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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 21 March 2019 / Jeudi 21 mars 2019

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

The People's Health Care Act, 2019, Bill 74, Ms. Elliott / Loi de 2019 sur les soins de santé pour la population, projet de loi 74, Mme Elliott

Mr. Logan Kanapathi	3695
Mr. Jamie West	3696
Mme Natalia Kusendova.....	3696
Mme France Gélinas	3697
Mr. Dave Smith.....	3697
Mr. Logan Kanapathi	3697
Mr. Wayne Gates	3698
Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto.....	3699
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	3699
Mr. Mike Harris	3700
Mr. Gilles Bisson	3700
Mr. Wayne Gates	3700
Miss Kinga Surma.....	3701
Vote deferred.....	3702

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan	3703
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	3703
Mr. Norman Miller.....	3703
Hon. Bill Walker	3703
Mr. Ross Romano	3703
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	3703
Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam.....	3703
Ms. Peggy Sattler	3703
Hon. Merrilee Fullerton	3703

Wearing of pins

Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	3703
------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Government accountability

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	3703
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	3703

Government accountability

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	3704
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	3704

Autism treatment

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	3705
Hon. Lisa MacLeod.....	3705

Autism treatment

Ms. Jill Dunlop.....	3706
Hon. Lisa MacLeod.....	3706

Autism treatment

Miss Monique Taylor	3706
Hon. Lisa MacLeod.....	3706

Public transit

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed.....	3707
Hon. Jeff Yurek.....	3707

Government accountability

Mr. Kevin Yarde	3708
Hon. Sylvia Jones	3708

Government accountability

Mme Nathalie Des Rosiers.....	3708
Hon. Steve Clark	3708
Hon. Todd Smith.....	3709

Municipalities

Mr. Doug Downey	3709
Hon. Steve Clark	3709

Government accountability

Ms. Sara Singh	3709
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	3710

Technology in schools

Ms. Christine Hogarth.....	3710
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson	3710

Education funding

Ms. Marit Stiles.....	3711
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson	3711

Curriculum

Mrs. Robin Martin.....	3711
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson	3711

Women's services

Ms. Suze Morrison	3712
Hon. Lisa MacLeod.....	3712

Government fiscal policies

Mr. Sheref Sabawy.....	3712
Hon. Bill Walker	3713
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	3713

Visitors

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde.....	3713
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	3713

World Down Syndrome Day

Ms. Jill Dunlop.....	3713
----------------------	------

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	3713
------------------------------------	------

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

The People's Health Care Act, 2019, Bill 74, Ms. Elliott / Loi de 2019 sur les soins de santé pour la population, projet de loi 74, Mme Elliott	
Second reading agreed to	3714

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Stephen Lecce	3714
-------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Racial discrimination	
Mr. Joel Harden.....	3714
Nowruz	
Mr. Michael Parsa	3715
Black youth in care	
Ms. Laura Mae Lindo.....	3715
George Leslie Mackay	
Mr. Stephen Lecce	3715
Highway safety	
Mr. Paul Miller.....	3716
Racial discrimination	
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	3716
Road improvement	
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff	3716
Down syndrome	
Ms. Sara Singh	3717
Cultural celebrations	
Mr. Logan Kanapathi	3717
Special Olympics World Summer Games	
Mrs. Belinda Karahalios.....	3717

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Justice Policy	
Mr. Parm Gill	3717
Report adopted	3717
Standing Committee on General Government	
Mr. Dave Smith.....	3718
Report adopted	3718

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, 2019, Bill 87, Mr. Rickford / Loi de 2019 pour réparer le gâchis	
--	--

dans le secteur de l'électricité, projet de loi 87, M. Rickford	
First reading agreed to.....	3718
Hon. Greg Rickford.....	3718

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	
Hon. Sylvia Jones	3718
Ms. Laura Mae Lindo.....	3719
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	3719
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	3719

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2019, Bill 76, Mr. Mamakwa / Loi de 2019 relative à la Déclaration des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones, projet de loi 76, M. Mamakwa	
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	3720
Mrs. Nina Tangri	3721
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	3722
Ms. Christine Hogarth	3723
Mr. John Fraser	3723
Mrs. Gila Martow	3724
Mr. Guy Bourgouin.....	3724
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	3725
Ending Discrimination in Automobile Insurance Act, 2019, Bill 42, Mr. Gill / Loi de 2019 mettant fin à la discrimination en matière d'assurance- automobile, projet de loi 42, M. Gill	
Mr. Parm Gill	3726
Mr. Gurratan Singh	3727
Mr. Tom Rakocevic.....	3728
Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria	3728
Mr. Faisal Hassan.....	3729
Miss Kinga Surma	3729
Mr. Amarjot Sandhu.....	3730
Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam.....	3730
Mr. Parm Gill	3730
Algoma University Amendment Act, 2019, Bill 79, Mr. Romano / Loi de 2019 modifiant la Loi sur l'Université Algoma, projet de loi 79, M. Romano	
Mr. Ross Romano.....	3731
Mr. Chris Glover	3732
Mr. Stephen Lecce	3733
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	3734
Miss Kinga Surma.....	3734

Ms. Marit Stiles.....	3735
Mr. Michael Parsa.....	3735
Mr. Ross Romano.....	3736
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2019, Bill 76, Mr. Mamakwa / Loi de 2019 relative à la Déclaration des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones, projet de loi 76, M. Mamakwa	
The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French)	3736
Ending Discrimination in Automobile Insurance Act, 2019, Bill 42, Mr. Gill / Loi de 2019 mettant fin à la discrimination en matière d'assurance- automobile, projet de loi 42, M. Gill	
The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French)	3737
Algoma University Amendment Act, 2019, Bill 79, Mr. Romano / Loi de 2019 modifiant la Loi sur l'Université Algoma, projet de loi 79, M. Romano	
Second reading agreed to	3737
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2019, Bill 76, Mr. Mamakwa / Loi de 2019 relative à la	

Déclaration des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones, projet de loi 76, M. Mamakwa	
Second reading agreed to	3737
Ending Discrimination in Automobile Insurance Act, 2019, Bill 42, Mr. Gill / Loi de 2019 mettant fin à la discrimination en matière d'assurance- automobile, projet de loi 42, M. Gill	
Second reading agreed to	3738

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Supply Act, 2019, Bill 81, Mr. Bethlenfalvy / Loi de crédits de 2019, projet de loi 81, M. Bethlenfalvy	
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	3738
Hon. Victor Fedeli.....	3740
Ms. Sandy Shaw.....	3741
Mr. Stan Cho	3745
Mr. Gilles Bisson	3747
Mr. Doug Downey	3749
Second reading vote deferred.....	3751

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 March 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 mars 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH CARE
ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LES SOINS DE SANTÉ
POUR LA POPULATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 20, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act concerning the provision of health care, continuing Ontario Health and making consequential and related amendments and repeals / Projet de loi 74, Loi concernant la prestation de soins de santé, la prorogation de Santé Ontario, l'ajout de modifications corrélatives et connexes et des abrogations.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: It is a pleasure for me to rise today and speak on Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act. This act is very close, near and dear to my heart, because my wife has been a family doctor in Markham for the last 20 years. This is my everyday dining table talk: how we can improve the health care act and what challenges our residents are faced with, not only in Markham but in Ontario. This is a day-to-day conversation. It's really a pleasure to stand here today and speak about the health care act.

I would like to thank the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Deputy Premier for the vision and the leadership she has demonstrated in the development and presentation of the proposed legislation. It is both visionary and transformative for everyone in the province.

The government has a long-term plan to strengthen and to fix the public health care system by focusing directly on the needs of Ontario's patients and families. Speaker, the operative word here is "directly," giving the residents a system that is connected, that puts their needs first. Is it the right thing to do? Yes, we all need and deserve peace of mind when it comes to our health care system. It is time for patients to see an end to a system of specialized care, for example, that requires the patience and determination of salmon swimming upstream. That is why we are building a public health care system centred around the patient and redirecting the money to the front-line services where it belongs, improving the patient experience and also providing a better-connected care model.

The People's Health Care Act improves both access to care and the patient experience, and it does so in several

ways. A key element of this legislation is the organization of health care providers to work as one efficient and coordinated team. That team will focus on patients and specific local needs. A patient would experience an easier transition from one health care provider to another. Also, many people in my riding of Markham-Thornhill and across the province will see the new system with one patient story and one patient record on one health care plan.

Mr. Speaker, who among us has not sat with a family member in need of serious medical treatment, and discussed and debated internally, or openly with loved ones, about how best to access the health care system? Well, help has come, Speaker. Help has at last arrived.

This legislation, if passed, will provide patients, families and caregivers the assistance they require in navigating the health care system 24/7: a system where family doctors, hospitals, and home and community care providers work in unison as a team; a system where, within these teams, providers can communicate directly with each other, creating a seamless care experience for the patients and their families; a system where patients are supported when transitioning from one health care service to another; a system that truly puts the patient at the centre of care, where and when it is needed.

Multiple provincial agencies will be integrated. Specialized provincial programs will be melded into a single agency, providing a central point of accountability and oversight for the system.

How does this make it better for the patient? By offering clinical guidance and support for providers, patients receive better in-depth care as a result.

For years, people have been discussing the concept of secure digital tools, including, most importantly, an online health care record and a virtual care option for patients, bringing our system into the 21st century.

We owe a better health care plan to Ontarians. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and her team have examined the system and concluded that we can do better and we must do better. As the minister so eloquently stated, if we expect real improvements, where patients will experience positive change first-hand, we need much better coordination of service. It must be better organized around the needs of the people and around the desired outcomes.

Speaker, I have spent much of my working life engaged in health care issues. I have continued constantly because of my wife, constantly with front-line providers within the system as a former councillor of the city of Markham. I was a senior communications—worked with communications people. This experience by no means makes me a

health care expert, but I understand the health care system very well. It has provided me with better tools to appreciate both the systemic problems with health care and the need to find more effective solutions.

Change is never easy. Some build their lives around a process, no matter how haphazard or ill-conceived that process might be. They develop a mechanism to hope and adapt until a pattern develops that becomes somehow acceptable through habits. Little or no time is ever spent examining what would make it dramatically better for the provider or better for the patient. We human beings are creatures of routine. Even the most spontaneous among us stick to a lot of routine and habits in life. For many of us, it is challenging to try different approaches to the problems in our life. Albert Einstein is widely credited with saying the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results.

Our visionary Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and her parliamentary assistants have not fallen into that trap. They knew that we needed and deserved different results, and they challenged themselves to look at an aging system in a dynamic new light. They're not afraid of change; they have embraced it. Nor do they fear the challenges caused by that change.

0910

The new patient-centric approach afforded with Bill 74 is paired with an historic investment in long-term care for seniors and better mental health and addictions services for families.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, that my mother is 92. She was diagnosed with dementia. I understand how mental illness has impacted seniors. There's a tsunami wave of seniors coming into the cities and the province, and this bill is very important—how we can take care of seniors. Also, my mother-in-law is 84 and is living with me. I understand their challenges day to day. It's in front of my eyes. When I wake up in the morning and when I go to bed, I can see some of the challenges that are faced by our seniors.

Our government is investing a huge chunk of money—\$3.8 billion over 10 years—to establish a connected and comprehensive system for mental health and addiction treatment, and is adding 15,000 new long-term-care beds over five years and 30,000 new beds over 10 years.

Our government for the people is committed and focused. We promised that we would end hallway medicine, and we are fully committed to making good on the promise. We all know of the challenges faced by Ontarians; the financial hardship is clear. This province has a monthly interest payment on its debt of over \$1 million.

Our government is taking a comprehensive, pragmatic approach to address our public health care system with the support provided through Bill 74, one that would ensure it will remain sustainable for all Ontarians when and where they need it. I would encourage all of my colleagues to support this important proposed legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jamie West: Good morning, everybody. I want to thank my colleague from Markham–Thornhill for his comments. One of the things that stood out to me is that he said, “How does this make it better for the patient?” That's the number one comment. I'm sure all my colleagues would agree. Knocking on doors—the riding of Sudbury was no different than yours. The number one comment that I heard in Sudbury from people at the door was, “We need to fix hallway medicine”—absolutely number one. Number two is long-term care. Long-term care is broken. It's underfunded. There are not enough beds—number one and number two.

The people in Sudbury were honest with me. People would tell me that they're voting for me or they're not voting for me, or they're card-carrying holders of whatever, and then they would say, “When you're elected, we need to fix hallway medicine.”

I have two quotes here that I wrote down. One was: “I am a Conservative. I believe in fiscal responsibility, but you have to pay for what is important. Our hospitals need to be fully funded.” I heard versions of that again and again from people who told me they were Conservative, that they supported this government, that you have to pay for what you need and what's important.

The other thing I heard that stood out for me and stuck in my mind eight months later was that the workers in long-term-care facilities “are me. They are family when I am not with my family,” and you need to pay them appropriately.

The problem we have here is that, of all the doors I knocked on—and we all knocked on many, many doors—not one single person said that what health care needs is a super-agency, that what health care needs is to take your voice from the north, from Sudbury, and bring it to downtown Toronto, in the 416.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: They did say they needed coordination.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The minister will come to order.

Mr. Jamie West: Not one person said to me that what we need is more bureaucracy, that we don't need more front-line workers, we don't need more money into the hospitals, but what we need is to be centralized and to use our OHIP money to pay for people to make a profit outside of the public sector.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Come to order.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All members will have the opportunity to stand and have their voices heard during questions and comments, so please use your time accordingly, and let's not heckle.

Further questions and comments.

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Je suis ravie de me lever aujourd'hui et de parler au sujet du projet de loi 74 sur les soins de santé pour la population. Je remercie le député de Markham–Thornhill et aussi la députée de Sudbury pour leurs paroles.

Madame la Présidente, pendant la campagne électorale, notre gouvernement s'est engagé envers la population de l'Ontario à mettre fin aux soins de santé dans les couloirs, et nous sommes fermement déterminés à tenir cette promesse. Les patients et leurs familles se perdent dans notre système de santé et attendent trop longtemps pour recevoir des soins. Cela a un impact négatif sur la santé et le bien-être des patients et de leurs proches, à la fois physiquement et mentalement. Le système de santé est confronté par des contraintes de capacité et ne dispose pas de la combinaison adéquate de services, des lits ou d'outils numériques pour être prêt pour une population croissante et vieillissante ayant des besoins de soins de plus en plus complexes.

C'est la raison pour laquelle nous construisons un système de santé public centré sur le patient et réaffectons l'argent aux services de première ligne, où il se doit, pour améliorer l'expérience du patient et fournir des soins de meilleure qualité et plus connectés, un système dans lequel les médecins de famille, les hôpitaux et les fournisseurs de soins à domicile et en milieu communautaire travaillent à l'unisson et en équipe.

Au fur et à mesure que nous proposons des améliorations nécessaires et attendues dans le domaine des soins de santé de la province, les Ontariens continueront d'avoir accès aux soins de santé publics fiables, couverts par l'assurance-santé, et notre plan améliorera le système de santé afin que les personnes aient accès aux soins plus rapides, mieux coordonnés, là où ils sont nécessaires.

La population de l'Ontario a toujours été et restera la priorité de notre gouvernement. Nous allons créer un système de santé public qui fonctionne pour tout le monde.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: This bill is not about ending hallway medicine. This bill is about making sure that the for-profit health care companies get a piece of the \$62-billion pie.

Let me tell you what I see in the future. The first thing I see is that—there is a very high demand right now for people to be able to access their electronic health records. They want to know the results of their tests. They want to know the results of their CAT scans, their MRIs etc. There are “vultures” around here right now—that’s the word I will use—but the real word is for-profit companies that want to charge each and every one of us to have access to our electronic health records. This is something that Ontarians want, and this is something that Ontarians will probably have to pay for. It doesn’t have to be like this. We already have the Ontario Laboratory Information System—all paid for by the taxpayers—that we should all have access to, but we don’t. Women’s College already has a portal where people are able to book their appointments, to change them, to see their lab work, and this is all done with public money.

But what will happen with this government? I can see it, Speaker: They will invest in technology. What does that mean? They will give money to the for-profits, who will then sell to us access to our medical records, because this

is not covered by medicare; therefore you’re able to charge for it, and the opportunities to charge will continue to multiply.

It doesn’t have to be like this. This information, first of all, should be protected. I have a great problem with thinking that the for-profits—most of them are international companies based in the States—will be here in Ontario selling me access to my health records. I have a great problem with this. I guarantee you that this bill allows this to happen, and it will under this government—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Smith: I’d like to take some points from the member from Markham–Thornhill, because some of the things he said definitely need to be repeated.

We’re developing a long-term plan by focusing directly on the patient. That can’t be emphasized enough. We’re focusing on the patient. The question that’s being asked throughout this entire process is: How does it help the patient experience? How does it help the patient? The system is being designed around the patient.

Another thing that he said sticks with me because I think this is also very important: We’re developing an organization of health care as one system—one patient story, one patient record, one patient plan. It sounds like something that should have been obvious from the very beginning, as we were developing health care over the last 152 years. It should have been one patient story, one patient record, one patient plan, but somewhere along the way, we lost that. We’re trying to get that back so that we have again—from the member from Markham–Thornhill—a system where the patient is supported.

0920

He talked about Albert Einstein and his quote that insanity is doing the same thing and expecting a different result. I’m going to give a quote from a member from the opposite party. We heard that the Juravinski Hospital is operating at 120% capacity, meaning that people are being treated in hallways and that people are being discharged who are not ready to leave the hospital. We heard it loud and clear: It’s time for change. We’re implementing change for the patients.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Markham–Thornhill for his wrap-up.

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I’d like to thank the member from Mississauga Centre and the member from Peterborough–Kawartha. Thank you for the kind remarks.

Madam Speaker, I could speak for hours and hours about how we can modernize our health care system. It’s very near and dear to my heart because of my family; they’ve been in the medical profession for many, many years. My wife has run a family medical centre for the last 21 years in Markham, and she has seen patients from emergency to family physician and walk-in clinic, and also sees a lot of young people and youth with mental illnesses and children with special needs. This is very close to my heart.

I have to thank the minister for coming with innovative ideas on how we can improve our medical system and health care system for the 21st century, that can fit into the 21st century.

Our government committed to the people of Ontario during the election campaign that we would end hallway health care, and we are fully committed to delivering on that promise.

If I go to a family doctor's office, any family doctor's office, in Markham, in my riding, or in Scarborough, if you want to see the good doctor, you have two hours' waiting time. That's why we're trying to end hallway medicine. But it's not only hallway medicine; it's also patients waiting at the reception area. That is unacceptable.

That's why we are building a public health care system centred around the patient and redirecting the money to the front-line services where it belongs, to improve the patient experience and provide better and connected care. The end vision for the public health care system is where patient and family will have access to faster, better and more-connected services.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's always a pleasure to rise and talk on behalf of the residents of Niagara Falls, and in particular on Bill 74, the privatization of the health care act. That's what this is about: It's about privatizing our health care. What I found very interesting over the last few weeks was that when the NDP found out that there was a secret meeting in a secret building you'd put together, the minister said—I didn't say this; the minister said it—that she'd never seen the bill.

So, my question to all the Conservatives over there: How can you be the Minister of Health, with \$57 billion, which is what we're spending on health, and you never saw the bill? How does that happen on your side? That should never, ever happen.

So, now what has happened is, we're looking at privatizing health care.

My colleague from Peterborough-Kawartha, I think it was, talked about health care. Well, let me tell you about health care in your own riding, my friend. In the Niagara Falls-St. Catharines area, we closed hospitals. When you guys were in government, quite frankly, you closed 26 hospitals and laid off 6,000 nurses. That's why we ended up with hallway medicine, just for the record.

But in Peterborough-Kawartha, you've got a new hospital. You know this—the member knows that. And so does St. Catharines. But what was the difference? The difference was, your hospital was built with publicly funded, publicly delivered—and do you know what the cost was? Some \$375 million. It's approximately 345 beds. Sounds like a pretty good deal. My understanding is, the hospital is pretty good right now.

Well, here's what happens when you privatize it and you do a P3. St. Catharines has a brand new hospital. Under the Liberals—who, by the way, did a terrible, terrible job on health care when they froze at 0% increases

to the budget as their hydro bills went up 300%. But getting back to the privatization, because I want that member to understand, in St. Catharines they built a beautiful hospital, privately built, and it's being privately run today. Do you know what the cost was of that, member? Maybe you can yell it out. It was \$1.1 billion.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Billion.

Mr. Wayne Gates: That's with a B—some \$600 million more than what it cost to build almost the exact same hospital in Peterborough. Now you know why the corporations—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Sorry to interrupt, but I would remind the member to direct his remarks to and through the Speaker and not to engage directly across the floor.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I appreciate that. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's just kind of the way I work.

So this is why corporations—Madam Speaker, I'll try and look at you and not look at my colleague from Peterborough-Kawartha. This is why private companies all over Canada want part of the health care. There's money in it. Do you think they care about hallway medicine? Do you think they care about long-term-care facilities? I'll tell you what they care about: They care about profit. That's the problem that we're having with your bill.

But I still don't understand how the minister cannot even know anything about the bill when it's almost the exact same bill as what was presented in this House. I say to my colleagues over there from the Conservatives: I would think, as a minister, you would at least have read the bill before it was done, or participated in those debates and those discussions on what we need in health care. I understand she has to defend it. I get that. But I don't know how you defend private health care.

Even the Conservatives—I know my colleagues might remember this guy: Tommy Douglas. You might remember him. How many—I'm sorry, Madam Speaker. You can put your hand up. How many remember Tommy Douglas? Just a few years ago, they had a poll across Canada—not just in Ontario but right across the country: Who was the greatest Canadian of all time? I thought it was going to be Don Cherry—

Interjection: How about Wayne Gretzky?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Or Wayne Gretzky. But it wasn't. It was Tommy Douglas, because he brought publicly funded health care to Canada, and it went right across the country. I'm going to age myself here. It came in in the 1960s under Tommy Douglas.

My mum and dad had five children. There wasn't publicly funded health care at that time, and because my brother was extremely sick for a number of years, they had to pay out of their own pocket. My parents had to make some choices: Do they make sure that my brother gets the health care he needs and pay out of their wallet, pay out of their card—I can show it to you. Oh, you can't do that in here. They didn't have a card at that time, so they had to pay.

So you know what happened to that? For 10 years our family was taking care of my brother to try to get him

healthy, and I'm happy to say today—he still has challenges, but he's still alive and he's still here today. But we ended up living in poverty. I knew what it was like to go to bed with no supper. I knew what it was like to have no clothes. I knew what it was like to go to school with my jeans—today, they're in fashion—with patches on them or holes in them. Why was it done like that? It wasn't because my dad didn't work. It wasn't because my mum worked in the fish store on Queenston Road across from the hospital. They couldn't afford their health care.

What are we doing? Why are we allowing private companies to take over our health care? Do we have issues around health care? Do we have a crisis in health care? I told you why it started. It started when you closed hospitals. It starts when you lay off front-line workers. It starts when the Liberals freeze their budgets at 0% year after year after year. That's why we had hallway medicine. It wasn't because we need the private sector to come in and take it from us. Wake up. What are we doing?

We came here for one reason and one reason only: to make sure that we can take care of our family, our kids and their kids and our grandkids. There's nothing in this country that's more important than a publicly funded health care system. Do not allow the corporations to take that from us.

0930

I want to close on—I've only got a few minutes left, but this is a very important issue in my riding. I apologize that I didn't get to my speech. I'd like to close on a topic that's barely touched on in this bill: mental health. I want to talk about mental health in Niagara.

Four months ago in this Legislature, this government supported my motion to bring more mental health funding to Niagara. The front-line groups put together a budget that was reasonable and explained how this could save lives. I want the PCs to hear this: save lives. The funding would have been used to expand services and operate three 24/7 sites. That's what front-line groups told us they needed. I'm not saying it; the front-line groups are saying it. Where is that funding, Madam Speaker? Why have these groups not heard from this government? We haven't heard a word from them. I sent three separate letters asking the minister to meet with them, and nothing.

Since that time—and pay attention, brothers and sisters—we've had four highly publicized deaths by suicide in my community, and many more don't make the papers. Families are struggling. Front-line workers are stretched thin. People are suffering. This government stood here in this House and made a commitment to those families. When do they plan to acknowledge that commitment?

Enough is enough. This government agreed to that funding, and the front-line service workers need it now. When can we expect the minister to talk to CAMH and talk to the front-line groups and get that funding flowing?

This bill offers no major overhaul of the mental health crisis situation we have across the province or in Niagara. People need help, and they need this Premier to give a damn. Neither this bill nor the action of this government

seems to indicate that they're willing to do that. So I'm asking the government—and pay attention, please, because people in Niagara are dying. I'm asking this government to do better, to immediately call these service providers in Niagara and get the funding done.

Madam Speaker, I hope that addresses some of the major flaws in this bill, but I want to close and talk to my colleague from Niagara West. Oh, he's not here.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Oh, I'm sorry. I apologize. I retract that. I didn't mean that.

The member from Niagara West goes to Brock University. He's a very smart kid. I'm not saying anything bad about him. But he supported my motion, and do you know what happened three weeks ago? A young girl who was at Sir Winston Churchill and who went to Brock University—an honour student, a great athlete—committed suicide at 19 years old.

We need the funding in Niagara now. Talk to your colleagues, and get the money—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'm proud to speak in support of Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act, introduced by the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I would like to thank her for her leadership on this important legislation.

Over the past few years, I've consulted with front-line staff, patients and families at our hospital in Mississauga-Lakeshore. Over and over, I heard the same concerns: We have too many people waiting on the wait-lists and too many patients treated in hallways. According to the ministry, in Mississauga, only 36% have an MRI within the target time, and only 22% in an ER are admitted within the target time. The average wait time is 22 hours.

After 15 years of Liberal mismanagement, Ontario's health care system is broken. Billions were wasted on eHealth and Ornge scandals and expanding the bureaucratic LHINs and sub-LHINs: \$100 million a year on LHIN bureaucrats, \$1 billion a year on home care bureaucrats. That's nearly 40% of the entire home care budget. This has drained our system of resources for front-line care, for our doctors and nurses.

Speaker, that's why I'm proud of this bill. It represents a long-term plan for a better-connected public health care system. It will better meet the patients' and providers' needs and make it easier to get the services you need.

In Mississauga, Michelle DiEmanuele, president of Trillium Health Partners, says that this bill is “an important milestone for the future of health care. It's only by working in partnership with government, front-line staff, patients and their families that together we will be able to build a new kind of health care for a healthier community.”

Speaker, I completely urge everybody to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Because I only have two minutes, I just want it to be clear to everybody. You hear the Conservatives say that you will be able to take your OHIP card

to cover your health care services, and somehow they think that is public health care. What we are talking about is publicly paid for, publicly delivered, publicly run health care. I don't want my money to go to the profits of a private corporation who will not properly staff their facility and who will not fairly compensate their employees. When their only concern is their own profit, that is not public health care; that is private health care. That is what Bill 74 will do. You will put more of our money, Ontarians' money, into the pockets of private companies whose bottom line is to make as much profit as possible.

We recently had a strike in Windsor at a medical lab that went on for weeks. It was a private company that put those low-wage workers out on the picket line for weeks because they would rather put profits in their own pockets than pay those workers fairly.

With the little time I have left, I want to mention to the government that we have 86 women public health nurses on strike in Windsor that were put out on strike on International Women's Day because all they are asking for is pay equity. Pay equity: That's all these women are asking for. What we need is for this government to actually invest in publicly delivered health care and to get these women back to the bargaining table.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Harris: There's a lot of rhetoric again coming from the other side of the House today, Madam Speaker. All this talk about privatization and workers' rights and unions and pay equity, but I have yet to hear anybody talk about patients. The patients in this province should be the number one focus—number one.

The NDP got a chance to form government once in 152 years, Madam Speaker—one time for four years. They went from 74 seats to 17 and third-party status. They had four years to try and fix the health care system, and guess whose government had to come in and clean up? My father's, the Mike Harris government, in 1995 had to come and clean up the mess that Bob Rae made. The NDP bankrupted this province, and the PC government had to come in and clean it up. And I'll tell you what, Madam Speaker—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I apologize to the member who does indeed have the floor. The House will come to order. I have no concerns about warning or removing members who cannot abide by the rules of the House.

The member may continue with his questions and comments.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We had to come in and we had to clean up the mess that was left from an NDP government. I have heard absolutely no constructive criticism, no plan, come from the NDP, the opposition across the aisle—nothing. All they have is complaining and bickering and whining. They have come forward with absolutely no plan to help fix the health care system here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments? A reminder to all members

that if they have the opportunity to speak, they may take it by standing and being recognized. Otherwise, enough.

I recognize the member for Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the member for Niagara—did I get it right? I'm terrible at that. He made a very good point, and that is that once we engage the private sector to deliver health services, inherently they have to make money. No businesses are operating as a philanthropical organization out of the goodness of their heart. They are trying to return money to their shareholders.

0940

He used a really good example, and that is the building of a hospital—pretty well the same hospital built in two communities. One was built as a private sector P3 model, and the other one was built as a public sector hospital. There was a \$600-million difference in price when it came to construction. Why would we use our taxpayers' dollars and give that money to the private sector just so they can make a profit? I would rather take that \$600 million and give it to our hospitals and other systems across the system in order to make sure that they can provide services to people on the front lines.

To my friend from Kitchener: I was here when the NDP government was there, and I was here when your father was there. I've got to tell you, that's not what happened. In fact, what happened is, you guys closed hospitals. You laid off nurses. You created a crisis in health care. You equated those people—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Kitchener—Conestoga will come to order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —with people with hula hoops. There was a fight for the entire time that government was in place, because what they were doing was trying to move their ideology through the health care system, and that's what this government is trying to do.

So, privatizing home care: I remember we were the government that created home care. The first government in the history of Ontario that created a coordinated approach to home care was done by the NDP. One of the first things the Mike Harris government did when they came to power was they privatized the darn thing. And now we've got this hodgepodge system that's in place because of the actions of, first, the Conservatives under Harris, and all of the changes that happened under the Liberals.

It's time we get back to the basics. It's time we vote for an NDP government to protect public health care.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Niagara Falls for his two-minute response.

Mr. Wayne Gates: First of all, I would like to say thank you to all my colleagues who had comments. But I'm not going to sit here and allow anybody to talk about the Mike Harris government when it comes to health care. It was Mike Harris who closed 26 hospitals and laid off 6,000 nurses. But how many people can remember—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Kitchener—Conestoga will come to order. Stop

the clock. The member for Kitchener–Conestoga will come to order, and has had the opportunity to have his voice heard, and is very close to being asked—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Let me tell you about why people are using our health care system under Mike Harris today. Anybody remember Walkerton, where seven people died because of the cuts in the privatization of our services? Today, those same people in Walkerton are still suffering. They're still using our health care system. So, when you're going to stand up and talk about health care—

Mr. Mike Harris: Madam Speaker, point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member on a point of order.

Mr. Mike Harris: I believe the member from Niagara Falls is insinuating that Mike Harris had something to do with the deaths of seven people in Walkerton. I don't think that's very parliamentary, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): That is not a point of order, but I will remind all members that the tenor of this place depends on how we conduct ourselves.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much. I didn't get a chance to say it in my two minutes, but seeing we brought it up, you know what privatization does? In St. Catharines, in the Niagara area, they privatized the cleaning of our hospitals—to an American company, by the way. You know what happened? They were told they could only spend five or seven minutes in each room cleaning, and we got C. diff in our hospitals—every single hospital. Do you know what happened, Madam Speaker? Thirty-nine people died from C. diff. What they found out as they did the investigation—because it didn't just stay in Canada; it went right into the States; they talked about it. They found out it was because of the privatization of the cleaning services in that hospital. It was only 39 people that they said died from C. diff. A lot of the other ones, they said, died from heart disease and diabetes, but we know it was C. diff.

So, when you're talking about privatization of health care, don't do it. Publicly fund it—public health care.

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

Miss Kinga Surma: Thank you to my caucus colleagues and members opposite. I would like to take this opportunity to discuss my thoughts on the innovations and efficiencies being proposed on public health care in The People's Health Care Act, Bill 74.

Prior to acknowledging the bill before us today by our Deputy Premier, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, my friend and the member from Newmarket–Aurora, and her hard-working staff and the ministry, I think it is important to discuss the broken health care system that we inherited from the previous Liberal government.

Many constituents across the province spoke to my colleagues and I during the election about their dissatisfaction

with the health care system. Some issues we encountered included:

- the unreasonably long wait times in emergency rooms;
- the lack of family doctors in our communities;
- the inability of the LHINs to address cases where service delivery and care were not meeting the expected standards;
- a lack of hospital beds, resulting in hallways being flooded with patients receiving hallway health care;
- dangerously long wait times for mental health resources and specialists, especially for those severely impacted by mental health issues, causing life-threatening scenarios.

I am blessed to represent the best riding in the province. I represent family-oriented, hard-working people who are very engaged in their local community. Demographically speaking, my riding has a large population of seniors. My seniors have worked, raised families and contributed to their communities in Etobicoke for many years, if not their entire lives. But as I got to know more and more of my senior residents, the more openly they spoke about their challenges with the health care system. Their biggest challenge was not only the long wait times and the diminishing quality of care, but often the frustrations with simply finding the right person to contact, to help guide them in the right direction. They felt abandoned, Madam Speaker.

It became evident that the strategies and budgetary priorities of the previous government were not meeting the modern needs of Ontario's people. Since taking office, I have visited hospitals and I have spoken to many health care professionals who are very honest about the challenges and pressures they felt, trying to provide the best health care with limited resources. They showed me where they had to keep medical supplies in hallways next to patients because there wasn't any room. So I would often ask them the same question: How did this happen and how did we let this get so bad? Their response: years of "Help" being ignored, and the lack of planning.

Our government committed to the people of Ontario during the election and we campaigned that we would end hallway health care, and we are fully committed to delivering on that promise. Since our government took office in June, we have been proud to share several health care improvements with the people of this great province. These announcements have included the rolling-out of 5,000 hospital beds, with thousands more over the next five years; a \$90-million investment in hospital programming and infrastructure; as well as a historic investment of \$1.9 billion, to be matched by the federal government, to develop a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy.

With all of this considered, we know we can do more, and we will. This sentiment is the spirit of this legislation, Bill 74, which we are discussing today. The fact is that Ontario's health care system is on life support. Patients are forgotten on waiting lists, more than 1,000 patients are receiving care in hallways every day, and the average wait time to access a bed in long-term care is 146 days.

Patients and families are getting lost in the health care system, falling through the cracks and waiting too long for care. This has a negative impact on the health and well-being of patients and their loved ones, both physically and mentally.

The health care system is facing capacity pressures today, and it does not have the right mix of services, beds or digital tools to be ready for a growing and rapidly aging population with more complex care needs. That is why we are building a public health care system centred on patient care and redirecting money to front-line services where it belongs, to improve the patient experience and provide better and connected care.

Our government believes that public funding should be directed to front-line services to continuously improve patient experience, constantly promote better value, ensure better outcomes for every dollar spent and improve the overall physical health, mental health and well-being of Ontarians. This includes ensuring we are committed to a sustainable, digitally enabled, publicly funded health care system that is built to last. Our government is not ignoring the call for help and we are, Madam Speaker, planning for the future.

We envision a public health care system where patients and families will have access to faster, better and more-connected services. We aim to do this by establishing a new model of integrated public health care delivery which will put each patient at the centre of a connected care system all across Ontario—a system where family doctors, hospitals, and home and community care providers work together so that patients and their families are not frustrated and stressed. We hope to accomplish this by creating a new single provincial agency that will remove duplication while replicating and amplifying best-in-class clinical guidance and approaches to care—a system where patients are supported when transitioning from one health care service to another; a system that truly puts the patient at the centre of care where and when it is needed.

Modernizing the health care system will take time, but we will continue to listen to the people who plan and work on the front lines, including nurses, doctors and other care providers, as we implement our public health care strategy.

As we bring forward desperately needed and overdue improvements to health care in this province, Ontarians will continue to access reliable public health care through OHIP, and our plan will improve the health system so that people have access to faster, better-coordinated public health care where it is needed and when it is needed.

The people of Ontario have been and always will be our government's priority and focus. This was lost with the previous administration. I was so proud to grow up in a country and a province that were recognized for having the best health care system in the world. Now we know that not to be true. I am proud to serve today so that our government can restore Ontario's reputation and leadership in public health care.

I would like to thank the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Health, for having enough courage to admit where we

have failed the people of this great province and offer improvements. The minister was not afraid to take action and speak up, knowing that sometimes the truth is hard to hear.

It will take many years to restore and modernize our health care system so that we can once again provide the best health care in the world, but if we don't, like the many patients, we'll fall through the cracks. It will take an enormous effort to bring about the changes in our health care system that patients themselves have been demanding. We have an opportunity to build on the success of our public health care system, but we'll have to recognize that a system built in the 1960s is not one that is ready to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

What has become clear to me in the short time that I have had the honour of serving is that while people appreciate the care they receive, they remain frustrated when attempting to access that care. A senior returning to an emergency room because he or she was unable to access timely home care is a failure, not of the health care professionals who provide the care, but of a system that is organized poorly. Long delays in emergency rooms, uneven care between urban and rural residents, communities without family doctors, long waiting lists for surgery and therapy, and frustration when your health professionals are not able to speak with each other is a failing of our system, not of the people who provide the care.

A 21st-century health care system is one where services can be accessed close to home and where health professionals have access to the latest tools and are part of a team that is focused on patient care.

I am proud that, once upon a time, we built one of the world's best health care systems. However, we have a responsibility to build on that success, to improve care and build a system that will serve Ontario patients for decades to come.

Madam Speaker, I would like to move that, pursuant to standing order 48, the question be now put.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order, please. The House will come to order.

Ms. Surma has moved that the question be now put. I am 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.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Todd Smith: No further business.

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

The House recessed from 0954 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to welcome guests from the riding of London North Centre who participated in the London Youth Advisory Council. We have Alice Balluku from ward 13, Joshua Monk from Western University, and Paris Liu from ward 5. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming Bruce Chapman of the Police Association of Ontario.

Mr. Norman Miller: I'm very pleased to welcome Hilary Jacob and her daughter Carly Merrick, who are here to have lunch with me on a visit to Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Bill Walker: I'm delighted to introduce Jayda Galbraith and Mike Spencer in the members' gallery. They're here to join me from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Ross Romano: I am very happy to introduce a guest from my riding of Sault Ste. Marie and my former alma mater, Donna Rogers. She is the academic dean of Algoma University, and she's here all the way from Sault Ste. Marie to support me in my PMB today. Thank you very much, Ms. Rogers, for being here today.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I would like to introduce my guests Joy Wakefield from Legal Aid Ontario, and Serena Purdy from the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation at the University of Toronto. Meegwetch.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I would like to welcome grade 5 students from St. Brendan Catholic School who are visiting the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I am going to ask the members to take their seats if they are in the chamber.

The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am delighted to welcome some of the elected representatives from the London Youth Advisory Council who have joined us today, along with the youth council director: Abdullah Al-Jarad, councillor for ward 8; Ainsley Jeffery, councillor for ward 10; Erika Juhasz, councillor for ward 14; and Elizabeth Muriithi, the youth council director. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I would like to welcome to the gallery today Donna Rogers, the dean of academics at Algoma University, who is here today to support the member from Sault Ste. Marie. Welcome.

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has a point of order.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: On a point of order, Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent so that members can wear the multi-coloured bow to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow members to wear a multi-coloured bow in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Agreed? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, Ontario's Integrity Commissioner released his report detailing the deeply flawed process that led the Premier to appoint a family friend as the head of the OPP. While the Premier spent yesterday pointing to page 1 of that report, it's not clear that he read the other 99 pages.

Last year, the Premier declared that this was "a transparent choice" that he and his chief of staff, Dean French, had zero influence over, which the Integrity Commissioner makes pretty clear was absolutely not the case.

Does the Acting Premier believe the Premier's claim that he and his chief of staff, Dean French, had no role in the flawed process?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: From the very beginning of this process, we said that we would welcome and would wait for the Integrity Commissioner's report, unlike the NDP opposite, who chose to drag good police officers through the mud, who chose to appoint victims.

I want to quote from the commissioner's report: "It was my opinion that on the evidence, Premier Ford did not breach any of the sections of the act, as alleged. I found that the Premier stayed at arm's length from the recruitment process and that he believed it to be independent."

I think the Integrity Commissioner did his job. Now I wish the NDP would do their job and stop dragging OPP officers and our offices through the mud.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members, please take their seats.

Restart the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I would like to remind the minister that from the beginning, the Premier said that it doesn't matter what the Integrity Commissioner was going to report because he was going to have Mr. Taverner at the front of the OPP regardless. Of course, Mr. Taverner decided otherwise, which is what the people of Ontario deserve. They also deserve and expect a higher ethical standard than that it technically wasn't illegal.

On December 5 of last year, the Premier stated that he "didn't know the decision until ... it was made" that his family friend had been offered the top policing job in the province. That's pretty unbelievable, considering details in the commissioner's report which describe constant streams of text messages flying back and forth between the

head of the hiring committee and Dean French, the Premier's chief of staff.

Does the Acting Premier believe that the Premier and his chief of staff didn't know that Taverner got the job until the decision was made?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, it's pretty obvious that from the very beginning of this process, the NDP did not want the Premier to have any interest in the OPP and the leadership within it. It's a completely false premise. They have chosen to sully individuals' reputations, including, frankly, my own deputy minister. It was, from the beginning, a politically motivated hatchet job. We categorically refuse to participate in that. As the Integrity Commissioner said, the complaints coming from the NDP and the Liberals based on the media reports were found to be "speculative and unsupported by the evidence received at this inquiry."

The NDP continue to believe that they can say whatever they want about police officers and send them through the mud. I don't think it's right. I think it's wrong, and we will continue to stand with our—

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

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, what's very clear is that the NDP official opposition did our job and we did it well. That's what's very clear, Speaker.

While the Premier was telling all of the people of Ontario that he didn't know the decision was made, Dean French, his chief of staff, admitted under oath that both he and the Premier recommended Taverner for the top job before the posting even went out. To quote Dean French, "We both recommended that" Taverner "be considered." That's straight from the report, Speaker. How does the Premier get from recommending Taverner for the top job to being totally surprised when he lands the position?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I think it's important to remind members of the House that the independent Integrity Commissioner did his job, the report has been tabled, the report has been made public and the Premier is 100% vindicated.

1040

From the very beginning, you chose to make this process political. You chose to take a 50-year veteran—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the minister to make her comments through the Chair.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker.

It was clear from the beginning that this complaint was frivolous and without merit. The Integrity Commissioner's report clearly shows that. We will stand with our front-line police officers every day to make sure that they have the tools that they need to protect our citizens and to keep our streets safe. I only wish the NDP would do the same.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier, but I would suggest that the minister actually read the report.

While the Premier insists that the system works fine, here's what Ontarians actually read in yesterday's report: The Premier's friend was approached about taking the job before it was even posted. The Premier's chief of staff received regular updates on that friend's progress from the secretary of cabinet, Steve Orsini, the head of the supposedly independent hiring committee. The independent recruitment agency even helped the Premier's friend draft his cover letter.

This might be technically legal, Speaker, but I'd hope that the Acting Premier has a much higher standard than that. Isn't it time for a full public inquiry, to take a real look at this stinking mess?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Deputy Premier. Get it right.

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

The question is to the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I understand that the NDP didn't get the answer they wanted from the independent officer of the assembly. I understand that their narrative of a quality 50-year veteran who would have been an excellent choice as the commissioner—I understand they didn't get what they wanted. But let's be real. The Integrity Commissioner has done his investigation. The report has been issued. It has been made public and, as I said at the beginning, is a 100% vindication of Premier Ford and our government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, again, I recommend that every one of those members take the time to read the report, because in his report the Integrity Commissioner states, "A public inquiry may be useful as a post-mortem exercise where there are not the same live issues outstanding."

Now that the commissioner has done his work under his limited mandate, there are still many, many questions that the people of Ontario deserve answers to. Will this government do the right thing by the people of Ontario and call a full public inquiry into this stinking mess?

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Minister?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: To be clear, you are suggesting that the independent Integrity Commissioner for the province of Ontario didn't do his job? I don't believe that. I believe there was a full investigation, as, frankly, was asked for by the NDP. Your own member from Brampton South asked for that investigation; it has happened. The report has happened.

Just because you don't like what the independent Integrity Commissioner found doesn't mean you can continue

to drag good front-line officers and OPP individuals through the mud. It's unacceptable. It's not right. You need to stop.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What's unacceptable, and what is not right, is that this minister is obviously completely unaware of what is in the Integrity Commissioner's report. That's what's unacceptable.

Again I say that the Integrity Commissioner's report makes it very clear that the job is not over. That's not what the opposition is saying; that's what the Integrity Commissioner is saying as well. He doesn't touch on the retaliatory firing of Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair, and he says in the report, if you read it, he wouldn't even attempt to resolve the issue concerning the Premier's request for an off-the-books, custom-fitted van. But he does make it clear, if you read it—he makes it clear—that this process—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please stop the clock. I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition. I have to be able to hear the questions that are being asked. I realize that many members are not participating, but the ones who are have to stop or they're going to be warned, and if they continue, they will be named.

I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition. Again, start the clock. Allow her to finish her question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker.

But he does make it clear, if you read the report—he makes it very clear—that this process was deeply, deeply flawed and that an inquiry could find answers. Will the government—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I can hear what's going on at that end of the chamber. The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry is warned.

Start the clock. The minister can respond.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I will attempt to lower the rhetoric in this place by again quoting from the Integrity Commissioner's report: "It was my opinion that on the evidence, Premier Ford did not breach any of the sections of the act, as alleged. I found that the Premier stayed at arm's length from the recruitment process and that he believed it to be independent."

We are going to move on with an excellent choice in incoming OPP commissioner Tom Carrique. I am looking forward to working with him to turn the page, so that our OPP officers get the support that they need to protect our province and to keep our citizens safe. If the NDP could join us in supporting front-line officers instead of continuing to malign them, that would be very helpful to ensure that our citizens are protected and our streets remain safe.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. Minutes ago, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services announced changes to the

government's scheme to reduce support for children with autism. Is the government finally ready to admit that their scheme was wrong, that it failed parents and failed children with autism?

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: This is a wonderful day for this government. This is a wonderful day for children with autism in the province of Ontario.

Before I answer the member opposite's question, I want to say thank you to Amy Fee and Doug Ford. Our government for the people is absolutely 100% committed to eliminating the wait-lists over the next 18 months, as I have said consistently in this House for the last month. We are going to make sure that those 23,000 children who were left to languish on a wait-list by the previous Liberal administration get off. We're going to ensure that we double—

Ms. Catherine Fife: You create the crisis.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: —the diagnostic hubs. We're going to make sure that we have an annual childhood budget from zero to 18 of \$130,000. We're going to make sure that there's choice in how parents spend that. I am so excited to talk in the supplementary about the enhancements we're going to make to that plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Parents have been clear that they don't want tweaks to the government's plans. They want and deserve a new plan—a plan that actually works for parents and, most importantly, works for children with autism.

Now the government is finally backtracking from their reckless scheme that really put parents through unnecessary stress and worry for the last number of months. Will they listen to parents finally? Don't try to fix the unfixable; come back with a brand new plan that does what it should have done in the first place, and a new minister that parents can trust and work with.

1050

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: That member opposite once wanted to clear the wait-list until we said we were going to do it. She wanted direct funding until we said we were going to do it. She opposed income testing until we decided we were going to get rid of it. She asked for an extension on contracts. That's what we're doing. We're going to make sure that we support those who have the most severity, and we're going to consult with them over the next few months.

But make no mistake: Our commitment to the people of Ontario, and our motivation, always has been that the 23,000, or three out of four, children who were denied service by their Ontario government are finally going to get it. We are enhancing our plan. We are spending more money than any government in the history of this country to support children with autism, and I would expect—

Interjections.

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

I apologize to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services that I had to stand up. I could not hear her because of the loud ovation by the other members in her caucus.

Start the clock. Next question.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Jill Dunlop: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. When our government took office, we were shocked to find that the previous Liberal government had left the province with a broken and bankrupt Ontario Autism Program: 23,000 children with autism were left to languish on wait-lists, and the minister had to go to the Treasury Board twice just to keep the broken Liberal program operating.

Can the minister explain to this House the work our government is doing to correct the course that the Liberals set us on and create a more fair Ontario Autism Program?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the question. It's very important. Obviously, we announced last month that our motivation would be to clear the wait-list of 23,000 children. We are going to achieve that in the next 18 months by doubling the investments into our diagnostic hubs and providing a childhood budget of \$140,000.

What I'm really excited about, Speaker, is—before, we were talking about allowing parents the choice for technological aids, respite and caregiver training. We have now expanded that to occupational therapy, as well as speech and language therapy. I know that is what parents have told us. They have told my PA Amy Fee that they had wanted to see that enhanced choice, and so today I was very proud to stand on behalf of Premier Ford and our government for the people to expand that enhancement to provide more choice for families whose children have autism.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Jill Dunlop: Thank you, Minister, for your tireless work to provide every child with access to service.

Speaker, I and many of my colleagues in this government have met with families across the province. We have heard many heartbreaking stories. A system that leaves three out of four children with little to no support from their government is unacceptable. It is clear to us that the existing system is unfair and must do more to deliver services to children as soon as possible.

Can the minister tell us about the work she is doing to provide service to every eligible child with autism across this province?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: As you know, Speaker, we inherited a broken and broke system. We had to inject an emergency \$102 million just to keep the current plan for 25% of the children in place. Therefore, we have also expanded our program to \$331 million over the last month.

But what I'm really excited about is that the new enhancements of this program will not just focus on clearing out wait-lists—which is incredibly important to me, which is our motivation—but we're going to create more choice for parents, for their children. We're going to extend the

contracts by six months for those who are existing in the program. We're going to consult with parents and clinicians throughout the next several months as we develop a needs test for those children who have the greatest severity. These are great enhancements to a very good, responsible plan that is fair, equitable and, most of all, sustainable.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Acting Premier. This morning, the minister announced changes to her cold, callous autism program, but she still doesn't have it right. What was missing from her announcement is a needs- and evidence-based program. We still have arbitrary age cut-offs that won't meet children's needs. In fact, it will devastate children and families.

When will the minister hold a second press conference to fix this mistake?

Interjections.

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

Minister? Or Deputy Premier, I should say.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Deputy Premier. I thank you for working with me on this file, as well as the Minister of Education, and I'm very excited that this government for the people is going to be taking seriously not only the issues with respect to children with autism, but for all of those with disabilities across this province. That's one of the things that we're committed to.

But if I listen to the member opposite's question, she clearly, when she attended my press conference, chose not to listen, because as I mentioned in the supplemental to the member from Simcoe North, we are actually engaging with the children and the parents of autism, and we are talking about how we can best develop a needs-based system by severity level. I was very clear both in the press conference as well as in this House that that's what we're moving to.

If the members opposite in the official opposition want to continue to fearmonger and want to continue to create rhetoric that only harms the debate, then they can go ahead and do that, but what they are doing is wrong and what we are doing is right.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, this minister has caused chaos for weeks, and we still do not have a needs-based program. If one family cannot afford services, it's one family too many. If one family has to sell their home, it's one family too many. If one child doesn't get therapy, it's one child too many. If one therapist loses their job, it's one therapist too many.

Why does this minister think that today's announcement is enough for families?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. There were multiple interjections from the government side, all

of which were unacceptable. I couldn't keep up with them all.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop it.

Start the clock. To the minister, to reply.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Why does the member opposite want to continue on with the status quo of the previous Liberal government's program, where 23,000 children were denied service by their Ontario government? Why does that member opposite not support direct funding, as she once did?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo is warned.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Why does that member opposite not support choice for parents, whether it's occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, technological aid, caregiver training or respite? Why does she not support that? Why doesn't she support extending the contracts by six months as we—

Miss Monique Taylor: How are they going to pay for all of that with \$5,000?

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Why does that member opposite refuse to support a consultation process that we're going to have throughout this province to ensure that we can best support children who are the most severe in terms of a needs assessment? Why doesn't she support any of that? I can tell you why: Because all they want to do is professionally protest and rile parents up, and that is irresponsible.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock again. There were a number of members of the official opposition yelling across the floor. I couldn't keep up with it all. There have been some warnings issued. Again, just to be clear, if we have to speak to you again, if you've been warned, you will be named and you'll be gone for the day. If that's your objective, we'll facilitate that.

Start the clock. Next question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Mr. Speaker, families in my riding know how important the Hurontario LRT project is for our future. I've also heard some concerns. One of them has to do with the routing. When people take transit, they want to get from point A to point B as quickly as possible.

The last government did not listen to the people. They expected commuters to switch trains before getting back on a route that is supposed to go north-south. That would add an unnecessary delay for commuters. Will the Minister of Transportation and Metrolinx make changes to the route that will get people where they have to go faster?

1100

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville for that question and for

representing his constituents, as do many of my caucus members here, regarding the Hurontario LRT.

As you know, they have been listening to the constituents. Lots of concerns about the route have been raised, and our government, as we proceed with these transit plans—we're listening as well. We're always thinking about people taking the trains—the staff. We're looking at how we can improve the trips for all the riders involved.

My PA, Kinga Surma, and I have been working with Metrolinx to come up with a more streamlined, efficient route plan for the Hurontario LRT. The loop that would have circled around Square One mall and forced a transfer has been eliminated. Instead, the new route will save time with a spur into Square One mall at Rathburn Road. There will be no need to switch trains anymore.

We understand that future needs may evolve and other investors may step forward, which would completely align with our transit-oriented development strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Residents of Mississauga and Brampton are excited about progress on the Hurontario LRT project. I would like to thank the minister for giving such an informative answer. I know that he believes in the Hurontario LRT as much as I do. A new transit line will boost development and create jobs, both during construction and as our economy grows along the route.

People want to know that the Hurontario LRT will be built on-budget. Since the Liberals left Ontario with a \$15-billion deficit, Mississauga residents understand that our LRT line must be built in a financially responsible way. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Transportation what he and Metrolinx are doing to ensure that the Hurontario line comes in under budget, so we can make this dream a reality.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks again for that follow-up question. Mr. Speaker, Metrolinx has made some adjustments to the design scope that will help build this project, while also protecting taxpayers' dollars. The plan is to reduce costs while still providing a fast, reliable and seamless customer experience, both on the new Hurontario LRT line and as it connects to GO Transit and other local systems.

Under the revised scope, the Hurontario LRT will provide 18 kilometres of reliable rapid transit with 19 stops and a dedicated right-of-way. The Hurontario LRT will link the GO stations at Port Credit and Cooksville, the Mississauga Transitway, Square One GO bus terminal, Brampton Gateway terminal, and key Züm and MiWay routes.

Metrolinx has made changes to other non-essential design elements to manage with the project budget. But moving forward, Metrolinx will report back with a detailed assessment of revised project costs and a construction timeline.

Speaker, we're working with Metrolinx. We're working with the people of this province. The Ontario government, with the PC caucus, is moving to get people moving forward as we open up this—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question is to the Acting Premier. For months, the government insisted that the hiring process that led to Ron Taverner's appointment was completely independent, yet yesterday, we learned that hours after Ron Taverner's appointment, the secretary of cabinet, who was chair of the supposedly independent committee, texted the Premier's chief of staff saying, "Independent of who? I'm the deputy minister to the Premier and Ron reported to Mario when he was at TPS. I would drop the word independent."

Why did the government keep defining the process as independent when the secretary of cabinet had asked that they stop doing so?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Now that the Integrity Commissioner has filed his report—which you actually initiated, as the member from Brampton North—I think it's important for members of all political parties to understand that this member from Brampton North has always made this process about politics. This is sour grapes, because when you applied to be a PC candidate, we said we had better people. When you—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): First of all, the member has to make her comments through the Chair. Secondly, I would caution her on her intemperate language.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: My apologies. When the member from Brampton North applied to be a Progressive Conservative candidate, we said, "No, thanks, we have better candidates." When the member from Brampton North took out a membership for Brampton North—this is about sour grapes from an individual who was politely declined to serve as a PC candidate and instead ran to the NDP to run—

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

There is a convention—I think a standing order—against personal attacks against other members. That was very close to the line. I would ask the members to remember that. It just creates disorder in the House.

We have an opportunity now for a supplementary question.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I hoped that the minister and everybody else on the other side would have read the report, but obviously it doesn't appear that they have.

My question to the Acting Premier: Steve Orsini wasn't the only person who believed the process wasn't independent. On page 68 of the report, the commissioner writes, "Mr. French indicated that he too believes that the panel was not independent...."

Why would the government insist the process was independent when the Premier's own chief of staff and the secretary of cabinet were certain it was not?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: This is a classic example of someone who won't take yes for an answer. You applied to the Integrity Commissioner. He did exactly what you wanted, which was to do a review. We've done—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll ask the minister to make her comments through the Chair.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: My apologies, Speaker.

The member opposite asked for the Integrity Commissioner's involvement. He did that.

He continues to sully good people's reputations—50-year-career front-line officers, deputy ministers who work for the public. I cannot understand why you continue to make this about individuals and drag people through the mud unnecessarily.

You've read the report. I've read the report—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ma question est pour le ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement.

As parliamentarians, our first commitment should be to the integrity of the democratic process. For me, prior to entering politics, it was very important to insist on better regulation of electoral financing. I was pleased that this House unanimously passed the 2016 election financing changes. The minister was one of the persons who voted in favour of that. Unfortunately, last fall, the government removed the certification, which basically allows for back-room funnelling of money.

Community members have reached out to me now. They're worried about the \$1,600 price tag for the fireside chat with the minister. I just want to ask him: Will the minister tell this House with 100% certainty whether everyone who purchased tickets to this event has paid with his or her own funds and will not be reimbursed by a third party?

Hon. Steve Clark: I've said in this House many times that our government for the people respects the rules of this House and the Legislature. I'm not particularly sure what this member is talking about in terms of a particular ticketed event. If she wants to send me the information, I'd be more than happy to peruse it at my convenience.

But I want to be clear: If a member of this House wants to have a particular fundraiser in their own riding or in another location, they need to be able to follow the rules, they need to be able to advertise the event that meets the criteria of the legislation, and they need to act with integrity. I have to tell you, Speaker, that every single time I've held an event in the past, I've felt quite open to contact the Chief Electoral Officer to ask questions. I think it's very important that members do their due diligence at all opportunities. I believe I have.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Thank you, Minister, for the answer.

Earlier this week, I tabled a private member's bill that simply requires people who make a donation to certify that

their political contribution comes from their own money and is not reimbursed by someone else. Studies have shown that affirmations of that kind are very conducive to good, ethical behaviour. People want to behave honestly, but they need to be able to state it.

Will you commit today, Minister, to two things: (1) supporting my private member's bill that includes this certification, and (2), insisting that all people who attend your event certify that they have indeed paid for their political contribution out of their own money and will not be reimbursed?

Hon. Steve Clark: Government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: It's an interesting question.

I first have to say that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is one of the most transparent and accountable members this Legislature has ever seen.

I find the question a bit passing strange, coming from the Liberal member, Mr. Speaker. It was the Liberals who were caught with their hand in the cookie jar in 2016.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. Todd Smith: I'll withdraw that, Mr. Speaker.

It was the Liberals who were caught having \$10,000-a-plate cash-for-access scandals. They were then awarding contracts to companies that paid \$10,000 a plate, that showed up at a dinner with the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Energy—\$10,000 a plate. You'll never guess who was awarded the IPO for the Hydro One sale, or who was given the green energy contracts. It was those companies that paid tens of thousands of dollars—

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

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Doug Downey: My question is for the magnificent Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We know that the previous Liberal government left us with a \$15-billion deficit. That's why we did a line-by-line review of our government expenditures and have clearly stated that we expect our partners to do the same. We also know that some of Ontario's small and rural municipalities may have limited capacity to transform and become more modern and efficient. Mr. Speaker, that is why I was so honoured to stand in Barrie–Innisfil yesterday with this minister as he announced support for these municipalities.

Can the minister please explain what he's doing to help those small and rural municipalities become more efficient and successful in the long term?

Hon. Steve Clark: First, I want to take the opportunity to thank the member for Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte for the great question. I also want to thank him for being at yesterday's announcement.

Speaker, it's no secret that the previous Liberal government overspent and that they under-delivered. They had no respect for taxpayers or their money.

Our government is putting the people of Ontario at the heart of municipal decision-making. We were elected to restore accountability and reduce the cost of government.

Taxpayers expect modern, efficient service delivery that puts them at the centre and shows respect for hard-earned taxpayer dollars. This respect is required at all levels of government. That's why our government is providing a one-time investment to help small and rural municipalities. This money will help municipalities find smarter ways to deliver services, support their communities and respect taxpayer dollars.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

I also wanted to note that the MPPs for Simcoe North and for Barrie–Innisfil were there with us yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud to be part of a government that values accountability and that is working hard to make life more affordable for the people in my riding of Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte and all across Ontario.

Despite the reckless spending by the previous Liberal government, they neglected small and rural municipalities. They made it increasingly difficult for these municipalities—like Springwater and Oro–Medonte in my area—to modernize. Instead of working for the people of Ontario and being a true partner with the municipalities, they failed to consult and they failed to listen to their needs.

Our government takes a different approach. We want to strengthen municipalities so they can find smarter ways to deliver services to support their communities—our communities—and respect taxpayer dollars.

Can the minister please explain what the payment is meant for and how it will impact municipalities?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank all the members who were at the event yesterday. I appreciate their support and the recognition of the importance of modernizing service delivery in municipalities.

We know the importance of municipalities and the services they provide for people across Ontario. We also believe in empowering municipalities because they know first-hand the needs in their communities. That's why we've made this investment unconditional, with the intention of helping modernize service delivery and reduce future costs through investments in projects.

For example, the county of Simcoe, which is one of the regions in the member's riding, is receiving \$725,000. These funds can go towards things like service delivery reviews, development of shared service agreements and capital investments.

I am proud, Speaker, to help modernization in our municipalities across Ontario and look forward to continued collaboration between our municipal partners and this government. I want to thank the incredible outpouring of support that I've received not just from members of this House but also Ontario—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is for the Acting Premier. The people of Ontario expect a higher standard than technically legal. They deserve answers that only a

public inquiry can provide. The commissioner's report includes sworn testimony from Matt Torigian, Deputy Minister of Community Safety, forced out of a job by the Premier's office. In his interview, he recalled a conversation with a member of the hiring committee who, when told there was an unqualified candidate who would likely apply, half-chuckled and said, "Well, we all know Ron is going to get an interview...." A member of the hiring committee was literally laughing about how a friend of the Premier had an inside track in this process.

My question is, does this government think this is a process worth defending?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Since we are quoting from the report made by the independent Integrity Commissioner, I will quote from page 99: "In fact there was no long-standing practice. For the 2006 appointment Julian Fantino reported to me in his interview that he received a call from Premier Dalton McGuinty's chief of staff followed by an interview with the Premier, after which Mr. Fantino agreed to accept the position. In 2010, Odgers was used in the process which selected Chris Lewis. No rank qualifications were used in that process. In 2014 Odgers was not involved and rank requirements were specific. Only one interview panel was required, presumably because the pool of candidates with the rank qualifications was smaller than the pool generated in 2018 when that requirement was removed."

We can go on and on, but the bottom line—

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

Ms. Sara Singh: I think it's very clear to us all that the commissioner makes clear that he does not in fact have all the answers and there were many issues that he just could not explore.

Given the continued questions surrounding this and other aspects of this report, will the Premier do the right thing to bring some much-needed clarity to the situation and call for a full public inquiry?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: What is clear, Speaker, is the that NDP chooses to continue to politicize this process. The NDP continues to drag good police officers, good front-line OPP officers, through the mud, including my own deputy minister. I find it unacceptable. I wish the NDP would start to stand up for the police instead of being the—

Interjection: Anti-police party.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you—anti-police party that they are, because what I was going to say would clearly have been unparliamentary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I'm going to caution the members on their language. We've got to get through the next 18 minutes.

Next question?

TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question is for the Minister of Education. I know that the students in the riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore are working hard at school, but they often face a number of distractions throughout the day. That's why last week, when the minister announced her vision for education in Ontario, I was very pleased to hear that she had introduced a plan to ban cellphones from the classroom.

Can the Minister of Education please tell us more about her plan to help our students succeed by banning cellphones?

1120

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for that great question, because this is something that has jumped out of the consultation loud and clear.

Speaker, we went across Ontario last fall and we embarked on the largest consultation in Ontario's education history: 72,000 people participated—parents, teachers, students, employers. Do you know what we heard? There was a resounding request to ban cellphones to some extent—97% of the respondents asked for some form of ban on cellphones—because, guess what, students need to be focused. They need focus time to learn. And teachers deserve, quite frankly, focus time to teach.

So we're going to be moving forward with a provincial initiative to ban cellphones. But that said, we recognize that there are school boards and there are teachers and principals out there who have initiated some best practices. We're going to work with them and make sure that when we land with our provincial ban in the fall, we're going to be embracing best practices and making sure that students have, absolutely, focus time to learn.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Thank you to the minister for that response. As a stepmom of two amazing teenage daughters, I am glad we have a government that recognizes that personal cellphones are the wrong way to bring technology into the classroom, and I am proud that we have a government that wants to put students first.

I know we need to modernize our classrooms to support our students. Can the minister explain how else our government is working to modernize the classroom?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thanks, again, very much for that question, because this is something that is very, very much good news. I want to repeat, Speaker, that 97% of the respondents to our consultation last fall asked for some form of ban on cellphones, and we're going to do just that because we want to make sure that we have the best learning environment possible—and bring our classrooms into the 21st century.

But in order to do so, we need to be embracing technology for all the good it can bring into the classroom. We don't want it to be a distraction. Quite frankly, people are fed up with cellphones being distractions. That's why we're going to ensure that every school in Ontario has access to reliable, fast and affordable Internet with our

new broadband-based strategy. It's something that our PC government is absolutely committed to.

In order to meet the goal, we are going to be going individually across the province and assessing every school for their unique circumstances. And we're going to get—

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Minister of Education. Opposition to the government's plan to take thousands of teachers out of schools continues to build across this province. Yet, the minister maintains that her plan is "actually getting good reviews from parents."

Yesterday, the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education, a parent organization that has been around for 80 years, challenged that notion. They said, "We believe that the changes tabled do not reflect the voice of parents in this province or the betterment of education for our children." Despite what the minister claims, they don't believe that firing teachers makes kids more resilient.

Since the minister clearly didn't listen to parents, who was she listening to when she concocted this plan for a billion dollars in cuts to education?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, we're absolutely focused on getting it right, once and for all. We're cleaning up the mess that the Liberal administration left for us, and unfortunately, our students have suffered as a result. We are going to get it right, once and for all.

We have to correct the narrative that is trying to be fostered by a tired opposition party, because the fact of the matter is, we are going to get it right. Let me be clear: There are no class size changes from kindergarten to grade 3. In terms of grades 4 to 8, maybe as many as one more student per class will be added to that classroom.

When it comes to our mature high school students, we want to make sure we align with other jurisdictions across Canada, because employers are asking our graduates to be coming out of high school with proper job skills and proper life skills.

I'd also like to share—people are referencing different quotes. I want to talk about something I learned from David Johnson, a professor at Wilfrid Laurier University. He is also a research fellow at the C.D. Howe Institute. He said, "There is no strong evidence that reducing or increasing class size within the changes in Ontario in the last 15 years could have had any impact"—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, this is not 21st-century learning. This is 19th-century learning, where the rich can pay for face-to-face instruction and it's the school of hard knocks for everyone else.

Speaker, we don't need an expensive online consultation to tell us that no parent voted for classes bursting at the seams and less support for their kids. Just listen to parents: OAPCE said bigger class sizes will have a negative impact on students and "will mean a reduction in the

number and variety of programs and supports for students and at-risk students in some schools."

Instead of testing the "resiliency" of our kids by jamming them into, yes, 40-plus student classrooms and cutting \$1 billion, why won't the minister invest to make our schools more resilient?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Education.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, our plan to ensure that students have the life skills and the job skills that are being asked for by our employers in this 21st century is absolutely about getting it right and recovering from what the previous government did in terms of their experiments. The previous government simply played politics with class sizes. You all have to agree in this House: We saw no measurable success in the experiments that the failed Liberal government injected into our classrooms.

So what are we going to do? We're going to get it right. We're listening to our parents. We're listening to our employers. We're going to make sure those job skills and life skills are absolutely evident in our graduates. And because of that, we're going to be focusing on the basics. We're getting back into a track whereby science, technology, engineering and math are fundamental in a core pathway to make sure our students are employable.

CURRICULUM

Mrs. Robin Martin: My question is for the Minister of Education. Last week, I was so pleased to hear the minister outline a great new vision for education in Ontario.

It was very disappointing to see the previous government fail to ensure our students learned basic skills like math. Our children were leaving classrooms unprepared for the real world.

Speaker, can the Minister of Education tell us what our government is doing to ensure that Ontario students will once again have the skills necessary to succeed in the classroom and in life?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for that wonderful, astute question. Do you know what? As Minister of Education, I have to say the previous Liberal government absolutely got an F minus on how they prepared our kids and our students for the world of work and post-secondary education as well. They experimented. They threw money at programs based on ideology, and they had pet projects as well that failed our students.

We want to make sure that our students succeed in class and in life, and they need to be supported and prepared when it comes to the basics. My top priority has always, always been making sure that Ontario is once again a world leader when it comes to our education system. We owe it to our students and our teachers to help them recover from the last decade and a half of mess that the Liberal—

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the minister for that response. It is refreshing to have a government that is putting our students first rather than focusing on tired ideologies. I know that this government is focused on getting it right for students.

Many parents in my riding and in other ridings participated in the government's curriculum consultation; over 72,000 did. Can the minister explain what we heard from parents during that consultation and how we can continue to support our students?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, thank you very much. I'm so pleased to stand in this House and talk about education for you. Our education program is geared towards the students and the teachers, because we're investing in so many different ways to get it right once and for all.

1130

As I said, in terms of the foundation of where we need to go, we're going to be rolling out a comprehensive four-year math strategy that gets back to the basics and puts our students first. We're going to be investing in teachers so that they have the confidence to get it right as well.

The previous government refused to listen to what students and teachers really needed in the classroom. During our consultation, we heard loud and clear that Ontario families want more job skills and life skills for our students.

Speaker, I can tell you we have listened and that's exactly what we're going to do. Next September, we're going to have a revamped math curriculum, and we're going to focus on financial literacy as well.

WOMEN'S SERVICES

Ms. Suze Morrison: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. The Investing in Women's Futures Program allocates funding for over 20 women's organizations across the province that provide a range of services to women in Ontario.

This funding runs out on March 31—in 10 days, Speaker—and the ministry has yet to notify these organizations whether they will receive their funding for the coming fiscal year. Will the minister commit to fully funding the Investing in Women's Futures Program for the next three years?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today about the women's issues ministry; it's very important to me.

This last week, as the member opposite may know, I had the opportunity to speak at the United Nations on a number of different issues, including women's economic empowerment, sex trafficking and violence against women. These are matters that this government takes very seriously. That is why we are continuing to invest in women's economic empowerment, but also in violence-against-women shelters right across the province.

I'm happy to have a conversation with the member opposite after question period on the particular issue that she's outlining today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Unfortunately, my question wasn't if the minister attended the UN but whether she was actually planning to fund this important program for women.

The organizations in question provide essential services to some of the most at-risk women in our province. It is shameful that front-line staff have been in the dark for months and are now issuing layoff notices and reduction of hours for their workers. Somehow, the minister can't be bothered, one way or another, 10 days out from this funding pot running out, to let these organizations know if they will be funded come April 1. Some of these organizations will have to close their doors when they lose this funding.

Will the minister prevent these layoffs and closures by providing sustainable long-term funding that is so desperately needed for these women's organizations?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: As the member opposite knows, the Minister of Finance on April 11 will be delivering his budget for the people. We are right now encouraging those who want funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, with responsibility for women's issues, immigration, refugee resettlement, poverty reduction and veterans affairs, to submit their applications.

Again, I would reiterate to the member opposite that we inherited a \$15-billion deficit. This government, since taking office, has lowered that to \$13.3 billion, and we're working extremely hard in order to get our finances back on track so that we can have sustainable and core-value public services.

I remember, as an opposition member, as the finance critic and as the Treasury Board critic, reminding the previous Liberal administration that for every single dollar that they wasted, it was a dollar taken away from health care, education and our social services. Unfortunately, because of that reckless mismanagement over the past 15 years, difficult choices have to be made in this government.

GOVERNMENT FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Yesterday, the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Government and Consumer Services announced their plan to centralize government procurement. Their plan will save the hard-working people of Ontario money. These savings are particularly important, given the tough fiscal situation that the previous Liberal government left our province in. Thanks to the former Liberal government, we are burdened by a \$15-billion deficit that makes it hard to invest in priorities like health care, education and other vital services.

I know that both ministers understand that government money is taken out of the pockets of hard-working Ontarians and should be spent responsibly.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services: How is our government fixing inefficient back-office processes?

Hon. Bill Walker: I want to thank the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills, Mr. Sabawy, for a great question and for being on top of the game in his riding.

First and foremost, we're changing the way the government purchases things like office supplies and uniforms. This will save taxpayers \$1 billion a year, helping us to balance the budget and protect our core services, like health care and education—something the Liberals didn't do.

Our lean and continuous improvements office will streamline how we deliver services and apply lean methodologies across government. We're also modernizing voice services across government, saving approximately \$8 million a year.

Under the Liberals, there were over 8,600 unused phone lines in government, costing \$2.7 million. That's \$30 million that could have gone into health care, long-term care and mental health. It's simply outrageous.

It took 15 years of Liberal neglect to create a \$15-billion deficit. Solving Ontario's fiscal mess will not take place overnight, but we're taking this first step and we're proud—

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Our government has set a clear goal: We want to get Ontario's finances back on track and balance the budget in a responsible way. This is imperative to make life easier for hard-working families across the province. My constituents, and indeed all Ontarians, were tired of the waste and mismanagement under the previous Liberal government. The Liberals failed to unlock the enormous savings potential that exists across government. As a result, Ontarians were not getting the best value for each public dollar spent.

Can the President of the Treasury Board please inform the House how our government is driving efficiencies to better serve the people of Ontario?

Hon. Bill Walker: To the President of the Treasury Board, Speaker.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, through you to our great member: Thank you for that very well-thought-through question. In the interest of time, I will keep my answer relatively short.

We are working hard to bring the language of business to the business of government. Part of our platform last year, alongside a number of other cost-saving measures, was to centralize government purchasing. Well, just the other day, I, along with the minister and our parliamentary assistants, announced that we are going to save \$1 billion through a new procurement strategy. This is money that can be invested in priority services like health care and education.

Last year, the people of Ontario chose to procure a government that respects their dollars, and that's exactly what they got.

VISITORS

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

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On a point of order: I would like to welcome in the House this morning Josh Monk, Ainsley Jeffery and Alice Balluku. They are here from the London Youth Advisory Council. I would like to welcome them, and also I hope they have a great visit at Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto—St. Paul's has point of order.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I noticed that the government didn't make a statement recognizing today's day of significance, on March 21, and I'm just wondering if I could ask for unanimous consent of the House to make a statement by a very powerful Pakistani activist and scholar in recognition of the day.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto—St. Paul's is seeking unanimous consent to make a statement on the elimination of racism. Agreed? I heard some noes.

The member for Scarborough—Guildwood has a point of order.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Point of order: I would just like to welcome to the House Laura Kirby-McIntosh, a significant advocate for the Ontario Autism Coalition.

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe the member for Simcoe North has a point of order.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I'd like to recognize that today is World Down Syndrome Day. My caucus and I have noticed many members of this House are rocking our socks today. I would like to thank our friend Hazel Seguin, who was here visiting a couple of weeks ago and provided our caucus with our socks today. Thank you to Hazel.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Toronto Centre has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services concerning Investing in Women's Futures funds. This matter will be debated Tuesday at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH CARE ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LES SOINS DE SANTÉ POUR LA POPULATION

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act concerning the provision of health care, continuing Ontario Health and making consequential and related amendments and repeals / Projet de loi 74, Loi concernant la prestation de soins de santé, la prorogation de Santé Ontario, l'ajout de modifications corrélatives et connexes et des abrogations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 74.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Will the members please take their seats.

On March 5, 2019, Ms. Elliott moved second reading of Bill 74, An Act concerning the provision of health care, continuing Ontario Health and making consequential and related amendments and repeals.

Miss Surma has moved that the question now be put.

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

Ayes

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

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	Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul
Arthur, Ian	Glover, Chris	Morrison, Suze
Bell, Jessica	Gretzky, Lisa	Rakocevic, Tom
Berns-McGown, Rima	Harden, Joel	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Hassan, Faisal	Schreiner, Mike
Bourgouin, Guy	Hunter, Miltzie	Shaw, Sandy
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutila	Singh, Gurratan
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Kernaghan, Terence	Singh, Sara
Fife, Catherine	Lalonde, Marie-France	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Fraser, John	Lindo, Laura Mae	Stiles, Marit
French, Jennifer K.	Mamakwa, Sol	West, Jamie
Gates, Wayne	Mantha, Michael	Yarde, Kevin

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 60; the nays are 36.

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

Ms. Elliott has moved second reading of Bill 74, An Act concerning the provision of health care, continuing Ontario Health and making consequential and related amendments and repeals. 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 a five-minute bell.

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 60; the nays are 36.

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?

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the committee for social policy, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is referred to the committee for social policy.

There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I'm very proud and honoured today to introduce leaders from the Taiwanese government as well as members of the business community who are with us today—people who stand up every day in the promotion of freedom and liberty. We thank you for being here, and we look forward to meeting with you this afternoon.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Joel Harden: Speaker, I rise today as a white politician wanting to speak truth on the international day for the elimination of racism. Some may find that opening statement curious. They might say, "Joel, why mention that you're white? Everyone here agrees that racism is unacceptable. We should try to be colour-blind and not see skin colour because it shouldn't matter." Well, I believe race does matter. I've talked to too many people denied employment, housing and basic decency from others because they're Indigenous, Black or brown members of my community. We can't hug that out. We can't fix it if we're colour-blind. We live in a racist society and we need to be honest about that.

On this day, I want to remember Abdirahman Abdi. Abdirahman was a 37-year-old Somali Canadian man with mental health challenges who was violently killed by a police officer while trying to go to his home in July 2016. Since this tragic incident, our community in Ottawa has come together to support the family and show that we need to root out the racism that remains, sadly, in our police force.

Abdirahman, like all Indigenous, Black and racialized people, faced systemic barriers each and every day in all aspects of daily life. We must address how racism and systemic discrimination affect racialized people, in particular those with disabilities and with mental health challenges.

I stand here, Speaker, having met Abdirahman's family and committed to them that we must do better, and I invite us all to do better.

NOWRUZ

Mr. Michael Parsa: Yesterday marked the first day of spring in Ontario and around the world. It was also the welcoming of Nowruz, also known as the Persian New Year.

Nowruz is an ancient and festive celebration that commences at the exact time of the vernal equinox. It has been celebrated for more than 3,000 years, and continues to be the prominent holiday for many countries around the world. This ancient day is not only celebrated in Iran, but in various central Asian countries such as Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and the republic of Azerbaijan; in parts of Pakistan, India and China; and in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, Iraq and Syria. Diaspora populations from these countries continue to keep the traditions of this beautiful celebration going in the new countries they call home. Over 250 million people around the world celebrate this joyous and festive holiday.

Right here in Ontario, over 100,000 families, friends and communities gathered around their beautifully decorated Haft Sinn tables to ring in the new year. During the 13 days, families, friends and neighbours will continue to celebrate the start of Nowruz by attending various parties and festivals around the province, and by visiting one another to share the happiness, joy and renewed hope of the new year.

Speaker, as a Canadian of Iranian descent, it is with great pleasure and pride that I rise today to wish all those celebrating this ancient tradition a happy, healthy and prosperous new year.

Remarks in Farsi.

BLACK YOUTH IN CARE

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Yesterday, I had the pleasure of meeting with a number of Black kids, Black youth, who are in our care system. They had released an amazing report called *HairStory: Rooted*, talking about the issue of anti-Black racism within our systems of care.

In their report, they provided a number of recommendations for a variety of people, whether it was youth care

workers or government officials, and before they let any of us leave, they asked that we use our positions of privilege and power to speak their recommendations into being. There are three recommendations in particular that I really want to share with everybody in this House.

First, staff of all government ministries and community organizations involved in providing care to Black children and youth must receive mandatory training regarding anti-Black racism, anti-oppression and the lasting effects of trauma on the mental health of Black youth.

Second, when creating and developing strategies, policies or practices to support Black youth, government ministries, service organizations and other stakeholders must work directly with Black youth to provide their input into the process and content.

Finally, persons providing training on the complexities of Blackness must be from the Black community and demonstrate a thorough understanding of how perceptions of Blackness impact the development of children and youth.

I hope that today, as we celebrate the day to eliminate racial discrimination, we take these recommendations to heart, we do this work, and we do better for our youth in care.

GEORGE LESLIE MACKAY

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I rise today to recognize and celebrate the amazing achievements of a Canadian who embodied the best of our values, Dr. George Leslie Mackay.

Born and raised in southwestern Ontario's Oxford county, Dr. Mackay spent much of his time in what is today Taiwan. As the first Presbyterian missionary to Taiwan, he introduced the concepts and practices of public health care, female education and Christianity to the island. After settling and starting a family in Taiwan, Dr. Mackay practised dentistry and built a clinic, a middle school and a boarding school for girls. He was a staunch advocate for women's rights. He spoke out against discrimination and fought for equality and human dignity.

Today, Taiwan is a shining example of the values Dr. Mackay promoted so vigorously. It is a beacon of democracy, pluralism and freedom, affording its citizens freedom of the press, freedom of speech and freedom of faith. It has transformed into a modern, vibrant democracy which in 2016 elected the first female President ever. Its Legislature is composed of nearly 40% women.

Many of us had the pleasure of visiting Taiwan earlier this year. We witnessed incredible accomplishments, many of which Dr. Mackay worked so hard towards building. We want to applaud him for the work and the legacy he's made on behalf of all Canadians.

I can say without any doubt that Taiwan is a genuine and reliable partner for Ontario and for all of Canada—a country that upholds the rule of law, a country that stands for democracy in a region of the world that could use more of it.

Today, on the 175th anniversary of his birth, I want to recognize the great contributions of Dr. Mackay and

highlight the strong friendship and enduring partnership between Canada and Taiwan, the two countries he called home.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: Yesterday, my colleague Sandy Shaw and I asked the Minister of Transportation about his ministry's role in public safety on our roads here in the province, specifically regarding Hamilton's very own Red Hill Valley Parkway.

As many people here know, a report commissioned by the city of Hamilton was unearthed after it was buried in 2013. This extremely important document detailed the substandard levels of tire traction on the major arterial roadway linking two provincial highways: the QEW and the 403. The municipality of Hamilton is dealing with their own questions about this report, especially why it was never shown to members of council until it was re-discovered earlier this year. While the city figures out its course of action, the people of Hamilton deserve answers, and they have good reason for that. The Red Hill Valley Parkway is not just a bumpy, slippery road; lives were lost, and the families of these victims want to know why they have had to suffer this tragedy with no answers.

1310

It seems that the minister wants to pin the blame of this hidden report on the city of Hamilton and wash his hands of it. This is not a blame game; it's about public safety. What we're asking for is this:

(1) the city of Hamilton should know that the province will assist with any judicial inquiry, especially when it comes to the financial burden of conducting such an in-depth undertaking.

(2) The province should also review its own policies regarding the regulation of high-speed roadways such as the Red Hill Valley Parkway, especially when they serve as conduits between our provincially regulated highways. What is the point of ensuring safety on the QEW when the road that gets you there is dangerously unsafe?

Thank you for this opportunity, Speaker, to raise these concerns, and I hope the members opposite take action on these serious matters of public safety.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I seek unanimous consent to present a member's statement on behalf of the member for Don Valley West.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough–Guildwood is seeking unanimous consent of the House to make a statement on behalf of the member for Don Valley West. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you so much, Speaker. It is an honour for me to speak today on the UN-proclaimed International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, on behalf of the Liberal caucus.

Fifty-nine years ago, on March 21, 1960, police opened fire on a peaceful protest against the apartheid regime in

Sharpeville, South Africa, killing 69 activists—69 people. This is a day that we should all commemorate because it speaks to our humanity and our connectivity, despite our diverse backgrounds.

My riding of Scarborough–Guildwood is home to a vibrant, diverse community of people, many of whom have encountered the struggles and triumphs that come from building a family away from your first home.

Scarborough is home to many of our brothers and sisters from the Muslim community. This past week, all of our lives were touched by the tragedy of the attack on two Christchurch mosques, a violent act of discrimination on the basis of race and religion.

We need to remember the spirit of this day and of decades of resilience when conducting ourselves as leaders and as elected representatives in this House.

Today on International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, I call on my colleagues in the House to practise active solidarity with racialized communities. Solidarity requires policy-making that supports the most vulnerable people in our communities and, importantly, solidarity means having voices at the table that reflect the vibrancy and diversity of our communities that we ourselves claim to represent.

ROAD IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Currently in my riding of Niagara West, there's no proper truck route heading north-south up the Niagara Escarpment to Smithville, and between Beamsville and Grimsby. The closest inter-sections are from Centennial Parkway all the way to Victoria Avenue. As a result, both towns have hundreds of heavy trucks coming through every day, which can be very dangerous, especially in icy conditions. Many transport drivers are forced to take the narrow, curvy and unsuitable roads that run through the downtown cores and up and down the escarpment. So it is of utmost importance that we ensure a safe alternative for these transport drivers and for all the citizens of Beamsville and Grimsby.

That's why I was so excited to welcome to Niagara West the Minister of Infrastructure, Monte McNaughton, to discuss the need for the Bartlett extension project in my riding.

Bartlett Avenue currently extends south beyond Main Street East in Grimsby, paving the way for a continuation of the avenue up the escarpment, which was the initial intent when shovels hit the ground 40 years ago. The extension of Bartlett Avenue in Grimsby south would ensure proper transit between West Lincoln, Beamsville and the QEW.

Speaker, I'm excited to tell all the residents of the Niagara region that, together with local mayors and councillors, our government is working hard to come up with a strategy that would see the Bartlett extension project completed.

Once again, I wish to thank Mayor Bylsma, Mayor Easton and Regional Councillor Fertich for meeting with Minister McNaughton and myself to work on this important project.

DOWN SYNDROME

Ms. Sara Singh: What an honour to rise here today on World Down Syndrome Day to celebrate all people with Down syndrome. I'd like to celebrate and commemorate this day by sharing a little story about my younger sister Gurvir, who is a person with Down syndrome.

Gurvir was born on December 22, 1991. She is now 27 years old. When she was born in Montreal, the doctors told my mom that they should consider adoption. They did not actually advise my mom on options for care or support in the community. What they did do was let her know that there were adoption options that were available. My mom, in fact, told the doctors that she did not see my sister as a challenge but as a gift for our family so that we could learn and see the world a little differently. Indeed, over the last 27 years, I and members of my family have definitely seen the world very, very differently.

Through my journey with my sister and our family, I watched my mom fight to have her included in mainstream classrooms, to ensure that she would receive the funding she needed to get the programs and supports that she needed—and that people would see her as just that: a person.

We continue that fight, as do so many families here across the province. So today, let's take a moment to celebrate the accomplishments of people with Down syndrome, their struggles to be included and their journey to achieve a good life. People with Down syndrome are athletes. They are artists. They are entrepreneurs. They are siblings. They are aunts. They are sisters. They are people in our community. As a sibling, I see first-hand how our society continues to place limits on people rather than see the possibilities of those individuals.

I encourage members here, as we celebrate and we rock our different socks: Let's think about more than just this day and what it means. Let's think about how we can work towards ensuring that people with all types of disabilities are included in our communities, in our province, in every single way that they deserve.

CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: It's a pleasure for me to rise today for us to reflect on and celebrate the many cultural events and festivals that have taken place over the past few months.

Canada is known and celebrated for its vibrant cultural diversity, and there is no better example of that than right here in the beautiful province of Ontario. We welcome and celebrate Canadians of all ethnic backgrounds and abilities. Indeed, as a nation and a province, it is our unique strength and our advantage.

Over the past few months, we celebrated Hanukkah, Christmas, Thai Pongal, Diwali, Kwanza, Ramadan, Chinese New Year and, more recently, Nowruz—the Iranian new year—to name a few.

As a member of Tamil descent, it was a great pleasure for me to co-host, with my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge Park, the Thai Pongal celebration at Queen's Park

along with the PC caucus. Similar Thai Pongal celebrations were held by many other members in their ridings, involving thousands of residents.

A large number of Chinese New Year celebrations were also held at Queen's Park and hosted by local MPPs across Ontario. Thousands of residents of all backgrounds joined in these celebrations hosted by MPPs.

In Markham, in my own riding, Chinese New Year celebrations dominated the month of February. Over 250 residents attended my traditional Chinese New Year celebration on February 23.

All of these events hosted by the government and members at large are a strong and encouraging testament to our commitment to diversity and inclusivity.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD SUMMER GAMES

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Today is the final day of the 2019 Special Olympics World Summer Games. The games have taken place in Abu Dhabi over the past week, March 14 to 21.

I want to congratulate Cambridge resident and 10-pin bowler Barry Green on being one of 109 athletes representing Team Canada at the games. Barry has won gold and silver in regional and national games in the past. I know that getting to the Special Olympics World Games has been a dream of his for many years, and I know that his family and friends and many in Cambridge are very proud of him and his accomplishments. Barry and his team will be bringing home medals from the games this year. They won silver a few days ago. Way to go, Barry and team.

To Barry Green and all of Team Canada's athletes, staff and volunteers at the 2019 Special Olympics World Summer Games: Congratulations, and thank you for representing our country and your communities so proudly. Go, Canada, go!

1320

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Parm Gill: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 68, An Act with respect to community safety and policing / Projet de loi 68, Loi portant sur la sécurité communautaire et les services policiers.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 5, 2019, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Dave Smith: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 66, An Act to restore Ontario's competitiveness by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 66, Loi visant à rétablir la compétitivité de l'Ontario en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 5, 2019, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIXING THE HYDRO MESS ACT, 2019
LOI DE 2019 POUR RÉPARER LE GÂCHIS
DANS LE SECTEUR DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Mr. Rickford moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to amend various statutes related to energy / Projet de loi 87, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'énergie.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the Minister of Energy care to give a brief explanation of his bill?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I certainly would. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The proposed bill, Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, 2019, if enacted, would amend the Electricity Act, 1998; the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998; the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act, 2017; and the Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act, 2016; and would make consequential amendments to other legislation to ensure consistency through the provisions in the schedules detailed in the bill.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL DAY
FOR THE ELIMINATION
OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Our government and, I'm sure, members from all three sides understand that there is absolutely zero tolerance for hate, racism, discrimination or violence in any form in the province of Ontario. Today, on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, everyone in this House, and indeed

everyone across Ontario, shares the responsibility to fight racial discrimination in any way that we can, and we join our colleagues on all sides of this House to vocally denounce racial discrimination at every opportunity.

As legislators, we have a unique platform to fight hate and build a better society that treats its members with the respect they are due as individuals, regardless of race, religion, sexual preference or anything else. We can lead by example. We can celebrate the achievements of all of our people, and we can call out unfair circumstances, discrimination and hate. In fact, acceptance and respect for the dignity of every human being are fundamental Canadian values, ones that we cherish across Ontario.

While Canadians overwhelmingly reject hate, we know that racism and other forms of bigotry persist on the margins and are a serious threat that must be addressed. Hate has tragic consequences, as recent events around the world have reminded us. This Legislature just on Monday paused to denounce recent tragedies, such as the attack in Christchurch where Muslims were targeted and killed while they were gathered together to worship. We remember the victims and their families, and we stand up against the hate that fuelled those terrible attacks.

Racism is also a threat here in our own province. Some people in Ontario, including Black, Indigenous, Muslim and Jewish communities, deal with systemic racism and bias on a far-too-frequent basis. While this hate is not always obvious, its consequences are very real. As Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—it is clear that racism is a serious problem that impacts the rights of everyone in Ontario to feel safe where they live and where they work.

Anyone who thinks that hate doesn't affect them is, frankly, wrong. History teaches us that those who target minorities are a threat to our society as a whole. Hate persists when it is allowed to fester. As the people of Ontario, we share a responsibility to speak out against hatred in all of its forms.

As the minister responsible for the Anti-Racism Directorate, I am proud to be working with my colleagues to eliminate systemic racism in government policies, decisions and programs to help everyone reach their unique potential and fully participate in society. Our government is committed to advancing racial equity and reducing the gap between the disadvantaged and the privileged. Government has a leading role to play in eliminating systemic racism across our province, and we are working with partners and the people of Ontario to address these very serious threats to the safety of our communities and everyone who calls Ontario home. We are responsible for ensuring that people in Ontario benefit equally from public policies, programs and services.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to discuss this critical issue of community safety in Ontario and invite every member of this Legislature and everyone in Ontario to work with us to eliminate racial discrimination wherever its destructive impacts are felt. Together, we can ensure that the rights and freedoms of everyone in Ontario are respected, and we can work together to combat the threat of racial discrimination in the

places we work, in the communities where we live, and in the future we are building for Ontario, our children and future generations.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for providing us with an opportunity to have this very important discussion.

I would have to begin by saying that we were remiss that this wasn't actually spoken of earlier in the day. We were a little bit worried, at least on our side, as part of the official opposition, that there wasn't an understanding of how important it is for us to take this day seriously. A day to eliminate racial discrimination isn't something that we should be celebrating without policies, practices and a transparent plan. It's wonderful that we all came together today and put on multi-coloured ribbons to demonstrate that we wanted to fight for racial equity, but we need to do more than that.

It's kind of ironic that I was just with a group of Black youth in care whose parents are actually this government and who spoke out loudly and consistently about the ways in which our systems, the systems that we are talking about right here, right now, are perpetuating anti-Black racism. They were very clear in their report that they weren't saying this just to yell and scream; they were asking for help from their parent. The Ontario government is their parent. We have to do the right thing for them, and what that means is that we have to do more than celebrate and actually more than calling out—because I have stood in this space a number of times and said that it's very interesting that one of the first changes that was made in this House was to move the Anti-Racism Directorate under corrections. I can't help but say it again: To take the Anti-Racism Directorate and put it under the same ministry that deals with corrections incidentally perpetuates anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism. It perpetuates racism.

1330

Interjection.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Interestingly enough, yelling about it as opposed to fixing it also perpetuates racism.

As a Black woman who's worked with police services, who's done equity training, who has a master's and a PhD in equity and education, I am pleading with the government to not take this personally, but instead do the right thing. Do anti-racism work well. Just do it well. Instead of perpetuating racism, let's not. We could choose not to.

But what we would need is a plan, and I think that's something we keep coming back to. We need an actual plan, and that plan needs to be transparent and that plan has to be with the people who are actually impacted by racism. That's what eliminating racial discrimination is. That's what this day is about. It's not about celebrating. I can celebrate; I celebrate my Blackness every day, in this House and outside. But I don't need more people to celebrate me. I need people to change legislation to ensure that people that look like me are safe and secure. And right

now, when I have to explain to the public that anti-Black racism is going to be dealt with under corrections, I can't tell them that they're safe.

Interjection.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: As somebody who has been here doing this work, who wants to do good work, who would love to have a briefing from the minister that's yelling at me right now, I am saying: Let's not celebrate; let's do the work. I'm ready to work. I hope they are, too.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses? The member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. Again—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Oh, I'm sorry. Yes, there's still more time. I apologize.

The member for Kiiwetinoong.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Certainly, I know, as a First Nations person, as an Indigenous person, we live with racism and also discrimination on a daily basis. I know, coming here as a First Nations person to this House, this is a colonial system for me. The way it perpetuates—I think the bill I'm presenting this afternoon will speak to that, on how we can improve and work with Indigenous people, First Nations people across this great province of Ontario. So I look forward to your support later on this afternoon. Meegwetch.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member for Scarborough—Guildwood. Now she has her chance.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the House on behalf of the Liberal caucus to recognize March 21 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. As I said in my earlier statement, this day was born out of a situation that we would never want to see repeated in our world, and that is the apartheid regime that was in South Africa.

But also, on this day, we have to reflect on the state of our world. The president of Ghana has declared this year, 2019, as the "year of return." It's been 400 years since the first slave ship left the shores of Ghana. It's an opportunity for us to think about the impacts that has had on people of African descent and the diaspora who have since settled in Canada, in the US, in the Caribbean and, really, all over the world.

We also know that there are effects of modern slavery that are in place. We need to stand up and make sure that our world is rid of this scourge.

Yesterday, I had an opportunity to join young people for a program that was celebrating something that the Ontario child advocate's office initiated, and it's called HairStory. It was an opportunity to look at the impact of our children's aid society and how it actually responded to the needs of racialized children in care, specifically Black youth. The program was remarkable. It was expressed in the voice of young people, and it really told their story about how a system of care does not have the lens of diversity and culturally appropriate responsiveness that is needed. This program allowed young Black students to connect with their roots. In fact, the documentary that was shown is called HairStory: Rooted.

One of the sad things about this, Speaker, is that we no longer have the office of the child advocate in place. Programs like this are very much at risk unless the government of the day stands up and responds to the needs of diverse, racialized young people who are in the care of children's aid, who are crying out, literally with tears, to say that this system needs to recognize them and needs to respond to their unique needs and to support them.

I would say, Speaker, on this day, the international day for the elimination of racism, that we should think about the policies and the programs we have in place and how it impacts the racialized communities across Ontario and what we can do to change and to adapt to make sure that everyone gets the support that they need, feels supported, and when there are things that need to be changed, that we take action and we change those things.

We have to remember that this day was born out of a past that was wrong. What happened to the 69 victims in Sharpeville, South Africa, was wrong. What is happening today, when it comes to what happened in Christchurch, New Zealand, where 50 people's lives were taken as a result of their race and their religion, is wrong. As leaders, we have to stand up and we have to make sure that not only do we say and express those things that demonstrate that all people have a shared humanity and all people belong in this province, but all people in this province have to also feel that they are included and that they are receiving the support that is important to them.

Speaker, in my last few seconds: This is a day of remembrance. March 21 is a day of remembrance. As legislators, it's important that we not allow this day to pass without marking this occasion and recognizing that we are all connected by our shared humanity and that we all, despite our differences in our background, have a common humanity that connects us all.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is now time for petitions. Once again, are there any petitions for today?

Orders of the Day.

1340

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION
ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 RELATIVE
À LA DÉCLARATION DES NATIONS UNIES
SUR LES DROITS DES PEUPLES
AUTOCHTONES

Mr. Mamakwa moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 76, An Act to ensure that the laws of Ontario are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples / Projet de loi 76, Loi visant à assurer l'harmonie des lois de l'Ontario avec la

Déclaration des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker.

Remarks in Oji-Cree.

In accordance with my traditions, I would like to first acknowledge that we are standing on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation and of the Six Nations of the Grand River. I also would like to acknowledge all our ancestors who walked on these lands, and who gathered here to trade and to share their languages and their stories with each other.

Today I am presenting my private member's bill for second reading: Bill 76, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2019. It is my hope that all members in this House will see the value, the importance, of supporting this bill. The United Nations declaration is a very powerful assertion by Indigenous peoples that we have survived, that we will continue to survive and that we insist on fair and just treatment by governments. It is intended to correct the wrongs of the past by acknowledging and protecting the inherent rights of Indigenous people to their traditional lands, their right to self-determination, and to protect the Indigenous culture and languages which are very vital to our identities as distinct peoples.

To all members of this House I say: Now is our chance, Madam Speaker, to come together as leaders in a non-partisan way and to breathe life into reconciliation by formally acknowledging the rights of Indigenous people in Ontario. Through the passage of this bill, we can bring change that is so desperately needed in First Nations communities in all parts of this province.

Let's talk about why this change is so important. Chief Rudy Turtle, who was in the Legislature here on Tuesday, recently sent a letter to Premier Ford highlighting the racist treatment of one of his community members at the hands of ambulance and hospital attendants. This individual was treated for cancer. When emergency services arrived, she was made to feel unsafe, unwelcome and second class. In this letter, Chief Turtle said that while this treatment causes toxic stress to individuals who encounter it, he also said the level of health services his community members receive is second class, third class, maybe even fourth class—and this, in a First World country. Because of this racist treatment, Chief Turtle stated that, more and more, his community members, who are citizens of this province and the responsibility of this government, are choosing no treatment versus racist treatment.

Unfortunately, Chief Turtle's experience is not an isolated one. I can tell you many stories about how Indigenous people in Kiiwetinoong and in this province were made to feel less than, not as good as, or less deserving of health and other essential services other Ontarians demand as rightfully theirs. Through Bill 67, Premier Ford and his government have a chance to stand up and say, "No, this is not right. This is unacceptable." To quote a recent article in the UK-based Guardian newspaper, Premier Ford can

say with certainty that we will no longer support a colonial system which causes Indigenous people to feel like beggars in their own land. Madam Speaker, Bill 76 gives Premier Ford an opportunity to take a stand against unjust and racist treatment of Indigenous people in this province and to ensure that their basic human rights are respected, accommodated and enshrined into provincial law.

As parliamentarians, Bill 76 gives us the opportunity to reject a colonial system and rebuild one that's based on enlightenment and hope. We can reject colonial policies and actions which oppress Indigenous people in favour of a system that is based on justice, equality and respect for human rights.

Bill 76 provides guidelines for Ontario to implement and establish a collaborative process for reviewing legislation, and it provides transparency and accountability by requiring annual reporting to the Legislature on progress toward implementation of the declaration. It also requires collaboration with Indigenous peoples in the creation of the implementation plan. Within a renewed legislative framework, long-standing issues like intergenerational trauma, severe impoverishment, mental health and physical illness, epidemics of suicide, and needless deaths and unnecessary suffering that happens in our communities would receive the attention that they deserve.

When passed, the bill will ensure that the laws of Ontario are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It will support and ensure basic human rights of Indigenous people to health care, education, safe housing and drinking water. It will support rights and access to community-based provincial police services to ensure safe, nurturing communities so that Indigenous people can feel safe and supported—the very things that most Ontarians see as their fundamental rights as citizens in the province of Ontario.

A recent letter to Premier Ford from Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon from the Mushkegowuk Council stated that without the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations in his territory, resource and any other development would not happen. Bill 76 would support the creation of laws that would ensure the full involvement of Indigenous people in any developments that occur on their traditional territories.

With the passage of this bill, Ontario will take positive, concrete action towards formalizing a respectful relationship with Indigenous peoples in this province. It will give Premier Ford an opportunity to affirm his commitment to the process of reconciliation, a principle that seems to have been lost since the election in 2018. UNDRIP is recognized globally as a human rights instrument which protects Indigenous rights to land, economic opportunity, and equal access to health, education and other services to ensure quality of life for our people. It has become a symbol of triumph and hope for the people in this province who are Indigenous. Without it, First Nations can only expect a lack of access to potable water; in many First Nations in Ontario, that will continue. The crisis like the one in Cat Lake continues to be ignored. The cleanup of the poisoned Wabigoon River will never happen. The

mistreatment of Indigenous people within the health care system will be status quo. The child welfare system will be filled with our children and the jails will be filled with our youth. And worse, the rise of youth suicides in Indigenous communities will continue unabated—a legacy that this government will not want to leave for their children to sort out.

1350

In the preamble of UNDRIP, it's described as a "standard of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and respect." Through this bill, we have this opportunity—a great opportunity, actually—to rise to new heights and to begin to change the abysmal status quo. The passing of this will give Premier Ford, his government and all the leaders of this House a chance to share the triumph and bring hope to Indigenous peoples and to acknowledge their rights as human beings living in one of the richest provinces and one of the richest countries in the world.

I sincerely believe that my colleagues in my party and fellow MPPs across the way will share in my hope and optimism in supporting this bill. I look forward to the discussion from both sides on this bill and also the passage of Bill 76 into law.

Remarks in Oji-Cree.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I'm pleased to rise today and speak about the importance of ensuring that our government's efforts towards reconciliation are making a real, meaningful difference in the lives of all Indigenous people who call Ontario home.

All Ontarians should be encouraged that we have such a dedicated minister responsible for this important file. The Minister of Indigenous Affairs has lived and worked in remote First Nations communities, developing a perspective that makes him exceptionally qualified for this file. The minister and our government share a passion for the opportunities for renewed economic prosperity with Indigenous people in Ontario. We know there is much work ahead of us, but we will continue to take important steps forward towards that goal.

From day one, our government has understood that Indigenous people in Canada have faced hardships and historical challenges that go back generations. It is important that we recognize the mistakes made in the past and work together on a vision for the future. Reconciliation is part of this vision. It's a healing process that will continue for many years to come.

