Carbonara, and we did hear a submission from TREB as well. I would like to recognize presenters in committee, such as the CEO of the Ontario Real Estate Association, Tim Hudak; Karen Cox, president of OREA; and Mike Douglas, all from OREA, and the others.

But the truth is, as a member of the opposition and as a New Democrat, I want to see this legislation passed. I want to see this legislation passed quickly, and then I’d like to tell everyone—the realtors know this—that New Democrats in the official opposition stand with you. We definitely would like to see this legislation move so that the things we talked about, the things that we agreed upon and the collaboration we’ve had—not just today, but in the past—on building better rules for realtors across the province of Ontario, giving them the respect they deserve and enhancing consumer protection across all of Ontario—these are things New Democrats believe in. So the ball is in the court of this government. Let’s move. Let’s get royal assent, and let’s move quickly on this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and responses?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. Questions and responses?

Further debate? Further debate?

Seeing none, Ms. Thompson has moved third reading of Bill 145, An Act to amend the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002. 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. There will be a 30-minute bell.

I just received a deferral slip:

“To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:
“Pursuant to standing order 30(h), I respectfully request that the vote on order G145, third reading of An Act to amend the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002, be deferred until deferred votes on Thursday, February 27, 2020.”

Third reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day?

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There being no further business, this House will stand adjourned until 10:15 tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1735.

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Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud- Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (PC)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of 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 Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of 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 (LIB)	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
Lorne Coe, Wayne Gates
Randy Hillier, Andrea Khanjin
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Kaleed Rasheed, Peter Tabuns
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

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, Stan Cho
Sol Mamakwa, David Piccini
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

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Rudy Cuzzetto, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Billy Pang
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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Parm Gill, Natalia Kusendova
Suze Morrison, Lindsey Park
Gurratan Singh, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
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
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Will Bouma, Stephen Crawford
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Gila Martow, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Dave Smith
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

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Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
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Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie