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3 mars 2020

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 March 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 mars 2020

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

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 26, 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?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to speak very briefly on the bill. As you know, Mr. Speaker, it was a bill that we brought forward in order to speed up the delivery of four priority transit projects throughout Toronto, projects that have been sorely delayed for many, many, many years. It's something that the Premier and this government have made a priority of. This proposed bill, if passed by this Legislature, will ensure that these projects are put in place quickly. It is, of course, another step on our agenda of progress, growth and prosperity.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Calandra has moved that the question be now put. I believe we've had something like 22 speakers and nine hours and 23 minutes, so it is within order to put the question. I'm satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, this vote will be deferred until after question period today.

Vote deferred.

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO HOME
AND COMMUNITY CARE ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020

POUR CONNECTER LA POPULATION
AUX SERVICES DE SOINS À DOMICILE
ET EN MILIEU COMMUNAUTAIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 2, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to amend and repeal various Acts respecting home care and community services / Projet de loi 175, Loi modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les services de soins à domicile et en milieu communautaire.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? I recognize the member for Richmond Hill.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the member from Mississauga West.

It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to speak about Bill 175, the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act. I know that my constituents in Richmond Hill agree that this is a very important issue.

Today, patients receive home and community care based on outdated models first developed in the 1990s. We are breaking down long-standing barriers that have separated home care from primary care and, in doing so, allowing for the seamless coordination of services for patients, while maintaining and strengthening oversight and accountability measures.

As part of the province's comprehensive plan to build healthier communities and end hallway health care, Ontario is modernizing the delivery of home and community care services by bringing an outdated system designed in the 1990s into the 21st century.

Ontario is announcing the government's plan to enable integrated and innovative models of home and community care through the introduction of the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act and new regulations under the Connecting Care Act, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to illustrate this exciting act through my personal experience. I served on the Mackenzie Health board for six years. The hospital could only take care of the patients while they were in the hospital. Once they are discharged, the patients are out of their hands. They probably would see them again returning to emergency because the patients had not followed through with the medical instructions given to them when they were discharged. The services from the CCAC were good, but they were not coordinated with the hospital, which resulted in a lot of duplication and missed treatments.

There were other cases when patients were ready to be discharged, but family members were not ready to take care of the discharged patient; or the patient was not willing to move into palliative care or a long-term-care home. They ended up continuing to stay in the hospital and taking up beds. This takes up much more beds and they are staying there for a much longer time. This is why we are experiencing hallway health care

I was frustrated with what I saw, and then I moved on to serving on the board of the CCAC. I thought I could put my focus on serving community health care instead of just in the hospital. Unfortunately, I only served there for over a year because I experienced the merger of the LHIN and the CCAC. I witnessed the layoffs of front-line nurses and social workers while I saw that management personnel increased. It really broke my heart when I saw that patients were not properly served. I resigned from the board and was invited to join the board of the Markham Stouffville Hospital. Even though the board and the hospital were running efficiently, they experienced the same problem that their service had to stop after the patients were discharged. The CEO at that time was working very hard, pitching to take over the work of the CCAC so that they could coordinate better and provide continued services.

It was under these frustrations that I decided to run as an MPP, so that I could share my voice at Queen's Park and make the necessary changes. I am so thankful for the transformation of the health care system brought forward by the Minister of Health.

Minister Elliott has a lot of experience in health care, and she understands exactly what is needed to rebuild the broken health care system. The Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act is part of the transformation to deliver these much-needed results.

0910

Speaker, our government started the launch of Ontario health teams in several communities across the province, and we hope to announce many more next year. If this proposed legislation should pass, those Ontario health teams would, over time, be able to deliver home and community care that better meets the needs of Ontarians. Ontario health teams will be responsible for understanding a patient's full health care history, directly connecting them to all of the different types of care they need and helping patients navigate the health care system 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Patients are the centre of our service. The government is redirecting money to front-line services, where it belongs, providing faster, better and connected health care. Their health care needs are connected right from the hospital.

We recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot meet individual needs, but rather, when primary care, hospitals, home care service providers and long-term-care organizations collaborate directly, patients will benefit from the more flexible, responsive care.

It would also provide the support that patients need every day, around the clock, not just during office hours. The proposed legislative changes would allow these key care coordination functions to be provided at different points of care within the health care system. This means that care

decisions can be made closer to the patient. This would reduce duplication and inefficiency and remove the middleman. As a result, patients will receive the home and community care needed as quickly and conveniently as possible, without having to tell their story over and over again.

It is important to note that during this transition, patients and caregivers will continue to access home and community care services in the same way and use the same contact. Care coordinators will continue to play an important role in ensuring continuity of home and community care services. Nothing has changed, but we're just giving better services.

Now, patients and their family caregivers can have access to virtual care and more electronic communication with providers, making it easier to stay in touch. This also allows nurses, therapists and personal support workers to access the information they need to provide the appropriate service. They can now work as a team and provide better care. Nurses and therapists can use video conferencing to work with a personal support worker to provide more information and specialized care. Virtual care could support monitoring patients with chronic conditions, with the nurse checking in as needed, while the patient and their family members can enjoy each other in the comfort of their own home.

Our government believes that everyone in Ontario should have access to the services they need at home, in the community or at the hospital. We are implementing a long-term transformational strategy that modernizes the system and redirects money to front-line services, where it belongs, and provides better, faster and connected public health care.

The home and community care sector has been neglected for too long, leaving gaps between client needs and services too wide as demand continues to grow. Overall, we are investing an additional \$155 million this year to expand home and community care across Ontario. By investing in targeted partnerships between hospitals, home care and community providers, we can ensure that patients are receiving the high-quality care they expect and deserve.

I'm going to be sharing the time with Mississauga-Malton, not Mississauga West; I'm sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member did say that she would be sharing her time. She has now indicated that it will be the member from Mississauga-Malton, and that's who I recognize now.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about teamwork. I know that the member from Richmond Hill is very passionate about this bill. Various times we've spoken in the past, and she always looks after the residents of her riding.

I'm also very passionate about this bill. When the time came and I didn't have the opportunity to speak and I reached out to the member, the member right away said, "Yes. This is the reason we are here, because we are passionate about the things that we do," and she agreed to share her time. So I want to say thank you to the member from Richmond Hill for doing this. I really appreciated your teamwork.

I'm very pleased and honoured to be able to rise today and support the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, 2020. Social work is a noble profession

that helps individuals, groups and communities. Social workers are committed to making a positive difference in the lives of people they work with. It is indeed a rewarding profession.

There's one such organization from Mississauga, the Malayali Association of Social Workers, an association of a dedicated group of social work professionals serving and supporting our communities. I want to give a big shout-out to them for what they're doing in our community of Mississauga–Malton.

I want to share my own personal experience. On October 27, my father-in-law, Mr. C.K. Mittal, was diagnosed with cancer. On October 30, he was shifted to the hospital. On the 3rd of November, he had an operation where he lost his voice. He was in the hospital and deteriorating. His only one ask was that he wanted to go back home. Thanks to the doctors and thanks to the health professionals, there was a small improvement, and after that when they felt it was safe for him to go back, they agreed to send him back home. To our surprise, we saw that at home, his health improved much more. We figured out why that was. I think it is because it's like a vicious cycle. When you give up, the body gives up. Systems give up. When you want to improve yourself, when you want to fight and you become a fighter, the body fights with you.

Another thing I want to talk about: When he was sick, when he was hospitalized, it's not just he who was in pain; the whole family was in pain. My brother-in-law, Ashish Mittal, did not go to the office—and he's a human being too. Day by day, he was getting burned out. As a caregiver, it was difficult for him as well. That's when I called an angel. Somebody came and helped him, and that was a personal support worker. Her name was Kiran. Kiran, in Hindi, means "light." And she was a light to our family. When she arrived, she could give some time to my brother-in-law, and he could—I would say, he couldn't live well, but he could live enough to take care of my father-in-law. It is sad that, eventually, my father-in-law passed away. He lost the battle with cancer on January 7.

0920

But what I want to talk about is that his stay in the home was probably the best time during his pain. That's why I believe home care is extremely important, and I thank each and every PSW, and not just in my home—there are many, many million homes that they're helping, they're serving. They're taking care of the burnout of those caregivers so that those caregivers can take care of the family. That's why I believe home care is important, and that's why I believe in our province our government is doing the right thing by making sure to invest, and continuously investing, into home care.

Home care is rooted in the principle that older adults should be free to age in their own home with the appropriate level of care that is required for their safety, health and happiness. Home care providers are at the front line of this fight to keep seniors well, and work very hard to ensure that Ontario's seniors are able to live as independently as possible while receiving the care they need to maintain a high quality of life. Our population in Ontario is aging rapidly.

With an aging population comes an increased need for a different type of care. Nine out of 10 older adults already express a desire to age in place, or, to stay in their own homes. Everyone wants to feel comfortable and stay home. The best way to achieve this is through home care. In the simplest terms, home care means assistance with activities of daily living and household tasks. Ideally, home care also provides meaningful companionship for older adults and peace of mind for their families.

As the Deputy Premier stated, the hospital is not always the best place for a patient to receive care once their essential needs have been taken care of. As a matter of fact, a study in the Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation concluded that after certain hospital-based operations, such as joint replacement, discharge to home is a more effective strategy than discharge to a rehab facility, for the vast majority of patients.

Statistics from the Ministry of Finance show that the number of seniors is projected to grow by 132%. With this large increase in the number of seniors, our health system must be ready to deal with the pressure. One of the biggest problems is hallway health care. If we want to solve hallway health care, we need to invest in alternatives. The government has already stated that \$27 billion over 10 years is being invested in hospital infrastructure. We cannot have a one-size-fits-all policy. We need a flexible approach. Along with building infrastructure, the government must continue to work to ensure that hospitals, home care and long-term care become the front line for our fight to keep Ontarians healthy, comfortable and happy.

If passed, and with royal assent, there will be a change in definition. The definition for home and community care services will include how services are delivered, enabling both in-person and virtually delivered care. Mr. Speaker, we live in the 21st century. We live in a place where technology has changed life in the last 25 years. We need to change. We need to take the benefit of that change in technology. I believe that with the use of technologies to aid humanity and not destroy it is the best way. I believe with this, everyone will win.

Mr. Speaker, the Mississauga Halton LHIN, which covers the great riding of Mississauga–Malton, has served 43,000 patients, which includes 34,000 face-to-face home visits. You can see how much there is a need. Personally, I have heard from home care assistance workers about how excited they are about this bill and the amount of positive change it will bring to Ontarians.

I want to thank the Deputy Premier and I want to thank the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health for the hard work they have done on this bill. I'm very pleased to support this bill. I think it is a good-news story, Mr. Speaker. I think it is important for all of us to get this bill passed. I look forward to the passage of this bill, along with the rest of my caucus and the rest of my members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): To the member from Mississauga–Malton: I'm sure I speak for all of us in the House this morning who were unaware of the passing of your father-in-law in early January. We pass along our condolences. He was a very lucky man to have such a compassionate son-in-law such as yourself.

It is now time for questions and responses.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank MPP Anand and MPP Wai for what they've said about the importance of community care and home care. I very much agree.

I have questions, though, Speaker. That's because, when I look at the PSW sector in my city, in Ottawa, there is a 60% turnover rate in that profession. There's a 60% turnover rate in that profession in the city of Ottawa—and, I understand, across the province—because we do not pay these workers well, and we do not guarantee them consistent access to work throughout an entire week. It is not uncommon in the city of Ottawa to have a PSW travel an hour on transit for a 15-minute shift with someone in an apartment, to help them live safely in their home. That is the legacy of decades of underfunding.

In the last election, I talked to a PSW at her door, and she told me, "Joel, I was given 15 minutes to open a door—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Response.

Mr. Joel Harden: —and give the senior living with dementia a bath. I told the LHIN that I couldn't safely do that"—

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

Mr. Joel Harden: —"and the LHIN said, 'Do what you can in 15 minutes'"—

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member for Ottawa Centre. This is exactly why we're introducing this bill. We understand that we need to have PSWs working together with the rest of the health team. That's why we're introducing the new system, where they are all connected.

We're in the 21st century. With digital being so accessible to us, we can schedule the PSW's program so that—I agree with what the member is saying. They have to run from one place to another. But with this better coordination, they can really work together—schedule them so that their hours a day are full—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Response?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: —and not only that, they can have information directly with the health teams—

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

As a reminder to all members, we have a new system, and the deputy Speakers are trying to police it as well as we can. We try to give you a 10-second warning when you're done, to wrap up. After that 10 seconds, you're supposed to sit down. If you don't, you risk raising the ire of the Speaker, which we don't want to do.

Further questions? I recognize the Associate Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think you're doing a splendid job, as always.

I just want to speak a little bit to the member from Ottawa Centre and remind him that if his party hadn't supported the Liberals for the last eight years and wasted billions of dollars on gas plants, eHealth and the Green Energy Act, we would have a lot more funds for PSWs and care at home and in our hospitals and across our great province. This bill is going to allow that community care be provided by not-for-profit organizations. I would think he would want to support that. Our new models of home care remove

service maximums and ensure that patients are the focus. Our new program will give future governments the flexibility to update the framework as needed—and that care coordination decisions are made close to the patients. I hope he will support it.

I want to turn back to the honourable member to give us a little bit more detail on how great this bill is and how it's going to impact the health care of the people of our great province of Ontario.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, Minister, for your great insights, as well.

Yes, we understand that PSWs—we are working on that and making sure that they will do their jobs even more efficiently. They are the ones at the forefront, caring for the patients. We are giving them all of the encouragement, giving them all of the ammunition, so that they can do their jobs better.

0930

Thank you very much to the member from Ottawa Centre for bringing this to our attention. This is why we have this bill, and we seek your support when we present this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Speaker. I'll try to do better this time.

We have a report on the conditions of personal support workers in the province called *Caring in Crisis* from the Ottawa Health Coalition that I'll bring to my friend's attention. What the report basically says is that if we can't mandate a table where employers negotiate collectively across the province of Ontario with the working conditions of personal support workers, it will continue to be a race to the bottom.

I'm happy that non-profit organizations are being encouraged here, but the fact of the matter is, the industry is dominated by for-profit corporations, and that's a legacy of the Liberal and Conservative governments that we never agreed to here on this side of the House.

I want to point out the case of Maria Konopeskas. This is someone who, as of January 2020, had been living at the Ottawa Hospital for three years, is perfectly healthy, wants to be released to her home but can't, safely, because there are not enough personal support workers in the city of Ottawa. There are 18 other people just like Maria.

I met with Maria recently. I went to her hospital and I asked her, "What can we do for you?" She said, "Joel, tell my story again."

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member from Ottawa Centre again. Yes, we have been working very hard, and this is why we see the need of having this bill.

We are just working with the not-for-profit agencies. This has nothing to do with making any changes. Our patients will receive the same care as they need. It is just the administration side of things: We're making sure things are more connected. People will have better service. That's what we say: better service; faster service. They don't have to repeat their story again and again to different people.

I would want to encourage the member from Ottawa Centre to really see what we are doing and support our bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Flamborough–Glanbrook.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to echo the sentiments raised by the Associate Minister of Energy when he referenced the absolute destruction left behind from 15 years of Liberal waste and mismanagement; in particular, the bill he referenced, and that was the Green Energy Act. It was bills like that, supported by, of course, the opposition, that created the mess, the fiscal hole, the problems and challenges that we as a government are currently facing.

The other challenge that we're facing—and, of course, money could always help solve a lot of these issues—is the challenge of attracting people to the health care sector, in particular PSWs. I would like to ask the member from Richmond Hill if she could address how we are going to be encouraging more people to enter the field of PSWs.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much, member. Yes, we are working very hard to make sure that we have increased PSWs. We have started with our long-term-care homes, and they're working hard to increase the numbers for the PSWs. We are doing different kinds of training as well.

More so, as I explained earlier, with this system, the PSWs already understand that they are not working alone. They are part of the health team, and they can work together with doctors, nurses and therapists. They build that relationship with the clients on the front line and then get the support at the back. I'm sure the PSWs will enjoy what they're doing a lot more and find it very meaningful.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I just would point out to my friends in government: You have a tangible example before you about how you could improve this bill. Today is Super Tuesday in the United States, and one of the candidates running to be the Democratic nominee is Bernie Sanders. Bernie Sanders has proposed central tables in the United States for personal support workers down there who work in supportive housing, who work with people with disabilities and who work with seniors who need care.

What those centralized bargaining tables would do is ensure that employers level up. Don't level down. We can't do home care on the cheap. We can't ask, particularly, women and newcomer women in our country who are doing this work to be doing it to their detriment, to be burning themselves out. That is not how we treat people in the personal support worker industry.

I want to see your bill improved to look after those people in the caring professions, if you do, in fact, care about them as you say you do.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, member from Ottawa Centre. Please see that today we're discussing the bill the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act. The PSWs are part of the group of the whole health care system that we work with. We are going to make sure that we connect them all together so that we give the best service to our patient care. Thank you.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I want to begin by just being very clear with everybody in the chamber today: I believe that our intentions are good. But when it comes to creating legislation, drafting legislation, our intentions aren't actually what matters. What matters is how we use our power and what we put into the pieces of legislation. So, with that as a framing for what I'm going to do next, I want to introduce folks in the chamber to one of my constituents. His name is Nolan.

Nolan Caskanette is three. He'll be three in May. His parents, Mike and Kerri, have been in touch with me, and they've also been in touch with the MPP for Waterloo. They were at one point the MPP for Waterloo's constituents; there was a change of boundaries in this last election and they've reached out to me.

Over the course of their time working with the MPP for Waterloo, she worked really, really hard to ensure that Nolan had access to medication that he needed. Nolan has spinal muscular atrophy type 1, which is severe, and Nolan and his family are actually watching this debate from McMaster Hospital today.

The Caskanettes got in touch with us when they weren't able to access the medication they needed. They received the medication and they wrote us a letter: "It's really amazing to see him progress. He's now able to roll onto his stomach, then his back by himself. He's quite proud of it. He's made so many advances. We are so proud of him."

Nolan, I want you to know that the members in this chamber are extremely proud of you. That is why we are fighting to make sure that the information that is needed gets inserted into the bill. What I was thinking about last night was this: Imagine ourselves as Mike and Kerri, Nolan's parents. In this bill, would we get the care that we need for our son? Would we be able to turn to this bill and be sure, certain, that every piece of advocacy that we needed to do to make sure that Nolan was okay could actually be attained? And unfortunately, though I combed through the bill, I have to say we wouldn't.

I'm going to continue with the letter. They wrote, "We're experiencing a real crisis this month with nursing. The LHIN provides us with 250 hours of nursing care a month for Nolan that allows us to have him cared for overnights so we can sleep. The problem is the nursing company, Saint Elizabeth, who is in charge of his care is failing us and others in the community. Up to this point, there have been a few shifts unfilled here and there. This month we have 13 unfilled nursing shifts on our schedule and 11 of those are overnight shifts. That means that Kerri or I have to be up at night with him. His care is complex and involves a fair level of competence. When you're sleep deprived, it is very challenging to give him the care he needs. It's dangerous for him and for us."

If we don't make sure that this piece of legislation provides an opportunity, a strategy, to address the crisis that we have been speaking about within nursing, as well as within the PSWs, I can't go back to my constituents and tell Nolan, Mike and Kerri that this new piece of legislation is going to be the thing that fixes that problem. Part of why that's not possible is because this bill doesn't address the root causes of the problem and the crisis. We can spend

as much time as we want in the chamber blaming this person or that party or whatever as the reason that we are where we are, or we can be responsible with the power that we hold and we can demand that the pieces of legislation that pass through this House actually address the needs of the constituents that we have.

I'm going to continue again because the problem was even more clearly outlined: "This coming week we had no nurse last night, and as of now nothing for Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. That's 40 hours of nursing we have to make up for ourselves overnights."

They looked for respite care. Unfortunately, my riding of Kitchener Centre, along with many other ridings, has wait times of sometimes a year to two years. That is the wait time at Extend-a-Family in my area, in Waterloo region. They don't have a year or two years to wait to be able to get the sleep and the rest they need to ensure that they can provide Nolan, who is three years old, with the support and the care and the love that he deserves.

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I truly believe that our intentions are good. I'm taking my time to explain Nolan's story because I want the members in government to take Nolan's story back so that they will make the amendments that need to happen.

I'll continue: "We've been promised the moon by Saint Elizabeth over and over. Just last week when we asked why all these shifts were unfilled we were sold the company line of 'We hired a bunch of nurses and they're starting soon!' I'm sorry but I've heard it all before and am still waiting for previously promised nurses to come running onto our front porch."

When I read that, I thought to myself that that's what I've heard in this debate. I've heard a promise of PSWs, a promise of nurses—a promise, a promise, a promise—and yet there's nothing in this piece of legislation that will fulfill that promise.

We know that there isn't ample staffing. We know that this piece of legislation will actually take folks who are—I believe that it's over 4,000 nurses who are employed as LHIN care coordinators, and those roles will be changed. But there's nothing in this legislation that ensures that those folks are now actively the nurses who we would be getting to support kids like Nolan.

We also know that respite services are one of the most important pieces. In fact, my colleague in government who was speaking about his father-in-law earlier spoke about exactly why respite services are so important. When you are dealing with crisis and trauma, if you don't take care of yourself, you cannot provide the support to your loved one that they need. If we're talking about wait-lists that are a year or two long for those services, then what is it that we're doing for the rest of Ontarians? How is this going to help them?

So there's no respite. There's no nursing. There's no help. There's no place to escalate the complaints. And the virtual care solution that's being provided and lauded by the government side doesn't help Nolan. That doesn't help his family.

His family isn't just fighting for Nolan. His family is aware, especially when you have a little person you are ushering

through a health care system, with a rare disorder—folks with disabilities—that you become part of a club of folks who understand your experience more than those who don't ever have that experience. Within that little club, you start to advocate for each other, because that's all you've got.

We have an opportunity to build pieces of legislation and pass pieces of legislation that will give those families bigger hope, that will extend their circle of care. But then I look at this bill and I can't guarantee that that's the case.

The bill of rights has been repealed through—when they repeal schedule 3. The Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994, is repealed. Nothing inside here reinserts the bill of rights. Why are we doing that? Why are we not ensuring that people know how they can advocate for themselves when they are the ones who are undergoing the trauma that everybody claims in this House to be taking seriously.

There's a complaints process, but if the terms of the complaints are to be crafted by the people you are complaining to, there's a high likelihood that they—knowing that there are 15 years of complaints, much of them similar. "I'm not getting my shifts covered. I can't find somebody." They're getting phone calls at the last minute saying that the PSW or the nurse or whoever was supposed to come to their home can't make it, for valid reasons. Sometimes they're sick. Sometimes they're burnt out. Sometimes they're overworked. That's part of the PSW crisis. The complaints process is going to be created off the record, in a back room somewhere, under regulations which we can't debate in this House. How is that supposed to make Nolan and his family trust what is happening in this chamber?

Public enforcement of any of these complaints, the legislation says, "may" be published by the minister—"may," "maybe," "might"—depending on how the minister feels on a given day, depending on how big a spotlight gets turned on that appeal process, depending on how much energy families have to fight the government for the health care and the support they need for a child who's three years old.

We actually can't stand up in this House and talk about the care that folks need when you have families that are undergoing cancer treatments, people who are in palliative care, people like Nolan with rare diseases, folks with disabilities who are trying desperately to keep their family members at home, who need the care they deserve as Ontarians—we can't stand and say that we actually care about them and then put through pieces of legislation like this that take away their rights, that take away their ability to complain, that hide from them what the terms of those complaints can be. We can't do that in good conscience.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: "We" can't.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: "We" can't do that in good conscience.

The fact that the minister may publish on a website or otherwise make available to the public the compliance orders, any kinds of issues that have arisen, reminds me of a situation that I personally am in right now. My father has dementia. It's interesting, actually. A number of people have stood in the House on all sides and talked about their personal experiences and the impact that this piece of legislation will have on them. What I find fascinating, and the

reason why I can't help but chuckle, is that some of us are willing to fix that problem and some of us aren't.

My father has dementia. He lives in Niagara Falls. He wants to be at home, his partner wants him to be at home as long as possible, of course; but the dementia is moving very quickly. He gets two two-hour sessions a week. Sometimes he's depressed. He won't get up. He won't move. His partner is trying to find additional care for him. It's one problem, one piece of legislation and one lack of investment that makes everything start to crumble.

He's on long-term-care wait-lists that are maybe two or three years long. He doesn't want to go there, but at least she knows that if he is in a home, he might—might—get the care that he needs. If he stays at home, which is where she would prefer to have him, she can't increase the number of hours, which means that she doesn't have enough space, time, energy to rest, to be able to rejuvenate herself, to be able to step outside of the trauma of watching your partner unable to remember the history that you had.

If we want to fix this, taking the complaints process out and putting it into a hidden back room doesn't do it. Not including a strategy to address the PSW shortage doesn't do it, either. We have to use legislation to address the root causes of the problems that we have before us. I'm going to repeat that for the people in the back: We have to use legislation. That is our power in this place. We have to use the pieces of legislation that we have to address the root causes.

The reason we go into our constituency offices is because we want to know what's happening on the ground. We hear what's happening on the ground, and it is wholly unthinkable that we would then come back to this space and pass legislation that will not be able to help the folks on the ground. It's disrespectful. It's not why they voted us in. It's not what they expected of us. It's not the standard of care that they are asking for.

We see it time and time and time again. I don't know how there's a plan to address the PSW shortage if we're not willing to increase minimum wage, we're not willing to make sure there's pay equity. Do we realize, are we ready to talk about the fact that the PSWs and nurses we're talking about are primarily women and primarily women of colour? Do we know that, through our immigration policies, it's usually a lot of women of colour who are coming from other places, who have nursing backgrounds, who come here to care for our families? Then we sit on our phones and we look down and we don't make eye contact with the member who's speaking about it, because that would be too much for us to handle? It's unfortunate.

The only thing that I have to rely on when I think about Nolan and his family, and families like his, is that we have to strengthen the complaints process—which on its own is ironic. Why are we putting through legislation where, literally, the only saving grace is that you can complain about it? How is that a thing? Why is that a thing? But here we are.

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What we know is that there will be prescribed requirements that will determine what you can even complain about. What does that mean? I can tell you right now what people are going to complain about. I can tell you, because

it turns out that my legislative phone has been confused with the phone number for ParaMed in my riding. That's a thing. It happens. It has also been confused with the phone number for families who have to call to get the PSWs to their homes. So I get random phone calls from constituents saying, "My PSW hasn't arrived." And I have to say, "Unfortunately, I'm just the MPP for Kitchener Centre, but I'll be sure to bring your concerns to Queen's Park." Then I get phone calls from ParaMed saying, "Oh, my gosh, is there anybody that can fill this shift?"

So I know the problem is real. The crisis is a real thing. And I look through this, and I think if nobody cares, ultimately, about actually helping and supporting the people in our respective ridings, then the only thing is to make sure that we bolster the complaints process, but then also put a caveat that the only people that are going to create the complaints process are those who already know what kinds of complaints there are, so we're going to make sure that those parameters are real tight. I feel sorry for the patients that have to now navigate a system that is claimed to be better for them but clearly won't help.

Do you know what I think could give families hope? I think we could give them hope if the patient bill of rights was enshrined in law. I think that we could give them hope if a strategy was laid out in this legislation that would explain how we were going to not only hire but also retain PSWs and nurses—and not just any PSWs and nurses, because there is sometimes this idea that it's just getting new people in, but those that don't have experience wouldn't necessarily be able to help Nolan.

We can do more than two things. We can chew gum and walk. When we're real skilled, we can pat our head and rub our tummy. There are all sorts of things we can do. And I think that we can include a strategy that would allow us to support the PSWs who are getting pushed out of a system that they actually care about, who have the experience that we need to be able to care for folks with complex needs, and to also get new people in to be able to take over and do some of that work. We can do both. It would require strategy, and strategy that you are proud of goes into legislation so we can debate and make sure that it's even better, more fulsome. We could do that. We could totally do things differently. We could turn the world on its head and work in a way that actually centres the care that our constituents deserve. That would be something.

Oh, we could also collect demographic data; imagine that. We could collect race-based data, disaggregated; geographic data; data around the kinds of calls that are coming through, the kinds of appeals and complaints that are coming through; gender. We could collect that because if we collected that and enshrined the data collection in law, it would demonstrate that we are actually trying to figure out what the root cause is of the situation we are in. Imagine that. Imagine proactive health care. You could even use your whole virtual thing. You could get people to put things on the computer and they could send you their info. They could do that.

I think that there are ways that we can do this, and I think that as we move into the portion of this fancy new routine

where questions are going back and forth, I would like to ask my colleagues on the other side that we think about Nolan when we ask our questions. Don't ask me a question that's just to try to put me on the spot or make me look foolish, because that would just be silly, and that would not be the integrity that I know everybody in this House has.

Hon. Todd Smith: Because you guys would never do that.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: That was cute.

But we could actually make a choice to do better. Think about Nolan. They're watching. Nolan is here. His mom and dad are watching. Imagine asking a question about what we could do to make sure that this little three-year-old gets the care that he needs. Imagine that, instead of heckling nonsense. It could be a whole new world. There's a song like that. I would sing it, but apparently Hansard won't pick that up.

Thank you for listening. I look forward to the questions.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you for your very passionate 20 minutes that you spoke here in the Legislature this morning, on a bill we obviously have different views on, on what is in this proposed legislation and what we can support.

But I would probably surmise that member opposite from Kitchener Centre would agree that we are struggling with an environment that was created by a previous government that had 15 years to fix it and left us with an absolute mess and left us with a limited number—in fact, I'd say a hole—when it comes to the number of beds that we even have in long-term-care facilities, let alone the challenges that we face in trying to have people serve the people who are in those beds.

Would the member at least support some of these initiatives? It's going to take a long time to turn it—

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you to the member. I believe that, on this side of the House, we are willing to support pieces of legislation that start to get us to a place where we're addressing the root causes. I think that we're at a point, at two years into this mandate, where just saying to each other, "It's this person's fault; it's this person's fault," doesn't actually do anything.

Sure, we all know that 15 years of lack of attention and lack of investment will cause this. But now, we're in a position where we have to fix it. Fixing it means enshrining into law the tools that we need to make that fix. That's what worries me about this piece of legislation, that the tools that we need to actually address the root causes are not present here. They're spoken about, which I know is something. But if it's not enshrined in law, then what is going to actually ensure, should there be a new government in two years, that the same problem doesn't happen? That's why it's important to put down in law exactly what the tools are and what the plan is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank Nolan and his family for their willingness to have their story shared in this Legislature. I also want to thank, of course, my colleague

for Kitchener Centre for centring her remarks around the needs of Nolan and the needs of his family.

I think all of us have experienced these issues with quality of care. When we look at improving accountability and oversight of our home and community care system and ensuring that people get the quality of care they deserve, I wonder if the member could comment on whether this bill that's before us, Bill 175, does anything to improve accountability and oversight so that Nolan's family gets what they need.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you very much for the question. I wish that I could say that this piece of legislation does, but unfortunately, it seems to be more focused on the complaints process rather than the proactive oversight.

Sometimes, in this House, when we talk about oversight, it seems to take on—like it's a dirty word. Nobody wants to be watched or monitored. But the reality is that, when we actually have strong oversight, we do better. When we have strong oversight that is respectful, that understands the expertise that's based on a strategic approach to addressing the health care crisis that we're in, it actually helps. It makes things better.

It also does something that's even more important, which is not about us or about the workers, but it's about the patients that we are caring for. It gives them confidence that the work that's being done is being done in a way that does provide them with the dignity, care and respect they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions? 1000

Ms. Donna Skelly: Back to the member from Kitchener Centre: One of the many problems that this government faced when we inherited the mess created by the previous Liberal government was the fact that the home care regime had a cap, meaning that clients were facing service maximums. Our new models of home care remove service maximums and ensure that patients are the focus, which they really should have been from the beginning.

Is the member opposite suggesting that she would defend the status quo, where vulnerable home care clients have their services capped?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thanks again for the question. I think that there's a bigger issue that we have forgotten, actually, in the question that was posed. The hours that folks already have are not being filled. Nolan has 250 hours a month dedicated to his care; they can't even get to 200 on an average month.

You can remove the caps, but if you don't have a strategy to find people to actually fill the service, it doesn't matter. It doesn't breed confidence with the families because these families have been fighting for the amount of hours that they have, even though they know that while they're fighting for that, nobody is filling them.

I understand that there's a desire to build something, that there's a vision of what wants to be built from the government side, but if it isn't connected to the reality that people are experiencing right now, they won't ever get to their vision.

I do think we have to take seriously a strategy to address the gaps that are happening right this second.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I also would like to commend Nolan and his family, and I'd like to say that you're at McMaster Children's Hospital, which is in my riding, and you are in good hands. I couldn't imagine a better place to be to receive the kind of care that Nolan and his family deserve.

My question to the member, whose presentation was so excellent—I would like to say that. I have a bill called the Nancy Rose Act, which is asking the government to come up with a coordinated strategy for pediatric palliative care. A big chunk of that bill is that there needs to be an understanding that respite is an important component of a health care system for kids who are experiencing life-limiting diseases.

You talked about how respite is important for the families, the caregivers, but I also would like to hear you explain how you understand that respite is also good for the children, who need a continuum of care and consistent care.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you again for the question and for the bill. It's really interesting when you talk about the respite piece. In Nolan's case, they had contacted and complained to the LHIN about the respite hours they were missing because they couldn't consistently provide the support to Nolan, and that support was tailored, of course, to Nolan and the needs that he had. The LHIN replied to them, and did so in writing, and said that they couldn't cover overnight care because of liability, which to me would suggest that they don't have the staff, the nurses, that understand those needs.

If you don't have that consistency and if you don't have somebody who understands you and if you don't have somebody who has built a relationship with you, then you can't actually receive that care. When you get to the end of your life and you're thinking about palliative care, it's just being present with the person. You want that relationship to be there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member opposite for her submissions today. I just wanted to ask her: Everybody knows that our home care system is broken down. I think you've been talking about that as well. In this bill we have quite a lot of suggestions for how we're going to get to an improvement of that home care situation, including having PSWs have a more active role in integrated teams so that their important perspective, closest to the patients, can be heard more often.

I'd like to ask the member opposite if she supports that kind of an integrated team approach, with better information sharing amongst the whole team, as a way to try to make sure that people are getting the best possible care they need with the team working together.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. It's very difficult to build a team when there aren't people to be on the team. That's what I think about that, to be just straight, blunt and honest.

There's a bigger issue at stake, and that bigger issue is that there is no strategy to get people to become part of the

team. Everybody wants to be part of the team. Everybody would be willing to. PSWs want to do the work, but PSWs are being pushed out of a system that doesn't pay them well, that doesn't respect them, that doesn't even recognize some of the expertise that they have and that overworks them. It makes their living conditions so intolerable that they can't do the work that they care about. So no, they don't become part of a team because they don't have time to even be on that team, because they're on subways and buses and in long car drives trying to get from patient A to patient B. So that is my biggest problem, is that we don't want to address the root cause, and instead just want to do something superficial.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's a pleasure to speak on Bill 175 today. I also want to thank in particular the member from Mississauga–Malton, who was here earlier today giving his personal story about his father-in-law. My sympathies for his family on that, but it's always good to hear personal stories from members of the chamber. I think it brings in the personal touch to the chamber.

Before starting, I'd also like to acknowledge the dedicated work done by the Minister of Health and by the parliamentary assistant for all their great work in improving our health care system. This bill is sorely needed after 15 years of neglect. The system was left in disastrous shape, with more bureaucrats than front-line health workers for the first time in the history of Ontario, so this bill is going to make some major changes in a positive direction, to put front-line health care back at the forefront for Ontarians.

Our government made a commitment to the people of Ontario that we would end hallway health care. We have a comprehensive, innovative plan to keep that promise. We are breaking down long-standing barriers that have separated home care from primary care and, in doing so, allowing for the seamless coordination of services for patients while maintaining and strengthening oversight and accountability measures.

If passed, the legislation will allow the Ontario health teams to deliver more innovative models of home and community care. Ontario health teams will work together to understand a patient's full health care history, directly connecting them to the different types of care they need in navigating the system. Patients will benefit from primary care, hospitals, home and community care, and long-term care providers all being able to collaborate to provide care that best meets their individual care needs.

Ontario is modernizing home and community care services to enable the introduction of integrated and innovative models of care. Since its initial introduction, the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994, and the delivery model it supports have not kept pace with a number of changing dynamics which include an aging population, changing client expectations on the different types of care, increasing opportunities for care at home, and innovation in technology and delivery options.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the act has created long-standing barriers that have restricted innovation in the delivery of home and community care, including:

—rigid care coordination: Decisions about patient care were often made away from the front-line care;

—siloed care: Patients often interact with home care separately from primary and hospital care, which often includes multiple assessments leading to delays in care; and

—restrictive care plans: Patients have care plans with a set number of hours or visits with service maximums that could curtail care.

In response, Ontario is introducing the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, and proposing new regulations under the Connecting Care Act, 2019, to bring an outdated system into the 21st century.

Speaker, there are four pillars to our plan. Our first pillar is one of prevention and health promotion; we want to keep Ontarians healthy and out of hospitals. Second, we are investing \$27 billion over 10 years in hospital infrastructure projects. Our plan is building much-needed capacity throughout the system, including in our hospitals and other community-based-care facilities. Third, we are also ensuring that Ontarians are receiving the right care in the right place. While in many ways the backbone of our health care system, the hospital isn't always the best place for a patient to receive care, especially at a time when far too many hospitals are operating at or near 100% capacity. And fourth, we are better integrating care to improve patient flow.

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Mr. Speaker, for those patients who need to be admitted to a hospital, we want to ensure that they will be in a bed in a proper hospital room, not in a hallway or a meeting room. But some patients are ready to leave the hospital and could do so with the right support and care. We want to ensure they are getting the appropriate care for their needs.

For many, their needs can be met by home and community care services. Home and community care services are a critical component and part of our plan to end hallway health care. These important services will improve things and are relied on by many Ontarians. Last year, more than 700,000 people received home care and over 600,000 people used community support services such as Meals on Wheels and client transportation. Care at home and in the community is less expensive, frees capacity in our hospitals and, in the end, is where most people want to be. However, our current home care and community care system is unable to keep pace with the needs and preferences in Ontario today.

The Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994, was developed 25 years ago and has not kept pace with changing demographics and care needs, nor does it reflect the plan of the ministry for a connected health care system. We need to bring our home and community care system into the 21st century.

I'd like to quote Sue VanderBent, the CEO of Home Care Ontario. She states: "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 at home."

Should this proposed legislation pass, health care providers will be empowered to work together with a full picture of a patient's needs in order to truly coordinate patient care while still operating under strong oversight and accountability. We can do better, Speaker, and we will do better.

With Bill 175, we want to make the kinds of changes that give patients across Ontario a better health care experience, with smoother transitions between care providers. The Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act would lead to meaningful improvements in patient care. Patients would access home and community care through trusted clinical providers instead of through a siloed LHIN care coordination process.

Speaker, far too many patients fall through the cracks or are left trying to coordinate their care on their own. Currently, those seeking home health care can face multiple assessments and long waits. The legislation would remove restrictions on the model of delivery, including care coordination. This supports flexible home and community care that is connected with both acute hospital care and primary care.

Our government's approach will help patients get the connected and responsive home care they deserve. We are putting patients first and ending the current one-size-fits-all approach to home care.

To help home and community care services respond to the needs of patients and families in communities around this province, this proposed legislation would remove restrictions on the model of delivery, including care coordination. This would support more flexible home and community care that is connected with hospital care and primary care. This is the type of home and community care Ontario health teams want to provide. More flexible delivery will be supported by the retention of key oversight and accountability provisions. This will give the ministry, Ontario Health and Ontario health teams a foundation to provide high-quality, financially sustainable care. These changes will translate into less bureaucracy, less process and more front-line care.

This is an opportunity to mark the transition from siloed and administration-heavy LHIN-delivered home and community care to a more patient-friendly model. We are rebranding the existing LHINs and narrowing their mandate to focus on providing home and community care and long-term care, home-replacement services during this transition—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. *Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Today, I rise with deep gratitude for the People's Action Group in Waterloo region. They are a group of concerned people who have lived on the streets and in the shelters of Kitchener, Waterloo and

Cambridge, people who have navigated housing systems meant to help them.

They wrote me to let me know that they need us: “It has been said of homeless people that they are not the problem, but that they are the result of a problem. Problems of affordable housing, problems of our treatment of mental health and addiction.”

I want them to know they are absolutely right. They are right to ask us to use our positions of privilege and power to think about the impact of each and every piece of legislation that goes through this House on people who are sleeping rough at night. They are right to ask us if we see shelters as a solution to homelessness or a Band-Aid for the same, and they’re right when they say—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member. Please stop the clock.

Members who are coming into the chamber, I need you to be quiet.

Restart the clock. Again, I apologize to the member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They are right to ask us if we see shelters as a solution to homelessness or a Band-Aid for the same. They are right when they say that homelessness can only be solved by the hard work and compassion of people like me—people like us.

“In your position of power, you have the ability to become a part of the solution, to join in on the hard work and compassion needed to address homelessness.”

I refuse to lose hope because they are right to call on us to do better, and we must do better. The people of Ontario deserve nothing less.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Toby Barrett: The illegal blockade of Highway 6 at Caledonia must come down. It’s a position I’ve consistently fought for over the past 14 years. Illegal blockades are dangerous and seriously hinder the movement of people, goods and services. Illegal blockades that force tractor-trailers and heavy trucks onto county roads have proven very dangerous. The Caledonia bypass blockade must come down.

The Caledonia blockade is part of an ongoing national insurgence. Protestors have blocked rail lines in several parts of Canada to show solidarity with hereditary Wet’suwet’en chiefs opposed to the construction of the Coastal GasLink natural gas pipeline in British Columbia. The provincial government continues to call on the federal government to continue to step up and take responsibility with a coordinated plan of action to dismantle illegal blockades.

We respect the right to assemble, but enough is enough. People are being hurt and their livelihoods affected. I’m in my second week at Queen’s Park pushing this position with my colleagues, with members of cabinet and the Premier. I and my staff are on the ground at Caledonia and Hagersville, monitoring and communicating. Caledonia needs some help.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Paul Miller: There are grave injustices taking place each and every day across this province, including to my constituents. Ontarians have unjustly lost their freedom. Children have been taken from their families. Refugees who were fleeing persecution could face torture and death if deported without fair and proper legal representation. These injustices and the many other violations to people’s freedoms are the direct result of the recent 30% cut to Legal Aid Ontario.

To add insult to injury, these cuts don’t save money. The Canadian Bar Association found that for every \$1 spent on legal aid, governments saved \$6. Mr. Speaker, this means that the government has added as much as three quarters of a billion dollars to the costs of other parts of our justice system and social services. That includes courts, jails, child protection services and welfare rolls.

Last week, I met with the legal aid lawyers and their union, the Society of United Professionals, about these cuts. I want to thank the front-line staff lawyers for their dedication to our justice system, and I join them in calling on the Premier to reverse his \$133-million cut to Legal Aid Ontario.

EVENTS IN CARLETON

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: On Friday, February 28, I was pleased to host the Honourable Ministers Rickford and Walker at a small round table discussion in Metcalfe to discuss energy, hydro, natural gas and more in Carleton. Constituents and representatives from various parts of my riding of Carleton, including local city of Ottawa Councillor George Darouze, gathered together to share feedback and give ideas on what our government can do to help build Ontario together. It was a very informative discussion, and the ministers were kind enough to stay for almost two hours, answering everyone’s questions and taking notes for follow up.

1020

I want to thank Minister Rickford and Minister Walker for taking the time to visit my riding and to get a first-hand understanding of the challenges faced by rural communities in Carleton, which are still considered “urban” because they fall under the city of Ottawa’s municipal boundaries—communities like Metcalfe, Osgoode, Richmond, North Gower, Ashton, Greely, Kars, Vernon, Becketts Landing and more. I look forward to continuing the conversation and working with both ministers to be a strong voice for the people I’m here to represent and serve.

I also want to take an opportunity to wish everyone a happy International Women’s Day. Last year, I held my first annual International Women’s Day events across the riding, and they were a huge success. Once again I’m hosting two free community events for International Women’s Day on Sunday, March 8: breakfast in Richmond and high tea in Metcalfe. I encourage everyone to come out and attend. You can get more information on my website, goldiempp.ca, or call my office at 613-838-4425.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We're going to continue with members' statements, and I would ask members to please quieten down.

Members' statements?

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: This morning I would like to tell a story about where I come from, my community of Kingfisher Lake.

What many people don't know is that we moved to where we live now in 1966, but before this, our community and others were part of Big Beaver House. Kingfisher Lake received reserve status in 1976. We were placed under the Indian Act and forced under an elected band council system.

Our first government school was built in 1973. The school had the only system for hydro and sewage in the community. In the early 1980s, the community installed its own electrification system. We got a gravel road in 1987, and we got sewage and running water in 1994.

Despite all this, there have been 20-plus deaths by suicide in my community since 1987. Across the Kiiwetinoong riding, since 1986, we've had over 400 deaths by suicide. This is what colonialism looks like.

As a community and as First Nations, we will continue to fight for our right to exist, our right to practise who we are and our right to speak our language.

So I ask, how do we fix this? Some say reconciliation, but how does this work when Ontario doesn't acknowledge that this is a broken relationship and that reconciliation is dead? I hear some say that reconciliation never really existed. Meegwetch.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise today to compliment the students in the Community Environmental Leadership Program and Youth Action on Climate Change. They did an amazing job moderating a climate town hall hosted by Guelph's MP that included Mayor Guthrie and myself. The town hall filled Harcourt Memorial United Church with so many people that they actually had to turn people away.

Speaker, it's clear people want climate action. People are deeply disappointed that the government has not brought forward a credible climate plan since the Auditor General tore apart their environment plan.

I was especially impressed by how the students connected job creation to climate action. Global investors have invested \$2.6 trillion in renewable energy in the last decade and will invest an additional \$3.5 billion every single year over the next five years.

Young people want jobs in the clean economy, but it is hard to see how Ontario will attract these investment dollars when the government is ripping up renewable energy contracts and peddling a made-to-fail climate plan. Young people are demanding a livable future, and I urge the government to listen to their call for urgent action on the climate crisis.

CAMBRIDGE NORTH DUMFRIES ONTARIO HEALTH TEAM

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Last year in December, I was pleased to announce, on behalf of the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, that the Cambridge North Dumfries Ontario Health Team was one of the 24 chosen to launch our government's new model of care to end hallway health care and build a connected and sustainable health care system centred on the needs of patients.

We've been working collaboratively in Cambridge and North Dumfries on health care, and on many things, for a while, thanks to organizations such as Langs community health centre—which is a focal point for people to access services and supports that they need—along with Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other organizations that continue to work to innovate, improve and support health care in our community.

Congratulations and thank you to the health care providers, organizations and leaders—people like Dr. Sharon Bal; Patrick Gaskin, Cambridge Memorial Hospital president; Bill Davidson, executive director of Langs—and, of course, other community partners who helped plan the Cambridge North Dumfries Ontario Health Team and worked to make it a reality.

Thank you to all of our health care professionals and providers for what they do every day: serving Cambridge and North Dumfries.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Outfitters in my riding are facing a really hard time right now. The government has deemed the northern herds of moose too small to hunt. So what does the government do? Do they look at the dozens of moose who get killed on the same track of railroad every year? No. This government that says that they are open for business is putting all of those small business operators at risk. Outfitters bring in tourism and create wealth in their communities, but now many of them won't be able to stay open.

Speaker, do we want to protect these majestic—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for Kitchener–Conestoga to withdraw the unparliamentary remark that I heard him utter.

Mr. Mike Harris: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member for Nickel Belt. I'll give you extra time.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, do we want to protect these majestic animals? For sure. I don't know one northerner who does not want a healthy moose population.

When the federal government shut down the cod fishery, they put in place a compensation system so that people could transition, so that businesses could stay alive. It should be the same for my constituents and those all across the north who invested in their outfitting businesses: Richard Comeau from Horwood Outpost, Paul and Angie Chartrand from Big Bear Camp, Jim Loiselle from J and L Lakeview Retreat, Henri and Annie Roberge from Tata

Chika Pika Lake Lodge, Gary Stocking and Kim Chappell from Thunderstock Outfitters—and the list goes on. All of these small businesses are at risk because of this government's decision. They deserve government attention. They deserve government compensation.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Lorne Coe: This past Friday, on behalf of the Honourable Monte McNaughton, the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, I officially opened a second action centre in Oshawa to provide services and supports to approximately 1,700 workers from independent parts supplier companies impacted by the closure of the General Motors assembly plant. The action centre is in partnership with Unifor. The new centre connects workers with job and training opportunities, counselling services and workshops that help them improve their job search, resumé writing and interview skills.

A job fair is also being organized on April 22, 2020, at Durham College in Oshawa to help connect workers more quickly with local job opportunities.

Speaker, we know this is a challenging time for many workers and families. Our government stands with the people in Durham region, and we will continue to help those affected by the closure to adjust and retrain so that they can quickly rejoin the workforce.

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, our government, Marten Falls First Nation and Webequie First Nation are taking a major step in unlocking jobs and opportunity in northern Ontario's Ring of Fire region by entering into a historic agreement to advance the planning and development of a proposed northern road link. Yesterday, in downtown Toronto, they held a celebratory signing ceremony.

This government is delivering on a promise to move forward with the development of the Ring of Fire with willing partners, including Indigenous groups and northern communities.

After 15 years of delay by the previous government, we said that we would build a road to the Ring of Fire. We are working with our incredible partners in the Marten Falls First Nation and Webequie First Nation to do just that and to make sure that we do it right. Together, we can bring jobs and prosperity to communities across the Far North.

This all-season road project would also improve access to health and social services and put in place proven infrastructure such as high-speed Internet and reliable cellular service for the First Nations and other communities nearby.

Chief Bruce Achneepineskum of Marten Falls First Nation said, "We look forward to working together with" this province of "Ontario to ensure the sustainable development of our ancestral territories."

1030

Chief Cornelius Wabasse of Webequie First Nation said they've been working together with Ontario for many years

to reach this point. Finally, road development will help bring prosperity to communities across the entire region and better infrastructure both on and off reserves.

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Chris Glover: It's my honour to introduce Eric Celentano and Russell D'Abreu from the Toronto Lung Transplant Civitan Club. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I'm very glad to welcome the independent pharmacists today. They are hosting a reception in the afternoon. I'm welcoming Billy Cheung, executive director of Pharmasave Ontario; Sherif Guorgui, CEO of OnPharm-United; Calvin LeRoux and Grady Brown, CEOs from PharmaChoice Canada; Jeff May, executive vice-president for Remedy'sRx Specialty Pharmacy; Dean Miller, president of Whole Health Pharmacy Partners; Ben Shenouda, executive director of Allied Pharmacists; and Rita Winn, general manager for Lovell Drugs.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd just like to give a warm welcome to my OLIP intern, Clare MacDonald, who is in the galleries today.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: First of all, I'd like to introduce Keith Currie and all the members who are here from the OFA at Queen's Park.

Interjections.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'd also like to—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome back Michau van Speyk from the Ontario Autism Coalition, and I see up in the House that we have Sherry Caldwell with us from the Ontario Disability Coalition. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I cut him off. If he wants to conclude his introduction—I apologize.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce and welcome David Crane, John MacKay, Ken Yeoman and Glen Blair from the great riding of Oxford.

Mr. Joel Harden: I also want to welcome Michau and Sherry to this House. Nice to see you here today.

I also want to welcome our friends from Epilepsy Ontario, who hosted a great breakfast this morning to help us be more aware of what we can do to help people living with epilepsy. Thank you.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to introduce to the House today Jason Ramsay-Brown. He's page Abbey's dad.

I'd also like to welcome, from Huron-Bruce, Pat Jilesen, Rachel Anstett; Steve Wright from Howick Mutual Insurance; as well as Erica Murray, who is here with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture as well.

Mr. Mike Harris: I'd like to welcome not only a member of the OFA, but one of my constituents, Mark Reusser, to the House today.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I would like to introduce three members of my constituency from Simcoe North, the Ott family: Andy, Elisabeth and Nicholas. Thank you for being here today and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud to announce our friends from Skills Ontario who are joining us today: Karen Creditor, Darryl Spector, William Chan, Ian Howcroft and Cathy Sprague. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Yes, welcome to Queen's Park.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This morning my first question goes to the Premier. After weeks of avoiding media questions, the Premier finally took some yesterday, but he seemed unwilling or unable to answer basic questions about his failure to listen to what parents, students, teachers and school boards told him in his government's own consultations. Instead, he lashed out at teachers, calling them greedy and claiming they were holding us hostage, and went on to make a whole series of wild accusations against the people who educate our kids.

The Premier claims that he wants to reach a deal with teachers. What serious Premier behaves this way when he's serious about reaching a deal?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I'd just like to correct the Leader of the Opposition. I've never called the teachers greedy. I've called the head of the unions greedy, but not the teachers, because I appreciate the job that teachers do. They go in and work hard, day in and day out.

When I speak to the teachers, what I'm hearing is that they're fed up with this. They want to get back in the classroom and do the job that they enjoy doing and they love doing, and that's teaching the students.

But we also have to have fiscal restraint. The head of the unions, they want the 1%, which is about \$920 a year—I'm sorry, we're proposing \$920 a year. The unions want \$1,840 a year. That's unacceptable. We have to make sure that we're within reason and we have a great deal. The minister has put great deals on the table. We're going to continue negotiating in good faith.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Leadership means actually working with people, even when you don't agree with them. The Premier seems to think it means avoiding blame. Yesterday, he blamed the media for asking the wrong questions. He blamed teachers for not caving in to his classroom cuts. He blamed everyone but himself for the crisis that he has created in our education system and in our schools.

Does the Premier think anything at all that he said yesterday will bring Ontario families closer to the deal they

want to see between the government and the people who make our schools work?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Again, our minister is working day in and day out to get a deal, a fair deal for the teachers, a fair deal for the students and the taxpayers. We're going to continue working hard, day in and day out, to get the kids back in the classroom. But we committed to a deal that's protecting full-day kindergarten, ensuring teachers are hired based on merit, making sure we maintain the smallest class sizes in Canada for the earliest years. On online learning, we went from four down to two. We are negotiating in good faith, our minister is negotiating in good faith and we're going to continue working hard to get the kids back in the classroom.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Ford government, in fact the Premier himself, keeps claiming that they want to negotiate a deal with teachers in the classroom, but the Premier called them greedy hostage-takers yesterday. He claims that parents and students support his classroom cuts, but he has been hiding a report that shows that they begged him not to make those cuts. He wants to be a leader, but he is showing the worst kind of leadership. Kids deserve better, Speaker.

Will the Premier stop name-calling, stop pointing to imaginary supporters, cancel the cuts and work with teachers to get a deal that actually improves education in our schools?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government to reply: Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: We're all proud on this side—Conservatives on both sides of the House are all proud of the work that this Premier has done to improve the education system in the province of Ontario. The Leader of the Opposition suggested that we can do better. Of course we can do better. That's what we're sent here to do each and every day, do better. That's what we're trying to do. It's an agenda of progress, growth and prosperity: progress on math and sciences, growth so that our kids can benefit from those changes that we made, and prosperity that comes when our kids have the best education possible. That's what we're trying to do.

We can only do that if our union partners work with us and do what teachers are telling them. Teachers want to get back into the classroom. Parents want their kids back into the classroom. If the opposition won't help us do it, parents can rest assured that we will ensure that that happens.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. So we're basically five minutes into question period, and there's a lot of energy in the House. I'm hearing, on both sides of the House, quite a number of members who are yelling at each other across the floor. They don't have the floor; they're just yelling across the floor. I'm going to start calling you out individually if you continue to do that and then of course, if necessary, warning you and then, if necessary, naming you.

We're going to have a civil question period for the remainder of the next 55 minutes. That's my hope.

Start the clock. The next question: the Leader of the Opposition.

1040

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. As concern about the novel coronavirus spreads all over the world, Ontario's public health officials are doing an extraordinary job keeping people informed and safe. They have a consistent message for people when they fall ill: Stay home.

Unfortunately, in Ontario, government changes to employment standards make it harder than ever for working people to do that when they need to. What is the government's plan to ensure that people are able to stay home when they need to?

Hon. Doug Ford: We had a great announcement yesterday about having a central command table. The Minister of Health is working hard, getting briefed every day. I just ended up getting briefed again this morning. We have all the confidence in Dr. Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health. They're communicating right across the province with other chief medical officers of health. We're going to be doing our due diligence to make sure that people in Ontario are safe.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, just last month, 175 health workers, including physicians, nurses and public health professionals, wrote the Ford government and implored them to reinstate flexible personal emergency leave days and end mandatory sick notes. They've warned the current provincial labour laws are "a serious threat to the health and safety of Ontarians."

Yesterday, the Premier said he was taking the threat posed by the coronavirus seriously. I think he's just repeated that by pointing to the command centre that has been set up. So my question is, will he listen to the concerns raised by these health professionals and deal with the sick notes and flexible days off, sick days off for workers in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Long-Term Care, to reply on behalf of the Premier.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite. I want to first thank all the people who are working in health care, providing front-line care, and our public health agencies, who are working so hard every day to be prepared in an instance like this. I want to make sure that we value what they do, and that's what we're doing.

Our government is committed to making sure that we support our communities, our population across Ontario and our front-line workers. We've added three new types of leave to the Employment Standards Act: sick leave, family responsibility leave, bereavement leave. Medical notes are not automatically required for those leaves of absence. Instead, employers have the option to require reasonable proof of the circumstances that entitle the employee to leave.

Although the risk to Ontarians—and I think this is a really important emphasis—is low, it is important that we take decisive action and take leadership. That's what this government is doing in this preparedness process. We are supporting our front-line workers. We are committed to making sure our Ontarians have a proper plan to stay safe—

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government says that they are taking the threat of the coronavirus seriously, and health professionals are saying that Ontario's current laws encourage people to go to work sick, putting themselves and all of us at risk. There's no better way to value the professionals that the minister was talking about than taking their advice.

New Democrats are ready to work with the government to ensure expedited passage of legislation to enact flexible personal emergency leave days and an end to mandatory sick notes, even if it's on a temporary basis. We can pass legislation in this House in one day. Will the government consider this?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Again, thank you for that question. I'm going to reiterate the importance of what our government is doing to show support for our front-line support workers and our communities across Ontario. I'm a little disappointed that the NDP is trying to play politics.

I was a family doctor for almost 30 years, and so I understand the importance of support for our front-line providers, absolutely. Everyone should take comfort in knowing that our skilled health care providers are bringing all their experience. Our government is supporting them and committed to supporting them every day that they provide that front-line service to our communities across Ontario and our people of Ontario, who we are making sure we have support for and are prepared for. Minister Elliott, the Minister of Health is doing an amazing job across Ontario preparing, with her leadership, with this government. I want our front-line support workers—

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

The next question.

LICENCE PLATES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday was the first time in a while that this Premier has made himself available to publicly answer questions about the state of things in Ontario, and it was fascinating to watch his unhappy and unhinged answers about licence plates.

This Premier can frame this fiasco however he wants, but the truth is it took almost two weeks for this government to take meaningful action to correct the glaring safety issue of unreadable licence plates.

If the government's approach to licence plates is any indication, how on earth can this province have faith in their plans for education, health care, legal aid, clean drinking water, transportation, housing, energy, social services or the environment? It's just the latest mess. Buck-a-beer isn't a thing, gas pump stickers didn't stick, the province has lost money selling weed—and the hits just keep coming.

With such a spectacular track record, we all should have seen this coming, even without fancy scanning technology. How can the people of Ontario have faith in this government?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's an easy answer for the member opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Essex, come to order. Premier, come to order.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Ontarians can have faith in this government because we're demonstrating, we're listening. We're not only listening; we're understanding their concerns and we're taking action.

I can't stress enough that the narrative that the member opposite and her entire party are trying to create is getting very old. Ontarians know that we're out there working for them.

In terms of the licence plates, a solution has been implemented, together with our vendor, which is going to see a replacement plan roll out.

I am very proud of the people who have worked around the clock to demonstrate that we've taken Ontarians' concerns very seriously. At the end of the day, we heard concerns, we understood. We've taken action, and Ontarians are going to be pleased with the outcome.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is again to the Premier.

Ontarians still want answers about licence plates, whether this government is happy about that or not. First they buried their heads in the sand, then they admitted there was a problem, and now they're trying to bury the problem again.

This government wants this to go away so badly that now they've signed a non-disclosure agreement with 3M. No one will ever know the cost, or what was or wasn't involved in supposed testing, or any other details of this botched job. I would bet that the deal they made for these plates wouldn't hold up to scrutiny, and that's why they want it to disappear—not unlike their branded plates.

The Premier seems angry that people would dare to question him. He says there will be no cost to the taxpayer. Really? I would say, "Prove it"—but you can't. So my question is, whose brave idea was it to hide behind a non-disclosure agreement, and why won't you let Ontario see this contract?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would remind members to make their comments through the chair.

The minister to reply.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I think what we've just seen here in this House today is a very clear misunderstanding of what business is really all about. The NDP do not respect commercially sensitive information.

The fact of the matter is, what really matters to Ontarians is that we're a government that listens. We've taken action and we're ensuring that the new plates that roll out

will be based on the feedback we've been receiving from our stakeholders. I've been meeting and speaking with stakeholders non-stop. I really appreciate their feedback and their investment in helping us move forward.

That's exactly what we're doing, Speaker: We're moving forward with a plan to implement plates that people will be proud of and confident in.

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Daryl Kramp: My question today is to our Premier, a man who is leading the way.

Premier, the Ring of Fire represents an untold opportunity for economic greatness, not only for northern Ontario and First Nations communities, but for all of Ontario.

Unfortunately, under the previous Liberal government, they wasted that potential with continued delays, inaction and actual roadblocks to development. Major industry partners left this province, literally saying that they didn't have hope for this project because of the impediments for success created by the previous government.

Year after year, announcements and re-announcements, and re-announcements of re-announcements, regarding potential funding by the previous government were made. Yet there was no actual commitment to getting shovels into the ground.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier share with this Legislature the great news from our government regarding the new partnership agreement that we have secured for the Ring of Fire?

1050

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank our great member from Hastings-Lennox and Addington.

What a great announcement yesterday it was, Mr. Speaker, for First Nations of Webequie and Marten Falls. Both chiefs were there. That's the difference between our government and the previous government, which couldn't get a deal done for over 15 years. The only deal they ended up getting done was with Bay Street. They spent \$20 million on lawyers. The NDP backed that, of course.

This is going to give an opportunity to two First Nations communities, along with many others, and the rest of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Official opposition, come to order.

I apologize to the Premier for interrupting. Please continue.

Hon. Doug Ford: —give them an opportunity for better access to health care and social issues; give them opportunities for economic prosperity and growth. That's what we're looking forward to, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Back to the Premier once again: Premier, thank you for that. That's incredible news, and it's certainly worthy of acknowledgement. I'm proud to be a part of this government, which is finally helping to ensure that our province is once again working and benefiting all Ontarians.

Premier, during your press conference, Chief Cornelius Wabasse from the Webequie First Nation said it best about the potential that this deal represents when he said, “We are looking forward to prosperity for our resource development in our area. And we are looking forward to working with Ontario and industry, as well as to be partners with them. We are looking forward to the prosperity and the benefits that will come from our land resources.”

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier please elaborate to the Legislature about the potential economic impact that Ontario could see from developments in the Ring of Fire region in this province?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, I want to thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. The First Nations communities from that area deserve to be finally part of the economic success in the province. This is going to create up to 5,500 jobs annually, \$9.4 billion in gross domestic product, \$6.2 billion for Ontario’s mining industry, and \$2 billion in government revenue divided among the federal government, provincial government and the municipal governments, along with First Nations communities.

This is one of the biggest announcements our government has ever made. This is an incredible opportunity, again, for our First Nations communities right across this province because they know they have a government that can work with them.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’ll ask the members to take their seats.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. You can’t heckle the press gallery.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And you can’t reply.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Please start the clock. The next question.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Premier. Wait times for mental health and addictions support in Ontario have reached an all-time high. In fact, just last month we found out that the wait times for children and youth have nearly doubled because of years of failed action from Liberal and Conservative governments. The Liberals let families down when it came to delivering mental health services for those in need. But instead of fixing the problem, this government has spent two years making empty promises. When will the Premier finally commit to matching this year’s federal mental health investment of \$232 million?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Long-Term Care to reply.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for that question. I look at our Minister of Health—and of mental health and addictions as well—and I say to myself: Look at the good work that they’re doing, the progress that we’re making.

And I’m looking at the last 15 years of absolute neglect in this whole sector.

We have an amazing minister, and an amazing Associate Minister of Mental Health, and I’m very pleased to say that that’s \$3.8 billion that our government has committed to spending for mental health—we are looking at ways to keep our youth supported across the sector. We made new investments in services and supports designed specifically for youth, including an additional \$10 million in annual funding for core child and youth mental health services. We’re making an additional investment of nearly \$40 million in targeted mental health for students. We have provided \$6 million in intensive services, another \$1 million for new provincial eating disorder prevention, and \$3.3 million over four years, so we are making—

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

The supplementary question.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: What the minister has failed to mention is that this government has put exactly zero dollars of provincial funds into mental health and addictions.

Back to the Premier: It seems that this government has forgotten also the deep cuts that the government has made to mental health and addiction services. One of the first things the government did was to cut \$330 million from mental health and addictions, of which \$69 million was for children and youth in crisis. Now we have ballooning wait-lists for people to receive mental health services.

Our kids deserve so much better than a Premier who cuts programs and services that our kids rely on. Premier, why are your government’s priorities focused on taking away services from Ontarians?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again for the question. I can tell you, legitimately, in all my experience in health care for 30 years, this is the first government that has prioritized mental health—the very first one.

As I said, the historic \$3.8 billion over 10 years, the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence, the additional \$10-million annual funding for core services, and \$3.5 million for psychosis intervention services—the list goes on and on.

Our government is making real progress, taking real action, putting our most vulnerable people at their most vulnerable time under our focus. Our government is taking swift action to make sure that the mental health and addictions issues across Ontario that were pervasive under the previous government—you watched it build; you watched it happen. Our government is dealing with that reality, and we are making progress every day.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier, but first I’d like to just congratulate the Premier on signing the deal on the Ring of Fire yesterday—long overdue.

For the last two years, the Lanark county OPP have benefited from a mobile crisis response team. This funded a full-time mental health nurse to be a first responder alongside the OPP. The data is irrefutable: Early intervention works. The Lanark county situation table, which deals

with individuals in crisis, has reported a 45% drop in referrals as a result of this pilot.

But now the funding for the program has been cut, and I understand that no evaluation of the program was ever undertaken. This program reduced pressures on our hospitals and our courts by solving problems before they became a crisis.

Will the Premier reconsider this poor decision?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: We're both very anxious to answer it because it is a government-wide issue that we're dealing with.

I'm sure the member opposite appreciates and understands that while we do not make operational decisions on how the OPP distributes their assets and resources, there is no doubt that situation tables and mental health workers embedded with the police have been a very effective tool.

I have seen first-hand how situation tables can actually get the individuals who need the services quickly within their communities. But, again, operationally, decisions made on where assets and resources should be deployed within the OPP are left to the commissioner.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, let's not deflect from the question. It was the Solicitor General who eliminated the program. This was not an OPP decision.

It's rare that we see success with such a program in such a short period of time. The MCRRT has improved communications and the sharing of resources between our service providers and our agencies. It has eased pressure on the police, who don't have the specialized training in mental health and ought not to be expected to be mental health professionals.

Early intervention has reduced those pressures on our hospitals and our courts. It was a win-win for everyone, but the Solicitor General did not even evaluate the outcomes before making the decision to cut and eliminate all funding.

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I'm calling on the Premier to review the details of this program and its success and then direct the appropriate ministers to reinstate funding.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: To be clear, 40% of front-line police officers' work today in the province of Ontario, across Ontario, involves individuals who are in crisis with mental health. It is, frankly, why our government has such a government-wide focus on actually getting the services where they need to be.

The operational decisions are made by the commissioner and his team. What we are doing government-wide is making investments that actually impact individual lives. Those investments continue to happen through the Minister of Health, through the Associate Minister of Mental Health and across government.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is for the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Speaker, we know that women across Ontario are consistently underrepresented in managerial and executive positions. On the TSX-listed issuers' broadsheets, women only hold 15%.

Increasing the number of women on boards and in senior management positions is good for the economy, good for business and critical for gender diversity. Can the minister please explain to the House why it is important to support women as they pursue leadership roles and what she's doing to achieve this?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member from Richmond Hill for such an important question.

One of my top priorities as the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues is to look at how our government can support the economic empowerment of women. Last week, with the member from Flamborough-Glanbrook, I had the opportunity to visit Susan Gubasta's auto dealership in Mississauga. Susan is the first female president of the Canadian International AutoShow. She actively looks to hire women at her dealership and mentor them in the auto sector.

Susan is just one of the many examples of women in leadership roles who are mentoring and leading the next generation of women and girls who are looking to start their own businesses or move up into leadership roles.

I'm proud to say that our government is funding projects that provide skills, knowledge and experience to women to increase their economic security. This year alone, our government is investing \$4.7 million into the Women's Economic Security Program and \$2.1 million in the Investing in Women's Futures Program—because when women in our society and economy succeed, we are all stronger.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: This is encouraging. Thank you to the minister for that answer. I'm proud that of the business owners I know, there are many other female entrepreneurs in my riding of Richmond Hill. I have met with many small business owners who have told me that they were ignored by the previous government.

One thing I noticed in meeting with these small business owners is that many of them are men. In fact, today, women only make up a fraction of the business owners in Ontario.

Minister, what is your ministry doing to help female entrepreneurs start, grow and run their own businesses?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you to the member for Richmond Hill for that question.

Our government is committed to making Ontario a competitive business environment that helps small businesses achieve their potential and grow jobs. But in order for Ontario to live up to its fullest potential, we need to empower all of the talent and skill that makes Ontario such a great place to live, work and play.

Supporting female entrepreneurs to start and grow their business is a key part to this vision. This is one reason our government launched the Small Business Success Strat-

egy: to help us better support small businesses and understand the unique challenges facing entrepreneurs in this province.

I'm looking forward to joining the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues to ensure female entrepreneurs are key players in moulding the Ontario Small Business Success Strategy. Our government will continue to make Ontario more competitive and build—

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

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Jill Andrew: My question is to the Premier. On Friday, the minister received the final report from the Peel District School Board Review—a review that was meant to address anti-Black racism across Peel schools.

Though the minister did not immediately make the review public, students, parents, educators, education workers and student support workers across Peel district already had cause for concern.

In December, the reviewers stated, “Community members, particularly in the Black communities, have expressed concern” about the review process, and that the review “may not satisfy the desire within the community for deeper and more thorough consultations.”

Premier, how many of the review's recommendations deal specifically with anti-Black racism? And how many of your minister's ministerial recommendations will specifically address anti-Black racism?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader to reply.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The minister, as you know, took a leadership role on this very early on. I know he reached out to the members of this Legislature from Peel region in advance of the review. There's a lot of good work that has been done, but obviously we'll review any of the recommendations that come forward and be sure to not only work with the legislation but with members on all sides.

I know that all members on both sides of the House deplore any act of racism, and we will always do our best to make sure that that's not the case in any one of our schools. I thank the honourable member for her question. We have a lot of work to do and we'll get it done.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Back to the Premier: This government is failing Black youth. Students have raised concerns about anti-Black racism in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the Toronto District School Board. The review under the Liberals did not address the root causes of anti-Black racism in the York Region District School Board, because I've heard from them too.

High school students across Kitchener Centre and Kitchener-Conestoga talk about an “N-word pass” that allows students to use the N-word at their schools liberally and without consequence. Students are desperate to address racism in schools.

What conversations has the Minister of Education had with the Solicitor General, who's responsible for anti-racism

strategies in Ontario, regarding the creation of an anti-racism strategy in education, and when will this strategy be released?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the questions from the members opposite. But as I said, Minister Lecce took a leadership role on this as soon as we were made aware of the situation.

I applaud members on both sides of the House for helping us take action on this. This is something that I'm sure that we all understand is completely unacceptable not only in our schools but across the province. That's why we will redouble our efforts to make sure that our schools are safe for everybody. As I said, we'll take a look at the recommendations and we'll be sure to report back in a very fulsome way to this Legislature on the next steps.

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday the Premier told the media, “You keep pounding on the little things.” If you can't get a 12-by-6 piece of metal right, how can anyone have confidence that you'll get the big things right?

Speaking of big things, in his last response to me, the Premier cited a \$15-billion deficit. I think the Premier must have forgotten that the last time he did that here, the Auditor General publicly corrected him on his misuse of that number—a number he is using as a context for making class sizes larger and cutting support for vulnerable learners. Can the Premier explain why he and his caucus continue to use this number?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader to reply on behalf of the government.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the awkward situation the member opposite has been put in, Mr. Speaker. He has been asked to account for 15 years of Liberal failure. I know that this is the last week of him being a leader of the party, and I know he's probably anxious to hand over that mantle to somebody else.

We use the \$15-billion number because that's the number. You don't have to ask Ontarians; they understand what happened during the previous Liberal government. They spent money like it was going out of style. They had no accountability on anything. When it comes to education, yes, they spent a lot of money, but our kids didn't receive the benefits of the money. They had no accountability. And what I said yesterday—a proliferation of private schools, of tutoring, all across the province, and why it's a legacy of what they have done—they failed parents. They failed our teachers. They failed our education system. We won't.

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

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Mr. John Fraser: That was just a bunch of horsefeathers. Speaker, people in Ontario are genuinely concerned, and each time the Premier uses that number, he loses credibility. I can't really understand—after the Auditor General schooled him in public, the FAO told him, the public accounts told him—that he continues to do this, why

his caucus continues to do this. And here is why: The Premier is creating a context for cuts, cuts to things that families depend on, making class sizes larger, less support for vulnerable learners, cutting services for the developmentally disabled, making a mess of the Ontario Autism Program. They've even been using it as a context to cut public health, at a time when we can least afford to do that.

Speaker, through you, can the Premier explain to Ontario families why he continues to cut those things that families depend on?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member opposite has absolutely no credibility in anything that he just said there. This government, since day one, has been focused on three areas: progress, growth and prosperity—progress on education, our math scores; progress on transit and transportation; progress on balancing the budget while removing the lowest-income earners from the tax rolls altogether; progress on long-term care. And what does that lead to? It leads to growth, an economy that is growing each and every month that we have been in office, Mr. Speaker. And you know what that leads to? It leads to prosperity, prosperity that comes when over 300,000 people have the dignity of a job and can pay their bills.

We'll continue on this agenda of growth, prosperity and progress, Mr. Speaker, and we'll let them account for the disaster they left this province in. But the people of Ontario need no lessons from them.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order. I ask the government side to come to order so that we can hear the next question. I think he might want to get a chance to ask his question, too.

Start the clock.

MENTAL HEALTH IN AGRICULTURE

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Our government has been clear that we support greater mental health supports for the people in Ontario. We're listening and we're taking steps to address the many problems people face. In doing so, we recognize that everyone is unique in the issues they face. And farmers, Speaker, are no different.

I know that the minister has been vocal about the many issues farmers and farm families in Ontario face. Will the minister please tell us about some of those issues?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Whitby for the excellent question. It's something that we don't often think about, but it's always present. Farmers face unique challenges every day, and unfortunately those come with their own struggles with mental health.

Mr. Speaker, mental health is health. If everyone is unique, farmers are no different. They often deal with unpredictable and difficult crop conditions, social isolation, heavy workloads, farm trespassers, fluctuating markets and pricing, burdensome regulations, and are anxious about what may come tomorrow. When we speak about mental health, it's important that farmers be part of the conversation so that we can all provide support and our assistance.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Minister, for that response. Speaker, it's encouraging for all of us here who have farmers in their riding to hear such words. Many of us have heard about farmers struggling with the difficulties of the occupation, and the many uncertainties it brings. It's important that we take action. Our government has made it clear that we're taking mental health seriously, and we've made it clear that we're listening to the voice of Ontario's farmers and rural communities.

Would the minister please tell us more about what our government is doing for farmers' mental health?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member again for that great supplementary question. I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the member.

As I said, I led a series of round tables with the agriculture community to learn more about their challenges.

We've committed resources for mental health supports for our agriculture community.

We're providing funding for a research project to develop mental health literacy and emergency response for Ontario agriculture.

Our government supports Ontario 211, a telephone helpline and website that provides information and mental health supports.

And we have tabled Bill 156, which, if passed, will give farmers peace of mind as we prevent farm trespassing.

Mr. Speaker, we heard rural Ontario, and we are taking action.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Hamilton Transportation Task Force that the Premier appointed will soon report on its recommendations, so my question to the Premier is a very simple one: If the task force recommends that the Hamilton LRT project continue, will the Premier in fact come to the table to get that project back on track?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Transportation to reply, on behalf of the government.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: As the Leader of the Opposition knows, our government has committed \$1 billion in new funding to the city of Hamilton.

Unfortunately, the previous Liberal government was not up front about the cost of the Hamilton LRT. Everyone believed that the cost of the Hamilton LRT was going to be \$1 billion, which is why our government committed \$1 billion to that project.

Mr. Speaker, we have been clear. We struck a task force. The task force is comprised of credible individuals led by the Honourable Tony Valeri, a former Liberal member of Parliament and Minister of Transport. They are doing their work, and when they've completed their work, they are going to provide the government with a series of recommendations. I look forward to receiving those recommendations and then moving forward on getting that money invested in the city of Hamilton.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it's unfortunate that the government decided to fudge around with the numbers and not treat Hamilton the same way as they treated all other transit projects—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the unparliamentary comment.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'll withdraw.

The bottom line is that the justification that the province used to cancel the LRT in Hamilton didn't meet the requirements of other projects that had been approved in the province of Ontario.

Before wasting hundreds of millions of public dollars, the Premier needs to make sure that he has explored all options to keep the Hamilton LRT on track. So far, he has failed to do that, but it's not too late.

If the federal government is willing to come to the table, and the task force does recommend this transit project, will the Premier recommit the funding to the Hamilton LRT?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker: In 2018, our government said that we were going to give \$1 billion to the city of Hamilton. In 2019, we said that we were going to give \$1 billion to the city of Hamilton. And today, in 2020, we are still committed to give \$1 billion to the city of Hamilton.

It was the previous Liberal government that led the people of Hamilton to believe that the cost of the LRT was going to be \$1 billion when they knew that it would not be.

We have been very clear with the people of the city of Hamilton. We know that they need transit and transportation infrastructure, which is why we have asked the task force to put together a list of needed transit and transportation options for people in Hamilton. We look forward to receiving that report and working with people in Hamilton to get that money invested as quickly as possible.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Our government has been clear in our commitment of improving the safety and efficiency of Ontario's transportation network, and I know the minister has been diligently working towards this.

We understand the importance of strengthening connections between individuals, families and businesses in southwestern Ontario.

Speaker, in January, the minister travelled to London to announce the release of our government's first regional transportation plan. Can the minister tell us about the contents of Connecting the Southwest?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to thank the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for the excellent question.

After 15 years of a Liberal government that only focused on connecting places like London and Windsor to the GTA, we have taken a different approach. Our plan outlines real, practical transportation improvements that better connect our cities, our towns, our villages and our

hamlets in a way that will preserve jobs and attract future investment.

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Connecting the Southwest has over 40 actions and commitments for improving existing rail corridors, highway networks and inner-community bus service across the region. And just last week, our government announced that the province is proceeding with an expression of interest to procure a contractor to widen and install concrete median barriers along Highway 401 between Tilbury and London—a key commitment that our government is keeping.

Our government is listening to the people of southwestern Ontario, and I look forward to sharing more—

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. Boy, if I had a million dollars—

Interjection: A billion.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Maybe a billion dollars.

We know the people of southwestern Ontario take pride in their communities, and our government wants to see these communities flourish as much as they do. Connecting the Southwest is an important step forward, and I'm thrilled that our government is carrying out this commitment for southwestern Ontarians.

This region is home to more than 1.6 million people and will only experience more growth from here. Can the minister share what Connecting the Southwest means for the people of this region?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Our government wants to encourage more growth in southwestern Ontario, and we know that our plan will help sustain an open-for-business environment in the region.

After we released our draft plan, the Ontario Trucking Association said this: "The Ford government has shown strong support for our sector.... Our industry, and by extension, the province of Ontario will be more competitive through the execution of this effort."

I want to remind Ontarians to participate in our online survey, which is open until March 17. Our consultations will help inform our next steps moving forward to ensure that we meet the transportation needs of the people of southwestern Ontario.

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Good morning, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier and the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines made a familiar-sounding announcement about road access to the Ring of Fire.

Agreements for all-season roads with these communities have existed for three years, but Ontario delayed the existing working relationship with all First Nations across the region by terminating the regional framework agreement. That was a step backwards that further delayed the infrastructure needed for the Ring of Fire development.

Can you tell me how ripping up previous agreements, then coming back to essentially the same agreements, is progress?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank my friend from across the aisle. We have a great relationship, by the way; we really do—probably better than with the leader over there.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, my friend across the aisle there knows this is probably one of the biggest announcements this province has ever had for First Nations communities because, again, it shows that we can work with First Nations.

This is a multi-multi-billion dollar opportunity—again, not just for the two First Nations communities up there, but First Nations communities right across this great province. We're going to be working with them shoulder to shoulder, standing up, making sure that we get a road to prosperity built and we give them a better opportunity for economic development—for emergency services alone, Mr. Speaker—making sure that they prosper like the rest of the province is prospering.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: We have to understand that development in the Far North does not happen without free, prior and informed consent of all communities affected.

Yesterday, the minister said that success is when these Indigenous communities are ready to move forward and show leadership by saying out loud, “We want to move at the speed of business,” but community decisions don't and shouldn't happen at the speed of business. How will Ontario make sure that First Nations who are not ready to move at the speed of business are heard and accommodated?

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

Hon. Bill Walker: Under the former Liberal government, there was a decade of talk and more than \$20 million spent and still no shovels in the ground.

I want to commend Minister Rickford and the Premier yesterday for the agreement that they signed with the First Nations partners: an agreement to move forward with the corridor to prosperity. We welcome proximal First Nations communities to enter into an agreement to unlock the incredible economic opportunities in Ontario's north for the people of the north and the great province of Ontario.

This is about more than just a road, Mr. Speaker. It's a corridor to prosperity that will improve the quality of life for First Nations communities by providing better access to economic opportunities, health care, education and housing supports. We're proud to support our First Nations in our north.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: My question is for the outstanding Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. Recently, you announced our government's plan to improve accessibility and make a positive difference in the lives of 2.6 million people with disabilities in Ontario. Can you please share

with the House what the government is doing to advance accessibility and inclusion in our beautiful province?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'd like to thank the member for raising a very important question. On January 28, I proudly announced our government's framework, Advancing Accessibility in Ontario. This framework helps to build a more inclusive and accessible Ontario. Our plan focuses on four key areas:

- breaking down barriers in the built environment;
- government leading by example;
- improving understanding and awareness about accessibility; and
- increasing participation in the economy for people with a disability.

These areas were informed by the recommendations made by the Honourable David Onley in the third review of the AODA, as well as input from key partners and people with disabilities.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'm very pleased to hear about the great work the minister is doing to improve accessibility for all in this province. As well, I would like to thank him in advance for coming out to our blind hockey game tomorrow night in Mississauga–Lakeshore. For the first time, we're going to have a blind hockey team playing in Mississauga.

Making Ontario accessible is a journey. When communities and businesses are accessible for everyone, it benefits us all. Can the minister share what we, as a government, are doing to keep driving towards that goal? Can the minister give examples of how our government is leading by example to make our province more accessible and more inclusive?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you, again, for the great question. The government will lead by example in its role as policy-maker, service provider and employer. Our government, under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford, has shown that accessibility is a priority by creating a dedicated, stand-alone ministry entirely focused on making a more accessible, inclusive Ontario. Another example of how we will be leading by example is by applying an accessible lens when evaluating capital project applications and spending tax dollars.

We are working towards a more accessible and inclusive province today and for our future generations.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. On February 5, myself and my fellow members from Niagara attended a mental health round table put on by the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. The round table was a result of a meeting between myself and the minister on the overwhelming need for increased supports to front-line staff who are battling the mental health and addiction crisis in Niagara. While I'm glad he

came, I hope the round table showed him how quickly we need him to act.

On December 6, 2018, this House, including the minister's party, unanimously supported my motion to create 24/7 mental health drop-in centres for Niagara. So why was this commitment ignored in today's announcements?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Long-Term Care to respond on behalf of the government.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Again, thank you to the member for the question. As I said earlier, our government is spending \$3.8 billion on mental health and addictions. It is the first time this level of commitment has ever been made. Our government is very proud to launch the Roadmap to Wellness, a plan to build Ontario's mental health and addictions system. I know that the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions is extremely dedicated to this area. This announcement follows extensive engagement with experts, grassroots organizations, health care providers on the front lines, and first responders, as well as people with lived experience.

My heart goes out to everyone who is suffering with mental health issues, who deserves to get the care they need when they need it. That's exactly what our government is doing. The neglect of the previous government over 15 years will not be undone in a day or a month, but we are dedicated, absolutely, to making sure that we have a plan to move forward, make sure that people can get the care they need—

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Back to the Premier: People in Niagara are dying today. They're dying, and they're dying in Niagara West, whose member is on your side of the House. In Niagara, we lose—think about this—to suicide one person every seven days. Upwards of 70% of our calls to police and first responders received are related to mental health crisis. Preventative supports and supports to family members helping their loved ones are stretched thin. Even worse, after 9 o'clock at night, there's almost nowhere for people to go who are in crisis, except our hospital. My motion would have addressed this need by allocating 0.002% of the provincial budget to three 24-hour drop-in centres across Niagara.

So again, Premier: When people are dying in Niagara, why did you ignore the commitment your government made to the people of Niagara?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for that question. It's a very important question to ask: How are Ontarians going to get the health care and the mental health care that they need? Every year—and I want to acknowledge—1.4 million Ontarians experience a mental health or addictions challenge. That has a serious impact on their quality of life, including their ability to go to school or make a living.

I'd like to point out that our government is launching Mindability, a new, first-of-its-kind program in Canada that will provide evidence-based cognitive behavioural therapy, or CBT. Through Mindability, an individual will receive an assessment from a trained mental health clinician and be offered a therapy program that addresses

their needs. Services will include Internet-based modules, personal workbooks and telephone coaching, but most of all, they will be able to get the care that they need when they need it. Our government is proud to present this program.

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Lorne Coe: To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: We've all been hearing for some time now that farmers are dealing with the issue of on-farm trespassing. We trust our farmers every day to provide us with safe and healthy food. And yet, farmers are feeling unsafe in their own homes and on their farms. I can imagine that farmers were very happy when our government tabled Bill 156 to deal with this issue.

Would the minister please tell us more about this proposed legislation and how it helps farmers?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much to the member from Whitby for the great question. I think I can fairly say that members in this chamber who have farms in their ridings have encountered or heard about the issues farmers face.

What's clear to me, Mr. Speaker, is that we owe it to our farmers and food processors to make them feel safe and support them in the great work they do feeding our province. That's why we put forward legislation that will address that issue.

Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, if passed, will balance the safety of our food, the safety of our farmers and the right of people to protest. We've had a number of hours of debate on that bill here in the House, and I have every confidence that when it passes, it will do that and provide that safety for our food and our producers.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Back to the minister: Since the tabling of this legislation, we've heard from farmers, and they're thrilled. I understand that a few weeks ago, the minister went out to tour the province to hear more from farmers, to see how they feel about the legislation and whether it addresses the concerns they've had for some time now.

Speaker, can the minister please tell us more about some of the things he has heard on this important tour?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker, and to the member. A few weeks ago, I travelled across the province, holding round tables with many of my colleagues here in the chamber to get a better understanding of how farmers feel about our legislation and to see what sorts of issues they are facing. These are farmers who know what it means to have someone walk onto their property and interact with their animals and know that there is nothing that they can do about it.

I'm happy to say that, across the province, farmers are thrilled that our government has put this forward.

One thing is clear, Mr. Speaker: Our government is one that is listening to rural Ontario. We're listening to Ontario's farmers, and we will continue to do so.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Solicitor General concerning mobile crisis response teams. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. today.

Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Toronto–St. Paul’s has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the government House leader concerning anti-Black racism strategy in education. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

BUILDING TRANSIT FASTER ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020

SUR LA CONSTRUCTION PLUS RAPIDE
DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put 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): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’m going to ask the members to please take their seats.

On February 4, 2020, Ms. Mulroney moved second reading of Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts. Mr. Calandra has moved that the question now be put.

All those in favour of Mr. Calandra’s motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Harris, Mike	Piccini, David
Baber, Roman	Hogarth, Christine	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Jones, Sylvia	Roberts, Jeremy
Bailey, Robert	Kanapathi, Logan	Romano, Ross
Barrett, Toby	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Ke, Vincent	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Khanjin, Andrea	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Kramp, Daryl	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kusendova, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Stan	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Martow, Gila	Surma, Kinga
Crawford, Stephen	McNaughton, Monte	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Miller, Norman	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Mulroney, Caroline	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Nicholls, Rick	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Fullerton, Merrilee	Pang, Billy	Walker, Bill
Ghamari, Goldie	Parsa, Michael	Yakabuski, John
Gill, Parm	Pettapiece, Randy	Yurek, Jeff
Hardeman, Ernie	Phillips, Rod	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gretzky, Lisa	Rakocevic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harden, Joel	Sattler, Peggy
Begum, Doly	Hassan, Faisal	Schreiner, Mike
Bell, Jessica	Hatfield, Percy	Shaw, Sandy
Berns-McGown, Rima	Hillier, Randy	Singh, Gurratan
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Sara
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Fife, Catherine	Lindo, Laura Mae	Stiles, Marit
Fraser, John	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	Taylor, Monique
Gates, Wayne	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Vanthof, John
Gélinas, France	Morrison, Suze	West, Jamie
Glover, Chris	Natyshak, Taras	Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 62; the nays are 39.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Ms. Mulroney has moved second reading of Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be another five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Mulroney has moved second reading of Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Hillier, Randy	Piccini, David
Baber, Roman	Hogarth, Christine	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Jones, Sylvia	Roberts, Jeremy
Bailey, Robert	Kanapathi, Logan	Romano, Ross
Barrett, Toby	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Ke, Vincent	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Khanjin, Andrea	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Kramp, Daryl	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kusendova, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Stan	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Martow, Gila	Surma, Kinga
Crawford, Stephen	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Miller, Norman	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Mulroney, Caroline	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Doug	Nicholls, Rick	Wai, Daisy
Fullerton, Merrilee	Oosterhoff, Sam	Walker, Bill
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Yakabuski, John
Gill, Parm	Parsa, Michael	Yurek, Jeff
Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy	
Harris, Mike	Phillips, Rod	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gretzky, Lisa	Sattler, Peggy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harden, Joel	Schreiner, Mike
Begum, Doly	Hassan, Faisal	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Hatfield, Percy	Singh, Gurratan
Berns-McGown, Rima	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Sara
Bisson, Gilles	Kernaghan, Terence	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Burch, Jeff	Lindo, Laura Mae	Stiles, Marit
Fife, Catherine	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter
Fraser, John	Miller, Paul	Taylor, Monique
French, Jennifer K.	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Vanthof, John
Gates, Wayne	Morrison, Suze	West, Jamie
Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Glover, Chris	Rakocevic, Tom	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 64; the nays are 38.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Which committee?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: The committee on social policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The committee on social policy.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Ottawa South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the government House leader concerning the public accounts. This matter, too, will be debated today at 6 p.m.

This House is in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1500.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Kiiwetinoong has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning the Ring of Fire. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Niagara Falls has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Long-Term Care concerning funding Niagara mental health support. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated March 3, 2020, of the Standing

Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 111(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT ACT
(PROTECTING NEIGHBOURHOOD
BUSINESSES), 2020****LOI DE 2020 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ÉVALUATION FONCIÈRE
(PROTECTION DES ENTREPRISES
DE QUARTIER)**

Mrs. Martin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to amend the Assessment Act to exclude the speculative sales of properties when determining the current value of land / Projet de loi 179, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière afin d'exclure les ventes spéculatives de biens lors du calcul de la valeur actuelle d'un bien-fonds.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would like to invite the member to briefly explain her bill.

Mrs. Robin Martin: In recent months, I've had the opportunity to speak with many business owners across my riding, including many along our major arteries in transition: Yonge Street, Avenue Road, Dufferin Street and Eglinton Avenue. No matter the location or type of business, I have heard one common theme: Increases in municipal property taxes have made it difficult for them to get ahead.

Business properties located in areas experiencing strong redevelopment activity can face increases in assessed property values due to speculative sales activity of nearby properties. As a result, these businesses may face large property tax increases despite the fact that their business activity has not changed.

The Assessment Amendment Act, areas in transition, if passed, will require the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. to adjust its valuation approach in a municipally designated "area in transition" to limit the influence of speculative activity.

I look forward to further discussion and debate on this bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would remind the members that, traditionally, when we introduce a bill and explain it, we will read the explanatory note that's associated with the bill that's drafted by legislative counsel.

MOTIONS**CONSIDERATION OF BILL 162**

Mr. Randy Hillier: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding Bill 162, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act,

the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 and the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion referring to Bill 162, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 and the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006. Agreed?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What's he asking for?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): He's seeking unanimous consent to move a motion with respect to this. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I move that the order of the House dated February 20, 2020, referring Bill 162, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 and the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006, to the Committee of the Whole House be discharged and that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My petition is:

"Give Prisoners Access to Free Phones Now!

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the House of Commons, and Bell Canada:

"Whereas Bell acts like a champion of mental health, they jeopardize the well-being of prisoners and their families by putting up barriers to communication;

"Whereas Bell has a monopoly over the federal and provincial prison phone systems in Canada and Ontario;

"Whereas phone calls cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars per month for prisoners and their families, and collect calls can only be made to land lines;

"Whereas disconnection and isolation can result in poverty, mental health challenges, and suicide—and create barriers for community reintegration upon release;

"Whereas phone companies like Bell and the province of Ontario profit off of the most marginalized among us; and

"Whereas Bell's contract with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is up for renewal in 2020;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the House of Commons and Bell Canada to ensure free calling for prisoners; direct calls to cell phones and lines with switchboards; and no 20-minute cut-off on calls."

I completely agree with this petition. I'll be affixing my signature and giving it to Nathan to give to the Clerk.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the last 15 long 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 307,800 new jobs; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario has added more jobs than in any 12-month period since statistics on job numbers have been recorded;

1510

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

"That the government 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 agree with this and will pass it off to page Paige.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My petition is entitled "Time to Care Act—Bill 13.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

I certainly support this petition and will be signing my name to it and giving it to page Aditri.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bailey: “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 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 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 agree with this and send it down with Abbey.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Doly Begum: Mr. Speaker, hundreds of petitions were collected by the wonderful volunteers from Progress Toronto, who went door to door, canvassing in Scarborough ridings represented by PC MPPs. The petition is titled “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 fully support this petition and will sign my signature to it and give it to page Owen.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Donna Skelly: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas climate change is a challenge facing us all; and

“Whereas this global challenge requires serious solutions that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario and across the globe; and

“Whereas Ontario has a proven track record of nuclear power reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the equivalent of taking millions of vehicles off the road every year; and

“Whereas due to nuclear power Ontario has one of the cleanest electricity grids in the world; and

“Whereas now is the time to commit to including clean, reliable nuclear technology in Ontario’s clean energy future;

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

“To support M91, which calls on the government of Ontario to include nuclear energy and the development of small modular reactors as a clean energy option in its environment, climate change and clean energy planning and policies.”

I support this, will sign my name and hand it to page Michael.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas intensive psychotherapy has for decades been a standard clinical treatment for Ontarians suffering from complex mental conditions and trauma that is not responsive to less-intensive treatments;

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) recommends that the Appropriateness Working Group limit full OHIP funding for outpatient psychotherapy delivered by a physician to 24 hours per year to ostensibly save \$13.2 million, with a final decision required by” May 15, 2020 ...

“Whereas the threat of a flat funding cap has created tremendous fear in psychotherapy patients who cannot afford to purchase the treatment they require, and the loss of funding for intensive therapy will harm vulnerable citizens who deserve and need quality mental health care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately remove the proposal to cut psychotherapy funding from the Appropriateness Working Group negotiations.”

I fully support this petition. I'll be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Giselle.

HOME CARE

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: “Petition for Home Care Services

“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 suboptimal 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, so that:

“(1) Decisions about home care services are made on the front lines where possible;

“(2) Patient transitions to long-term care are more efficient, reducing pressures on hospitals;

“(3) Ontario health teams are empowered to coordinate care for each and every patient;

“(4) Improved scheduling improves care and unlocks the potential of our personal support workers;

“(5) More flexible care plans enable innovative approaches and end service maximums;

“(6) Patients no longer need multiple assessments or referrals for home care services;

“(7) Coordination between home care providers and other forms of care;

“(8) A complaints process can be established to ensure high quality home care services;

“(9) Ontario can continue to deliver publicly funded home care through non-profit providers.”

I proudly affix my signature and will give it to page Daniel.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Jill Andrew: I proudly present this petition on behalf of residents in St. Paul's, particularly our midtown residents.

“Petition to reverse changes to OPA 405.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas midtown Toronto is one of the most densely populated areas in the country;

“Whereas increasing density requires increased services, including transit provisions, schools and utilities;

“Whereas the changes to official planning amendment 405 will benefit developers and not residents;

“Whereas the proposed new developments will not provide any new affordable housing;

“Whereas the community's concerns were ignored, and the changes to OPA 405 will have a negative impact on local residents;

1520

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the changes to OPA 405 and revert back to the original amendment 405 passed by the city of Toronto in 2018.”

I proudly sign this and hand it over to Paige. Thank you very much for tabling it.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas climate change is a challenge facing us all; and

“Whereas this global challenge requires serious solutions that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario and across the globe; and

“Whereas Ontario has a proven track record of nuclear power reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the equivalent of taking millions of vehicles off the road every year; and

“Whereas due to nuclear power Ontario has one of the cleanest electricity grids in the world; and

“Whereas now is the time to commit to including clean, reliable nuclear technology in Ontario's clean energy future;

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

“To support M91, which calls on the government of Ontario to include nuclear energy and the development of small modular reactors as a clean energy option in its environment, climate change and clean energy planning and policies.”

I agree with this petition and will send it down with Hannah.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank Jeannette Rainville from Capreol in my riding for these petitions.

“911 Emergency Response.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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 of Ontario as follows:

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

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMARTER AND STRONGER JUSTICE ACT, 2020 LOI DE 2020 POUR UN SYSTÈME JUDICIAIRE PLUS EFFICACE ET PLUS SOLIDE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 27, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act to enact the Legal Aid Services Act, 2020 and to make various amendments to other Acts dealing with the courts and other justice matters / Projet de loi 161, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 2020 sur les services d'aide juridique et apportant diverses modifications à des lois traitant des tribunaux et d'autres questions relatives à la justice.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to second reading debate of Bill 161, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, introduced by my friend the Attorney General.

C'est un plaisir de me lever aujourd'hui pour discuter le projet de loi 161.

Let me begin by congratulating the Attorney General on the introduction of this important legislation. I know that his extensive experience and commitment to the cause of a stronger justice system were paramount in the development of this bill.

It is always important to start by looking at the recent history that necessitated the consultative development and introduction of this significant piece of legislation.

It is important to note the context around any bill, and with the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, one must note the 15 years of inaction by the former Liberal government that led to increased courtroom wait times and slower justice for the citizens of this province.

Bill 161 is a massive undertaking. Writing such a sizable bill takes a lot of hard work, and that hard work began last year with extensive consultations. Over the past

summer, our Attorney General and our parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, MPP Lindsey Park, spoke with people—families, business owners, legal system workers—about the challenges they face when interacting with Ontario's legal system. It was a significant stakeholder consultation process that sought out input from across the province. As the minister noted in his remarks, his team met with partners including the Law Society of Ontario, Legal Aid Ontario, the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario, Ontario's everyday heroes in law enforcement, the Ontario Bar Association, the Federation of Ontario Law Associations, the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, South Asian Bar Association, Canadian Association of Black Lawyers and law professionals, the Ontario Paralegal Association as well as various consumer groups. That's a very extensive list, and those consultations that took place helped to drive the development of this legislation.

We were particularly pleased that MPP Park had the chance to visit Ottawa over the course of these consultations. I know that those interactions were very meaningful and helped in the development of this legislation.

There were several ideas brought forward that can be found within the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, but in general, our government heard the following common complaints time and time again:

(1) Ontario's justice system is complex and outdated.

(2) It's time to bring innovation to the justice system.

(3) It should be easier, faster, and more affordable to access justice in Ontario.

It's clear that the status quo was not working for the people of Ontario. So how did things get to this point? Let's look at one example of inaction under the former Liberal government. Towards the end of 2017, the former Liberal government finally decided to announce that WiFi would eventually come to Ontario's courtrooms—in 2017. Imagine, for a moment, trying to work in a professional environment three years ago without WiFi. It's astounding.

Simply put, the former government was not forward-thinking when it came to Ontario's justice system service, and they weren't forward-thinking in how we could make it more responsive to citizens in a faster and modern way. This has led to a system that has gotten slower and more complex over time. Our government agrees that people shouldn't be faced with the task of navigating a complicated and old-fashioned justice system, often during some of the most difficult times in their lives. That is exactly why the Attorney General introduced Bill 161.

We are not the only ones highlighting this systemic issue surrounding justice in Ontario after years of inaction. In her 2019 annual report, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk noted that, “The backlog and systemic delay in resolving criminal cases jeopardizes the right of accused persons to be tried within a reasonable time. The proportion of remand population in Ontario adult correctional institutions increased from 60% in 2004-05 to 71% in 2018-19.

“Delays also have a significant impact on victims of crime and their families, who may feel they are denied timely justice, and on public confidence in the justice

system.” That’s from the Auditor General’s 2019 annual report.

« Cet arriéré et ce retard systémique dans le règlement des affaires criminelles compromettent le droit des accusés de subir un procès dans un délai raisonnable. La proportion de la population en détention provisoire dans les établissements correctionnels pour adultes de l’Ontario est passée de 60 % en 2004-2005 à 71 % en 2018-2019.

« Les retards ont également des répercussions importantes sur les victimes d’actes criminels et leurs familles, qui peuvent avoir l’impression qu’on leur refuse justice en temps opportun, et sur la confiance de la population envers le système de justice. » Cela vient de la vérificatrice générale de l’Ontario.

The Auditor General went on to describe the increased amount of time needed to deal with criminal cases in our province’s courtrooms: “Between 2014-15 and 2018-19 ... the average number of days needed to dispose of a criminal case increased by 9% (from 133 to 145 days); the average appearances in court increased by 17% (from 6.5 to 7.6 appearances).”

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« De 2014-2015 à 2018-2019, le nombre moyen de jours requis pour régler une affaire criminelle a augmenté de 9 % (passant de 133 à 145 jours). » Et « le nombre moyen de comparutions en cour a augmenté de 17 % », et cela c’est de 6,55 à 7,6 comparutions.

As parliamentary assistant for children, community and social services, I have had the pleasure of meeting with several stakeholder groups advocating for the needs of children. One of the key issues that has been mentioned by these advocates is the long wait for case resolution, something that places even more strain on children and families that are already going through an incredibly difficult process.

The Auditor General noted in her most recent report that, overall, the Family Court services audit found that as of July 2019, about one quarter of the 5,249 child protection cases awaiting resolution had been pending for more than 18 months, and some for more than three years.

« Dans l’ensemble, l’audit des services de la Cour de la famille a révélé qu’au mois de juillet 2019, le quart environ des 5 249 affaires de protection de l’enfance en attente de règlement étaient en instance depuis plus de 18 mois, et certaines depuis plus de trois ans. »

In its landmark 2016 ruling in the case of *R. v. Jordan*, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that provincial court cases must be concluded within 18 months of a criminal charge being laid. Cases extending beyond that were described as “presumptively unreasonable,” and therefore would now violate an accused person’s “right to be tried within a reasonable time.” This sent a clear message across the country to get to work on addressing courtroom delays.

Despite this, delays continued to grow under the previous Liberal government. Delays increased across the province. This was particularly the case at Ottawa’s courtroom. In July 2018, the Ottawa Citizen published a story entitled, “Two Years After Jordan, the Ottawa Courthouse Remains Beset by Delays.” The article described the

troubling trend caused by the Liberals’ lacklustre response. Of all the cases that went to trial at the Ottawa courthouse during the past 15 years, 55% took 15 months or more to reach the finish line. That number has climbed steadily since 2011, when only 25% of criminal trials took so long—25% to 55%.

It is our duty as legislators to make sure that the province of Ontario is as safe, just and prosperous for generations of its citizens as possible. We must also ensure that justice is accessible in a timely manner for victims and their families.

Mr. Speaker, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act also features a number of positive changes for Franco-Ontarians, including those from my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean.

Les modifications proposées au sein de Loi pour un système judiciaire plus efficace et plus solide pour améliorer l’accès à la justice en franches :

(1) Certaines modifications proposées au sein de Loi pour un système judiciaire plus efficace et plus solide clarifieront la traduction française de certaines dispositions de la Loi sur le Barreau, de la Loi sur les services d’aide juridique, et de la Loi sur le Conseil canadien sur la reddition de comptes.

To repeat: (1) Introducing a new mandate requiring Legal Aid Ontario to consider the needs of francophone individuals and communities when providing its legal aid services.

(2) De plus, nous proposons d’obliger Aide juridique Ontario à tenir compte des besoins des personnes et des communautés francophones lorsqu’elle fournit des services d’aide juridique.

(2) Amending the Class Proceedings Act to require that notices to class members be published in both English and French unless the court orders otherwise.

(3) Des modifications à la Loi sur les recours collectifs pour exiger que les avis aux membres du groupe soient publiés en anglais et en français, sauf ordonnance contraire du tribunal.

(3) Fixing French translations in a number of statutes, including in the Law Society Act and the Canadian Public Accountability Board Act.

These are some excellent changes that I think are going to help support our Franco-Ontarian communities.

Lastly, I would like to spend a few minutes going over some of the elements of Bill 161, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, that I am pleased to see included in the bill, as parliamentary assistant for children, community and social services.

If passed, Bill 161 would make it easier for cyberbullying victims to sue their offender, thanks to amendments to the Victims’ Bill of Rights. It is an issue that can target anyone, but it is especially problematic for young Ontarians. Statistics Canada found in 2016 that roughly one fifth of young Canadians age 15 to 29 said they have experienced some form of cyberbullying or cyberstalking. For that reason, it is an issue that our government is deeply concerned with.

The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, the Honourable Todd Smith, and the Associate

Minister of Children and Women's Issues, the Honourable Jill Dunlop, have spoken at length about cyberbullying, whether it was during Safer Internet Day or Pink Shirt Day, to address bullying.

My colleague the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville has also introduced a private member's bill, the Stop Cyberbullying in Ontario Day Act, to raise awareness about cyberbullying. I should note that this bill enjoyed all-party support, which demonstrates that there is unity in this chamber for getting this issue right.

Cyberbullying occurs when someone uses information and digital technology to deliberately and repeatedly harm a person or group. Cyberbullies can communicate broadly and quickly, making targets feel like they have no escape, and often causing enduring mental and emotional harm.

I had the chance recently to engage with high school students. I visited a civic education grade 10 class in my riding to talk with some of these high school students about some of the issues impacting them in their classroom. I was fascinated, because the two big issues that came out of that discussion were (1) vaping and (2) cyberbullying.

I'm pleased to see that our government is taking action on vaping through the strong work of our Minister of Health. I know there is a lot of work that has yet to be done there, to make sure that we're actively addressing those health concerns, and make sure that we're ensuring that our young people remain healthy into their adult years.

But I'm equally pleased that this bill will start to address gaps in legislation to protect our youth from cyberbullying. That is so critically important, Mr. Speaker.

The proposed amendment to regulation 456/96 under the Victims' Bill of Rights would make it easier for victims to obtain damages in civil proceedings against offenders convicted of the offence of non-consensual distribution of an intimate image.

Quiconque utilise de l'information et la technologie numérique pour délibérément et à plusieurs reprises nuire à une personne ou à un groupe commet de la cyberintimidation. Les auteurs de cyberintimidation peuvent communiquer avec un grand nombre de personnes très rapidement, ce qui suscite chez les victimes un sentiment de désespoir et leur cause un préjudice mental et psychologique profond.

La modification proposée au règlement 456/96, pris en vertu de la Charte des droits des victimes d'actes criminels, permettra aux victimes d'obtenir plus facilement des dommages-intérêts dans des instances civiles contre des contrevenants déclarés coupables de l'infraction de distribution non consensuelle d'images intimes.

1540

Cyberbullying is an issue that I and my great team at my constituency office hear about frequently. They want to see the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act passed so that we can improve the justice system from the standpoint of victims.

Another critical area that I would like to touch upon is the problem of human trafficking. Sadly, two thirds of human trafficking crimes in Canada are being reported

here in Ontario. In Ontario, the government can currently pursue the forfeiture of profits and property that is used for, or results from, criminal activity. For example, a building or car that was used to sell illegal drugs could be forfeited to the government under the Civil Remedies Act. The money earned from selling that property would be used to compensate victims and support programs that help prevent illegal activity.

The proposed changes introduced in this bill would simplify the processes around property forfeiture by allowing personal property to be forfeited without a court order in uncontested cases. A new annual report requirement for all forfeiture proceedings in Ontario would also add additional transparency.

Individuals with a genuine, non-criminal interest in the property would be given a 120-day notice period to contest an administrative forfeiture. Ontario's notice requirements would be among the most robust in the country, including the requirement for personal service of forfeiture in administrative cases in addition to the longest notice period in Canada.

Making sure that crime does not pay well while also reducing burdens on our backlogged court system will make it easier for Ontarians to access justice. Chief Paul Pedersen, president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, had the following to say about these specific changes:

"We support the proposed legislative changes to the Civil Remedies Act, 2001, because it will simplify the processes around personal property forfeitures while also relieving burdens on our police personnel and the court system."

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude my remarks, I can safely say that it is obvious that we must move past an outdated and complex justice system. It is time for Ontario to move towards a modern justice system that makes it easier for victims to seek justice. It is time for the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act.

I can say, as a millennial member of this Legislature, that one of the reasons I sought elected office was to do just this: to make sure that our government was taking into account innovation and modernization and was bringing us forward into the 21st century so that all people across Ontario have the chance to access a high degree of customer service in our justice system and beyond.

Thank you for listening to me today—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. It is time now for the member from Ottawa West–Nepean to respond to questions from his colleagues from both sides of the House. I recognize the member from Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is one of those bills that—between the name of the bill and what it actually tries to accomplish, the disconnect is so profound, sometimes I feel like we are in a little bit of the Twilight Zone here in Queen's Park.

The member from Ottawa West–Nepean didn't mention any consultation with the Society of United Professionals around the new legal aid, and this is a quote from their press release:

“The Ford government introduced legislation on December 9 that literally removes access to justice from Legal Aid Ontario’s purpose. In tandem with their 30% cut to Legal Aid Ontario in last April’s budget, the society, which represents Legal Aid Ontario lawyers as well as legal professionals at three legal clinics, called this the biggest attack on legal aid in Ontario’s history.”

How does the member respond, and why did you not consult the very people who are on the front lines of legal aid in Ontario?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I appreciate the question from the member from Waterloo. I listed out, during my speech, a particularly long and lengthy list of all of the organizations that were consulted here, and it is extensive. I need not repeat it all, but everyone from the Law Society of Ontario and Legal Aid Ontario down to the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association and the South Asian Bar Association—the list goes on and on and on.

I know for a fact that extensive consultations were held right across the province, because I saw the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General in Ottawa taking part in these consultations.

I’ll add particularly that we have received numerous accolades on this piece of legislation as well. I can read here that we had David Field, CEO of Legal Aid Ontario, express support for this bill at the time it was introduced: “The new Legal Aid Services Act is an important step towards improving access to justice in Ontario.” Mr. Speaker, it speaks for itself.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

M^{me} Goldie Ghamari: Je voudrais remercier le député d’Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean pour son discours intéressant et informatif. Est-ce que le député peut clarifier les modifications proposées au sein de la Loi pour un système judiciaire plus efficace et plus solide pour améliorer l’accès à la justice en franchises?

M. Jeremy Roberts: Merci beaucoup pour la question, ma collègue d’Ottawa de la circonscription de Carleton.

Certaines modifications proposées au sein de la Loi pour un système judiciaire plus efficace et plus solide clarifieront la traduction française de certaines dispositions de la Loi sur le Barreau, de la Loi sur les services d’aide juridique, et de la Loi sur le Conseil canadien sur la reddition de comptes.

De plus, nous proposons d’obliger Aide juridique Ontario à tenir compte des besoins des personnes et des communautés francophones lorsqu’elle fournit des services d’aide juridique.

Troisièmement, des modifications à la Loi sur les recours collectifs pour exiger que les avis aux membres du groupe soient publiés en anglais et en français, sauf ordonnance contraire du tribunal.

Je pense qu’il y a beaucoup de choses dans ce projet de loi à admirer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, I will note that the member from Ottawa West–Nepean, in his extensive consultations, did not consult with the Legal Aid Ontario lawyers under the Society of United Professionals. What

is missing in this legislation is an equity lens on access to justice, so they go on to say: “The so-called Smarter and Stronger Justice Act is an attack on legal representation for the poorest Ontarians. Beyond removing ‘access to justice’ and ‘low-income individuals’ from the purpose of the Legal Aid Services Act, the legislation would radically alter Legal Aid Ontario’s mandate.”

In essence, Legal Aid Ontario used to provide—“shall provide”—legal representation. This government changed the language. Language, of course, matters when you are creating laws. They now say “may provide” representation.

Why did you not apply an equity lens when drafting such important legislation?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Again, I appreciate the question from my colleague from Waterloo.

Mr. Speaker, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act is making our system more innovative. It’s startling to me that this piece of legislation hasn’t been updated since 1998. I was six years old in 1998. That’s how long it has taken for this bill to be updated with all the new innovation that we have seen since that time.

When we talk about equity, we want to make sure that our system is responding faster to everyone, so that people can get that service that they expect in the 21st century.

We have taken a collaborative approach. We’re modernizing; we’re innovating. We have done extensive consultations. I’m proud that this bill is bringing that innovation that is much needed into this system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you to my colleague from Ottawa West–Nepean. You mentioned cyberbullying. Standing up for victims of crime is a driving force of our government’s efforts to grow healthier and safer communities across Ontario. We know that many victims of cyberbullying, including those who have had their intimate images shared without consent, can suffer emotional, mental and physical pain, and feel powerless.

Can you please tell us more about how the government’s proposed changes to the Victims’ Bill of Rights will make it easier for victims of this crime to get the justice they deserve and to fight back against their offenders?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you to my friend the member for Cambridge for that important question. As I mentioned in my remarks, I believe that this section on cyberbullying is one of the most critically important pieces of this legislation. The amendment to regulation 456/96 under the Victims’ Bill of Rights will update the list of prescribed crimes in the regulation to make it clear that a person convicted of the crime of non-consensual distribution of an intimate image is civilly liable in damages to a victim for emotional distress and bodily harm resulting from the distress.

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Our government is determined to stand up against cyberbullying at every opportunity and to support victims of these senseless acts. Under the existing legislation, victims can start civil proceedings against convicted

offenders. Now we're going to introduce these changes to allow them to start civil proceedings against offenders convicted of the offence of non-consensual distribution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Equally disconcerting, one could say—this is back to the Ottawa West–Nepean member—is that the Society of United Professionals have also issued their more than discontent with the way that the government is dealing with Legal Aid Ontario. For instance, in the 2019 budget, the Ford government cut \$133 million from Legal Aid Ontario immediately, and then planned another \$31 million over the next two years. This is a direct quote: “‘Not hurting access to justice more than they have already is the least this government could do,’ said Fisher. ‘Announcing this at the same time as the amendments to the Legal Aid Services Act is a cynical ploy to distract from the extraordinary damage this bill will do to Ontario’s legal system and the most vulnerable people in that system.’”

I ask the member: Do you not think that Legal Aid Ontario has served an important and crucial part in ensuring access to justice for the people of this great province?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you again for the question.

Mr. Speaker, I go back to some of the remarks in my speech earlier about the need for this legislation. Again, I’ll quote the Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk, who noted, “This backlog and systemic delay in resolving criminal cases jeopardizes the right of accused persons to be tried within a reasonable time.”

This was a necessity that we needed to act upon after 15 years of Liberal inaction. There was a need to modernize this system, to make it more responsive, to make it more innovative. Extensive consultations were held.

Again, we have the CEO of Legal Aid Ontario expressing support for this bill at the time it was introduced.

I’m pleased that we were able to respond to many of those concerns laid out in the Auditor General’s report, and I’m pleased that through consultations we got the Stronger and Smarter Justice Act as a result.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: It’s my pleasure to add some words on Bill 161, the smarter and stronger injustice act. I’m going to start on the piece around this government’s claim that they care about sexual assault survivors. I’m going to start at the back of my debate and go forward.

Schedule 1, the Administration of Justice Act: It introduces a proof-of-undue-hardship test for those seeking a fee waiver under a court or tribunal proceeding. I ask, why does the government want to punish the poor? Aren’t we supposed to operate on a system of innocence until proven guilty?

Schedule 3 expands civil forfeiture in Ontario—and I must admit that I didn’t know what that was before I started to prepare my notes for the bill. This is a process, common in many American jurisdictions—like America and their long history of injustice should be Ontario’s

benchmark, but hey—where law enforcement officers can take assets from someone suspected of involvement with a crime or illegal activity without necessarily charging the owners with wrongdoing. Legal commentators and scholars have called civil forfeiture draconian, but the Ontario Conservatives embrace it. I ask the government, who are you consulting with here? It’s important to know that Ontario has been accused of using this law to seize property from people it expects are innocent. Where are the human rights in that?

Speaker, schedule 15 is even more wicked than that. It changes laws so that the Legal Aid Ontario board of directors can literally be buddies, BFFs of the Attorney General—and we know how Conservatives love nepotism. It creates a situation where legal aid clinics denied funding are no longer allowed to request reconsideration. Talk about shutting the doors on building a relationship with legal aid clinics that are supporting survivors, that are supporting tenants who are being reconvicted, that are supporting seniors, grandmothers in my riding, who, because they make a little more than the lowest income bracket, plus ODSP, are no longer eligible for legal aid. This law slashes and cancels all existing funding arrangements with clinics, including outstanding requests.

Last but not least, Bill 161, the smarter and stronger injustice act, attacks everyday people’s ability to sue this government and to come together in class actions. I have to say, Speaker, that this is particularly harmful when I think back to Kelly’s situation. She’s a survivor of sexual assault, historical abuse, who realized that she was not going to get anywhere near the compensation from the disbanded Criminal Injuries Compensation Board—again, another cut, courtesy of this government.

Here’s what the Canadian Civil Liberties Association had to say about this government’s tactics of changing acts—like their plan here, with Bill 161—to prevent people from having power to address inequity: The “provincial government then seeks to all but immunize itself from contractual or tortious liability facing people and corporations, such that the government can legally do no wrong....

“This is obviously an abuse of power, an affront to the rule of law, and only confirmed our worst fears: that a first minister, yet again, was the lone, unchecked source of all power at Queen’s Park.”

Another consideration I want to share, Speaker, is a quote, actually, from our Premier—and I will use the “Premier” word even though it says his first name here. The Premier has been quoted confirming that the new act—and the act I’m talking about in this case is the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act—was designed to limit access to justice. My goodness; that’s the same thing that this bill, Bill 161, does: It takes away access to justice to those critical of the government, like Kelly, the sexual assault and historical child abuse survivor.

This is from our Premier: “‘You even look sideways and some special-interest groups [are] out there trying to sue you, you know,’ he said during a morning appearance. ‘It’s ridiculous. I’ve never seen anything like it. It’s tying

up the courts. I want to clear up the courts until real lawsuits”—real lawsuits—“can go through, for real people, for things that really matter. There’s a lot of frivolous nonsense going on right now in the courts.”

Interjection.

Ms. Jill Andrew: And we have an MPP, who is a woman, clapping at the quotation that I just gave, even though this quotation was a direct quote about our Premier suggesting that special interest groups, like rape survivors and sexual assault survivors, to the woman Conservative MPP over there, aren’t real people. They aren’t real issues that should be brought to the courts.

Going back to the beginning of my debate: Bill 161 is an omnibus bill. An omnibus bill, for folks who are watching, is essentially meant to be opaque, and it’s meant to lack transparency—not to mention, the bill will also cost a lot of money to Ontarians, for people who are sitting in jail longer than they need to because they’re waiting for a Legal Aid Ontario lawyer that they now can’t get access to.

The bill, in terms of schedules 15 and 16, literally removes the words “low-income” and “access to justice” from the “purpose” section of the act. If legal aid services are not for the low-income and most marginalized in our society to access justice, to have their opportunity to fight for their rights, then who is legal aid for, I ask?

And by the way, last week, some member from the government was quoting their CEO friend who is excited about Bill 161. Here’s the catch: Because they’re CEOs, they’ll likely never, ever need legal aid services. They will likely never fall below our low-income poverty line, currently set at roughly—what is it?—\$22,000 a person, or something like that.

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Furthermore, the catch is, the person making \$22,000 currently can’t even access legal aid. Ontario’s legal aid threshold currently sits at around \$17,000 per year for a single person or \$31,000 or \$32,000 combined for a family of two. If you make more than that, well, tough luck.

The bottom line is that this government’s attack on legal aid is this government’s attack on seniors, who, because, as I said earlier, they are pennies over a fixed income and maybe on ODSP, are out of luck. I’m thinking particularly about a 70-year-old woman I know who is on old age security and CPP and is, therefore, too rich for legal aid.

The bottom line is that this government’s attack on legal aid is this government’s attack also on Black children. I’m thinking of Black children who, as research has demonstrated, are disproportionately expelled or suspended for the same or similar behaviour that their white student counterparts often receive second chances for.

Toronto’s Taibu clinic has provided assistance to racialized families to push back against severe disciplinary measures levied against their children in schools. Thanks to the legal aid system and especially community clinics that have been able to assist families before the crisis hits, these families have had some legal recourse, which is warranted and needed considering their children are more

likely to experience anti-Black racism and other forms of bias in the education system.

But what, then, are we expecting in terms of this government’s commitment again to access justice for the most marginalized to access to justice, when we have slashed—or, should I say, more accurately, the government has slashed—the Anti-Racism Directorate down to a budget of \$1,000?

We’ve slashed the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, and there’s no provincial gender equity strategy for addressing gender-based violence, for addressing the needs of single women trying to get housing or single women needing shelters. Rape crisis centres are waiting for their cheques, yet this government is making cuts to legal aid that are going to make it even harder for these marginalized groups to get justice.

I’ve met with legal aid lawyers and recipients in my riding of St. Paul’s, and they’ve all expressed despair about this government’s Bill 161 and its impact on community and the everyday person’s access to justice and their fair shake to equity.

But they’re not alone. I’ve got quotes here from the Society of United Professionals, which represents more than 8,000 professionals in Ontario, including engineers, scientists, supervisors and lawyers. They have publicly condemned Bill 161.

Interjection.

Ms. Jill Andrew: The government has just yelled, “They think they’re lawyers,” but the reality is, many of them are lawyers. And when lawyers who aren’t getting \$700,000 or whatever it was that the government’s lawyer, Gavin Tighe—however you pronounce his name—was getting—when these lawyers have an issue with cuts to legal aid, we should listen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): It is now time for the member from Toronto–St. Paul’s to respond to questions from colleagues on both sides of the House. I turn to the member from Cambridge.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to address a couple of things. First, I’ve heard members opposite saying that names have power, so it would be important to pronounce people’s names correctly and not make fun of them.

Secondly, the Anti-Racism Directorate’s budget for the fiscal year 2019-20 is \$4.92 million; \$4.92 million is in the budget for the ARD. I want to put that on the record.

Do I have time for another question, because I realize we have a short time, and I’m respectful of that, Mr. Speaker? We have former Attorney General Charles Harnick quoted as saying, “The proposed legislation will enable Legal Aid Ontario to better serve clients more efficiently with service providers.” This is good news for all Ontarians.

Are politics really more important than ensuring that Ontario has a functioning legal aid system that is both sustainable and responsive to the needs of those they serve?

Ms. Jill Andrew: First, I’d like to thank the Conservative member for her member’s statement. I’ll try to find the question in that.

The bottom line is, if your Bill 161 is supposed to create a better justice system for Ontarians, one that is not leaving people out in the cold, I'm wondering: Why was it so necessary for them to actually and consciously take out the words "low-income" and "access to justice" in their bill? If we're really talking about doing things better, and if the government is trying to use new words that their speech writers come up with, like "equity" and "misogynoir," let's actually put them in practice.

You can't take away the words "low-income" and "access to justice" and try to sound like you give a darn about survivors of rape, and Black people at the margins, and Indigenous communities. You can't have it both ways.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to commend the member from Toronto–St. Paul's. Clearly, 10 minutes was not enough time for her to fully cover some of the issues that she has heard from her community around the lack of an equity lens being applied to Bill 161.

We know that our jails disproportionately incarcerate Ontario's most marginalized citizens. Rather than learning accountability or addressing root causes of crime, jails push people further into the margins.

So I'm trying to get a sense from her, when she's hearing from people in her riding, as to how concerned folks are about the lack of access—I mean fundamentally putting up barriers to access to justice. Has she heard from her community about any of those consequences, if you will?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you very, very much to our member from Kitchener-Waterloo for that question. I absolutely have heard from our community.

I will refrain from using names that I haven't gotten consent to share today, in this moment. But the majority of folks who come into my constituency office are coming in because of the housing crisis. They're coming in because they feel like they're one dollar away from being homeless.

I'm hearing about legal aid cuts, and tenants who have to fight against many—not all, because there are some great landlords in our province—many bully landlords who are increasing the cost of rent, who are increasing AGIs. We have a government that has ripped away rent control.

What I'm finding is, we're hearing from a lot of folks who are having issues accessing justice. It's very hard to access justice when our government is cutting necessary funds to Legal Aid Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the member from Toronto–St. Paul's: This member has spoken passionately in the House about women's rights and protecting women. One of the many changes that we're bringing forward in Bill 161 will, in my opinion, help women, and that is protecting women jurors. Many women sit as jurors.

Would the member opposite not agree that the common-sense changes that we've brought forward dealing with jury privacy is something that she would support? We don't believe that convicted offenders should

know, or have access to, personal information of jurors. Would the member at least support this provision in this bill?

Ms. Jill Andrew: This is what the government does with an omnibus bill. Again, for those watching, we're talking about Bill 161, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, but I call it the "smarter and stronger injustice act." What the government does is, they will put in a few things that aren't too bad—there's no huge negative repercussions in the bill—and then they will ram it with other things that are literally a matter of life and death for certain people.

I will go back, and I will sound like a broken record, because if this Conservative government truly cares about the most marginalized folks—listen, I'm not a lawyer. I am not a lawyer. So if you're a lawyer, yes, you're probably smarter than me, in terms of knowing legalities. But one thing I do know is that when you remove the words "low-income" and "access to justice" from the act, it makes me suspicious. It's like, what are you hiding? Or are you suggesting that people who are low-income and need access—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: The government is saying that they're drawing back all this money, but for every one dollar, it costs six more dollars because of these cuts, because other jurisdictions, courts, police, immigration, all kinds of different organizations are drawn into the particular case, depending on what the case is, and that costs more money. So when you withdraw something from one section and you implement this other section, you're causing more chaos.

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A lot of people in my community are complaining that not only can they not get access to it, but they're concerned about children being ripped from families. They're concerned about people who can't get immigration protection and then get deported. Are you finding that in your community?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you very much to our member for that question. I'm definitely hearing and feeling—and I think you're right: Your members have a right to be worried. They have a right to be concerned about not only accessing, but the timelines, the costs of this access.

While I was listening, I heard a government member over there say "bleeding hearts." This is the kind of compassion—or lack of compassion—that this government has perpetually shown for folks who are marginalized: bleeding hearts.

I'm actually going to read something here. "Recent media stories have confirmed that this government is taking steps to retroactively throw out class actions that were started under the prior regime."

What does the government have against being held accountable by everyday folks—by our voters? Some of these people are abuse survivors, incarcerated people. They're justice-seeking groups, for goodness' sakes. This bill does nothing for them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Ms. Lindsey Park: The topic of what we're doing to support Indigenous peoples in communities, particularly the overrepresentation of them in the justice system in certain parts of the province, I think is an important issue. In September 2019, not only did the Ontario government announce that, together with Indigenous leadership and organizations, we were establishing a Kenora justice system to address overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the justice system, but there is, right in this bill, a proposal regarding marriage solemnization, which recognizes that permanently established Indigenous groups should be able to designate individuals in their communities to solemnize marriages.

Our government is taking action and responding specifically to a resolution passed by the Chiefs of Ontario in June 2018 asking for this change. Why is it that the NDP caucus won't listen to the chiefs and won't support this change?