In the spirit of reconciliation, the member from Kiiwetinoong has put forward this private member's bill, Bill 76. Bill 76 is based on the principles outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, otherwise known as UNDRIP. We recognize the importance of the principles and spirit of the declaration, and we remain committed to continuing our work towards reconciliation in Ontario. We are also committed to renewed economic prosperity for all Indigenous people in Ontario.

It is important to note that UNDRIP is an international declaration and not a piece of legislation. However, as an

international declaration, the federal government has a lead role in implementing UNDRIP in Canada. In fact, the federal government has tabled Bill C-262 to address the declaration in Canada. This is important because Ontario can only make laws that are within Ontario's legislative jurisdiction. There are a number of provisions in this bill that are outside the scope of the provincial government, so we are concerned about the precedent that it would set, Madam Speaker.

This is why it is so important to carefully analyze the bill and the implications it will have for Ontario. There are many articles in this bill that align with the province's priorities, but we must make an effort to better understand the practical realities of Bill 76 in the context of Ontario's laws. We will continue to review the bill at length to gain a deeper understanding of the broader implications that Bill 76 may have on the rest of the province. This analysis is already in place.

The federal government must also take a leadership role working with the provinces and territories to ensure that its response does not conflict with provincial and territorial priorities and responsibilities. But while we wait to see if the federal legislation makes its way through the Senate, I want to assure my colleague and the Legislature that we are working across government to undertake a thorough review of Bill 76.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have to start by saying how honoured I am to rise and speak to this important and historic piece of legislation which my colleague, the first elected First Nations member to take a seat in this Legislature, the member for Kiiwetinoong, has brought before the House today. I want to thank the member for his vision and his leadership in presenting the government and all of us with a clear and meaningful way to take action on reconciliation and a vision for a province in which everyone can build their best lives.

This legislation is a way for the government to actually walk the walk and make sure that the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous peoples are clearly recognized and reflected in Ontario law. It's a way to lay the foundation for the nation-to-nation work that needs to be done.

We still have a long way to go: until the water in First Nations communities is safe to drink, until health care is accessible to every Indigenous adult and child, until the duty to consult is honoured, until the housing in Indigenous communities is safe and healthy and until the relationship is a true nation-to-nation relationship. We still have a long, long way to go.

Speaker, I have to say that, frustratingly, unacceptably—irresponsibly, in my opinion—the government has been dragging us further away from reconciliation, not closer to it. We need to face that fact and be honest about it if we are in fact going to take this province in the proper direction when it comes to reconciliation. Instead, what they've done is remove the very concept of reconciliation from the very title of the minister. It is no longer the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation; it is just the

Ministry of Indigenous Affairs. They cancelled the Indigenous curriculum development process. They scrapped the Indigenous Culture Fund. They have so far refused to take any action whatsoever, as the member for Kiiwetinoong has mentioned, to clean up the English and Wabigoon River systems, poisoning Grassy Narrows First Nations and Wabeseemoong. They scrapped the Ontario Child Advocate, which we know is going to disproportionately hurt Indigenous children. They were doing fantastic work up in Thunder Bay, and all of that work is stopping, all that work to support Indigenous youth in the northwest. And despite the repeated calls from the member for Kiiwetinoong and the people of Cat Lake, this government has ignored the crisis in that community—ignored it.

The housing, mould and health crisis in Cat Lake is a crisis that has taken children's health away from them here in Ontario—taken children's health away because of mould. It is a crisis that has caused painful rashes on the skin of babies and illness in the lungs of their parents. It is a crisis that, just a few weeks ago, took the life of Nashie Oombash, who battled pneumonia again and again while living in a mould-infested house. Nashie hadn't even reached the age of 50 yet, and she died because of the housing conditions on her reserve in Cat Lake. It's completely unacceptable.

This is happening in Treaty 9 territory. Ontario is a signatory to Treaty 9. Our responsibility here, as a province—all our responsibilities here as legislators in this province—is absolute; it is not questionable. Lives are literally hanging in the balance. Ontario can do better, Speaker. People deserve much, much better.

1400

By passing this bill, the government could start to turn things around. Our province could start to strengthen its relationship with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous nations. Our province could be a leader in building a nation-to-nation dialogue based on mutual respect and commitment to action to make people's lives better. It would stop being dismissive of its treaty obligations and start recognizing that we in Ontario are all treaty people.

I want to urge this government and every single member of this House to support this legislation, but also, more importantly, to abandon the old, paternalistic, colonial approach that has failed Indigenous peoples for centuries in this province—failed Ontario for far too long—and move forward respectfully, honestly, with your heart full, knowing you're doing the right thing, in a new way, a good way, by working respectfully and collaboratively with Indigenous communities within the UNDRIP framework.

We can do this. We can do this. It is not the responsibility of the federal government. We are a party to Treaty 9. It is our responsibility, and in taking up that responsibility appropriately, we can become a province that takes reconciliation seriously, that honours its treaties and keeps its promises. We can start today, absolutely, by voting in favour of this legislation and then making sure that we actually bring it to third reading and bring Ontario to a place where we can begin the path of reconciliation.

Thank you again to the member for Kiiwetinoong for leading the way on this particular legislation. I really look forward to the rest of the debate, and hopefully hearing from the government side particularly a deeper understanding of the importance and responsibility of our role here in our Treaty 9 territory.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you for the opportunity to speak on your bill today. Madam Speaker, it's important to note that concrete steps lead to meaningful change. This means new development opportunities to create real, sustained economic growth. Our government believes that it is important to continue working towards real, meaningful change, change that makes a difference, particularly in the pursuit of economic stability and development opportunities.

We are committed to working with Indigenous communities and businesses to ensure they have access to a variety of new opportunities. New project developments are increasing employment opportunities for Indigenous communities in the north. We are confident that these new developments will lead to a brighter future. Renewed opportunities of economic prosperity can support growth, attract business, create jobs and extend access to educational services to Indigenous communities.

Energy is such a critical part of creating economic opportunities, especially in the north. This is why it is so exciting that Ontario is supporting the connection of First Nations communities to the energy grid. Most importantly, this helps northern First Nations communities achieve a better quality of life, but it also sets a framework to launch new businesses and to create new jobs.

In December, Pikangikum First Nation was connected to Ontario's electricity grid, bringing a reliable, clean supply of power to the community for the first time. This is the first of 16 First Nation communities being connected to the First Nation-led Watay Power project, the biggest and most far-reaching First Nation grid connection project in Ontario's history.

Madam Speaker, this isn't the only successful energy project our government is supporting. In January, our government took decisive action by issuing an order in council that immediately designated NextBridge as the transmitter to build the east-west tie line. The previous government unfortunately delayed the east-west tie project, even though it had the support of the local communities, First Nations and Métis partners. Our government's actions ensured that these communities would benefit from this critical expansion of our electricity grid. The east-west tie line will run 450 kilometres, from Thunder Bay to Wawa, and will benefit local First Nations. The project sets in motion opportunities to create local employment for over 200 Indigenous people. These are success stories for First Nations, and our government is committed to celebrating and encouraging efforts that make a real, positive difference.

We know a prosperous future for Indigenous peoples across the province is important for the rest of Ontario, and

that's not all our government has done to make a positive difference for the First Nations people. I'm proud that more than 200 people in the communities of Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong have received an increase in mercury disability benefit payments that have been frozen since 1985. Those benefits are now indexed for inflation, both retroactively and going forward.

These initiatives are making a real difference for the lives of First Nations. This is why it is so important that we carefully review Bill 76 so we can gather more information about how it could affect existing provincial programs and new development projects in the province.

We look forward to continuing on our path to prosperity so that we can move forward with new projects that will help all communities. We value the relationships we are building with Indigenous partners, and we are excited to continue working together to grow local economies and find programs that make a real difference.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's an honour to stand and speak to Bill 76. I want to congratulate the member from Kiiwetinoong for his debate and in bringing the bill forward. I didn't have a chance to catch the first half, but I do want to say something about the member's voice in this Legislature. It's very clear, whether it's in debate or it's in question, that we're listening. The member speaks from his heart and he speaks truth, and that's why we hear his voice in here. It's a very important voice, and I think we're all very happy that it's here.

This bill is very important. In this province, we're supposed to be on a path towards reconciliation, and the Leader of the Opposition said some very honest things about how we have deviated from that path, how we're falling off that path, and I know that members know that we should be on that path. This bill will align us with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

There is so much more that we have to do, not just to right the wrongs of what is behind us, but more importantly, right the things that are wrong right now. We all have a responsibility for that. I'm not going to be partisan. We have all been responsible for that in smaller ways and bigger ways. So it's up to all of us to do this, and this is an important step. Issues like safe water, housing, child welfare, health, access to opportunity—this is about partnership. This bill is about partnership. It's not about jurisdiction; it's about partnership. It's about the things that we need to do. We must do them.

Now, my colleague, the member from Ottawa–Vanier, very much wanted to be here today, but actually we can't split time so it sort of worked out okay. She wanted me to pass on this message; she may have already sent it to you. I am going to read her words.

"I support this bill for several reasons:

"(1) Ontario must adhere to UNDRIP and must do so in a proactive manner.

"(2) I particularly endorse that the preamble recognizes the importance of responding to the call for action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

“Second, I also support the recognition of past historic wrongs and the rejection of all policies based on doctrines or practices linked to alleged superiority of any race, religions or ethnicity. This strong commitment to a human rights culture, a culture of equality, is particularly important to state and to state again at this time in our history.

“(3) I also agree with the commitments in sections 3 and 4 to have [an] action plan and annual reports. In my view, the development of such a plan, ‘in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples in Ontario,’ as stated in the bill, would be beneficial to our reconciliation efforts.

1410

“(4) Finally, let me say that that Ontario should never hesitate to show leadership in expressing its support for international instruments that aim to curtail injustices. Ontario is a jurisdiction with lots of advantages, and when it does express its endorsement and its commitment to action, it signals to other subnational jurisdictions that it is possible to do so. Governments around the world need to commit to UNDRIP and they need the reassurance that they are part of a large, morally strong universal movement.”

Again, Speaker, I want to thank the member for bringing this bill forward. I want to thank him for what he brings to this Legislature. I guess it’s evident that I fully support this bill. I look forward to all of us in this Legislature supporting this bill. We all need to do this together. There should be no division.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I always say I like having my duty day on Thursdays because we do private members’ bills on Thursdays, and it’s very personal. You learn a lot about individual members from all sides of the House and you learn a lot about different parts of the province, different cultures, different backgrounds and different types of industries. I really do enjoy it and I’m very glad to add my voice to what the member from Kiiwetinoong—I hope I’m saying it correctly—has put forward. It’s Bill 76, An Act to ensure that the laws of Ontario are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I just want you to know, Madam Speaker, that when I first got elected, I thought northern Ontario was Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins, and the furthest north I had been at that time was Sudbury. I look forward to finding my way further north than that and learning more, not just from within the walls of the Legislature but learning more by actually seeing it myself and experiencing and speaking to people.

I know we have a lot of First Nations that come to visit us here at Queen’s Park to teach us and to educate us. They have a lot of challenges in their communities. The independent member who just spoke outlined some of those challenges.

On this side of the House, we’re all speaking, we’re all concerned, we’re all educating ourselves, but we’re also calling to action. And just as we are learning—we are working to expand energy. That’s one of the big challenges, I think, in northern communities, not just for homes

to have energy but for business development in the north. We have to have access to good, reliable, clean energy in the north. That’s why we’re so excited on this side of the House that Ontario is supporting the connection of some First Nations communities to the electricity grid for the first time. I want to just outline a little bit that northern First Nations communities achieve a better quality of life with proper energy, but it also sets a framework to launch new businesses and create new jobs, and we know that that will bring prosperity to northern communities.

In December, Pikangikum First Nation was connected to Ontario’s electricity grid, bringing a reliable, clean supply of power to the community for the very first time. It’s the first of the 16 First Nation communities that are being connected to the First Nation-led Watay Power project, the biggest and most far-reaching First Nation grid connection project in Ontario’s history.

It reminds me of doing a project on the James Bay hydro project when I was a student in Montreal, learning about that in Montreal, and realizing as I got older that a lot of the information that I learned in elementary school doing projects about First Nations and Canada was fairly biased by the teachers and by the textbooks we were given. We all have to re-educate ourselves.

I look forward to hearing a lot more from the member about his community, his way of life, his cultural practices. I know that I’ve been to Kleinburg, to the fantastic McMichael collection, and they have some ceremonies at different times of the year that I have participated in, learning so many of the customs—so very peaceful. The member himself, I just want to remark, speaks very softly. I don’t know if he realizes it or not, but people get quiet in the room whenever he speaks, Madam Speaker, because they want to hear what he is saying. I really commend him for his manner of speaking and I really admire it.

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I rise in this House today to speak in support of my friend and colleague from Kiiwetinoong’s private member’s motion titled An Act to ensure that the laws of Ontario are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Let me begin by saying that I completely support this motion.

Twelve years have passed since the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP for short. It was on September 13, 2007, that 144 states voted in favour of the 46 articles included in the declaration. Generally speaking, UNDRIP recognizes and protects Indigenous rights through the world to land, economic opportunity and equal access to health, education and other services to ensure quality of life. How could anyone with a bit of common sense be against that? How could states defer from acknowledging essential human rights, dignity and well-being to any one of their citizens?

Well, to be fair, four countries voted against it, and, sadly and shockingly, Canada was one of the countries that

originally voted against this declaration. Yes, Canada was not among the signatory states back in 2007. It is fair to say that Canada reversed its position on the declaration, along with three others: the United States, New Zealand and Australia. But the scar of Canada's first reaction to UNDRIP is consistent with the historic status of Indigenous peoples in our country and in our province.

But that scar doesn't need to last forever. We should and must do better. It is precisely for that reason that the member for Kiiwetinoong's motion is so crucial. Let me ask you again: Would you want to see a child—any child—without access to health, education, housing, drinking water or dignity?

Speaker, as you know, I represent the northern riding of Mushkegowuk—James Bay. I have the honour and pleasure to represent multiple First Nations in this assembly. Mushkegowuk—James Bay is the second-largest riding, with the smallest population in the province. It is spread out, and the constituents are oftentimes based in remote, fly-in areas.

I just asked you whether you would be willing to see a child's dignity disregarded. Let me tell you one thing: There is a lot of work to be done on our part to truly embrace such a belief. Children of the First Nation of Kashechewan cannot attend their elementary school because of mould and uneven floors. They have been in portables for 15 years, despite constant promises on the part of the federal and the provincial governments.

Seniors from Fort Albany, Attawapiskat and Moose Factory have to travel to Timmins to get their driver's licence because ServiceOntario doesn't offer the required examination in the James Bay area. This means that they have to pay hundreds of dollars for a service that costs a mere \$36 anywhere else in Ontario.

Health services in certain First Nations are certainly not at par with those that you receive here in Toronto. Actually, many people don't even have access to doctors in some regions.

Housing is a hustle in many communities. Houses are falling apart. They are infested with mould or simply not there. You see multiple families crammed in small homes because there is simply no other option. I have witnessed this first-hand on multiple rounds of visits in James Bay.

Social services are almost a utopia for some First Nations. A few weeks ago, I spoke in this Legislature about the Billy Bayou Program, a program for adults with intellectual disabilities in Moose Factory, the home of the Moose Cree First Nation. The Conservative government has recently informed the Moose Cree that it won't be renewing the funding for Billy Bayou because of budget reasons.

We are talking about basic human rights here, Speaker: access to education, health, housing and dignity. These are a very few individual examples of a larger and structural problem that First Nations face on a daily basis. This is the result of a historical and ongoing state of colonialism, domination and discrimination. This motion will allow Indigenous communities to begin looking towards a better future, a future devoid of discrimination and injustice and colonialism.

1420

As the preamble to this motion indicates, it is important for Ontario to reject colonialism and engage in a contemporary approach based on good faith and on principles of justice, democracy, equality, non-discrimination, good governance and respect for human rights. In other words, this is a first and serious step towards reconciliation.

Before us we have two clear historic options: to continue on the path of injustice and colonialism, or to embrace a universal framework that acknowledges the dignity, self-determination and well-being of the Indigenous people. The member of Kiiwetinoong's motion is a fundamental step in that direction. For that reason, I fully—

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order. The member for Kiiwetinoong has two minutes for his reply.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Madam Speaker. I would like to close today with some personal comments. First, I would like to recognize that today is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and it is very timely that we are standing here having a discussion.

As I stated earlier, UNDRIP has become a symbol of triumph and hope for Indigenous people. As an Oji-Cree person, it's important that my colleagues in the House understand that the majority of the people in the riding of Kiiwetinoong have been deeply affected by the colonial system that shapes how we govern this province. The damaging effects are real for us. We live with it on a daily basis.

As you know, Madam Speaker, I have stood up in the House many times asking this government to provide real support for the people of my riding and for all Indigenous people in this province. I have asked about the lack of equity, equality and health care being provided to the communities in my riding; the removal of the provincial child advocate for Indigenous children and youth; about the contamination of the land and the rivers; and about housing in First Nation communities. In all of my questions, I talk about the needless deaths and unnecessary suffering that happen to Indigenous peoples. Yet the government continues to not act.

I am tired of the jurisdictional ambiguity. I'm tired of the jurisdictional Ping-Pong that's played on the lives of our people. So the question is, does this government unequivocally support the human rights of Indigenous people in this province—yes or no?

ENDING DISCRIMINATION IN
AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 METTANT FIN
À LA DISCRIMINATION EN MATIÈRE
D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

Mr. Gill moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Automobile Insurance Rate Stabilization Act, 2003 and the Insurance Act with respect to ending discrimination in automobile insurance / *Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2003 sur la stabilisation des taux d'assurance-automobile et la Loi sur les assurances en ce qui concerne l'élimination de la discrimination en matière d'assurance-automobile.*

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

Mr. Parm Gill: As always, it is an honour to stand in this House and speak to my private member's bill ending postal code discrimination in automobile insurance. I have heard loud and clear during the last election that drivers need relief when it comes to automobile insurance rates in Ontario. It is no secret that Ontarians pay some of the highest insurance premium rates in the country. Our PC government made a promise to put more money back in the pockets of Ontarians, and my bill aims to do just that, Madam Speaker.

When I began to explore how best to tackle this issue, I quickly understood how complex and burdensome the auto insurance industry is for drivers. Insurance companies have taken full advantage of these complexities for years. One complex component is bulletin A-01/05. This bulletin has multiple rules that the insurance industry needs to follow when setting parameters to calculate driver insurance premiums. A key component to this bulletin mandates that insurance companies divide the province up to a maximum of 55 territories, up to 10 of which can be in the city of Toronto alone. We can already see how this is an issue, as it forces clusters of large areas to be grouped together simply based on geography; thus the term "postal code discrimination."

Since I first introduced this bill back in October, I have received countless stories from across the province, stories like Christine's. Christine was a former resident of Richmond Hill, a city, and moved to Binbrook, a small town just outside of Hamilton. She told me that she saw an increase in her auto insurance as soon as she moved. When she confronted her insurance company, she says, she was told that the reason for the increase was because of where she was living now. I shared the same story in a recent op-ed I penned in the *Toronto Star* to outline that even rural Ontario drivers are being unfairly targeted based on their postal codes.

My bill's short title is the Ending Discrimination in Automobile Insurance Act. It hopes to eliminate Ontario of these territories. It will rescind bulletin A-01/05, which mandates that insurance providers adhere to the 55-territory system, among other things. It will prevent the insurance companies from grouping consumers based on their location.

My bill, if passed, will also amend regulation 664 of the Insurance Act to prohibit a postal code or telephone area code from being used as part of the insurance premium calculation. This change will result in more of an emphasis being put on personal responsibility and fostering greater competition in the insurance market. We all want to see

insurance companies compete for business, not for postal code areas. This bill, if passed, will force insurance companies to use a driver's record as the primary factor when calculating insurance premiums.

Madam Speaker, I spoke to Miss Ostronic, who is an 80-year-old senior. Let me share her story with you. She told me that she has been driving for the last 53 years and does not have any traffic violations—not even a parking ticket. She drives about 200 kilometres a month and regularly maintains her vehicle. Ms. Ostronic felt cheated when she learned why her insurance premiums kept rising year after year and told me, "I still have to pay insurance for all those ones that have accidents and all other traffic violations."

I find it unfair that Miss Ostronic has to subsidize bad drivers in her area. This bill is aimed at helping people like her. This bill, if passed, will help create a fair market for consumers looking to get automobile insurance. The current laws help insurance companies group areas in a way that benefits the insurance companies. My bill, if passed, will eliminate these unfair practices and help Ontarians achieve much-needed relief when it comes to insurance premiums.

There are many constituents in my riding of Milton and across our great province who have shared their stories with me, like Miss Penhale, who saw an increase of \$400 per year; like Mr. O'Neill, who moved less than five kilometres to be closer to his workplace and saw his insurance premiums increase by \$480 per year; or like Mr. Desormo, who is retired and has recently been subject to an increase of \$504 per year. This bill is aimed to bring relief to them and many other drivers across our great province.

1430

I asked Mr. Desormo if anything in his driving record had changed, or possibly that he purchased a new vehicle. He explained to me that he called his insurance company, and they explained that the increase was a result of them reassessing and reclassifying the postal code he resides in now.

These stories are only a few of the experiences that I have heard from drivers in our great province. The regulations that allow insurance companies to unfairly target people like Miss Ostronic, Mr. O'Neill and Mr. Desormo will be removed if this bill passes.

During the last campaign, I heard from people in my riding of Milton who had moved from one side of the town of Milton to the other and saw a rise in insurance rates. Milton, Madam Speaker, is a town that has both urban and rural areas. The rural part has roads like 5 Sideroad, 10 Side Road, and many other 5th, 10th and 25th lines, while the urban part has Main Street, a parkway and even the 401 running through it all.

These areas are completely different from each other, and still, somehow, Miltonians with postal codes that span the rural and urban parts are grouped together while neighbourhoods in the urban part of Milton can be divided depending on what side of the street you live on. Simply put, grouping drivers in Milton is unfair, no matter which way you slice it.

I heard from Mark, who reached out to my office right after I introduced my bill. Mark recently renewed his home and auto insurance. When he renewed, he realized that his postal code had been off by one digit; the last digit in his postal code was wrong. When Mark called to correct the postal code—just one digit—his auto insurance jumped by almost \$500. That's \$500, Madam Speaker. Mark said that the postal code he had mistakenly been using for years was literally three houses down the street and across the road from where he lives. No one can argue that risk changes by \$500 just 150 yards apart. My bill will fix this for Mark.

When we're talking about \$400 or \$500 a year, Madam Speaker, just an increase in auto insurance, imagine what a family can do with that money each and every year: the ability to put food on their table, fill their gas tanks or put their kids in sports activities. That can mean that a senior in this province has to go without heating in the winter or putting food on their table.

It is no secret that a previous Liberal government mismanaged the entire province for 15 years, but when it came to auto insurance, they had nothing more than stretch goals. Drivers in my riding of Milton are frustrated. Many families have one or two cars, and they have to drive to work each and every day. Like many ridings in the province, having a vehicle is essential to work and live. Milton is absolutely one of those ridings.

Drivers in Milton have been gouged by the insurance companies for years. My bill, if passed, is standing up to the unfair practice of discriminating based on postal codes across our great province. This bill promotes personal responsibility for drivers in Ontario. This bill stands up for good drivers in our province, no matter where they might live.

A good driver who moves to Milton, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Windsor or any other part of the province should not see their rates go up by hundreds of dollars. It is not fair for Ontarians to pay such a high auto insurance premium. The previous Liberal government let insurance companies profit off of good drivers.

I brought forward Bill 42 in hopes that it will work towards simplifying this industry, promoting more personal responsibility and encouraging companies to compete for drivers, not geographical areas and postal codes.

Our PC government is and always will take every step possible to make life more affordable and more efficient for people across our great province.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Life is getting tough for Bramptonians and people across Ontario. We have some of the safest roads in the country, yet we pay some of the highest car insurance rates. The result is devastating families. Every day, it's getting tougher for Bramptonians to make ends meet.

Think about it. For some families, they're paying more for their car insurance than their home mortgage. And

families consistently ask why. Why is it that simply because of where they live, because of the community they choose to call home, they are being discriminated against and having to be charged higher car insurance rates? That unfairness is clear. If you take a driver from Brampton, they pay one rate; but if you take that same driver, with the same car and the same record, and move them across the street into Caledon, they can see their rates drop by as much as 50%. Nothing changes except where they live.

How is this fair? Bramptonians are feeling this. They're constantly asking why: Why does the Conservative government allow billion-dollar insurance companies to discriminate against Bramptonians and other Ontarians and charge them higher rates? People should be paying car insurance rates based on their record, not based on where they live.

We need immediate action now to stop this unfair practice and make life more affordable for everyday people, but with the bill the Conservatives have put forward, it's not going to fix the unfairness caused by postal code discrimination because of its glaring loopholes. The Conservative bill will only prohibit insurance companies from charging drivers based on factors primarily related to postal code or telephone area code. The use of "primarily" is not defined in the bill, and, quite frankly, it's vague and will not be enforceable. Because insurance companies can look at this bill say, "No problem. Postal code won't be our primary factor. Our primary factor will be the make and model of the vehicle. Our secondary factor will be the postal code." The Conservative bill does actually not take postal code discrimination off the table.

This bill also doesn't actually stop insurance companies from charging drivers higher rates based on where they live. The Conservative bill prohibits insurance companies based on only two factors—postal code and area code—but does not prohibit insurance companies from using factors like city, street address or geographic region. So the bill will still allow insurance companies to discriminate against communities by using these other factors.

The member from Milton acknowledges this himself, in his recent op-ed published in the Toronto Star, when he stated, "Simply put, where you live should not be a large factor when calculating your insurance premium." It shouldn't be a large factor? Speaker, where you live shouldn't be a factor at all, full stop. Why does this Conservative government not have the courage to say this and ban this discriminatory practice once and for all? Instead, their solution to this problem is to put forward a weak bill that won't actually stop insurance companies from charging hard-working people higher rates because of where they live.

But it doesn't have to be that way. We in the NDP believe that people deserve more from their government. They deserve to live in a province where life is affordable and where government will side with everyday people over billion-dollar insurance companies; where entire communities are not discriminated against; where people are not punished just because of the community they choose to call home; where government has the courage to

ban the practice outright and prohibit insurance companies from using someone's postal code or geographic region when charging them car insurance rates. This is the kind of bold, brave leadership that the people of the Ontario deserve, and this is the future that we in the NDP are committed to fighting for.

1440

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I rise today in the House to discuss the issue of auto insurance postal code discrimination, an issue that deeply affects my lifelong home of Humber River–Black Creek and other postal codes here in Ontario.

Make no mistake: The issue of postal code discrimination is here before the House thanks to years of advocacy by Ontario's NDP. Under the previous Liberal government, it was former NDP MPP, and now federal NDP leader, Jagmeet Singh who put forth a bill that would prohibit auto insurers from charging you based on where you live. Both Liberal and Conservative members then voted this down. The NDP pushed the Liberal government to reduce rates, but all the Liberals ever did was allow auto insurance companies to reduce accident benefits while premiums still rose.

Do I believe that the Conservatives have any real interest in fair auto insurance? No. If there was ever a base for the Conservatives, if they ever had a friend in this world, it is the auto insurance company executives themselves. Let's face it: The friends of this government always get rewarded, and these companies are not really interested in fairness; they're interested in making money. If this government wanted to take action on auto insurance postal code discrimination, this would be here as a government bill and not as a backbench PMB.

Last year, the exceptional member from Brampton East, an NDP MPP, put forth a bill that would end postal code discrimination in the GTA, where it is primarily happening. When the Conservative government caught wind of this excellent bill, their member from Milton hurriedly tabled a bill months before it was intended in a press conference the same day. Then the Conservative government voted down the NDP's private member's bill, saying that ending discrimination in some postal codes would make premiums go up elsewhere. If they really believe that, why allow a Conservative member's PMB that, in title at least, seeks to end discrimination in auto insurance? I'll tell you why: It's because it will not end postal code discrimination in auto insurance.

Why won't it work? Because of the word "primarily." It does not prohibit insurers from using factors related to postal code when determining auto insurance premiums. Rather, it will prohibit insurers from using factors primarily related to postal code when determining auto insurance premiums—a loophole so big you can drive a giant uninsured truck through it.

Where you live plays a major role in determining your rate. It is really unfair and heavily discriminates against my community and many others in Ontario, but it is not

the primary factor now. How can you test this? It's easy. Last night, I went online and found a site to determine your expected premium for a major auto insurance company here in Ontario. I plugged in the details of a 40-year-old married guy named Bob, who drives a nice, safe 2017 Volvo, with a clean driving record and averaging 15,000 kilometres a year. If he lives in Halton Hills, he pays \$1,466 a year. If he lives at Jane and Finch, in my community, he pays \$2,539—a huge increase of \$1,073 because of where he lives. But what happens when you keep him in Halton Hills and change other variables? If you give him an at-fault accident in 2018, his rate goes up to \$2,680. If you take away all of those things and turn Bob into an 18-year-old, he ends up paying a whopping \$5,184.

You can see that you get charged based on where you live, and that's wrong. But primarily you're charged on your driving record. So what does this bill do? It muddies the water and gives the Conservatives a stretch goal of pretending to care about auto insurance.

Speaker, I want to believe so badly that the guts of this bill will do something good for the people of my community, but unfortunately, I don't believe it will. I will be voting for it, though, because at least it has a nice title, and it speaks to an issue that my community and I have been fighting for years. If it doesn't really help, the only harm it does is a missed opportunity for real change.

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

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I'm very honoured to be here to speak to Bill 42, a key piece of legislation that aims to ensure fairness and fix auto insurance in Ontario. I'm so proud to speak to this because this is a major issue in Brampton and something that, when I was campaigning, when I was going to door to door, I heard about so much. It's about time that a government took action, made life more affordable and fixed the broken auto insurance system.

Bramptonians have been unfairly targeted just because of where they live. This is unacceptable. For far too long, governments and legislation have overlooked this issue. Our government for the people is here to change that, and that is exactly what this piece of legislation will be doing. Bramptonians pay some of the highest auto insurance premiums in the country.

Insurance premiums are high in part due to failed Liberal policies put in place by the previous government. Auto insurance rates should simply be based on your driving record, not where you live. Residents of Brampton should not be penalized for living in Brampton. That is why our government is taking action.

The rationale behind this bill is simple: A good driver in Brampton should be paying as much as any other good driver anywhere across this province. Bill 42 promotes personal responsibility and, if passed, will force insurance companies to base premiums on the driving record of the customer rather than where they live. Our government made a promise during the election to make life more affordable for all Ontarians. With this bill, we are going to

be removing red tape and making it more affordable for good drivers in Ontario. Promise made, promise kept.

Madam Speaker, our government is going to get this right, unlike the previous Liberal government, which failed to bring relief to Bramptonian drivers and drivers across this province by asking for a 15% reduction in rates and then pushing back and calling it merely a stretch goal. It never happened. That's unacceptable and that will change.

This bill, if passed, will bring relief to drivers across Ontario. Once again, a good driver in Brampton should pay as much as a good driver anywhere else in the province. I want to commend the member for Milton for bringing this forward and driving this issue.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I rise today on behalf of the hard-working and decent people of York South–Weston. In coffee shops, libraries, barber shops, bakeries and everywhere else that people gather, auto insurance is often the topic of conversation. My constituents are fed up, and rightfully so.

Madam Speaker, many of my constituents are paying hundreds of dollars more a year than those in other neighbourhoods across the GTA, and for no real reason. This is not fair. I'm often asked by constituents why they have to spend so much on auto insurance when they have many years of safe driving under their belt, no tickets and no claims on their record. As a matter of fact, it is because of where they live, and that is not a good enough reason—not for me, not for my constituents and, I hope, not for the members of this House.

Constituents that I have spoken to are appalled that an act of insurance fraud by someone who lives nearby can—and usually does—affect their premiums. As if that is not bad enough, someone who lives in York South–Weston who drives their car a few times a week ends up spending almost as much as the person who drives their car to work every day.

These are just a few examples of the collective punishment that takes place in today's system. The message this sends to drivers is that it does not matter that you are a responsible driver; it does not matter that you are a safe driver; it does not matter that you obey the law. What really matters is where you live.

For the past 15 years, Madam Speaker, the former Liberal government failed to meaningfully address this issue. Their tinkering with the system has been unable to get the job done. Simply put, the system is broken and the Ford Conservatives are making it worse.

1450

The time for words has long gone. It is time for real action on auto insurance. Ontarians deserve a system that works for them. A postal code should have absolutely no bearing in determining auto insurance rates. Your rates should be based on your driving history and the vehicle you drive. The people of York South–Weston are not looking to hear any more lip service about reducing auto insurance. They want action. They want results now.

Madam Speaker, for generations, people in this targeted neighbourhood have been asking only for what is fair. Their message is simple and clear: If they are responsible and if they make the right choices, they should have the same opportunities and the same privileges as everyone else. Fairness should not be too much to ask for; it should be the bare minimum.

What my constituents are asking the government is to provide real and immediate relief to families across the GTA by ending postal code discrimination now.

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

Miss Kinga Surma: Thank you to my colleagues in caucus and in opposition for this opportunity to share my thoughts on Bill 42, the Ending Discrimination in Automobile Insurance Act.

I would like to recognize my friend the member from Milton, who introduced this legislation, which, as the name suggests, has used discriminatory generalizations of our communities to determine the price the people of Ontario will pay for necessary and mandatory automobile insurance. I think the number of times that all of us have applauded the member from Milton during question period speaks to how important this bill is for the residents in all of our ridings.

The opposition parties have both offered insufficient solutions to the issue of affordability in the insurance industry across Ontario. The previous Liberal government mandated insurance providers to segregate the province into different territories. This system drove up the cost of auto insurance unfairly and still used generalizations of our communities to determine how much insurance should cost to Ontarians living in areas they deemed high-risk.

The NDP, specifically the member for Brampton East, introduced Bill 44, the Ending Automobile Insurance Discrimination in the Greater Toronto Area Act, after the introduction of Bill 42. This proposed legislation only addresses the Toronto area and amends the Liberals' plan to make Toronto a single geographic region. It does not address the unfair discrimination and generalizations that drive up the cost of insurance.

Our plan is truly a plan for all the people in Ontario. Ontarians pay some of the highest auto insurance premiums in the country. Ontarians work hard to save their money and should not have to drown in outrageously high auto insurance premiums.

This bill, if passed, will prohibit insurance providers from using postal codes or telephone area codes as a primary factor when calculating auto insurance premiums. Bill 42 is simply the better piece of legislation presented for our consideration. I believe this because it will address discriminatory practices in price determination, affect more people in our province than the NDP's proposition in Bill 44, enhance the marketplace and encourage more consumer choice.

As someone who has themselves been a victim of these discriminatory practices, I am very grateful to the member from Milton for his initiative in putting forth this bill. By moving eight kilometres away, I was expected to pay \$80

more per month for my insurance because the area which I was moving to was deemed a high-risk area. From a budgetary perspective, this was extremely frustrating as it was an unexpected cost, and I wasn't moving very far away. I can only imagine what kind of burden that would be if I had children and a family, or if I was a retired person moving because I was downsizing and had to bear this cost.

With this bill, we are removing red tape and making it more affordable for good drivers in Ontario. With Bill 42, we will have another promise made and promise kept.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I'm privileged for this opportunity to rise today and speak on Bill 42, the Ending Discrimination in Automobile Insurance Act, 2019, in this chamber.

Auto insurance rates in Brampton are significantly higher. In fact, no other city comes close to Brampton's average rates, which were 24% higher than Vaughan, the second-placed municipality in the province. A recent study by an online insurance rate aggregator found that a driver in Brampton paid an annual premium of \$2,268, approximately 72% higher than the provincial average of \$1,316. Auto insurance should be based on how we drive and not where we live. I believe that people living in Brampton should not suffer by paying more for the same product because of where they live when other factors are far more relevant in determining rates. This bill, should it pass, will introduce a fairer market for consumers, with more choice, and end the discriminatory practices used by insurance companies.

Automobile insurance costs continue to impose a heavy burden on family budgets. Years of apparent inaction and neglect created this crisis in Ontario. Now my friend and colleague the member from Milton and the government of Ontario have undertaken the most significant reforms to car insurance in the province. Bill 42, if passed, will resolve such automobile insurance anomalies, and the people in Brampton and Ontario will start to see the benefits as these reforms take effect.

The Ontario government believes that these reforms will achieve the outcomes Ontarians deserve, which are affordable car insurance, safer roads and a public insurer that isn't losing money. This is the most appropriate and dynamic balance we are envisaging to achieve, and we are prepared to take further action to keep rates low. We need to continue to consider measures to improve the province's auto insurance system, informed by the experience in other provinces and jurisdictions, as Ontarians are entitled to high-quality public auto insurance coverage at the lowest possible cost. The government of Ontario is determined to deliver.

Madam Speaker, Bill 42, if passed, will put an end to the postal code discrimination when it comes to auto insurance. It will prohibit auto insurance companies from primarily using information related to postal codes or telephone area codes when calculating insurance rates. This is a matter of fairness. A good driver should not be

penalized because of simply moving to a new town or neighbourhood. Therefore, through you, Speaker, I would urge all honourable legislators to join me in supporting Bill 42, the Ending Discrimination in Automobile Insurance Act.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 42. Before I begin my comments, I would like to thank my colleague the member from Milton for introducing this in the Legislature and giving me the opportunity to participate in the debate. The reason I would like to thank the member from Milton for this opportunity is that he knows how important this issue is to my constituents in Scarborough–Rouge Park.

I think most of us here can agree that auto insurance rates in Ontario have been problematic for a long time. I am proud that, under Premier Ford's government, the government for the people is finally going to address the postal code discrimination that has been so hurtful and costly to many in Ontario, including constituents throughout my riding.

In Scarborough–Rouge Park, we have many communities that pay an average estimated premium of \$2,249 per year, according to the insurance aggregate company Kanetix. The same website states that an average premium in Ontario is \$1,473. That's a difference of \$776—\$776 extra that my constituents pay for their auto insurance, solely based on their postal code. And that is the crux of the issue here. This is discriminating against everyday Ontario residents for living in certain geographical areas, not based on their driving record, how many accidents they have been in or the tickets they have been issued. I simply do not believe this is fair.

During the recent election campaign and since becoming the representative for Scarborough–Rouge Park, I have had the opportunity to speak to many of my constituents. One of the issues I hear about, and one of the hits they take monthly on their pocketbook, is the cost of auto insurance. Under the previous Liberal government, life in Ontario got expensive, and it is no different for my constituents in Scarborough–Rouge Park. Hydro bills skyrocketed. They introduced unnecessary taxes, and life got more expensive. We, as a Legislature, should be working to save everyday Ontario families money, to put more dollars in their pockets for them to spend as they see fit—

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

The member for Milton has two minutes for his reply.

1500

Mr. Parm Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all of my honourable colleagues who took the opportunity to speak to my private member's bill in this Legislature. I also want to thank my staff for helping along the way and for all of the important work that they put into this piece of legislation. I want to thank all the stakeholders and all of the Ontarians who reached out and continue to reach out and share their stories in terms of

how the auto insurance industry and the premiums impact their day-to-day life, and how we can try to deliver relief for them and their families.

I must say, listening to all the members in this House, I was disappointed by the comments made by the some of the NDP members. It's unfortunate to see the NDP playing political games with this very, very important issue that impacts every Ontarian across this province.

We all know that the NDP supported the previous Liberal government about 97% of the time. They cut all sorts of deals and made all sorts of promises leading up to an election on how they're going to deliver relief for Ontario drivers. And what did we see at the end of the day? Nothing but apparently what the previous Liberal Premier finally admitted was a stretch goal. We saw absolutely no result.

What I would encourage the members opposite to do is to support this important piece of legislation. They know it's a right piece of legislation. They know it's going to deliver relief for Ontario drivers. If they genuinely do not believe that this piece of legislation is going to deliver relief for Ontario drivers, then I would challenge them to vote against this piece of legislation if that's exactly how they believe.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity.

ALGOMA UNIVERSITY
AMENDMENT ACT, 2019
LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'UNIVERSITÉ ALGOMA

Mr. Romano moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to amend the Algoma University Act, 2008 / Projet de loi 79, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2008 sur l'Université Algoma.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: For those who know me, 12 minutes is going to be very difficult, but I'll do my best.

I want to just start off by providing a very, very brief bit of background with respect to what this is. Algoma University is my alma mater, the school I went to from 1998 to 2001. I received a Bachelor of Arts degree in law and justice from Algoma University. Because of my time at Algoma, I was able to pursue law school in Windsor for a few years, become a lawyer thereafter and was able to get to this point. There's no way I could possibly have been here had it not been for the education I received at Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie.

At that time, Algoma University was called Algoma University College, and when I graduated from Algoma in 2001—my degree actually says Laurentian University on it. That's because, at that time, Algoma University did not have degree-granting authority.

In 2008, the former government introduced legislation, the Algoma University Act, and what that permitted was

that Algoma University was given authority to grant degrees, as it had under the old system that it had under Laurentian University.

Unfortunately, after 10 years of introducing that legislation, the Algoma University Act expired. It was not brought into force and as a result, as of December 31, 2018, my alma mater of Algoma University no longer has the ability to grant—the new expansion of degree-granting authority is no longer there.

In summary, what this Algoma University Amendment Act would do is it would allow Algoma University to work together with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to grant further degrees—to expand their degree-granting authority. That is the purpose of the legislation.

Now, I have a very special guest here today who flew in from Sault Ste. Marie, from Algoma University. I really want to welcome again to the House Ms. Donna Rogers, the Academic Dean of Algoma University. I thank Donna for being here, not to support me in my PMB but to support Algoma University, and for her ongoing support and help at Algoma University and the great work that is being done there. Even more so, I want to thank you for being here to support Sault Ste. Marie and our community's post-secondary education, which is so vitally important to our community and the growth of that school. The continued growth of our university is tremendously important to all of us in our community. In my time back in that 1998 to 2001 period, Algoma University only had the equivalent of just over 500 full-time students; now they're in the neighbourhood of 1,300, and growing. I want to see it continue to grow, as I know Donna does and so many in our community.

Certainly, I would like to share with everyone my “why”: Why I got involved in politics, why I wanted to be an MPP to begin with. Unfortunately for poor Donna today, I asked her to join me for lunch. We sat in the cafeteria for a very long period of time and I gave her the long dissertation of my why. It was a very, very long, drawn-out story, and I'm sorry for inundating with that so much, Donna, but I thought it was important, as our academic dean, to really understand what it is that motivates me, why I want to be here and why I sit in this House away from my very young family five days a week.

And my why is very simple. When I was in high school, from 1993 to 1998 in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario—from the time of 1993, Algoma Steel was going through its first restructuring. The member from Timmins was a member of the government then, dealing with that first restructuring. The people in Sault Ste. Marie, specifically our youth, our young people looking at their futures, were devastated. We heard it at our dining room tables every night, we heard it in our schools, we heard it everywhere we went, that our city was dying. That's what we heard.

As a young person growing up in that environment, I can tell you that it is very devastating. I can tell you that it is very concerning, very saddening, because all you're thinking about is, what am I going to do? Where am I going to go? Am I going to be around my parents? Am I

going to be able to, one day, invest in this community? Will I be able to find a job in this community? How will I ever stay in my community? Where will I go? I don't want to go to Toronto where everybody else is going or I don't want to go to this place—not that it's bad. But it's the feeling you have that it's not my home. I want to stay home. I want to raise a family in my home. I want to buy a house. I want to be able to buy a camp—that's what we call it in the north, not a cottage. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin will understand that very well.

That's what you want. Sadly, we didn't have that opportunity. All of my fellow students and I, from 1993 to 1998, used to talk about it all the time, how we had to get out of town because we didn't have a choice. We didn't have any opportunity in our own city because we had that black cloud hanging over us.

I was very fortunate that I was able to gain a good education. I was able to return home and find work. I returned back home to Sault Ste. Marie in 2004, started articling in a law firm, was able to find good employment and, a few years ago, an opportunity arose when our former MPP David Oraziotti resigned. My wife looked at me and said, "You've got an opportunity to do something right now for our kids. Go, run, be the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie and change what's happening." Here I am, as a parent of a four-year-old, a five-year-old and a six-year-old, and nothing has changed.

I was talking to people—and at this point in time, Algoma Steel, then Essar, was going through its third restructuring. Fast forward those years, and we're back in the same rut. That's the steel industry. That's what it is. We deal with it all the time. It's a cyclical industry. We will be back there again one day, I'm sure.

1510

But the students at the high schools, when I go and I talk to them—and I went into every school—are saying the same things that me and my classmates were saying back in 1993, and that devastated me. That devastated me before I decided to run, as I was seeing it. I coached a kids' soccer team. I used to talk to the kids on the soccer team that I coached. They were under 14. They used to say the same thing: "Well, no, we can't stay here. There's nothing here for us, Coach. We've got to leave." My "why" was to find a way to fix it, to find a way to do something to help the kids in my city feel comfort that they can stay home, to find jobs so that they can stay home.

Unfortunately, when a great university like Algoma, the school that gave me the tools, the keys, to be able to here right now in this very spot—when they don't have the ability to expand their degrees, to expand their post-graduate certificates, they're handcuffed from being able to educate the people within my own community and many of the surrounding communities. Our school has a satellite school in Brampton. We have a satellite school in Timmins. So many people from the member from Algoma-Manitoulin's riding attend Algoma University. When they cannot expand their programming to cover so many jobs that we have today—Algoma Steel is looking at hiring. Places like JD Aero in the community are

looking at hiring. We have all of these people hiring. We have in the neighbourhood of thousands of jobs available in the STEM areas, in IT areas. But our university is hamstrung in their ability to offer an expansion of degrees and programming that would actually service our students, our young people, to be able to grasp the jobs of today and the jobs of tomorrow.

I saw a unique opportunity—and it's funny; I said this to Donna today over lunch: I believe deeply that everything happens for a reason. Call it karma, call it fate, call it whatever you will, but everything happens for a reason. I look back to me as my 13-year-old self back in 1993, digging a potato garden for my dad on our farm—I lived on a ranch—crying my eyes out because I was terrified that there was nothing in my community for me. I was upset. I was mad. I was mad at the world. I was mad at my dad for making me dig the garden. I was thinking, "One day, I'm going to have an opportunity to fix it. One day I'm going to make a difference. One day something is going to happen that is going to allow me the opportunity" to change what I believed was the negative fate of our city. Lo and behold, many, many, many years later, my wife looked at me and said, "You need to do this. You need to go and change this city for the betterment of our kids and all of the other kids in our community."

Everything happens for a reason. Suddenly, here we are. Here I am, a member of the government of Ontario, elected the exact same year that the Algoma University Act expires, in December 2018. I thought to myself, "Well, there you go. Everything does happen for a reason." I immediately knew that this was what we needed to do to help our community, moving forward. With other initiatives I'm working on in my community—a student committee that I've spoken of before and I will speak of again—we're going to show our students, we're going to show our young people, that there is, in fact, a very good reason to stay in Sault Ste. Marie; there are, in fact, great job opportunities in Sault Ste. Marie; and we will fill those job opportunities after we pass this legislation and we give degree-granting authority back to Algoma University so that we can continue to expand the programming there to fill the jobs of tomorrow.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I appreciate the member from Sault Ste. Marie and the words he said. I appreciate his passion for his community. I will be supporting this bill. The thing, though, is that it doesn't go far enough. There's a greater opportunity here, and I'll talk a little bit about that. I've got a few minutes.

In the late 1980s, I actually had the pleasure of working and living in Geraldton, Ontario. I worked in a number of jobs. I worked planting trees, and then I worked on a tree-tending crew. Then I was on a forest fire crew for the MNR. Then I was working for a mining company, cutting line through the bush.

In that time, my time in northern Ontario, I learned that there's a lot of frustration. People in southern Ontario aren't aware of it, and that's part of the frustration for the

people of northern Ontario, because we in the south just aren't aware enough of the needs of the people in the north. The frustration really centred around the economic potential of the north that is not being realized. There is an opportunity here with Algoma University and with this bill to actually realize more of that economic potential for the north.

Algoma University, as you all know, or as some of you know—and I'll just give a little background. It's a small university: 1,200 students. As the member from Sault Ste. Marie said, it became independent from Laurentian University in 2008. It's a university that's dedicated to reconciliation. That's the part of this I'll let the member from Algoma–Manitoulin speak further to. It's also a university that understands its role in creating economic growth and social healing in its own community.

This bill basically reinstates the degree-granting abilities that Algoma University already has: the ability to grant bachelor's degrees, undergraduate certificates and honorary degrees. There was, as I understand, an honorary degree given two years ago to Paul Thompson, who was granted a doctor of letters for his work with the Sault Ste. Marie Theatre Workshop, and so he was speaking at the commencement. But there's a greater opportunity here.

The original bill, the 2008 bill that created Algoma University as an independent university, talked about expanding its degree-granting authority in stages, but there was no timeline put on it. This was one of the Liberal failings with this original bill; they didn't actually expand those degree-granting opportunities. Both the Wynne and the McGuinty administrations just let that opportunity pass by.

The problem with the bill brought forward by the member for the Soo is that it does nothing to establish Algoma's ability to grow its program beyond those initial offerings. It simply reinserts the language from 2008 and re-establishes the recent ability to grant undergraduate degrees.

As the NDP critic for colleges and universities, I've had the honour and pleasure of travelling to universities across this province, and one of the things that's impressed me most is that our public universities and colleges are the engines of economic growth in this province, especially at this crucial juncture in our economy, because the new jobs, the jobs of the 21st century, are in information technology, artificial intelligence, green tech. And those are the jobs where partnerships between our public universities and colleges and local businesses are bearing real fruit.

This is an opportunity. If Algoma University was given the ability to grant master's degrees and postgraduate certificates, it could provide a greater contribution to the economic development of the Soo and of the area around it. That's what I would be asking the member to reconsider in his bill: to take it back and expand it to fulfill the original vision of the 2008 bill that created Algoma University.

To the member from Sault Ste. Marie, I humbly say to you: Reconsider this. Take it back. You talk about the opportunity that you have with your position to fulfill your

goal of helping to make Algoma University an economic engine of the community, and I would ask you to take that back and expand its degree-granting abilities beyond the current ones.

1520

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

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I want to start by noting, Madam Speaker, I'll be splitting my time with the members from Etobicoke Centre and Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

I want to start by expressing my gratitude to MPP Romano, the member from Sault Ste. Marie, for his leadership. Not only is he a champion of his riding, he is a fierce advocate for northern Ontario in this Legislature. We are all better off for your leadership, so thank you to the member. And not just as an alumnus of this fine institution; he is an active leader in enabling the success of northern Ontario. We know, Madam Speaker, with northern Ontario facing a 10.5% unemployment rate, almost twice the provincial average, we as political actors and as government actors must do more to enable this critical region to seize the potential of the north—the northern frontier—that is filled with great talent, human talent, natural resources and capabilities, to enable our First Nations communities, our young people who live in the north to be able to continue to have the dignity of work in the region where they were raised.

Madam Speaker, it was this MPP who worked very hard to deliver a \$60-million loan to Algoma Steel, providing a lifeline to the region and protecting jobs for generations. That is leadership. It was this member, who brought forth this legislation, who brought revisions to the Northern Ontario Internship Program so that more organizations can provide the career-related skills development for our young people. It was this member who helped initiate \$700,000 in funding from the province for the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre. It is things and initiatives like this that speak to the government's drive to create jobs north, south, east and west to enable every single person in the province to achieve their God-given potential.

In the context of this bill—a bill which I support and all members of our party support—I want to really express my gratitude for it, because I really believe education is a foundational prerequisite for a strong democracy, a strong economy. We want to make sure that young people in that region, specifically, are able to get the skills within a changing labour market. We know that this institution has the ability, has expressed the interest, and the member believes strongly that it has the trajectory of providing that skills training to young people that desire to seek it in northern Ontario.

Madam Speaker, you know and the people of the north know—and the Premier of Ontario has made this message very clear both in Sault Ste. Marie and in a variety of ridings and communities in the north—that we want to create meaningful jobs in this region. The way we do that is providing the skills training, the education and the

access to employment within a strong economy. Those foundations are required to get young people working. If this legislation passes, we believe it will allow our government to collaborate with Algoma University to help students gain the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, this is building on our other support for our post-secondary sector. It is this government, for the first time in my lifetime, that has seen a 10% reduction in post-secondary education tuition. When you're looking at \$700, \$800, \$900, \$1,200 savings per annum, that is significant for young people, and for their families, should they be supporting their kids in education. It is this government that has taken action to help young people get access to bursaries and scholarships and give them the support they need to ensure access to education.