Ms. Jill Andrew: This is no laughing matter. I'm actually laughing because it truly is a twilight zone, sitting in this House, listening to this government.

The member for the government has just stood and said, "We care about Indigenous folks." Okay, so here's my thing: You care about Indigenous folks; can you provide us with a list of the Indigenous communities, the individuals, the folks who don't have clean drinking water because of your government, the folks who are being displaced—

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: It's an enormous honour to stand and contribute to this debate. I want to pick up on some of the issues, the really important and crucial issues, that my colleague the member for Toronto—St. Paul's was talking about.

I want to talk about some of the equity considerations, or lack thereof, in this bill. I want to talk about a number of things, beginning with the extremely important and foundational issue that the mandate of legal aid has changed from promoting "access to justice throughout Ontario for low-income individuals"—taking that away for something else. The moment that you take that away, you are fundamentally altering the very purpose of the bill.

I also want to say that it is putting the clinic system in danger, in part because the board of Legal Aid Ontario has been changed so that it no longer will include five members from the Law Society of Ontario, but only three, which means that it can effectively be bullied by the Attorney General's office. That, in combination with the fact that all existing funding arrangements will be cancelled six months after the law comes into practice, means that certain legal aid clinics and certain work, particularly that done to help low-income and marginalized folks get access to justice, are in danger.

International Women's Day is fast approaching, and very soon we will see pretty words coming from the mouth of the government about how much they care about women.

I want to quote from an article published by Luke's Place, which provides legal advice for women in Durham region. Luke's Place is deeply concerned about Bill 161. Here are a few quotes from their article:

"Under Bill 161, the mandate of LAO would change from: 'to promote access to justice throughout Ontario for low-income individuals' to: 'to facilitate the establishment of a flexible and sustainable legal aid system that provides effective and high-quality legal aid services throughout Ontario in a client-focused and accountable manner while ensuring value for money...."

"The removal of promoting access to justice and of low-income individuals from its mandate cuts LAO loose from what has been central to its operations since its"—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please. Government members, too many conversations going on.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown:—"a commitment to assisting vulnerable Ontarians to access justice," which is absolutely fundamental.

"The new mandate ... gives equal value to the delivery of legal aid services and cost. There can be little doubt that when these two values conflict, as they" inevitably "will, cost will trump delivery of legal services."

It's also really important to understand that the language changes. It speaks to the delivery of legal services. The current legislation states that: "The corporation shall provide legal aid services...." But Bill 161 will change this wording to: "The corporation may, subject to the regulations, provide legal services...." The concern here is that going forward, LAO could reduce the provision of legal services in favour of providing less expensive services that fall short of legal representation.

With regard to women, Ontario's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee has found that victims of intimate partner abuse are at the highest risk of lethal violence during the separation process. Non-lethal forms of abuse also continue and often escalate post-separation. It is during this time that many women engage with the family/criminal legal systems, where they're often subjected to legal bullying by their former partners. Women in this vulnerable position must have access to full legal representation to ensure they understand their legal rights and have a meaningful opportunity to advance them.

Luke's Place is concerned that, coupled with the 30% cut to LAO's budget imposed last year by the government, the safety and well-being of women and their children fleeing abuse may well be jeopardized.

I want to turn now to the question of racialized people, particularly Black Ontarians. I want to quote Robyn Maynard, a scholar and author whose book *Policing Black Lives* goes into great detail—and I really wish that the government had consulted with Robyn Maynard when it was putting this bill together. When you talk about the most vulnerable Ontarians, you need to understand that people don't end up disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system by accident. It is not an accident that there are significantly and disproportionately more Black men or more Indigenous folks in prisons.

I want to quote from Robyn's book: "'Crime' itself is not a neutral category. So-called criminal behaviour is widespread, and overall, activities deemed criminal are both common and evenly distributed across race and class...." She has references which I won't read out here. "Almost 40% of all youth report having committed an act of violence, selling drugs or destroying property in their lifetime"—that is a quote from Public Safety Canada, by the way—"but 40% of youth are not in juvenile detention. Most people who commit crimes do not go to jail. It is not, after all, breaking the law which renders one a criminal—it is being caught, arrested and convicted...."

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"The enormous discretion granted to law enforcement in where to seek out crime and to determine who seems suspicious plays a significant role in who becomes a criminal offender.... The more that a group is targeted, the greater the likelihood that criminality will be discovered—particularly for those offences that are prevalent in society." These are all quotes.

"The enormous discrepancy of Black youth in jail—a rate four times higher than white youth in Ontario—stands as a testament to the power of profiling to create criminals.... Black people are not 'more criminal'; they are placed behind bars for crimes that, had they been white, would have been far more likely to have gone unseen and unpunished."

When you combine the analysis that Robyn has cogently laid out here with the fact that black and other racialized people, including Indigenous folks, are significantly more likely to be poor in Ontario, you end up with the inevitable and inescapable conclusion that it is racialized folks, it is Indigenous folks, it is Black folks who most desperately need access to legal aid.

And when you take away the very foundational idea that legal aid is there to provide access to justice for low-income folks, and you take away the certainty that legal aid clinics will be able to provide that justice, you are undermining justice in such a deeply foundational way that I don't know how anyone on the government benches can call this bill by the name that they have given it with a straight face.

I think it's really important, Speaker, that the government understand that its relationship to understanding something as foundational to this society as the reason that 90% of Indigenous people in Toronto live in poverty or the reason that they keep being told there is significant anti-Black racism that they are not grappling with or dealing with—I think it's absolutely essential that they come to terms with the fact that they need to understand a phenomenon that they do not at this moment understand.

Earlier today, two members of our caucus questioned the government about its response to the Peel District School Board's anti-Black racism report, and the government House leader could not bring himself to say the words "anti-Black racism." A little bit earlier, when one of our members questioned a government member who was speaking on this about why there were no equity considerations in the bill, he could not bring himself to talk about

anti-Black racism. I think it's incumbent on the government to understand that they have put forward a bill the ramifications of which to vulnerable people they do not begin to understand. That itself is criminal and that itself is a huge injustice to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): It is now time for the member from Beaches–East York to respond to questions from her colleagues from both sides of the House. I turn now to the member from Carleton.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, for 15 years the NDP propped up successive Liberal governments that did nothing for the legal aid system in Ontario other than disregard and neglect it. Ontarians have paid the price for the NDP's inaction, and as a result the system grew outdated, inefficient and unresponsive to the needs of Ontario's most vulnerable.

Now the member opposite stands across from us, criticizing our government for being the first in 15 years to make meaningful change to the system to ensure Legal Aid Ontario is sustainable and working the way people expect.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: How can the NDP justify their position on our proposed changes, particularly when Charles Harnick, a former Attorney General and chair of the board of Legal Aid Ontario, and David Field, CEO of Legal Aid Ontario, stood with the Attorney General during first reading of Bill 161 in support of the government's changes?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I'm not sure if the member is aware that the Liberals had a majority. I'm not sure if she's aware of how that works, but maybe she should find out.

The fact that the government has made changes to the legal aid system does not mean that these changes were good changes. I think it's really incumbent upon the government to understand, when they are being told that the changes they are making are going to hurt, that they are not neutral changes; that they are not simply administrivia changes; that the changes they are making are going to fundamentally hurt communities and individuals who are already vulnerable and the most in need of legal aid, and who are going to be unable to access it.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Beaches–East York for your very insightful presentation. I was particularly struck by the concerns you raised about domestic violence victims, women, when they're going through a separation and need to access the legal system, how they face increased risk of assault, injury and death—I'm assuming their children would as well—and that having access to legal representation at that point is very important.

Could you elaborate on how you believe this bill will make these women even more vulnerable?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you so much for the question. Here is the issue: When funding commitments to all legal aid clinics expire six months after the bill comes into being, that means that there is absolutely no

guarantee. No legal aid clinic has a guarantee that it's going to be able to continue to provide the services that it does at the moment. That puts all the clinics in danger of not being able to continue their work.

And so, those who find themselves on the outside of the government's favour—as I was saying earlier, the bill explicitly changes the board so that it's no longer equal members of the law society and equal representatives of the Attorney General. There are more Attorney General representatives than law society, which means that in fact they can bully the society. They can end up closing legal clinics that provide desperately needed work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Ms. Donna Skelly: I find it surprising that, regardless of what this government brings forward, members opposite just will not support anything, regardless of how much good it is doing for—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): A point of order has been raised by the member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, a member cannot knowingly mislead the House, and that voting record is misleading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I'll listen closely to the voting record the next time.

I return now to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook. Start the clock, please.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I find it difficult to understand, to grasp, why there is so much opposition to every aspect of this particular bill that we've brought forward. We have not seen or heard anything from members opposite in support of this proposed legislation.

To the member from Beaches–East York: Do you not believe that members of our Indigenous communities should have the right to designate marriage officiants? Should they not be able to provide protection to jurors, to prevent them from having criminals, convicted criminals, having access to personal information? Do you not—

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: As my colleague from Toronto–St. Paul's was saying earlier when addressing precisely the same point, you have a vast problem in front of you which is resulting in the fact that Indigenous people are vastly overrepresented in Ontario's prisons. That's the problem that you have been asked to deal with. That's the problem that you have been asked to solve. You have made that problem worse.

So, the fact that there might be a crumb or two over in the corner that's glittering and sweet and delicious takes nothing away from the fact that this bill will result in more Indigenous people, men and women, disproportionately represented in Ontario's prisons because of their lack of access to legal aid.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question.
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Ms. Jill Andrew: The question I have to the member from Beaches–East York: The bill by this Conservative government removes the words “low-income” and “access

to justice” from the act. The current cost of poverty in Ontario, I understand, is approximately \$33 billion. I'm wondering if the member can share with this House how poverty is linked to the school-to-prison pipeline and how the school-to-prison pipeline is linked to communities from racialized communities not being able to access justice. What do you think about this mishmash in this bill and how it's going to negatively impact folks who are trying to access justice?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you so much for the question. I really hope that the government members are listening to this, because poverty does indeed cost Ontario between \$28 billion and \$33 billion a year—that's billion with a B. It is significantly more expensive to house somebody in a jail than it is to provide them with supports up front, where you can prevent them from ever having been jailed in the first place. It is significantly more expensive to run criminal justice systems that work—and the school-to-prison pipeline, for that matter—rather than ensuring that your teachers don't participate in a school-to-prison pipeline; rather than ensuring that you don't end up criminalizing young people; that you don't end up expelling disproportionate numbers of Black students, who should never have been expelled; and that you don't end up pushing people down the paths that end up with their being in prison.

If you would like us to sit down and explain it to you one-on-one, or in a group, we would be very happy to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I always enjoy having the opportunity to debate with my colleagues on the other side of the House. The member opposite referred to parts of the bill as “crumbs over in the corner that are sweet.” I think what she's trying to say is that she supports some parts of the bill, but doesn't support other parts. Would you share with this House what parts of the bill you do support?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I'm really not going to fall into this trap, because the bill itself is a travesty. The government needs to go back to square one; it needs to take the bill apart. It needs to begin by understanding that taking away justice from the people in Ontario who need it the most is not the way that you go about reforming or creating a just legal system.

As my colleague was remarking at the very beginning when he did the lead on this, the government are meant to be the owls in this situation, but they're not behaving like owls; they're behaving like owls that are blind to justice. It is time that they take off the blindfold and understand how justice actually works.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question? The member for Toronto–St. Paul's, you have time for a very quick question.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm just wondering if the member from Beaches–East York can elaborate again on the significance of Legal Aid Ontario funding for single parents. Single parents use legal aid clinics to get help with missing child support payments. When Legal Aid Ontario is cut, therefore, those single parents—many of them are women,

and many of them are being impacted by this government's slashing of the Pay Transparency Act because the government doesn't want to pay women for the same work that they pay men; shame on you. How are the single-parent moms supposed to get access in this new injustice bill?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): If you can answer that in 10 seconds—

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I can't tell you how many single parents, racialized folks and legal aid lawyers have been in my office gnashing their teeth about this bill.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I am pleased to join the debate on Bill 161, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act. This bill offers us an important set of reforms which are aimed to achieve two purposes. The first is to make our laws work better for the people: make them simpler, make using them less expensive and make them work faster. The second aim is to increase people's access to justice. This includes making legal aid work better and ensuring that if you have to file a legal document or register something with the government, the process is simple, affordable and straightforward.

To me, these two purposes really work hand in hand. A law should have a good reason or purpose behind it, whether it's preventing crime or protecting those who have become the victims of crime. The protection of the law must not be out of reach for anyone in Ontario, and the benefits of the law must be available to all of us.

The great philosopher and politician Edmund Burke told the voters of Bristol in 1780, "Bad laws are the worst sort of tyranny." Now, I won't go so far as to say that any of the laws being reformed today are tyrannical, but I think we can agree that we should aim to only have good laws.

For most people, coming into contact with the law is not a daily occurrence. It often comes at a time of difficulty, such as when someone has in fact become a victim of crime. We in this House should do all we can to make things at least a little bit easier for law-abiding people who have to comply with laws or regulations during such a difficult time. This is why I support Bill 161: because I believe it will increase the protection of the people by the law, while making it easier for people to make use of the law.

In October 2019, in my own community of Halton, we learned from Halton Regional Police that in the previous 12 months, 72 separate human trafficking charges were laid in Halton and 12 women were rescued as a result—12 young women rescued from modern-day slavery. In cases such as this, we can help fight crime by ensuring that, firstly, criminals are caught and tried, but that we can also take the profit out of crime.

Currently in Ontario, the government can seek the forfeiture of property or profits of crime that have been used in criminal activity. These proceeds then can be applied to compensating victims. Changes in this bill would simplify the process by allowing personal property to be forfeited without a court order in uncontested cases.

By taking this action, in many cases not only can we make it harder for criminals to commit these crimes, but we can work to discourage crimes like this taking place in the first place.

York region deputy police chief Brian Bigras has pointed out that allowing this without a court order eliminates "an exhaustive administrative process that has an impact on the deployment of our resources." This means that the police will save money that they can then use to fight crime, and victims can be compensated sooner. Our changes will hold offenders accountable. They will help us in our fight against gangs and human trafficking, and they will keep the proceeds of crime out of the hands of criminals. Crime should never pay.

Standing up for victims of crime is a driving force of our government's efforts to grow healthier and safer communities across Ontario. Regrettably, another crime that happens all too often in our society is cyberbullying. We know that this has a terrible impact on its victims, sometimes costing lives. Many schools in Halton region took part in the annual Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in November, and cyberbullying is an important part of this campaign.

We must also remember that people targeted by cyberbullying can be of any age. I'm proud that with this bill we will be adding another tool to fight cyberbullying. We are proposing to amend a regulation under the Victims' Bill of Rights that would make it easier for victims to obtain damages in civil proceedings against offenders convicted of the specific offence of non-consensual distribution of an intimate image. Any form of bullying is unacceptable, and we stand firmly with the victims of cyberbullying and online sexual exploitation. Sharing an intimate image will now face this further penalty.

Fighting crime and protecting the victims of crime are important parts of this bill, and I'm glad that we are taking action to ensure that the law better protects people.

It's not just in cases of crime where people have to come into contact with the law. Whether someone has to register a birth or a death or is getting married, we want to make it simpler and faster for them. The government is amending by regulation the death registration process, to ease the burden for families when faced with registering the death of a loved one in the absence of their remains. This new provision is called Laura's Law.

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The Attorney General has already spoken about the murder of Laura Babcock. In 2017, a jury found that there was sufficient evidence to find that she had been murdered, but due to the rules then in place, her death could not be registered for another two years. Her brave family raised this issue with our government, and I'm proud that we are changing this. I thank the Babcock family for helping ensure that other families do not have to go through the same ordeal as they did at their time of grief.

Families can also face great stress when a loved one dies and they have to take their estate through probate. The current rules are no different if an estate is worth \$15,000

or \$500,000. Legal costs can sometimes cost more than the value of a small estate, so our government is making it easier, faster and more affordable to manage a small estate by reforming the probate process. Requirements to post security for small estates will be removed in most cases, and record searches will be simplified.

When people are mourning a family member, they shouldn't have to be worried about the property in a small estate, and they shouldn't face costs that would eat up the value of an estate. These proposed changes to the Estates Act are an example of smart and practical changes to better serve Ontarians.

We made it easier for people to be married by increasing the number of people who can perform marriages. The bill allows out-of-province Canadian judges and court officials in Ontario known as case management masters to perform marriage ceremonies in Ontario. As well, after a request from the Chiefs of Ontario, Indigenous groups would be able to designate people to perform marriages.

The changes we are making across the board are being made to make it easier for people to navigate the laws and the legal system. Laws protect us best when they are clear, sensible and easy to access.

Legal aid is also a vital access to justice for people in Ontario. It has to work for their benefit to offer the legal advice and representation they need and deserve.

In my early career as a practising lawyer, I was proud to serve clients who needed legal aid. It's important that all people have full and fair access in our justice system.

Today, many parts of the Legal Aid Services Act are outdated. It's hard for clients to navigate, with roadblocks depending on where people live and what services they need. It is also a system that was designed for a pre-Internet age. Both the Attorney General and Legal Aid Ontario consulted extensively on the changes proposed in this bill. We need to provide the tools that Legal Aid Ontario needs to modernize and innovate the way it delivers its services in today's modern world.

As we improve the legal aid system to work better for people, the bill also makes it easier for people to get services from commissioners for taking affidavits and notaries. The proposed changes include amendments that will allow for remote and virtual commissioning and notarizing online, an innovation that would dramatically increase access to vital services for many Ontarians, including in northern and rural and remote communities.

These changes will make it easier and faster for people to get those important services while ensuring security and privacy and allowing Ontarians to emerge as a technology leader in Canada in the legal sector.

I believe we can all agree that our legal system can be complex, it can be lengthy, and it can be intimidating for people. So as legislators, let's agree to remove some of these complexities to make it easier and more affordable, and let's make sure people can access their rights under the system.

It should be easy and affordable for our police to seize illegal profits and pass them on to victims. More importantly, our laws must be made to work for the people. I say

this as a lawyer and a legislator: Our laws should be for the people.

I look forward to the changes in this bill passing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): It is now time for questions and answers.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: The member opposite started her comments by stating that we need to make good laws in this Legislature, but she has disregarded the fact that Bill 161 has received a scathing criticism by the Law Commission of Ontario, which, I remind the member, is Ontario's leading law reform agency. They have stated that they cannot support Bill 161 and that the effect of Bill 161 will be to increase costs, lengthen delays and undermine the acts of justice and judicial efficiencies of our court system.

How can the member opposite and the Conservative government, in good conscience, support a bill that is being rejected by the Law Commission of Ontario?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'd like to thank the member opposite for his question.

In fact, the Attorney General had extensive consultations with many stakeholders, including with Legal Aid Ontario. And you heard earlier, in one of the other responses, that a former Attorney General, Charles Harnick, also supported it.

We're trying on many fronts to make these legal changes simpler and more affordable for everyday people. Nowhere is innovation and modernization more important than in our legal aid system. You, yourself, recognize that the legal aid legislation is quite archaic. It's over 20 years old, and it's time that we apply some simplicity and take out the complexity, and allow for more access to justice for people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Mississauga–Malton has a question.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Member from Oakville North–Burlington: It was good to hear about the good laws.

I really want to talk about the legal clinics. Mississauga Community Legal Services is in Mississauga, and a lot of our residents go and get services. I had the opportunity to meet the legal clinic many times, and I value the valuable work they're doing.

Bill 161 proposes many important changes to Legal Aid Ontario that would allow clinics more flexibility to provide services and better serve clients. Can you please tell us more about how our government's proposed changes to the Legal Aid Services Act will impact clinics like Mississauga Community Legal Services, and how the clients will be impacted?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: It's so important to underline that what this bill is trying to do is update legal aid legislation that, after more than 20 years, is no longer serving clients and strengthening the justice system. Following widespread consultations, which I referred to earlier, including with Legal Aid Ontario, our aim is to provide seamless, sustainable and high-quality front-line services for those clients who need these services.

The proposed changes are building on the strengths of community legal aid clinics, as you mentioned, duty

counsel and use of private bar certificates to make the system easier to navigate for clients. The Ministry of the Attorney General has been working closely with Legal Aid Ontario and consulting with community legal clinics, the private bar and other legal aid service providers to build a client-focused legal aid system that provides high-quality services.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Again, back to the member opposite: Quoting from the Law Commission of Ontario, who have stated that this bill, Bill 161, would be so in contradiction to justice that it actually, if applied retroactively, would have resulted in huge access-to-justice issues for Ontarians, including Bill 161—and I'm quoting from the letter here—"would likely have prevented important and successful class actions regarding Indian residential schools, environmental tragedies (such as Walkerton), tainted blood supplies" and price-fixing.

My question is to the member opposite. Does she believe that the government of Ontario should not be held accountable for those kinds of infractions?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'd like to thank the member opposite for his question.

In fact, when the Attorney General was consulting, he also consulted with the Law Commission of Ontario. In fact, in those consultations, the majority of recommendations that were made were taken aboard by the Attorney General, including work that was done specifically on the issue of small estates—I'm sorry; I'm losing my voice—as well as in the area of—what was it? Not legal aid. Sorry, I forgot.

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Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a good bill. Vote for it.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: It's a good bill. I think you should vote for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: While the member from Oakville North–Burlington is catching her breath there: The official opposition spoke numerous times about civil forfeiture. I'd like the member, when she gets her voice back, to speak about civil forfeiture.

It was originally instituted, I learned myself today, by the former provincial Conservative government, with the idea of taking ill-gotten gains, eventually selling them and applying them to victims of crime. I'd like to know if the member from Oakville North–Burlington could respond to civil forfeiture and what we're doing there.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'd like to thank the member from Sarnia for his question. My apologies that I didn't quite get the rest of that answer out. I'm just recovering from a bad cold.

What I would like to say in response to the question from the honourable member is that Ontario is determined to ensure that crime doesn't pay for criminals, and to stand up for victims of crime. Our government is simplifying and strengthening Ontario's laws around property forfeiture to help ensure crime doesn't pay by making it

harder for criminals to hold onto the proceeds of their crimes.

To hold offenders accountable, support victims, and provide better tools to help police fight crimes like human trafficking, as I mentioned in my speech, and gun violence, we are trying to catch up with Canadian best practices by moving to an administrative property forfeiture system that makes it harder for criminals to hold onto the proceeds of their crimes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: The member opposite was having a coughing fit during my second question, so I'm going to give her another opportunity to clear the record.

Does the member opposite believe that the Ontario government, in situations like Indian residential schools, in tragedies like Walkerton and the tainted blood supply situation—does she believe that the government should be held accountable in those situations? If so, how can she reconcile that with the fact that the Law Commission of Ontario has clearly stated that this Bill 161, if passed, would likely inoculate the government from those kinds of cases?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'd like to thank the member for the question. I really have to suggest to you, with great prudence, that you're wildly off topic.

In fact, what we're looking at doing here is ways where we can actually make life more affordable and easier when it comes to individuals being able to have access to justice.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry to interrupt the member from Oakville North–Burlington. The member from Brampton East has raised a point of order. Stop the clock, please.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Yes, Speaker, thank you so much. Once again, I'm asking the member to correct her record. She said—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): That is not a point of order. Thank you for the interruption. Please take your seat.

We'll return now to the member from Oakville North–Burlington to finish her reply.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you, Speaker. Again, what I wanted to do was to clarify that what this bill is trying to do is actually work in favour of citizens, make life more affordable, take away some of the complexity that currently is in our system. It's almost impossible for most lawyers, let alone—

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: In the short amount of time we have left, let's talk about online verification.

The security and integrity of data has become an important issue for all Ontarians. We're moving forward with a lot of changes in this bill. Can you share how we are going to ensure that this security and integrity of data is protected?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Oakville North–Burlington has 30 seconds to respond.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'll try to be quick, Speaker. Thank you very much for that question.

Ontario's justice system is outdated in many ways; we can all agree on that. We very much need to be able to update old laws and simplify processes, including as they relate to modernizing the system of appointments and functions of notary publics and commissioners for taking affidavits.

Currently, it's very, very difficult, particularly for people who reside in remote, rural and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Those 30 seconds go flying past, don't they?

Further debate?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Today, I rise in opposition to this government's cuts to legal aid. Don't take it from me. Listen to the experts—those practising law, and those who have benefited from the support of legal aid—because we know justice, as with everything else, favours those with power. The people most affected by the decisions we make in the House know best. As elected representatives, we should act as their conduit.

Let's hear from Roger Rowe, who has practised law in Ontario for more than 30 years: "Bill 161 is neither smarter nor stronger in promoting justice, and constitutes a dangerous attack on access to justice.

"I've been practising law in Ontario for 30 years. A large part of my practice is dedicated to representing some of the most vulnerable sectors of society, including female victims of domestic violence, children in need of protection, young offenders and refugees.

"The legal aid system was already virtually running on empty prior to the proposed cutbacks of Bill 161, which, if implemented, will make it even harder for low-income Ontarians to get access to justice.

"From my vantage point, systematic underfunding of LAO has translated into ever-increasing numbers of self-represented parties in the family courts, many of whom are deemed ineligible for legal aid, but lack the income to retain a lawyer privately.

"Routine matters end up taking way longer than they should, and costing a lot more. For the mother trying to escape domestic violence, the young person involved in youth criminal court or child protection court, justice delayed is justice denied.

"Battered mothers are impeded in obtaining in a timely way restraining orders, child support orders and child custody orders. Parties are impeded in having meaningful participation in family law case conferences, settlement conferences and trials. This tends to have a clogging effect on the court system and increase the suffering of all of the stakeholders.

"The cost to the justice system of LAO cutbacks is significant as judges, court staff, law enforcement and lawyers have to spend more time dealing with self-represented litigants.

"Sadly, many young persons end up pleading guilty to end the misery of unjustified pretrial detentions and/or oppressive bail conditions that they receive as a

consequence of not being able to get legal aid to pay for a lawyer to argue their case.

"I reviewed with disbelief and dismissed as upper misrepresentations" the Attorney General's "following statements of December 9, 2019, in which he attempts to sell the benefits of Bill 161's cutbacks.