Madam Speaker, I want to conclude by just noting, very strongly, that when we make education affordable, when we support innovation and jobs in the north, when we speak about being able to actually bring our northern resources—particularly in the Ring of Fire, where there's literally billions of dollars of untapped economic development—to bring those minerals to market, get them to foreign markets and, obviously, create local jobs for Indigenous and local populations, I feel very strongly that as we support economic development, as we support quality, affordable education, and as we support Algoma, we know that together we're going to create opportunities for the people of northern Ontario.

So to the member, I express my gratitude. I thank you and I thank all members for their support. And again, more jobs in northern Ontario is success for all Ontarians.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Just when I open, my friend will know what this means: [*Remarks in Ojibwe*]. Chi meegwetch.

We've often had the opportunity—I know he likes to call this his area, but a lot of my area in Algoma-Manitoulin feeds into the university and feeds into the other facilities that are there. It's always nice that I have the opportunity to speak to this bill on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin, and to encourage and support the member from Sault Ste. Marie in regard to what he is looking at accomplishing. Essentially, it's what every single member in this room wants to try to accomplish: to help our constituents, to help our communities, to help our businesses, to help our institutions.

I've had the benefit—and I know Mr. Romano will also know what it means and how much of an impact it has—when you actually walk the grounds over at Algoma U. I've walked the hallways. I've walked the grounds. I've touched the grasses. I've touched the tobaccos. I've had a prayer at the cemetery that is in the back. It's a powerful feeling. I've sat with survivors, and what I found the most difficult part is listening to them share their stories, listening to them talk and laugh, and laugh about the experiences they have. I know the member will understand when I say this: I felt so uncomfortable, because I didn't want to laugh. It was something that was, “Am I supposed

to laugh?” But just sitting down and listening to them, having those stories.

When you talk about Algoma U and you talk about the other opportunity across the highway which is coming, which is going to be a complement to Algoma U, which is the Shingwauk Kinooaage Gamig institution, which is going to be a gem of resources that are going to be there, which is going to be exemplary, which is going to be a tool for all First Nations—resources and information to be stored. That's going to be part of that education system.

When we look at what the member is asking—and I just got clarification today—this is a step towards opening up opportunities, to making sure that the degrees that are going to be made available to students, yes, continue, that we continue with that. But to my understanding—and I want to work with the member on this—this is the first step to expanding further degrees that are going to be available to the individuals who are going to this school.

With that note, I want to congratulate the member for bringing this forward. As with every member in the House, this is our role. This is what we're sent here to do. I want to say good luck to Ross. If you need some help, I'm here. I'm more than happy to help you on this one. I'm pretty sure it's going to pass, but to get it to the next stage, if you need some help, just ask. I'll be happy to help, and from what you're hearing from my colleagues as well, this is really a good, essential tool and a step in the right direction. And yes, I always love coming to Algoma U.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Interjection: It's the Kinga Surma show.

Miss Kinga Surma: I am rising for the third time today—thank you very much—in support of Bill 79, the Algoma University Amendment Act. Algoma University currently has 1,500 undergraduate students. Every year, students from across northern Ontario, other parts of Canada and the rest of the world join the dynamic community of Algoma University in pursuit of a high-quality education. The main campus is located in Sault Ste. Marie, the third-largest city in northern Ontario.

As the world and technologies around us change rapidly, universities should have the ability to adapt to the new environment, introducing new courses and programs that prepare students for new and exciting careers. Education that corresponds to the current skills demand on the market is key to a healthy and growing economy in the province and in the country.

Just as little as 10 years ago, such professions as app developer, social media manager, driverless car engineer, cloud computing specialist, big data scientist, sustainability manager and many more did not even exist. Nowadays, these professions are in very high demand and require education and preparation to be successful at.

1530

In the coming years, there are going to be tens of new professions that we have never heard of before, but they will be shaping the future of our economy and our province. We need to be ready to embrace the many

changes that are coming, and foster the environment that would empower our northern communities to grow and develop.

Our government was elected on a strong commitment to open Ontario for business, to modernize the economy of this great province and to create more jobs. This also means expanding access to the most innovative academic programs and courses for students all around Ontario. Universities should have an option to teach new classes preparing students for the real world. Students should have an option to receive education in many different fields, without necessarily having to move hundreds of kilometres away from home just because a local university, due to the restraints put upon it, cannot add more programs to its curriculum.

If Bill 79 is passed, it would allow Algoma University to create more educational opportunities and train more specialists in a variety of disciplines. More importantly, it will create more opportunities for students in northern Ontario, helping them to obtain education in the fields in high demand and allow their potential and local talent to grow in Sault Ste. Marie.

It is of the utmost importance for all of us to procure growth and employment in northern Ontario. Passing Bill 79 will be a big step forward in this direction.

The reason why I chose to speak on this bill is because young people are very important to me and, as said many times by the member from King–Vaughan, we want to leave a better province than what we inherited. I want young people in my riding and young people in this great province to succeed. We play a role in getting them there. This is why I would like to thank my colleague for bringing forward this very important initiative to let Algoma University be able to expand the scope of educational programs it offers. I believe this is a great opportunity to provide the people of northern Ontario with more choice, more career options and more personal growth.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to thank the member for Sault Ste. Marie for providing this opportunity for debate as well, around these very important issues: the future of Algoma U and also, of course, the future of post-secondary education in this province.

As others have already noted, we will be supporting this legislation. But we have been disappointed that the member from Sault Ste. Marie didn't take this opportunity to bring us forward that extra step: the opportunity to really move Algoma U forward, once and for all, permanently, for the people of Sault Ste. Marie and for Algoma students and faculty.

I was very pleased to speak to this legislation and to have an opportunity to talk a little bit about post-secondary institutions and education, on behalf of my constituents in the great riding of Davenport, many of whom are post-secondary students. Of course, in Toronto we have many post-secondary institutions, and in my area of the city, we have many, many students residing there. Over the last eight months since we were elected, I have heard from

many, many post-secondary students in my community—by email and by phone, and many of them also at rallies and at meetings in the community—who are very, very concerned about this government's record when it comes to post-secondary education, and how this government has shown that they really don't understand the reality of post-secondary students and post-secondary education today, and the reality of students in their ability to get by, as well as to learn in a positive learning environment.

I think this is a really important opportunity just to remind ourselves, though, of some of the things that this government should be doing better.

What they have done so far is, they've gone after low-income, middle-income students by cutting grants, making loan support harder to get and cranking up the amount of interest they'll pay.

We know that in Ontario already, student debt levels are crushing and are requiring that so many students are putting off moving out of their parents' homes and even starting a family. This scheme that the government put in place to charge more interest and take away grant money is going to make things even worse for so many people, including so many of the students in my own community.

I want to contrast that with the kinds of things we could be talking about. We could be talking about student loans being—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Mississauga Centre will come to order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: We could be talking about all student loan interest being eliminated. We could be talking about more paid work-integrated learning jobs and youth employment opportunities. We could be talking about real solutions.

I think it's important that the government take a moment to actually listen. We have this tendency, on the other side, to bring forward solutions and schemes and plans without actually stopping to talk to the very people who are going to be the most impacted. I urge the other side to please consider listening to the students.

I thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for his legislation.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: My colleagues have already articulated and clarified the matter so clearly that it really doesn't make any sense to vote against this bill. Nevertheless, I want to share with you some of the reasons as to why I'll be voting in favour of this bill and why I urge all my colleagues across the aisle to do so, as well.

In my capacity as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, I was given the opportunity to criss-cross Ontario and to attend small business round tables. Some of these round tables were in urban centres like Toronto, and some were in rural ridings like Haldimand–Norfolk, Niagara West, Northumberland–Peterborough South and Huron–Bruce—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Parsa: And, hopefully, in Kenora soon.

The surprising message I heard from both urban and rural Ontario was that employers were struggling to find workers. The not-so-surprising part of this message was that the problem wasn't finding jobs; it was finding skilled workers to do those jobs.

One employer from Haldimand–Norfolk told me that he had put an ad in the papers, online, and every other place where he could possibly post a job ad, and in six months had only received three inquiries of interest that came somewhat close to meeting the requisite criteria for the job.

At another round table, a group of employers in Simcoe North told me that young, talented people often leave the rural setting to get an education in urban centres, and a very small percentage of them ever come back. Big-city life simply has too many draws, and most rural communities in Ontario cannot compete to attract the talent they need. Once the youth leave, most of them are gone for good, and attracting them back is usually a very difficult challenge.

Algoma University is located in northern Ontario. Northern Ontario has a lot of challenges that southern Ontario doesn't; namely, distance. The distances that people have to travel in the north are just too incredible. Another challenge that northern Ontario faces is a shortage of educational institutions. Due to the limited number of colleges, universities and learning institutions, youth and potential students are forced to seek education elsewhere. As I mentioned previously, once these youth and students leave their local communities, it's very hard to attract them back.

Voting in favour of this bill is an easy fix to a big problem. By re-establishing sections 38 and 39 of the Algoma University Act and providing the university with future degree-granting authority, we are helping to ensure that this educational institution in northern Ontario remains competitive in its ability to attract youth and talent. This will not only benefit the local employers and economy in northern Ontario, but it will benefit Ontario as a whole. Bigger companies will seek to expand their operations into northern Ontario in order to capitalize on the talent pool there. This will create jobs, it will increase revenue, and it will definitely increase Ontario's prosperity.

I want to applaud and thank my colleague the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie for his tireless work in northern Ontario.

Speaker, this is a fantastic bill and will only work to benefit northern Ontarians and Ontario as a whole. Once again, I urge all members in this House to vote yes—

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I will return to the member, but remind all members that the side conversations make it a challenge to hear the member—who does indeed have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all of my colleagues who have spoken to this matter today. Thank you specifically to the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for taking time to pay attention to what the bill is about. I truly, having seen you at numerous events at our Algoma University, know you understand what it is we're working towards, and I thank you for that. Perhaps you could share that amongst some of your colleagues to make sure they can get the understanding as to what this is truly about.

I think I've said enough. I think my colleagues have said enough. What I really want to conclude by saying is, again, I want to share my deepest gratitude and thanks to Ms. Donna Rogers, our academic dean, for being here today. The work that you and Asima Vezina, our president and chancellor at the university, are doing to help the university move forward is incredible. I am very proud to be able to work alongside you. I look forward to continuing to work with you in helping this process move forward with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to make sure that we can grant those additional degrees and certificates that will allow Algoma University to educate our young people in Sault Ste. Marie and everybody who wants to come to Algoma University; to ensure that we can educate people of where the jobs of today are, the jobs of tomorrow, the jobs of the future; and to make a real, meaningful impact to satisfy my "why" and the obligation, if you will, that my wife set upon me, bestowed upon me, when she asked me to take this step in politics, which is to help our kids in Sault Ste. Marie stay in Sault Ste. Marie, the best place I know to live, work, play and raise a family.

Thank you, everybody, for your support today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION
ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 RELATIVE
À LA DÉCLARATION DES NATIONS UNIES
SUR LES DROITS DES PEUPLES
AUTOCHTONES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will deal first with ballot item number 52, standing in the name of Mr. Mamakwa.

Mr. Mamakwa has moved second reading of Bill 76, An Act to ensure that the laws of Ontario are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will deal with this vote after we have finished the other business.

ENDING DISCRIMINATION IN
AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 METTANT FIN
À LA DISCRIMINATION EN MATIÈRE
D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Gill has moved second reading of Bill 42, An Act to amend the Automobile Insurance Rate Stabilization Act, 2003 and the Insurance Act with respect to ending discrimination in automobile insurance. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will deal with this vote after we have finished the other business.

ALGOMA UNIVERSITY
AMENDMENT ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'UNIVERSITÉ ALGOMA

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Romano has moved second reading of Bill 79, An Act to amend the Algoma University Act, 2008. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): To the member: Which committee?

Mr. Ross Romano: The Legislative Assembly committee, please.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Does the majority agree that it be referred to the Legislative Assembly committee? Okay.

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

The division bells rang from 1544 to 1549.

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION
ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 RELATIVE
À LA DÉCLARATION DES NATIONS UNIES
SUR LES DROITS DES PEUPLES
AUTOCHTONES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All members will please take their seats.

Mr. Mamakwa has moved second reading of Bill 76, An Act to ensure that the laws of Ontario are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Harden, Joel	Piccini, David
Andrew, Jill	Harris, Mike	Rakocevic, Tom
Arthur, Ian	Hassan, Faisal	Rasheed, Kaleed
Baber, Roman	Hogarth, Christine	Rickford, Greg
Babikian, Aris	Horwath, Andrea	Roberts, Jeremy
Begum, Doly	Hunter, Mitzi	Romano, Ross
Bell, Jessica	Jones, Sylvia	Sabawy, Sheref
Berns-McGown, Rima	Kanapathi, Logan	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Karahalios, Belinda	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bisson, Gilles	Karpoche, Bhutla	Sattler, Peggy
Bouma, Will	Ke, Vincent	Schreiner, Mike
Bourgouin, Guy	Kernaghan, Terence	Shaw, Sandy
Burch, Jeff	Khanjin, Andrea	Singh, Gurratan
Calandra, Paul	Kramp, Daryl	Singh, Sara
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kusendova, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Stan	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	Lindo, Laura Mae	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Coe, Lorne	Mamakwa, Sol	Stiles, Marit
Crawford, Stephen	Mantha, Michael	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Martin, Robin	Tabuns, Peter
Downey, Doug	Martow, Gila	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	Miller, Norman	Taylor, Monique
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Paul	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fedeli, Victor	Morrison, Suze	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fee, Amy	Mulroney, Caroline	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fife, Catherine	Nicholls, Rick	Wai, Daisy
Fraser, John	Oosterhoff, Sam	Walker, Bill
Gélinas, France	Pang, Billy	West, Jamie
Ghamari, Goldie	Parsa, Michael	Yarde, Kevin
Gill, Parm	Petta-piece, Randy	
Glover, Chris	Phillips, Rod	

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 91; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: General government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on General Government? Agreed.

I will now open the door for 30 seconds—well, I won't. The door will be open for 30 seconds.

ENDING DISCRIMINATION IN
AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 METTANT FIN
À LA DISCRIMINATION EN MATIÈRE
D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Gill has moved second reading of Bill 42, An Act to amend the Automobile Insurance Rate Stabilization Act, 2003

and the Insurance Act with respect to ending discrimination in automobile insurance. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Harden, Joel	Phillips, Rod
Andrew, Jill	Harris, Mike	Piccini, David
Arthur, Ian	Hassan, Faisal	Rakocevic, Tom
Baber, Roman	Hogarth, Christine	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Horwath, Andrea	Rickford, Greg
Begum, Doly	Hunter, Mitzie	Roberts, Jeremy
Bell, Jessica	Jones, Sylvia	Romano, Ross
Berns-McGown, Rima	Kanapathi, Logan	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Karahalios, Belinda	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bisson, Gilles	Karpoche, Bhutla	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bouma, Will	Ke, Vincent	Sattler, Peggy
Bourgouin, Guy	Kernaghan, Terence	Schreiner, Mike
Burch, Jeff	Khanjin, Andrea	Shaw, Sandy
Calandra, Paul	Kramp, Daryl	Singh, Gurratan
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kusendova, Natalia	Singh, Sara
Cho, Stan	Lece, Stephen	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Lindo, Laura Mae	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Mamakwa, Sol	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Crawford, Stephen	Mantha, Michael	Stiles, Marit
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	Martow, Gila	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Jill	Miller, Norman	Tangri, Nina
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Paul	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	Morrison, Suze	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fee, Amy	Mulrone, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fife, Catherine	Nicholls, Rick	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Gélinas, France	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Parsa, Michael	West, Jamie
Glover, Chris	Pettapiece, Randy	Yarde, Kevin

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 90; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Mr. Parm Gill: The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLY ACT, 2019

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2019

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 81, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019 / Projet

de loi 81, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2019.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, as I clear the room, Madam Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to my first piece of legislation as President of the Treasury Board.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order, please. The House will come to order.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Today I will be speaking to Bill 81, Supply Act, 2019. The Supply Act is a procedural yet important step in the province's fiscal cycle. It provides final approval for spending undertaken by the government in the last year. The discussion today, and the vote, are crucial steps in approving spending this fiscal year ending March 31, 2019.

I would like to highlight that this bill does not propose any new spending. It is simply a step in approving the spending already outlined in the expenditure estimates. As the members of this House may recall, those estimates were tabled in the Legislature on November 26, 2018, and deemed concurred on December 3, 2018.

1600

It is important to note that there is significant symbolism surrounding this supply bill. Not only is it the first supply bill tabled by this government, but it marks the end of 15 years of reckless and irresponsible Liberal fiscal management. Madam Speaker, that's what they left us with: nothing. The budget to be tabled next month by my colleague the Minister of Finance will mark a new beginning for responsible fiscal management in Ontario.

For those new members amongst us, I will add some brief context on how the supply bill fits our government cycle.

Each fiscal year begins with the budget, a document that lays out at the highest level what our government plans to do during the upcoming year.

As you know, we announced that our first budget will be released on April 11. Our budget will build on the five core commitments that we were elected on:

—restoring trust and accountability in the province's finances;

—cleaning up the hydro mess. I'm honoured to work with my colleague who has since left the building; however, he will be happy to know that Bill 87, Fixing the Hydro Mess Act, is in progress and, if passed, will help clean the mess;

—making Ontario open for business by creating and protecting jobs;

—cutting hospital wait times and ending hallway health care; and

—putting more money back in taxpayers' pockets, where it belongs.

These commitments guide every decision we make and are a reminder that everything we do is for the people.

Following the budget document are the expenditure estimates, which go into detail about how the goals of the

budget will be carried out. Once expenditure estimates are approved, the supply bill is tabled. This is where we find ourselves today.

To understand the full context of this supply bill, the numbers it contains and the context leading into the upcoming budget, we need to understand Ontario's current fiscal situation.

As a result of poor policies, poor politics and poor management, the previous Liberal government left Ontario with a \$15-billion deficit. But we have made progress on this front. As revealed by Minister Fedeli in the third-quarter update, Ontario's 2018-19 deficit is projected to be \$13.5 billion, an improvement of \$1 billion from the outlook published in the 2018 fall economic statement and a \$1.5-billion improvement from the \$15-billion deficit identified by the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry.

Though our government has been dedicated to restoring fiscal stability, the \$346-billion debt left behind by the Liberals still means that Ontario has the largest subnational debt in the world. To put this in perspective, simply servicing that enormous debt requires paying more money in interest than the government spends on running the entire Ontario public service. That means we are spending \$1.4 million on interest every single hour. That is \$3 million on interest alone over the course of the two hours that we will debate this bill.

What is more, according to the Ernst and Young line-by-line review, the Liberals, over 15 years, managed to increase interest on debt charges by \$2.4 billion. That is nothing short of shocking. In practical terms, it means that somewhere in Ontario there is an elderly person waiting in a hospital hallway because they can't get a bed.

We could be spending that money on more front-line workers in hospitals to end hallway health care. We could be spending that money to help people that need mental health and addiction supports. We could be spending that money on roads and bridges that move goods to market. Instead, that money goes to bondholders.

This form of structural debt and unlimited spending is at the core of mismanagement. The former government viewed structural deficits as a given. They viewed deficit spending as free money that carried no consequences or costs, and we know there are consequences. In fact, today, the Fitch rating agency indicated that the federal government's debt and deficit targets are not compatible with a triple-A rating. This is back to the future, Madam Speaker. There are consequences. You can't continue to kick the can down the road, and that's what the former Liberal government chose to do, leaving it for our children and our grandchildren to pick up the tab. Let me be clear: I reject this generational inequity outright.

Here's a sobering fact. Since Confederation, Ontario has recorded a surplus in 67 fiscal years, but in the last 50 years the province achieved a surplus only nine times. In fact, the data suggests that the last instance of Ontario's net debt actually decreasing year over year was in fiscal 2001-02. The 2001 budget, led by the late Jim Flaherty, then Minister of Finance, showed a \$1-billion reduction in

net provincial debt in 1999-00 and a record \$3-billion contribution projected for 2001. I'm honoured to work with his wife, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, as she modernizes the health care system in Ontario.

This reduction, the budget document noted, would make this the largest single debt reduction in Ontario's history. With this information, we must ask ourselves, what are we leaving for the future? Increasing debt, increasing interest payments? Or should we see the treasury for what it is and what it is meant to be: a shared resource, an endowment for future generations that must be carefully tended to and managed?

It's no secret that this is a major challenge for our government. It took the Liberals 15 years to more than double the debt, and it will take us in Ontario a long time to pay it down. But I'm confident this government will rise to the occasion and do what is right for the people of Ontario. We will get the province's finances back on track. We will balance the budget responsibly. Most of all, we will protect what matters most to the people of this great province, and we have a clear plan to make this happen.

We are making sure Ontario is open for business and open for jobs by reducing red tape and focusing on job creators. We are making decisions that put more money back in the pockets of Ontario taxpayers where it belongs. And we're ensuring that oversight on spending is strengthened, restoring trust and accountability to our finances.

Last fall, the Minister of Finance announced the fall economic statement. The statement showed how we found \$3.2 billion in savings and how our government used that money to provide \$2.7 billion in relief to the people of Ontario, and that relief, in the form of savings for Ontarians and opening the province for business, has already paid off. These savings are just a start, but there's still much more work that needs to be done to bring Ontario back to fiscal health.

Our government is taking further steps to control unnecessary expenses and provide assurances that tax dollars are being treated with respect. This includes important initiatives including the likes of the launch of the new Audit and Accountability Committee that I chair as President of the Treasury Board. The Audit and Accountability Committee brings a new level of accountability that will ensure Ontarians are receiving the best value for their money. It will take a firm role in directing internal audits to services, to priority areas, and embed more scrutiny and discipline at earlier stages in the fiscal process. It will support ministries in their respective duties and, above all, will focus on the \$32.4 million that the government spends on internal audits.

Speaker, for 15 years the Liberals took reports from the Auditor General and put them on a shelf to collect dust. The Audit and Accountability Committee will monitor and follow up on the implementation of Auditor General's recommendations. This will reinforce the valued work of the Auditor General while identifying areas where taxpayers' money could be used more efficiently.

I will conclude, Madam Speaker, by saying that though this supply bill is routine, its symbolism is much more than

that. The passing of the supply bill signifies the end of irresponsible Liberal fiscal cycles and will set the stage for further fiscal transformations, including those in the upcoming budget. Again, this bill is not about approving new spending. It's about providing legislative approval for the spending to which this government has already committed.

1610

Moving forward, Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance is about to table a budget that will be about protecting what matters most: strengthening health care, education and other services we hold dear. It's about balancing the budget in a responsible and pragmatic manner, creating jobs, fighting for Ontario workers, and continuing to find ways to always put the people first.

Above all else, it's about ensuring that future generations of Ontarians are able to enjoy the fruits of a fiscally sound province. History has shown us that proper fiscal management has proven elusive for many governments in this province, but all of us in this House must ask ourselves: If not us, then who? If not now, then when?

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

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I want to say to the President of the Treasury Board, Mr. Peter Bethlenfalvy, congratulations on your first bill. This is a very important bill.

Speaker, I want to mention one of the expressions that the minister has used so eloquently. I'm not sure if he's used it in the House yet or not; I'm hoping he has. It's a very important one. This is what he says: When we ask him about things like the debt and deficit, he tells us that that's what keeps him up at night, but solving it is what gets him up in the morning. Congratulations on your absolutely dogged work on this file.

As the President of the Treasury Board said, the passage of the Supply Act by the Legislature is required every fiscal year to provide final approval for the government's spending. It's the final step in the annual process of providing the province of Ontario with the legal spending authority to pay the government's bills. So it's technically required.

There's no new spending here, as you heard, beyond that which was described in estimates. The Supply Act authorizes the expenditures that were, indeed, in the estimates for the government ministries and offices of the Legislature and legislative offices, and it must actually be based on those estimates. There's nothing new here other than the approval.

But it does give us an opportunity to revisit where we were, where we are and where we're headed. I think that it also gives us especially this opportunity to look back on the fiscal position that we, as a new government, inherited nine months ago.

We inherited, Speaker, a \$15-billion deficit, the largest subnational debt on the planet. That's something that we certainly should not be celebrating as our number one in the province of Ontario. There were many other things we used to be able to celebrate. We were the number one mining jurisdiction in the world in 2003, when the Liberal

government took office. Sadly, we've fallen to—a new number came out last week—somewhere between 27th and 33rd, depending on which metric you follow. That's nothing to be proud of.

The fact that the Liberal government was spending \$40 million a day more than they brought in—that's the reality. That is nothing to be proud of. The fact that we now are forced to spend \$1 billion every single month just on the interest on the debt that the Liberal government ran up—that is money, as the President of the Treasury Board said, that should be spent on health, education and other public services—crucial public services, Speaker.

So, we see that a tremendous shift has happened on June 7 and, more specifically, on June 29, when the Premier was sworn in, when we heard that Ontario was going to set down a different path, when we are now open for business and open for jobs. That's a really different attitude.

We saw that. It began, as the President of the Treasury Board spoke to earlier, with the Ernst and Young line-by-line review, where the Liberals' interest added \$2.4 billion. That's just interest—added interest. We saw the audit committee that brings a new level of rigour to our finances, as the president said earlier. These are the things that we've done internally.

When you think about what all that means to the people of Ontario, one of the things that came out was the LIFT Credit. This is the Low-income Individuals and Families Tax Credit, or LIFT. I'll talk about that in a moment, when we get into some details of what that means to families. But in a nutshell, it means that there is relief that's provided.

We saw the Minister of the Environment bring a bill that took away the cap-and-trade carbon tax, and we saw that returning \$260 to each family, \$80 for natural gas, dropping the price of gasoline at the pump by 4.3 cents a litre. These are the kinds of changes that we saw immediately when our government, the government of Premier Doug Ford, took over.

Shortly after, the fall economic statement showed a \$500-million reduction in the \$15-billion deficit that we inherited. The third-quarter finances came out, reflecting where we were at the end of December, and that proved that our plan is working. It increased economic growth in Ontario to a billion-dollar reduction in the deficit, which brought it from \$15 billion to \$14.5 billion to \$13.5 billion by the end of December.