"The provisions of Bill 161 are antithetical to the goals that it purports to try to achieve. Based on my review of Bill 161, its authors are living in an alternative" reality "universe and are completely out of touch with the reality that low-income Ontarians, including the most vulnerable sectors of our society, have to live with every day."

Let's hear from Professor Obiora Okafor, a lawyer, law professor and research chair in international and transnational legal studies at York University's Osgoode Hall Law School. He added: "The provision of legal aid to poor and less financially endowed Canadians, permanent residents and even refugee claimants is essential for them to truly realize their human rights—a key promise of Canadian democracy.

"Without equal arms, without legal representation, few in our society can understand enough, let alone adequately navigate the legal system we have in this country, a modern advanced society governed by complex laws and procedures.

"Yet legal representation is expensive in Canada and all too many of those who need it cannot afford it. This is a historically well-established fact.

"Even a full professor of law, who has taught law in Canada for about 22 years, cannot afford to pay a lawyer for even many non-complex cases, much more of affording a lawyer to represent me in difficult cases that last several years, as can be the case.

"I know of middle-class professionals who, when faced with a divorce or other regular occurrence in their lives, go deep into debt. What then would be the situation of refugees, most of who arrive in this country with little money? What would be their fate as they try to navigate our immigration determination systems with little or no legal representation?

"A society is as good as how it treats the most vulnerable within it."

Omar Ha-Redeye, the executive director of Durham Community Legal Clinic, said, "Investments to legal aid have been demonstrated to save between \$9 to \$16 for every dollar spent."

In conversation with Omar, he explained how community legal clinics inform and streamline legal proceedings, saving courts and tribunals time, and assist low-income people in legal matters that they would otherwise be unable to handle.

It should be noted that this bill cancels all funding agreements six months after the law comes into force, and removes the ability of clinics to have further cuts reconsidered. Those clinics who lose their funding will have no recourse to challenge the decision.

1700

Maria, a resident in my community fleeing domestic violence, had this to say about the impact of legal aid on

her life: “If it wasn’t for legal aid, I cannot imagine how I would be able to represent myself in Family Court, fresh from domestic-violence-related trauma, in court where my abuser was continuing to intimidate me.

“After I found myself in a women’s shelter with no income, and nothing but two bags of belongings, only because I had access to a legal aid lawyer in my case, I was able to secure custody for my two young children, protecting their health and securing a safe future for our family. It meant the world.”

Aliraza Asrani, a current student of Osgoode Law School, volunteers his time in legal aid. Here’s an excerpt of his comments on Bill 161:

“As a student at Osgoode Hall Law School, which is located in Humber River–Black Creek, I am extremely concerned about the changes to legal aid outlined in Bill 161. Despite its name, this bill is not set to provide smarter or stronger justice. Rather, it is set to weaken access to justice for everyone, especially our most vulnerable.

“As most of us know, the cost of legal services is continuing to rise. In 2011, Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin stated at a conference at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law that, ‘We have wonderful justice for corporations and for the wealthy. But the middle class and the poor may not be able to access our justice system.’

“She further added the average hourly rate for legal services has risen to \$338 an hour, which is more than what most earn after an entire day of work, before taxes and cost of living is considered. This was nine years ago, and the situation has only worsened as cost of living has continued to rise while real wages have declined.

“This situation has most adversely affected the working poor, who are simply unable to access justice, opening doors for them to be exploited.

“The key goal of legal aid is to provide access to justice, and removing that from the official purpose provides a key avenue to gut the legislation.

“By cutting legal aid funding and making it harder to launch class actions, Bill 161 continues the trend of rigging ‘justice’ in favour of the corporate elite, reducing access to justice for everyone else, and making our justice system weaker and less effective.”

Odoardo Di Santo, a former MPP for the old riding of Downsview, a former chair of the Workers’ Compensation Board, and a long-serving experienced lawyer, shared his thoughts on this government’s proposed changes to legal aid:

“Bill 161’s changes to legal aid is a further attack on women, victims of domestic violence, refugees and people at risk of losing their freedom and who need legal representation. These are the most vulnerable members of our society who risk being deprived of the most basic human right.

“The government’s intent on saving money will add an intolerable burden and increase the suffering of the members of our society who can least afford it, while adding cost and delays on an already overburdened court system.

“The government should have the decency of withdrawing the amendments and restore dignity and respect.”

Maria Augimeri, a former Toronto city councillor with over three decades of experience and a true and greatly respected name in anti-poverty advocacy, says, “Any attack on funding for legal aid is tantamount to an attack on democracy.

“Access to legal aid provides the vehicle for which the poor and the disadvantaged can effectively seek justice.

“Access to justice is a human right. A decrease to legal aid funding further alienates and impoverishes those communities and individuals who are most vulnerable.”

Reverend Sky Starr, a grief therapist, author and researcher, has dedicated her life to helping survivors of trauma. Here’s an excerpt from a letter she wrote to me in response to this bill:

“As a minister, therapist and crisis responder in your riding, I deal with countless cases where youth and mothers cannot afford the exorbitant legal fees and need to access legal aid.

“Attaining legal counsel is a necessity for many disadvantaged youth, and particularly for women fleeing abuse.

“Under the proposed revisions to the Legal Aid Services Act, 1998, many lives would be adversely affected. Removing ‘low-income’ and ‘access to justice’ would be an earthshattering disservice to disadvantaged communities.

“Ontario’s Domestic Violence Death Review Committee has found that victims of intimate partner abuse are at the highest risk of lethal violence during the separation process. Non-lethal forms of abuse continue and often escalate post-separation.

“During these life-altering times, with continuous legal bullying from partners, many women, and individuals, engage with and need the family/criminal legal systems.

“I work with many women who need to be protected from abusive partners. I often have to assist youth who are labelled and charged with simple offences and sometimes offences that are placed on them without merit. Bill 161 presents challenges such as women and children having to endure life-threatening situations without any recourse.”

So there you have it: the words of legal aid lawyers, a professor, a law student, former municipal and provincial representatives, a grief therapist with years of helping survivors of trauma and violence, and a victim of domestic abuse who relied on legal aid to escape. They spoke with one voice on the importance of legal aid and how this legislation will only weaken it.

I am calling on this government to change course on this short-sighted plan. Future lives may depend on the services you are slated to weaken and cut.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We now offer all members of the House an opportunity to pose questions to the member from Humber River–Black Creek on what he has had to say for the past 10 minutes.

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the member from Humber River–Black Creek: I raised this earlier with a number of your colleagues, asking if there’s anything that we have

introduced in this act that you think is something that you like, something that you would support.

I want to ask you: Do you believe that Indigenous communities should be able to delegate their own marriage officiants? Do you believe that it is important to introduce protection for jurors so that their identities and their addresses—their personal information—remain private and are not shared with convicted criminals? Do you believe, for example, in something as simple as online verification of documents, making the process of legal documents quicker and easier for residents of Ontario? Are these three aspects within this act something that you believe we should support?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I believe that this government cares little to nothing about Indigenous communities in this province—and don't take it from me; ask them.

I also believe that when members of this government used to sit in opposition, they hated Liberal omnibus legislation—and that's what we're facing here. I strongly oppose cuts to legal aid, but don't listen to me; listen to the people who are most affected, because in all the stuff we've heard from this government, they seem to only want to quote law enforcement. They do not quote the people most affected by this legislation.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to ask the member: Would it be fair to say that people who are in jail, who are in custody for long periods of time, would not have access to legal aid? We already have backlog in the courts now; by taking that much money out of the system, that's certainly going to impair these people's ability to get service. People are falling through the cracks now. What's going to happen now? It will be a canyon by the time we get past the first year.

Wrongly accused people who are in custody will possibly be exposed to a criminal element in these prisons, and they may have life-altering events happen while they're in there. Once they get out of that situation, they could be negatively impacted and society could be negatively impacted with their new attitude, especially for young people who are influenced that way. So I have great concerns about taking that much money out of the system. Would you?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I absolutely share your concerns. Again, I don't think that these are the individuals this government has solicited opinions from or talked to. Based on the submissions that I've read out here, cuts to legal aid actually cost the court systems, because yes, people are appearing there unrepresented, and they're facing very, very dire outcomes. I wish the government would listen to other people.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you to the member from Humber River–Black Creek. First, I'd just say that the comment you made about our side of the House and how we feel about the Indigenous peoples—I think

that's an inaccurate and unfair comment. I'm disappointed to hear that coming from you, actually.

When it comes to the cyberbullying aspect of the bill, do you not agree with the proposed changes to the Victims' Bill of Rights? We know that it's primarily women where intimate photos are being shared online without their consent, and the victimization is recurring. They can't get rid of it, and it's quite traumatizing for these women. I personally think this is a great addition to the bill, because in 2020 this is an issue that we're seeing on the rise. I'd like the member to comment. Do you not agree with this proposed change to the Victims' Bill of Rights?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My answer is that this government should present legislation not in this omnibus form. Again, what you have are proposed cuts to legal aid, and this is what is going to continue to happen, so why does this government insist on packaging issues that are only going to make the lives of the people who are most vulnerable in this society worse? I don't understand. People don't understand. The people who I spoke to in these submissions couldn't believe and spoke vehemently about this bill, specifically about the damage that you're going to be doing to the system by going through with this.

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

1710

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, I'd like to throw out a compliment to legal aid lawyers. With all due respect, a lot of these lawyers are new lawyers; in some cases, a lot of them are entering the field of litigation for the first time. These types of cases that they deal with are giving them great experience for their career in law. It opens doors to other types of law. They may want to be a corporate lawyer, they may want to go in other directions, but this is a good base for lawyers.

I think it's a labour of love. A lot of these lawyers aren't in it for the money; they actually have a social conscience. They don't make as much money as some of the fancy Bay Street lawyers. They don't make as much, but they care about the people they represent. They care about their neighbours, they care about their community and they care about people who don't have access to proper channels.

Do you believe that this could happen in a negative way to lawyers, too?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: In my own office, we've had so many people who are complaining about access to justice. They're being harmed by people in positions of so much more power and they have no other hope except to be represented. Even the bar for being able to apply for legal aid is very low.

But I want to offer this one comment with regard to an earlier question from the government. The concept of me saying that this government cares little to nothing about Indigenous rights comes out of the fact that this is a government that cut \$1 billion from corporate taxes—the richest, the people who have the most—while not adequately providing clean drinking water to people in Ontario. How can people not come away with that sort of an interpretation? How is that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Hon. Ross Romano: Having been a lawyer who started my profession doing legal aid and who did legal aid for some 12 years, I can tell you that I watched as the system was manipulated by lawyers for a very long time. Not all, but certainly a lot of the time, the access-to-justice element was missing. It's all too often missing.

This legislation may be a bad day for lawyers, but it's a good day for the people of Ontario. It's a good day for people who want access to justice, who desperately need access to justice. I find it very, very difficult when I hear the comments coming from the opposition member with respect to a lot of those individuals out there who need access to justice.

What I really want to know, Mr. Speaker, having come from a world of experience in this area—I'm really curious: What is your experience specifically with legal aid and how it applies to access to justice?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This, coming from a member who likened take-home cancer treatment to ice cream—this, coming from that member.

If this member actually thinks that access to justice doesn't exist in this system, why not simply fix it instead of removing it from the act entirely?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Ms. Jill Andrew: My question to our member is, have you spoken to legal aid lawyers? Because I know I have in my riding. Contrary to what the government said, the lawyers I know who are fighting for the most marginalized are doing very, very long hours and they're doing it with compassion and heart. They're crying for their clients—not for themselves or for their wallets. Shame on you for disrespecting legal aid lawyers.

I'm wondering, member, if you've spoken to legal aid lawyers and what they have to say.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you very much for the question. My submission came from the submissions of people who are most affected by this: legal aid lawyers, people who have benefited from legal aid, trauma counsellors. All of them were unanimous in saying that the poor, the working poor, do not have adequate access to justice, that justice does not favour those who need it the most. This is the system we're living in.

I've spoken to many legal aid lawyers over time. In fact, we shouldn't be cutting back on legal aid; we should be strengthening it. The last thing we should be doing is removing the language that protects people who require access to justice from the act. This is absolutely the opposite direction of where we should be going in, if we care about the people of this province and the people who are relying on us the most. It's a shame.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: It's again an honour to rise in the House and to be able to discuss and debate important bills and issues which come before our province.

Ensuring the continued strength and vitality of our legal system is one of the most pressing and, I would say, important issues that we face today.

Let me begin by pointing out that the legal system here in Ontario is complicated, very inconvenient and often very, very expensive.

Since coming into office, our government has moved quickly to make life easier, better and more affordable for the people across our great province, and we've done this by simplifying the onerous regulations and cutting burdensome red tape across a number of different areas, including health care, transportation, infrastructure and job creation.

However, the justice sector remains burdensome and complex and outdated. Our government has heard this from legal organizations and stakeholders from across the province, and I have heard just that same thing from constituents, stakeholders and local organizations from my riding, as well. I've heard that simply accessing the justice system is neither simple nor convenient. I have heard that it is unaffordable and prohibitively complicated. That's just not right. That's not right for the people of Ontario.

Having equitable and fair access to justice is one of the cornerstones of a modern, democratic society. Our government understands this, and we understand that right now there are significant barriers standing in the way of a strong justice system in Ontario. We know that these barriers have real, negative effects on the lives of ordinary Ontarians. That is why our government, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, has introduced this bill, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act.

This bill contains a number of proposals—I won't be able to get through them all today, obviously; it's just 10 minutes that I'm speaking—that will make it easier, quicker and much more affordable for Ontarians to access the legal system and to resolve their legal matters. These proposals address many different areas of the justice system, including how legal aid services are delivered, how court processes are administered, and how lawyers are regulated, among other items. In fact, this bill contains over 20 measures to improve, simplify and make more affordable our legal system.

Each and every one of these legislative improvements was the result of extensive consultation with stakeholders, lawyers, legal organizations and everyday Ontarians who have experience interacting with the legal system. We understand—and that's why this has happened—the importance of wide consultation. That's the key to getting bills like this right. I am happy to say that all of the important provisions in this bill were informed by extensive and wide consultation. In fact, this bill is the result of hundreds of hours of conversations and consultation. Again, through these, we heard that the system is complex, outdated and in need of reform. This is what I have heard from my constituents, and this is what our government has heard from the people of Ontario. And that is just what we are doing: We are making positive reform by simplifying and modernizing our justice system.

I would first like to speak on a way in which this bill will bring our legal system up to date and finally into the 21st century. Through this bill, we are modernizing the

way that documents are notarized and commissioned. This is one of the innovative changes that we are proposing to make life more convenient and affordable.

Before I speak about how we are proposing to improve the system, however, I must briefly lay the groundwork about where we are. Right now, in order to verify a document, you must bring those documents before a notary or a commissioner. In fact, I often see the people of Brantford–Brant in my own office—

Interjection.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you for the reminder—looking for commissioning, and I often hear from them how inconvenient and time-consuming the process is to get their documents signed. In fact, it's not uncommon—and I've done this on numerous occasions if someone is unable to come into my office—I'll take the stamp and I will go to their house, and I had that just not that long ago. Someone was trying to pass on their vehicle to a younger family member and they couldn't get out of the house. They needed this stuff commissioned, and so staff had it ready; I went into the office, grabbed the stamp, went to their house, signed the paperwork, stamped everything and got it done for them.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mr. Will Bouma: But what a complicated process, and something that's completely unnecessary.

1720

We're proposing instead to allow Ontarians to commission and verify their documents online. By doing this, we will be taking from the best practices of other similar jurisdictions to bring Ontario up to date. These changes will have a significant, positive impact, not just on Ontario families but also on our economy and for small businesses. They will streamline the way things are done, and bring them in line with what other sectors are doing.

Take banking, for example. I'm sure everyone is familiar with e-banking—online banking. It's no longer necessary to physically go into a physical bank in order to do many different sorts of banking transactions. With modern technology, these can now be done online. You can transfer money online, buy securities online, sign a document to rent a property and so much more. E-banking has eased the way that we do business in Ontario.

The proposals contained in this bill will allow for the same thing to be said about verifying and commissioning documents. Doesn't that just make sense, Mr. Speaker? Of course, in all of this we are very aware that we must have appropriate safeguards in place to protect people's data. And through consultation, our government intends to design a system that takes into account the dual need for data security as well as the convenience of access.

I want to mention that this proposal is especially important for rural, remote and northern communities. Notaries and commissioners are often few and far between in these areas. People and businesses there can often find it very difficult to physically get out to one and to have their documents signed. By utilizing modern technology in an innovative way, we will be easing that burden and making life easier, more convenient and more affordable

for those living in these communities. And I'm sure that our opposition members will all agree with such common-sense changes.

This change is very important for the people of Ontario, but, Speaker, this bill is broad and contains proposals for improvements across the legal sector. I'll touch on one other one. One of these is a proposal to improve the legal aid system to make it more flexible, sustainable and accountable. The current system, as we've heard from both sides of the House this afternoon, is out of date and needs modernization. This can clearly be seen by the fact that the legal aid legislation has not been significantly updated for over 20 years. In its current form, the Legal Aid Services Act certainly does work in an efficient and modern way.

This bill, if passed, contains proposals that would help Legal Aid Ontario and give clients sustainable and seamless service. They would further build on the strengths of Ontario's community legal clinics, duty counsel and the use of private bar certificates. These changes would further serve to make navigating the system easier and more seamless for legal aid clients. In addition, these are a response intended to modernize outdated processes which currently characterize the system. The proposed changes to the Legal Aid Services Act would do a number of things to help legal aid clients access the system and more effectively resolve their legal business.

Firstly, we are putting clients at the centre of the legal aid system by allowing services to be provided by a range of providers, including private practice lawyers, community legal organizations, such as legal clinics, and law firms, among others. Secondly, the bill would boost Legal Aid Ontario's ability to adequately meet client needs by giving the organization greater flexibility to collaborate and work with other service providers. Thirdly, it would broaden the scope of legal aid services by giving Legal Aid Ontario the ability to offer a wide range of services, such as a summary advice, alternative dispute resolution services, unbundled legal services, legal information and full representation. Finally, it would simplify services and processes by removing barriers to high-quality and efficient service delivery.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, but let me just wrap up. We want to make sure that outdated rules, procedures and processes do not get in the way of claiming a small estate. We will be giving Legal Aid Ontario the tools that they need to provide the citizens of this province with seamless, high-quality legal services, and there is so much more in this bill to build up and modernize our province's justice system. All of these will make it more responsive, more accountable, more affordable, more convenient and more equitable for all Ontarians.

If passed, this bill will help the justice system to operate better every day to deliver seamless service to those who need it most. Speaker, our government has committed to supporting the victims of crime, to make sure that our legal system uses all of the modern technology available and at their disposal.

I will be supporting this bill, and I would invite all members to do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): It's time for questions and answers. We turn to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I listened intently to the presentation by the member from Brant. His enthusiasm for online banking and his enthusiasm for automation certainly bring up a concern for me. I think he would agree that we have things called identity theft and fraud through these types of things. If hackers can hack into NASA or the United Nations, I'm sure they can hack into banks and into the automation system that you guys want to set up for legal aid.

What you're also not thinking of is the human factor. You're losing jobs. Look at all the tellers who have lost their jobs at banks. Where are all our young people going to work? They're losing jobs all over. This is part of the automation that you want to bring in. You talked about online—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We turn now to the member from Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: I appreciate the question from my good friend the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I appreciate his giving me the opportunity to talk about the fact that we are going to be safeguarding the identity of people to the best of our ability and making sure that we put processes in place so that their identity is protected.

However, this isn't a loss of jobs at legal aid. What we're talking about is things that are done at my office every day, simple things like commissioning visa documents and everything else, so that we can simplify these things, do them online, especially in service delivery areas that are difficult to access, in rural and northern—for example, for someone who has a disability and has great difficulty to come into my office, that I can commission them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you to the member from Brantford–Brant for a great presentation.

Mr. Speaker, it has been said in here that this legislation has not been updated for over 20 years. The Liberals had 15 years and didn't really do anything to modernize and bring us better services; we've been here for less than two and we're already doing it. We have former Attorney General Charles Harnick, the chair of the board of Legal Aid Ontario, who is supporting this. We have David Field, the CEO of Legal Aid Ontario, supporting this.

We're trying to modernize—and a very particular one that I think is very interesting, particularly from the opposition NDP, who have a lot of people who represent the northern parts of our province. We're trying to do things, like he mentioned, online so that we can actually save people who travel—the less fortunate in our province, having to travel to get something as simple as a document signed. We want to do that online. We want to modernize. Yes, just like bank tellers, we want to be in the 21st century. So, yes, we're very proud of that.

What I don't understand—maybe you could help us out—is how this is going to level the playing field and

provide equal access to those people, especially in rural and northern Ontario.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to thank—Mr. Speaker, through you—the incredible Associate Minister of Energy for an excellent question. This is something—

Interjection: All-star.

Mr. Will Bouma: I think he is an all-star. Thank you. Yes.

The reality is that in so many locations in our great province, we don't have ready access to legal services, legal aid services and the ability to have documents notarized and commissioned, so by enabling people to do this sort of service online, we're really opening that up. The proposed changes will help build on the strengths that are in the system and just make all those things more available for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Bill 161 changes the composition of the board of Legal Aid Ontario, allowing the government to stack the board in its favour.

My question is to the member opposite. The independence of our legal institutions, be it legal aid or the judiciary or the judge system, is what makes our judicial system one of the best in the world. Why does the Conservative government believe in taking away Legal Aid Ontario's independence?

Mr. Will Bouma: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member from Brampton East.

I'm going to stick to what I was talking about—because the beauty of the changes to the standing orders is quite simply the fact that this really engages us in a system of making a speech and then being able to provide a response to a question based on what was said.

1730

What I was talking about earlier is that all Ontarians—we have a duty to them to be able to provide a legal system that works efficiently, that provides services quickly and at a low cost. That's why I'm so impressed with the work that our Attorney General has done in bringing forward this legislation, so that we can see that happening for everyday Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member for Brantford–Brant for his great presentation.

For 15 years, the people of Ontario have paid the price of this Liberal government's disregard and neglect of our legal aid system here in Ontario. As a result, it grew outdated, inefficient and unresponsive to the needs of Ontario's most vulnerable people.

As a person who worked in legal aid, along with a number of my other colleagues—the member from Oakville North–Burlington, the member from Sault Ste. Marie—I have some exposure to this. I'm proud that our government is the first to take on this vitally important task, to make sure that Legal Aid Ontario is sustainable and working the way that people expect.

Could the member please speak to important changes to legal aid that we have brought forward, what we're proposing and why these changes are needed?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank, through you, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. Again, thank you so much for your co-sponsorship of our bill on combatting anti-Semitism. I really appreciate that.

But getting back to the task at hand, Mr. Speaker: Nowhere is innovation and modernization more important than in our legal aid system. Ontario's legal aid legislation, as the member stated, hasn't been significantly updated since 1998. Unfortunately, the previous government had practically 20 years to get this work done.

Although a lot has changed since then, the Legal Aid Services Act has stayed almost exactly the same. Legal Aid Ontario has been unable to adapt to the challenges of a rapidly changing demographic, economic and technological landscape. We've heard that over and over again, from Legal Aid Ontario itself—and other justice system partners, from them—that the current legislation is outdated and creates barriers to legal aid access for those who need it most.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I'm going to give the member opposite another opportunity to answer a very, very simple question. Bill 161 changes the composition of the board of Legal Aid Ontario, allowing the government to stack the board in its favour.

The independence—I'm going to stress this, Speaker—the independence of our legal systems, be it Legal Aid Ontario, be it the judge system or any aspect of the judiciary, is fundamental to democracy and fundamental to the rights that we enjoy.

My question is a very clear one, and I'm going to ask the member to answer it. Why does the Conservative government believe in taking away Legal Aid Ontario's independence?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, I would rather not answer that question.

Mr. Will Bouma: Mr. Speaker, is it myself, or the House leader for the NDP—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The Speaker called on Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Oh, thank you. Perhaps you could remind him of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm reminding you I called on Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: Oh, thank you. I appreciate that.

In response to the member from Brampton East—and, again, thank you for the question—developing new legislation is only the beginning of this process. The government will continue to engage with Legal Aid Ontario and other stakeholders as we move forward with proposals to enhance Ontario's legal aid system.

The LAO consulted with key stakeholders on ways to create a more integrated and efficient legal aid system, to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used more effectively. In August and September 2019, the LAO board chair hosted

18 round tables and stand-alone meetings with key stakeholders in areas of criminal, family, clinic, and immigration and refugee law. The Attorney General participated in a number of these round tables and also engaged—

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the member from Brantford–Brant—I asked our colleagues across the aisle this question: Would they support allowing Indigenous peoples to delegate their own marriage officiants? Do they not support protection for jurors? Do they not believe in online verification of documents? And no one would say that they thought that these were good ideas.

To the member opposite: Do you believe that these are good ideas?

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for another excellent question.

Ontario's justice system is outdated and in need of reform. That's what we've been hearing all day here in the House. The government is delivering on its promise to put people first by updating old laws and simplifying complex processes so that justice works for Ontarians. Finding faster, easier and more affordable ways to resolve legal problems is a key priority for this government.

We are modernizing the system of appointments and functions of notaries and commissioners for taking affidavits.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 161. I want to start off by saying a special shout-out to my folks, Allan and Sheila Wood of Peterborough, who have been watching the debate. They also sometimes send me funny little comments on what's happening here, and I can assure you that they're not very impressed.

I do also want to give a shout-out to Kate Crozier, the director of programs at Community Justice Initiatives in Waterloo, who is one of those voices that probably should have been consulted on a piece of legislation like this one.

I just want to start off by saying that some people in this province don't know that we start off some mornings with a prayer—non-denominational, usually. One of the prayers that we say is: "Give to each member of this Legislature a strong and abiding sense of the great responsibilities laid upon us. Guide us in our deliberations. Give us a deep and thorough understanding of the needs of the people we serve. Help us to use power wisely and well."

It strikes me as very meaningful in the context of this particular debate because, for some reason, the government has looked at the Auditor General's report as it relates to access to legal aid and justice in the province of Ontario, and they have tabled this particular bill, which, of note, is an omnibus piece of legislation almost all of which has to do with the administration of justice but in essence is an attack on access to justice in Ontario.

There are problematic schedules: schedule 3, the Civil Remedies Act; schedule 4, the Class Proceedings Act; schedule 11, the Judicial Review Procedure Act, which

appears to give the court greater discretion to deny relief under judicial review; and schedules 15 and 16, on the Legal Aid Services Act, which appears to unilaterally cancel all funding arrangements for clinics six months after this legislation comes into force. So to say that we have serious concerns with Bill 161 would truly be an understatement, Mr. Speaker.

What can we do better? We can start off by not cutting legal aid; that's a good place to start. And if we want to improve the justice system, we need to speak to people who are working in it every day, making a positive impact—that, unfortunately, did not happen—and particularly the people who are working as lawyers or with incarcerated folks or in restorative justice, because there are solutions to the backlog in our court system. There are community solutions that have existed, that the Liberals ignored for 15 years.

I went to the people on the front lines, because that's how we work here on this side. We went to Community Justice Initiatives in Waterloo region, which has been leading the way on restorative justice as a way of addressing conflict and crime. They support people impacted by sexual trauma, provide assistance to families involved with child protection, and provide reintegration support for adults returning to the community. Their work is wide-ranging and effective and offers a number of solutions for the issues that our justice system currently faces in Ontario.

One of those folks was Kate Crozier, who is the director of Community Justice Initiatives. Many comments in our House have been said about the state of our prisons. I've toured three major prisons in the province of Ontario: Maplehurst, Vanier and a federal prison as well. I have to tell you, when you learn that 60% of inmates are on remand—they have not had their day of justice. They may be innocent. They do not have the funding to post bail. They may be innocent; they may go into those institutions innocent; they do not come out of those institutions innocent. Quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, I wish I could unsee some of the things that I saw in our prisons.

There's no doubt about it: Our jails disproportionately incarcerate marginalized citizens in this province. Rather than learning accountability or addressing the root causes of crime, jails push people further into the margins, and it is not sustainable. Does Bill 161 address this? No, it does not.

1740

One third of those inmates in our institutions have identified mental health needs. Should people with mental health needs be in a prison? No, they should not. In fact, what I once saw in Vanier, the women's prison—there was a woman there who had been there for years in solitary confinement, and she was desperate for human contact.

Most of the people who are incarcerated are unemployed or underemployed. Most women in prison are mothers, and most of these have children under the age of 16. Indigenous people make up 2% of Ontario's population, and in 2016 they made up 13% of those in provincial custody. They serve more time in segregation than non-

Indigenous inmates and are more likely to be flagged as a suicide risk.

This knowledge was accrued and gathered by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services in Ontario. It's a report. This report is Directions for Reform. It's from 2017. One would think that this knowledge, this data, this information would inform a piece of legislation that was looking to improve access to justice.

We even have the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which found that the correctional system had inadequate programming to address and respond to the conditions and precursors that Indigenous offenders may experience and that there was a lack of realistic alternatives to custody. Part of that commission addressed undertaking reforms to the criminal justice system to better address the needs of offenders with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, for instance. Navigating the court system without supports within that system and without access to legal advice has proven to be a systemic issue in the justice system. Does Bill 161 address that? No, it does not.

We have ministry reports which should inform this piece of legislation. We have the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. One of their major recommendations was “a culturally relevant and responsive justice system.” There was some funding attached to that, but that funding did not flow. That was part of the problem of the previous government.

We know that Ontario jails are setting people up for failure when they leave. We know that they leave into a state of homelessness. Some 40% of adult males released from Toronto jails were either homeless or at risk of being homeless.

Yet there are solutions that this government could employ, could address, and actually, ironically, would save some money. Right now, there are programs in Waterloo, for instance. There's Stride for women and Stride for men, which is an engagement from the public to be a part of the solution of successful reintegration and to help navigate through the court system. They are helping navigate by talking to landlords, reuniting with family, and finding good counsellors and needed medical attention.

The Stride program for women is an example of evidence-based, successful and extremely cost-effective programs that specifically target the needs of women. It is one of the rare programs in Canada that provides a continuum of support by building relationships inside the prison and maintaining them after a woman is released from an institution.

At the end of the day, there are meaningful opportunities that are accountable that can address the backlog in our court system and in our justice system. Restorative justice organizations are ready to do this type of work right now. They want to partner with this government. The savings—\$500 a day for a three-day restorative justice program versus \$35,000 in court at a sentencing hearing and in jail—are quite astounding to me.

The Society of United Professionals, in their commentary on the cuts to legal aid and their description of Bill

161, said at the time of the announcement that the amendment “to the Legal Aid Services Act is a cynical ploy to distract from the extraordinary damage this bill will do to Ontario’s legal system and the most vulnerable people in that system.” They went on to say that when this legislation was announced on December 9, it “literally removes ‘access to justice’ from Legal Aid Ontario’s purpose. In tandem with their 30% cut to Legal Aid Ontario in last April’s budget, the society, which represents Legal Aid Ontario lawyers, as well as legal professionals at three legal clinics, called this the biggest attack on legal aid in Ontario’s history.”

I’m looking forward to the questions. I enjoy this part of the debate. The government had an opportunity to address some of the core issues—cost savings, ethical changes that could be made—and yet Bill 161 did not address that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Now, colleagues, the members have the opportunity to pose questions to the member from Waterloo. I turn now to the member from Durham.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I appreciated the member from Waterloo highlighting some of the local restorative justice initiatives she has had a chance to learn about. It sounds like she must really support our community justice centres that we’re piloting in different parts of the province, and I hope in the future she’ll work with us to develop them in her area of the province.

David Field, the CEO of Legal Aid Ontario, has made it clear that this legislation, if passed, will allow legal aid and its valued service providers, including the staff, the clinics and the private bar, to better serve their clients. My question to the member opposite is, do you agree with Mr. Field or not?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I realize the government is really struggling with our criticism of this legislation because there is so much to criticize. You have given us so much material with Bill 161, it is actually shocking. They’re a little thin-skinned today, but that’s okay; it’s been a tough day for the PC caucus.

But when the Conservative government attacks legal aid clinics again—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Government members, come to order, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —and removes their core goals by taking the words “low income” and “access to justice” out of the legislation, how could you come to floor of this Legislature—

Interjection.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: —in good faith and say that your goals are to address access to justice?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question to the member is as follows: The government is saying that this is all about modernizing—I love the word—our legal aid system and

our legal system overall. You said in your speech something that I thought was interesting, that 40% of those who are released from jail in Toronto are at very high risk of becoming homeless.

My question to you is, will this legislation do anything to reduce the number of people being released from jail being homeless, and if not, does it cost us more money?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Actually, I really appreciate the question. Thank you very much to the member from Timmins.

The data demonstrates that the reintegration into society for inmates—and the government doesn’t want to hear this because they have no strategy to address homelessness in the province of Ontario. But recidivism and reoccurring crimes actually happen when people are desperate.

You can’t incarcerate an individual in the province of Ontario and then just leave them to fend for themselves when they’ve been incarcerated for years. Does Bill 161 address that? Does it address mental health issues? No. Does it address housing needs? No. Does it address transit or education or mental health? No, it doesn’t. It doesn’t. It’s the lowest form of legislation because it does not address the core problem, and that is obviously problematic for the people of this province, and will cost the province more money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Before we go to more questions, I’d like to remind the government members, who have been quiet all afternoon, that there’s a couple of members, including the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, including the Minister of Colleges and Universities, who perhaps are over caffeinated at this point in the afternoon. But please, we don’t have a lot of time left. Let’s enjoy it. Let’s listen to the debate back and forth. Thank you very much.

I now recognize the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Ross Romano: I appreciate that there’s a lack of experience in the members opposite with respect to actual legal aid, so I’m going to take it to something that I know at least one member opposite has very, very particular knowledge and experience on, and that’s an issue regarding northern Ontario,

Having been a lawyer, again, serving clients for many years, signing commissioner documents, notary public documents, I know how difficult it is for people in the north to access these services. I know very well, and I know the member opposite knows how difficult it is for people in his riding of Timmins to be able to access these services, and how virtual access to these will be so great for people in northern ridings who have such a difficult time, given that most people will need a commissioner or a notary public. At some time in their lifespan, they’re going to need those services, and they’re so difficult to access in the north.

1750

My question to the member from Waterloo: Has the member from Timmins told her that he will be supporting this legislation because of the help for northern Ontario?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know that the member from Sault Ste. Marie previously was making some denigrating comments about lawyers, and legal aid lawyers in particular. He said that this piece of legislation is a bad day for lawyers. But we've met some really good lawyers who work in legal aid, and they care deeply about the clients that they serve.

You know what the people of Timmins and northern Ontario are going to care about? They're going to care that the legislation now says that Legal Aid Ontario "may" provide representation instead of "shall."

Being a lawyer, I'm sure he would truly appreciate the fact that language in legislation actually matters. When you change the language from "shall provide" to "may provide," you are actually denying access to northern people in this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Timmins has a question.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, in follow-up to my first question, you've answered, so I want to go to the second part. That is, again, the government saying that this is all about modernizing the act, and it's about giving people better access to justice. Now, as we read the legislation, it appears that there's going to be less opportunity for Legal Aid Ontario to provide representation to clients who come through their door.

My question is this: If people who can't afford to get a lawyer in the first place go to legal aid, and by legislation, they're prevented from getting representation, what is that going to do to justice? And in the end, does this mean to say our jails may get fuller?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Really, the crux of the problem right here is that the government is looking for a silver bullet on a very complex issue.

You have to remember, to the member from Timmins, that this government has already attacked legal aid clinics, removing their core goals by taking the words "low income" and "access to justice" out of their mandate, which makes no sense whatsoever.

This government has already slashed legal aid funding by 30%, further denying the most marginalized and poorest people in the province of Ontario to have access.

The government on the whole is making it harder for everyday people to form class actions against the big Goliaths, including this government. And that's what people do in class action suits: They pool their resources to fight the government.

So, yes—the answer to the member from Timmins—this piece of legislation will not improve access to the justice system in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Question?

Mrs. Robin Martin: On this side of the House, we find it really troubling that the member opposite and her party, the NDP, would vote against this bill, Bill 161, and speak against it, and vote against it at first reading, when it would improve access to justice for Ontarians—something that you people seem to speak a lot about but don't seem to want to do anything about—and in ways that are very important.

For example, our government will continue, and has increased, the annual 6% increase for financial eligibility for legal aid services.

Also, in removing the words "low-income Ontarians" specifically in the legislation, what we're merely recognizing is that many of the Legal Aid Ontario-funded services may also benefit middle-income Ontarians, who also have trouble affording legal services.

So are you saying over there that you do not want those people to have access to legal aid services? We're just widening the tent.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member opposite seems a little upset, Mr. Speaker, a little sensitive to the fact that this legislation does not achieve the goals that—just because you put it in the title doesn't make it so. We've already been through this chapter with the Liberal Party for the last 15 years.

I'm just going to read from the Society of United Professionals, who represent Legal Aid Ontario lawyers. They say, "Combined with the Ford ... severe and cruel Legal Aid Ontario cut, this bill amounts to passing the buck to Legal Aid Ontario to implement cuts without the agency being constrained by a legal mandate that protects the vulnerable people who need legal aid."

In other words, this legislation, as it is crafted—and, listen, we're going to try to make it stronger. We're going to try to help you actually try to help people, when it gets to committee. But this piece of legislation does not achieve the goals that are actually stated in the title of the legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have further debate. We don't have a lot of time for it, but I'll turn to the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook to give her an opportunity to start on it.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I am pleased to stand in the House today in support of Bill 161. It's a bill that is long overdue, and it represents a critical step towards simplifying a very complex and a very outdated justice system, as you have been hearing from my colleagues all afternoon.

If passed, Bill 161 would make it easier, faster and more affordable for people in Ontario to access the justice system. Our government is proposing more than 20 sensible legislative improvements through the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act. These improvements reflect our government's determination to work with our justice partners to build safer communities where people and job creators are not tied up in outdated processes to resolve their legal and business issues. Collaboration and consultation are priorities for this government, and these proposals reflect hundreds and hundreds of conversations with front-line staff and practising lawyers about the need for common-sense change.

Our government met with partners including the Law Society of Ontario, Legal Aid Ontario, the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario, the Ontario Bar Association, the Federation of Ontario Law Associations, law enforcement officers and a number of consumer groups, to name just a few. These stakeholders have been key partners in the development of these proposals, and

their hard work and strong support for these changes reflect our government's commitment to building healthier and safer communities.

Communities cannot grow to their full potential when residents simply don't feel safe and when the job creators in our province are being unnecessarily delayed by some archaic process in an effort to resolve legal and business issues.

Our government has heard loud and clear that people are frustrated trying to navigate a system that even lawyers find difficult to understand. This frustration is heightened during crucial and often very stressful times in people's lives.

Ontarians have spoken and our government has listened. The complaints our government has heard consistently from people are that Ontario's judicial system is too complicated, too costly and often bogged down with lengthy delays.

If passed, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act would simplify a complex and outdated system. It would help Ontario stand up for victims and law-abiding citizens, and provide better, more affordable justice for all.

Mr. Speaker, modernization and innovation are key priorities for this government. There are so many opportunities to update what has become, in some instances, an antiquated legal system. Today, we are pleased to be discussing some very reasonable steps that lead us in the right direction.

A prime example is Ontario's current system of verifying documents through notaries and commissioners. This process, as we have heard all afternoon, is stuck in the pre-technology Stone Age. That is why the government is proposing to open the door to allow Ontarians to simply verify and commission documents online. Most people today are able to complete a variety of simple tasks online or through an app or a mobile device—basic banking transactions, for example. People expect and want the same level of convenience when they interact with our legal system. Notarizing documents is a perfect example of where we can modernize a dated process while still ensuring the security and integrity of an individual's data. This will certainly make life much easier for people who live in remote and rural communities, who in many cases don't make those journeys due to the distance and the expense—communities in northern Ontario, for example.

By adopting best practices from other jurisdictions, we see a great opportunity for this bill to help Ontario emerge as a leader in Canada in the use of technology in the legal sector.

Certainly, with change and modernization comes the responsibility to ensure that an individual's data is safe and secure—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I apologize to the member for Flamborough–Glanbrook, but as I indicated earlier, we would not have much time to continue the debate this afternoon.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 36, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. However, earlier

today during question period, a couple of our members gave notice of dissatisfaction with answers given by the government side, so they have asked for the opportunity to speak further to that matter.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The first member up this afternoon will be the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston who has given notice of dissatisfaction with the question that he posed to the Solicitor General. The member will have up to five minutes to state his case, and the minister's parliamentary assistant, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, will have up to five minutes to respond.

We turn now to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

Mr. Randy Hillier: During this morning's question period, I asked a question of the Solicitor General. At first, I was gobsmacked by her response. Then, on reflection, I was outraged at the response. This may be unfair for the parliamentary assistant to be responding to and defending the minister's comments this morning. It really ought to be the minister responding. However, during that time, I did find it difficult to retain my composure with the minister's response. There are a few points that I'd like to raise. Hopefully, the parliamentary assistant will be able to respond.

The first thing I want to say is that members of the executive are referred to as "Honourable," and that really does mean something. It means that they will display the utmost integrity. It means that they will provide factual information, not falsehoods. It means that if they make a mistake or they speak in error, that they have the integrity to correct the record. That's what it means to be honourable.

The minister's reply to my question this morning was not factual. It was erroneous. It attempted to relieve her of responsibility through fiction and misinformation. Six hours later, the record—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry to interrupt the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston. I would ask him to withdraw those unparliamentary remarks.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I return now to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

Mr. Randy Hillier: To be clear and unequivocal, the mobile crisis response team, the program that funded mental health nurses to be front-line responders, has been axed by the ministry. The money has been turned off. It is no longer a priority of this ministry. It was not an operational decision of the Lanark county OPP, as the minister stated. And those are facts.

The government talks a big game of funding front-line mental health professionals. But as we saw and heard

today, it appears that it's just a game. There were four questions in the House this morning regarding mental health today. The Solicitor General's response was quite different than every other one. The Minister of Long-Term Care responded. Minister Hardeman, the Minister of Agriculture, responded. They responded with facts of what this government is doing about mental health—or so they tell us, and I believe them.

But the Solicitor General has purposely cut this program. I ask this: How can this government have ministers doing two very different things?

Interruption.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think it's Doug on the phone—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thanks.

I'm going to also say, this minister, while she was sharpening the axe and looking at which programs to cut, it would have been wise to take a few moments to think and reflect before swinging that axe. This is just another licence plate fiasco, people doing things without thinking first.

I would like the parliamentary assistant to state unequivocally, in the response: Why has this ministry cut the mobile crisis response team? It is no longer able to be funded.

Speaker, that would be okay if they handed off that responsibility to another ministry, but they didn't do it. They've just cut the program, and then deflected responsibility by saying that it was an operational decision by the OPP. That is a false statement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I would ask the member to withdraw his unparliamentary accusation.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

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

The parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General is the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore. The member will have up to five minutes to respond.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'm always pleased to rise and to discuss how our government is supporting everyday policing heroes in every aspect of their job. They work every day to keep all of us safe, and for that, on behalf of our entire government, I want to thank them for their service.

Since day one, we have been committed to putting resources directly in the hands of police services across our province. They are experts in maintaining public safety, and our primary partners in keeping Ontario's communities safe.

That is why, last fall, we launched the new Community Safety and Policing Grant program, to support police services across Ontario through \$195 million in stable, secure funding. In developing the CSP Grant program, we are laser-focused on fixing the mistakes made by the previous Liberal government, by providing guaranteed funding for recipients through a three-year funding cycle rather than a one-year funding cycle. The grant funding will help police services pay for personnel, training,

equipment, engagement and education, as well as research and analysis.

Of our historic \$195-million investment, the vast majority will help tackle public safety issues that have been identified as local priorities by the local police services and their partners across the province.

Grant programs offered through the Ministry of the Solicitor General are there to support the great local work that is taking place in communities across Ontario, including by police services in the member's riding.

Local priorities can include public safety issues, including mental health and addictions, as well as issues like drug-impaired driving and property crime.

Mr. Speaker, 89 police services boards received funding through the Community Safety and Policing Grant program. In the member's riding of Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, the Perth Police Services Board is receiving \$135,000 over a three-year period. This funding will support the Lanark county situation table, and the community safety and wellness plan initiative. The Lanark county situation table has been doing important work in the member's community, supporting critical incidents, including mental health incidents. I am pleased that the member's community will be receiving this funding to continue supporting that great work.

Additionally, community safety and well-being planning ensures that municipalities identify local risks, with a focus on social development, prevention and risk intervention. This planning improves coordination of services, collaboration, information sharing, and partnerships between local government, agencies and organizations, and improves the quality of life for community members. Through the community safety and well-being planning, police will have more support and interaction with their community partners.

We know that mental health and addictions are complex issues impacting communities across Ontario. We know that intervening at an early stage is critical to addressing these individual situations. That is why, in addition to the situation table in Lanark being supported through our Community Safety and Policing Grant, we are also supporting front-line policing partners across Ontario with the Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere—RIDE—grant program, to help police services across the province detect impaired drivers and keep our streets and highways safe. In the member's riding, this means an investment of over \$52,000 in Lanark and Frontenac counties.

These grant programs are in addition to grants such as the Proceeds of Crime Front Line Policing Grant, that are supporting police services in the member's riding over the years, including OPP Perth's crisis response projects.

1810

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we know—our government knows—that mental health and addictions issues impact people and communities all across Ontario.

Every year, 1.4 million Ontarians experience a mental health or addictions challenge, which can have a serious impact on their quality of life, including their ability to go to school or make a living. That is why our government

launched Roadmap to Wellness: A Plan to Build Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions System.

Through the leadership of the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, this road map provides a clear path forward to offer Ontarians easier access to higher-quality services and supports in communities across our wonderful province. Thank you.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Earlier today, the member for Toronto–St. Paul's gave notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question that was posed to the government House leader. The member from Toronto–St. Paul's will have to up to five minutes to debate the matter and the government House leader will have up to five minutes to respond.

We turn now to the member for Toronto–St. Paul's.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Earlier today, we asked the government and the House leader responded. We asked them about concerns that we're hearing from Black community members, education workers, educators and students about the transparency of their anti-Black racism review of the Peel District School Board.

We have heard as well from students from the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. We've heard from the Toronto District School Board, and we know that the previous government, namely the Liberal government, didn't do much to address the root causes of anti-Black racism. However, it's now this government's turn, the Conservatives. And the House leader refused—he couldn't even bring himself to say the words “anti-Black racism.” Maybe he forgot it in the moment, but that was the topic that we were addressing: anti-Black racism.

Our questions were simple. I'll reiterate: “Premier, how many of the review's recommendations deal specifically with anti-Black racism? And how many of your ministers' ministerial recommendations will specifically address anti-Black racism?”

My colleague Dr. Laura Mae Lindo, who is the critic for anti-racism, also weighed in on the second question and expressed to us that there are students in Kitchener Centre and Kitchener–Conestoga who reportedly have said to her that there's an N word pass where the N word can be shared in their schools without any discipline. She asked, “Have you had conversations with the Solicitor General who is responsible for anti-racism strategies in Ontario regarding the creation of an anti-racism strategy in education and when will this strategy be released?” There were no responses.

I'm here to say that anti-Black racism is real, and while the government may give peanuts around—“yes, we've got reviewers doing the work”—we need transparency. We need results that are open to the public. We need results that actually address anti-Black racism that have actual recommendations to anti-Black racism.

I want to give a shout-out to our members for York South–Weston and Parkdale–High Park for putting forth

their private members' bill just yesterday to have Ontario recognize Black Mental Health Day, and also a call-out to this government to address Black mental health and the disparities within mental health services.

I'm here simply to say that anti-Black racism hurts. It has an insurmountable weight on Black community members. It wreaks carnage on our physical, emotional and mental health. It wreaks carnage on academic success of students. It wreaks carnage on educators, and I'm just not sure that this government gets that, because their policies don't reflect it.

We have an Anti-Racism Directorate that's been slashed to a budget of \$1,000. Mr. Speaker and those who are watching, we're now able to use digital devices, and I'm trying to get some words specifically from our anti-racism critic.

Over the course of this session, the Black caucus has raised alarm bells regarding anti-Black racism in the education sector. This includes experiences of Black students, Black educators, Black education workers, Black administrators and Black school board trustees. If we're unable to say the words “anti-Black racism,” how are we to gain confidence as Ontarians that this Conservative government is actually dealing with the issue?

While Black communities continue to resist white supremacy, oppressive educational environments and the board-by-board approach to addressing anti-Black racism that began under the Liberals and continues under this Conservative government, we as members of the official opposition demand that a strategy be developed that actually addresses anti-Black racism across Ontario.

I must say, folks, as Black communities, in trying to keep ourselves up in the face of oppression, we usually say, “Black don't crack,” but the reality is, Black does crack. And when you're beaten down by the system, when you're beaten down by anti-Black racism in your schools and you're looking to your government to even just start by saying the words and you can't bring yourself to say the words in this House, we've lost them already.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The government House leader now has up to five minutes to reply to the member from Toronto–St. Paul's.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to address this. It wasn't my intention to speak very long on this, because I thought it would go without saying that every member of this Legislature would be in agreement that, whether it's anti-Black racism or racism of any type, it would be completely unacceptable.

Specifically to the member's question from earlier today with respect to the Peel review, the review is obviously in the hands of the government. As I committed during question period today, we will take a look at what the recommendations are, and very soon, very shortly, we will share those recommendations with all members of the House.

Obviously, I would assume that all members of this House want to make progress on ending racism in all its forms. It isn't owned by members of the NDP. It's not owned by members of the Conservative Party. And to suggest that somehow members on this side of the House

don't understand—I can tell you that being an Italian kid in the 1970s wasn't always the easiest thing. I can remember being beaten up and having a bunch of people come to my home and threaten my father because he looked like a mobster. It's not owned by one group of people. We all have a responsibility to do something about it. Whether it's anti-Black racism or whether it's the work that's being done on anti-Semitism, we all have a responsibility.

I would suggest to the member opposite that she does a disservice when she tries to make it seem like this party doesn't care, because not only do we care; all members care. And we acknowledge that, Mr. Speaker. We acknowledge that. It's not just the responsibility of the government; it's the responsibility of all of us as legislators to do something about it.

To sit in this House day after day and to hear that somehow members on this side don't care, that somehow we also haven't experienced—and I'm not going to suggest that I understand entirely some of the things that the member opposite has referenced. Obviously I can't. I can't completely understand the issues that she has raised on anti-Black racism. I can't understand that. But I want to learn and understand more about it, and that's why, when the minister brought forward this panel in Peel, I was very happy about that. I was happy about that. We—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Toronto—St. Paul's will come to order, please. It's never too late to be tossed out of here.

The member is speaking. They listened to you; it's time for you to listen to them.

I return to the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, I would call on all members of this Legislature on both sides of the House to understand the issues that face not only the Black community. I can appreciate that in this instance we're talking about the Peel board and the issues that—not only the Peel board; we had some issues in the York region board as well. I get it. I understand, and I want to learn more. That's why I reach out in my own community. That's why I don't mind talking to the member opposite about the issues that she wants to raise. But, Mr. Speaker, we will not make any progress if we can't, in this place, show leadership and show that it's not a partisan issue. It is something that we all have to deal with, because in this day and age, in this century, in 2020, that we still have to talk and we still have to fight and make progress on this file? I think we have all failed and we all have work to do.

So again I say to the member opposite very, very clearly: I hear what she is saying. I appreciate the passion that she brings to the debate. But I think we, all Ontarians, would be better served if we worked together in a spirit that wasn't partisan, and we worked together to solve this problem once and for all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): There being no further matter to debate this evening, I deem the earlier motion to adjourn to now be carried.

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

The House adjourned at 1821.

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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
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Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
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Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
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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
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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	

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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

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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	

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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	
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