The upcoming budget will lay out our path to balance, showing how we will restore accountability while protecting what matters most. And that's the key. I am truly looking forward to April 11, when people will understand—all the rhetoric can end, and all of the fear-mongering can end, when people understand two things: We're going to restore accountability, we're going to lay out our path to balance, and we're going to protect what matters most—health care, education and crucial public services.

So, we've seen things change. The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade has brought the

Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, and it's really fascinating to see the difference.

After the fall economic statement, there was a New York trip where we had to go and raise money from the investment groups. It was interesting: At one of the speeches, the groups said out loud—and they weren't speaking about me and my delivery; they were talking about the message that came from Premier Ford. They said, "We haven't heard a message like that in 15 years."

It's the message that tells you that families are going to find relief, and businesses are going to find a friendly place to do work, put people to work and create employment. And we saw employment increase: 132,000 new jobs since June 2018. That's by getting rid of the job-killing cap-and-trade carbon tax and by doing all the other moves that we made.

Some people may say, "Oh, it's all about business." Well, those businesses created 132,000 jobs. That's 132,000 people and their families who now have a paycheque that they didn't have before. That's what is so critical. That is what is so absolutely critical with this talk about being open for business. It's not a bumper sticker. It's a philosophy that says we understand who creates the jobs in Ontario, who creates the employment for families, and who helps put food on their table, and who is also helping keep their costs down by keeping the price of gasoline down, by not raising the fees for licences and registrations and for hunting and fishing licences, and by making sure our veterans can go fishing for free.

1620

It's the little things. I know the Premier has such a big heart, and those are the things that he feels are important to him, to all of us. He said to the President of the Treasury Board, and he says to me, "We pay enough taxes. Let's give people a break here." That's why it's so important.

He also knows that the businesses need to know that we've got their back. That's why, when the Americans dropped their corporate tax rate and dropped—it's called an accelerated capital cost, and it's a mechanism that means they can write off their equipment earlier. They were eating our lunch. We can't have that any more. We were losing out. If a multinational had a decision to invest in Ontario or in the States for their capital expenditures, they were picking the States because ours was not a good area for them. The previous Liberal government had an all-out assault on business. That has changed now, and they're reinvesting.

In the fall economic statement, we put a capital cost allowance. We asked the federal government to do that. They put a capital cost allowance. And now the balance has tipped again in our favour. We are a better cost jurisdiction for companies to come to. These are the kinds of things. We're protecting families, we're protecting what matters the most to them—their education, their health care—and this Supply Act gives us an opportunity to stand in front of you and talk a little bit about those things.

I say to the President of the Treasury Board, congratulations. This is your first bill. It's an important milestone in acknowledging that we have seen the past, we know

where we are today, we've got a plan for the future and we look forward to April 11 to take the hand-off from you, Treasury Board, and present our path to balance to the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I guess I'd like to start by acknowledging the remarks of the President of the Treasury Board, Mr. Bethlenfalvy, who, when he introduced this bill, I believe on Monday, said, "The Supply Act is one of the key acts in the Ontario Legislature. If passed, it would give the Ontario government the legal spending authority to finance its programs and honour its commitments for the fiscal year that is to close at the end of March." I have to say that I do agree. The Supply Act is one of the key acts in the Ontario Legislature and, as such, it deserves the attention and the scrutiny of this Legislature.

You know, it's possible to view the Supply Act as something that's simply procedural, but that's not true. Supply Acts actually have deep ties to the origins of the Westminster parliamentary democracies. With your indulgence, Madam Speaker, and I'm hoping that the House leader will appreciate this story, I'd actually like to share a story with you that a charming gentleman just told me recently to help illustrate how far back this legacy goes. In fact, it goes all the way back to King John in the 13th century.

Before there was Parliament as we understand it today, there were what were called Great Councils. These councils consisted of archbishops and abbots and barons and earls. Great Councils were used to seek consultation and consent from the nobility on major treasury spending decisions of the crown, or of the king—maybe the queen, but in this case it's the king.

When this system of consultation and consent broke down, it often became impossible for the crown to function effectively. The most prominent instance of this was between King John and the barons. King John was fond of his expensive foreign wars, and the barons wanted King John to seek approval and be accountable for spending the coin of the realm. But King John really didn't want to fall into line, and he provoked such hostility from so many of the leading noblemen that they forced him to agree to the Magna Carta. King John's failure to abide by the Magna Carta, in fact, led to what is known as the First Barons' War.

This Great Council evolved into the Parliament of England and, over time, Parliament further restricted the crown's taxation and spending authority, slowly moving towards the system that we have today.

As improbable as this may seem, the supply bill that we're debating at this late hour on a Thursday goes all the way back to King John. It has a pedigree that goes back centuries.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I didn't know that.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, who knew?

I would like to talk—more recently—about the Auditor General's report from 2012. The Auditor General describes the supply bill and legislative oversight thus:

“Legislative oversight of government spending, including the annual budget, is fundamental to any democracy.” In Ontario, “such oversight typically falls to the opposition parties”—that’s us—“although”—and this is important—“all elected officials are ultimately responsible for ensuring that revenues are spent prudently on behalf of the public....

“While the government sets spending priorities and manages service delivery, it must seek the Legislature’s approval”—just as King John needed to—“each year for its spending plans....

“Parliamentary oversight and approval of a government’s proposed spending plans has long been considered a key element to ensure government fiscal accountability. Legislative scrutiny of proposed government spending, especially by opposition members, is a key component of this accountability.”

So supply bills are not simply procedural; they are in fact fundamental in ensuring accountability and transparency in government spending. But as with most of this government’s actions in the Legislature, including this supply bill, this is not business as usual. I’m disappointed to say that the actions of this government are eroding even this fundamental and historical system of oversight.

What exactly is the problem? Let me start with the fact that this Supply Act is based on the Liberal spending plan, the estimates from the 2018-19 budget. This is not the Conservative spending plan from the fall economic statement. This Supply Act will not help the public to know what the government is doing with their taxpayer dollars.

We know the fall economic statement announced cuts, but we don’t know the details. We don’t know how big they are or exactly where they will take place, because they are not in the supply bill that’s before this House. This government has made many announcements of cuts to program spending that will result in lower overall program spending, which are not included in the estimates, again, that are now before us.

In the fall economic statement, the government identified \$3.2 billion in program cuts—of that, \$1.7 billion in lowered program spending, such as health care spending. Health programs in the 2018 budget have been eliminated, such as programs providing drug and dental coverage, OHIP+ expansion for seniors, and OHIP+ for children and youth. Also in this \$1.7 billion, the government removed the \$330-million investment in mental health and addiction programs that was in the 2018-19 estimates. As well as this, the government, as we know, has cut in half the planned increase to social assistance and ODSP benefit rates.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. In addition, this has resulted in another \$300 million in spending cuts that are not identified in the spending bill that is before us.

In addition to the \$1.7 billion in program cuts, there was another \$1.4 billion in ministry underspending, re-profiling and efficiencies, but the government has provided scant or no details to help us understand what exactly these changes mean.

This is \$3.2 billion in programming cuts and changes, and we don’t know where this money is moving. Madam Speaker, we ask: What are these spending changes? I really do wish the government had bothered to update the estimates, but instead the government is keeping the details of its real spending plan from the public.

I have to say, it’s ironic—in fact, many of their bills are titled with ironic titles, but it’s especially ironic that this government chose to name their fall economic budget Ontario’s Plan for the People, because—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It’s a Liberal plan.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —it’s a Liberal plan for the people. Because in abandoning these estimates for those in the Liberal budget, they’ve also abandoned any chance of Ontarians knowing exactly where their dollars are currently being spent.

1630

Here’s where you’re going to have to pay attention. This is a lesson that we are going to need. Here’s what the established, standard procedure for supply bills in this Legislature should be. In Ontario, the supply bill spending process begins before the start of the fiscal year with the passage of the interim appropriation act. Am I good so far, Gilles? This legislation is typically passed months before the start of the province’s April 1 fiscal year, and it allows supply bill spending to occur until the passage of the Supply Act. Near the start of the fiscal year, the government presents its Ontario budget, followed soon after by the expenditure estimates, which formally request the supply bill spending component of the province’s expense plan, as outlined in the budget. Clear as mud? Got it?

After the estimates are tabled in the Legislature, the Standing Committee on Estimates begins its scrutiny of the government’s spending requests. This is a very important part of the process. The committee selects between six and 12 ministries for review, and this review continues until mid-November, after which time the estimates are reported back to the House. The supply bill is then formally introduced for approval by all MPPs. However, I have to be perfectly clear and underscore the fact that these expenditure estimates have never been seen by the Standing Committee on Estimates. It’s a fundamental part of accountability.

In fact, the FAO’s recent report on the expenditure estimates has something to say about that. From the FAO’s report: “Overall, the” Standing Committee on Estimates’ “review of the estimates provides a valuable opportunity for MPPs to scrutinize the government’s spending plan and to support MPPs’ review of the annual supply bill.” This is where we are now in this year.

“After the June 7, 2018 election, the new membership of the Standing Committee on Estimates was appointed on July 26, 2018. However, as the new government had not yet tabled the 2018-19 expenditure estimates in the Legislature”—I suppose an oversight—“the SCE could not begin its review of the estimates.”

However, “On November 29, 2018”—this past fall—“the 2018-19 expenditure estimates were tabled in the Legislature by the government. As the estimates were

tabled after mid-November, the SCE did not have an opportunity to review” those estimates.

I'd like to repeat: The estimates committee was constituted in July, but no estimates hearings were ever scheduled. This is significant because this means that MPPs on all sides of the House have not been given a reasonable opportunity to scrutinize the government's spending plans.

You would like to think that the reason this government chose not to hold estimates hearings was because they were updating the expenditure estimates to their own, which were announced in the fall economic statement on November 15. But that was not the case. On November 29, this government tabled in the Legislature its 2018-19 expenditure estimates, and unbelievably, these were identical to those of the previous Liberal government. This is the Liberal government's budget, which the members of this House railed against when they were in opposition and railed against on the campaign trail. But here we are, right now in the House, being asked by this government to approve a supply bill that is essentially the Liberal government's spending plan. How is this even probable?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The original.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It boggles the mind.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It boggles the mind.

I need to underscore: No estimates committee has had a chance to review this supply bill.

The critical question is, if the Conservatives were simply going to submit the Liberal estimates anyway, then why didn't the committee get a chance to scrutinize these plans? This is yet another example of this government avoiding public accountability and transparency, and keeping information from this Legislature—information that is vital for all of us to do our job.

Despite the fact that this government claims to be different—we hear a lot about them being more accountable and more transparent than the former Liberal government—they are presenting the exact same numbers. But we know this government has made significant changes and cuts. They've announced them right here in the House and in the media, but they're not in the supply bill. We know this government has cut from essential services, like the aforementioned \$300 million in cuts from the increase to social assistance.

But here's the truly frightening bit for me: While this government's total spending cap for the Supply Act authorized programs must remain fixed, the government can use Treasury Board orders to take money from one program to another, without requiring new legislation. Clearly, as we've seen, they don't need to inform the Legislature as long as, at the end of the day, all spending increases are equally offset by spending decreases.

In other words, we have no real way of knowing what actual spending plan the government has adopted until, of course, the release of the public accounts, which will be up to a year and a half from now. It will show what this government has spent or what the Treasury Board orders have been.

Ms. Marit Stiles: So much for transparency.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly.

As long as the scales balance out at the end of the day, who will know where the money is being spent before it's already gone?

This government will have to move money in and out of 40 programs, whose individual spending plans under the fall economic statement are very different from what is in the estimates. This represents over 30% of the total number of programs whose spending is authorized by the Supply Act. According to the FAO's recent expenditure estimates report, there will be spending increases for 10 programs and spending cuts for 30 programs. These changes represent the government's real spending plan, which is different than the Supply Act that is before us today.

So, what options exist for Ontarians to get these important answers about where their money is actually being spent? It should have been at the estimates committee, but we've already heard that that whole step was just skipped over. We, as members, can ask questions in the House. I don't know how you feel about it, but I don't feel like I'm getting solid answers to my questions to help us understand.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, not so much, right?

As I said before, we can wait up to a year and a half for the public accounts to show what the government has already spent or, I have learned recently, we can request information through order paper questions.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to let you know that as the finance critic for the official opposition, I take my role very seriously. I really think that it's my role to ensure that government spending is transparent and accountable. You should also know that in my role as the finance and Treasury Board critic—I've got my hands full—I've submitted order paper questions. I've done this to try to get answers on what this government is doing with Ontarians' tax dollars.

Let me read my order paper questions in the House, two of them: “Would the President of the Treasury Board please provide a copy of all Treasury Board orders since June 29, 2018, including orders to adjust the authorized spending for any ministry program or sub-program.”

The second question: “Would the President of the Treasury Board please provide details of planned spending changes to approximately 40 ministry programs referred to in the Financial Accountability Officer's report, Expenditure Estimates: A Review of Ontario's Proposed Spending Requirements for the 2018-19 Supply Bill, reflecting the differences in planned spending between the Expenditure Estimates published by the previous government—the Liberal government—and subsequently tabled by the current government—the Conservative government—and the spending program outlined in the ... fall economic statement.”

Order paper questions appear to be one of the last ways that I, as the critic, or Ontarians, can get answers to where their government is actually spending the money. In the

true spirit of parliamentary democracy and the importance of debate over the spending of the crown, I hope to receive a real answer from the President of the Treasury Board.

As elected officials, we all have a real fiduciary duty to understand when the crown, or the Premier, is trying to spend Ontarians' money. As parliamentarians, this is our primary job. We all owe it to our constituents and the people of Ontario to be able to answer these questions and to ensure that we have the information to do so.

So, I'd like to ask some of the members across the aisle, particularly those not in cabinet: Would you be able to answer those questions? If a parent came into your office and asked where the \$100 million from the school repair budget went, what are you spending it on instead and what is the government doing with money that was allocated in the very supply bill we are discussing today, would you be able to answer? This government has yet to provide me this information, let alone this Legislature or the people of Ontario.

1640

Our job is to be critical, to ask questions and to represent our constituents. I recently served on the Select Committee on Financial Transparency that investigated spending by the previous Liberal government. I served with some members across the aisle. This was an entire committee that met for the better part of what seemed like five months, and the point of it was to get to the bottom of some of the shenanigans that the Liberals were playing with the books of Ontario.

Now, we spent a lot of time at committee and we asked a lot of hard questions to try and understand what the Liberals were doing. I heard the members opposite on that committee feel frustrated and irate with the way in which the Liberals tried to—can I say “obfuscate”? I can't even pronounce it; I'm trying to say a word that is parliamentary. They were trying to cloud the way that they were spending. What I see here really is a doubling down on the same games as the Liberals. Not only are they doubling down on the same games, they're actually using the same budget, the Liberal estimates.

The President of the Treasury Board said this morning that the people of Ontario elected a government that respects their dollars. I would ask the President of the Treasury Board to walk that talk. Ontarians don't operate on blind trust. This is not our money; this is not your money. It is fundamentally irresponsible to pass a supply bill on estimates we know to be inaccurate at this point. It's essentially, at this point, a work of fiction.

Here are two critical examples that prove just that. The FAO report observed a sharp growth in the 2018-19 estimates approved spending for the adult services program, which we talked about earlier, which includes the OW and ODSP supports. The actual spending will be lower because, as we know, they've cut the spending in half from 3% to 1.5%. So this long-overdue promised 3% increase to OW and ODSP was quite callously cut in half. But that's \$300 million. Madam Speaker, I ask this government, where did that money go? Where was it reallocated?

I would have to say that the autism file is particularly messy. That's probably an understatement. Going back to the 2017-18 public accounts, they showed that the government of the day spent \$317.8 million on the Ontario Autism Program that year. The 2018-19 estimates originally published by the Liberal government, which are now the Conservative government's estimates too, show planned autism program spending as \$321.5 million, which was an increase of \$3.7 million.

Of course, we now know that this spending can be changed at any time by a Treasury Board order. For all we know in this House, the Ontario Autism Program spending may have already been changed. It's certainly hard to believe that the program simply ran out of money last summer if it had \$3.7 million extra to spend as compared to the year before. The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services has said repeatedly in this House that she went to the Treasury Board for an emergency \$100 million. Was this money moved from another program? Is there a Treasury Board order that we can see to help us understand this file?

I have to say, Madam Speaker, the ultimate irony is, because the approved estimates were for the Liberal spending plan and not the PC spending plan—this government's spending plan—the supply bill act will shortchange the Conservative government on its own spending plan, the fall economic statement, by \$136 million. Does that mean an additional \$136 million in cuts has yet to be disclosed?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Who knows?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Who knows?

So why are we rushing? Why are we being asked to pass a supply bill with expenditure estimates we know now to be incorrect? Why, given that these expenditure estimates were never sent to the Standing Committee on Estimates, are we not being given reasonable time to review what's actually going on? We have not been provided with information essential to discussing the bill, because apparently this government has deemed it unnecessary to share with us.

Again, I ask all members of this Legislature to reflect: If your constituents were to ask you today where hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars have been reallocated, would you be able to answer? If not, how in good conscience can you vote to spend money when you don't know where it will end up? If this thought troubles you as it troubles me, if you feel unprepared, if you feel you don't have adequate information, as do I, don't make this decision. You don't need to do this. We have a choice to take more time and get these answers before rushing forward.

I look around this House and I think about the disagreements that we have had and that we'll continue to have. When Minister Fedeli's budget comes down on April 11, I know that we will have heated discussions regarding funding cuts to programming and so forth, but I'm hoping we can all agree that at the very least it is in the best interests of Ontarians to know where their money is being spent. People want to know where their tax dollars

are going, and they don't want to wait until a year and a half after the money has been spent to find it in public accounts.

I would urge all members of this Legislature to take a principled stance and demand that we be provided with all of the information on past and planned Treasury Board orders before we vote to allow this supply bill to pass.

We were all elected to this Legislature, and we should all know where and how money is being allocated, not just the government's inner circle.

Where does this leave us today, Madam Speaker? We are being asked to support spending estimates we know to be wrong. By putting forward the 2018-19 Liberal government expenditure estimates instead of their own announced-in-the-fall economic statement, this government has shortchanged themselves by \$136 million, meaning, I guess, we can expect \$136 million in cuts that will be laid out in the fall economic statement.

To balance the scales between the Liberal expenditure estimates in the 2018-19 budget and those of the fall economic statement, this government will have to move money in and out of 40 programs whose individual spending plans, under the fall economic statement, are very different from what is in these estimates. These 40 programs are substantial. They represent about 30% of the total programming whose spending is authorized by the Supply Act. So, really not only does this defy the traditions of our democratic system—I think King John would be okay with it—but it demonstrates, I have say, an arrogance—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: King Doug.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes—in an outright disregard towards the people of Ontario. By shuffling money between programs out of the public eye, we have no real way of knowing what actual spending plan the government adopted until the release of the public accounts up to a year and a half, or perhaps, maybe through my order paper questions, the President of the Treasury Board will enlighten us. We can hope.

This feels like it's an uneasy sense of entitlement, that this government is acting like this is their money, that they know best and that the opposition, this House, and the people of Ontario don't need to know. Just leave it with them; they'll take care of this. To act like they don't have a duty and an obligation to be completely transparent and accountable on how they're spending Ontarians money is something that I never expected to see. I'm a new MPP here, but this is something that I find so deeply disappointing. If this government doesn't believe that parliamentarians, the official opposition and elected officials, need to know where they are spending money, please tell me that, at the very least, you feel that the people of Ontario deserve straight answers on how you are currently spending their money.

The most troubling aspect of all of us is not just the unprecedented lack of accountability and transparency, but who this shroud serves. It's becoming increasingly clear to us on this side and, I would say, to the people of Ontario that there's a concentration of power and decision-

making occurring within this government. More and more decisions are being moved away from the public eye and are happening behind closed doors. Our parliamentary system evolved to increase public accountability over crown spending. As I said, it's a tradition that goes back to the 13th century and beyond, and we are the keepers of that tradition. Ultimately, our fiduciary duty to understand the purse of the Legislature is the most important function that we have as elected officials. This is not our money. We are stewards. We are fiduciaries. This is a very, very important duty and we all take it very seriously.

1650

Having said that, it's incredibly concerning that this government seems to be intentionally removing much of this oversight. So, Madam Speaker, I have to ask, will this government give the Legislature answers to our questions? Will this government provide reasonable time for us to fulfill our very important fiduciary duty? Most importantly, it is not just our fiduciary duty; it is our duty as elected officials to the people of Ontario. I hope that this government will be forthright and provide more answers, because this supply bill does not provide the kind of detail that we as parliamentarians and the people of Ontario deserve.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: It is a privilege to rise today to speak to the Supply Act and the critical work that the government is doing to restore trust, accountability and sustainability to Ontario's finances.

I'd like to begin by thanking the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Finance and the member for Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte for the context they've provided. I'd also like to thank them, most importantly, for their unrelenting dedication to the taxpayers. I am honoured to work alongside you.

Madam Speaker, the people of Ontario elected this government with a clear mandate to bring responsible fiscal management back to Queen's Park. As I knocked on doors in my riding of Willowdale, I heard time and time again that people were scared about their future. The previous government had spent recklessly and Ontarians had little to show for it. They threw more and more money at problems but didn't solve them. Hard-working Ontarians—moms and dads—were paying more in taxes but weren't seeing their children's grades get any better or seeing their aging parents receive better health care or seeing their cost of living decrease. That's why this government is doing things differently: focusing on spending smarter, transforming the way government works, putting money back in people's pockets and reducing red tape.

As we debate the supply bill for this year, it's worth reflecting on the critical steps this government has already taken to create the solid financial footing for the Ontario of tomorrow. After all, finding savings in government is not an end in itself. Finding savings is not an end in itself; it is a means of investing in the programs and services Ontarians rely on every day and protecting those core services for future generations.

As the President of the Treasury Board outlined, the supply bill is necessary to ensure that the government

meets its spending commitments for the current fiscal year. But controlling those spending commitments, moving forward, is crucial to ensuring that Ontario can honour our commitments to health, education and other important public services in the future.

When this government took office, we inherited a \$15-billion deficit. As the Minister of Finance likes to put it, the previous government was spending \$40 million more per day than it could afford. These successive deficits have added to over \$300 billion in debt, giving Ontario the unenviable title of the most indebted sub-sovereign nation in the world.

This government, though, has begun the difficult task of chipping away at that deficit, of bending the cost curve down. As the President of the Treasury Board mentioned, we have already found \$4.2 billion in savings, and have put \$1.5 billion towards eliminating the deficit and the other \$2.7 billion back in the pockets of those Ontarians most in need.

We know, Madam Speaker, that there will be more savings to come in this government's first budget. We are making the necessary, foundational changes now that will help put money back into the pockets of the people and protect the world-class public services that Ontarians pay for each and every day. The path to balance and the path to prosperity is possible because this government has taken bold action. There's no question that there are hard choices that need to be made, Madam Speaker, but we have an obligation to our constituents and to future generations of Ontarians to restore trust and accountability in Ontario's finances.

One of the first things this government did upon taking office was to launch a full, independent, line-by-line review of government spending over the last 15 years. This review covered expenditures and expenditure growth for every ministry, every major sector, every program and every transfer payment. The result was the Managing Transformation report, which revealed a frightening picture of this province's financial outlook, but also explored ways the government could adapt, modernize and transform to deliver our programs and services more efficiently, without involuntary front-line job losses. Our government has taken swift action on that advice.

The comprehensive line-by-line review of past government spending provided the base line we needed to help transform government and to transform the lives of the people of Ontario for the better, putting the citizen, the taxpayer, at the centre of everything we do. This government is walking the talk, Madam Speaker. We're doing the difficult work of creating a culture of efficiency and respect for taxpayer dollars.

In addition to the line-by-line review, the government has engaged an independent panel of experts to support its transformation agenda. The Planning for Prosperity Advisory Group will provide essential insight and unique expertise on providing programs and services in a way that delivers the best value for money.

Speaking of consulting the experts, we went to the foremost experts on government services: the people of

Ontario who actually use those services. In the fall, we conducted the Planning for Prosperity public consultations, giving all Ontarians a chance to suggest new ideas to transform the way the government services they rely on are delivered. Now, I'm proud to say that Ontarians responded in huge numbers, sharing over 26,000 ideas for ways we can make government more effective, more efficient, and most importantly, sustainable.

At the same time, we launched the Big Bold Ideas Challenge internally, asking the dedicated public servants who deliver our programs to share their front-line knowledge and insights on how they could be delivered better. There is no monopoly on a good idea, and we've gone out of our way to listen, seek input and leave no stone unturned in our mission for better, more efficient government.

This government also took a coordinated approach to managing expenses across the public service. Spending controls on all ministries have included a hiring freeze on non-essential front-line positions, a suspension of compensation adjustments for executives and managers, a freeze on discretionary spending and restrictions on travel, meals and hospitality spending.

We have also taken unprecedented steps to address March madness—and I wish I was talking about college ball, Madam Speaker, but I'm not. March madness is unnecessary discretionary spending at the end of the fiscal year when ministries rush to spend any funds they have left over from the year. To address this, our government has directed all ministries to limit spending to commitments under contract, legislation or as required to fulfill core services up to March 31, 2019. Ministries have also been ordered not to enter into any new funding commitments, including spending from within their allocations, without approval from the Treasury Board. The Treasury Board is monitoring this spending and will hold ministries directly accountable for ensuring compliance.

This, Madam Speaker, is what responsible financial management and good governance look like. These expenditure controls will make sure that we all remember that we're not working with our own money. We're working with the hard-earned dollars of Ontario taxpayers.

We've already started to see the results. In both the fall economic statement and the third-quarter finances, we can see that the era of fiscal mismanagement and scandal in our province is over. Ontario is on the path back to balance. The supply bill this year is part of this transformation. We must pass this bill to provide the final authority on the spending commitments and savings we have undertaken in the last year.

1700

In many ways, this supply bill closes the chapter on the previous government's fiscal mismanagement and makes way for our government's first budget, which will light the way to a brighter future for our province. It has truly been a transformative year, and there is more transformation to come, but this government has a clear mandate to put more money back in the pockets of Ontarians, to restore trust and accountability in the government's finances, and to

end the culture of waste that has too long held this province back and return Ontario to a balanced budget.

Madam Speaker, this supply bill is not about new spending. It constitutes necessary approvals for the spending already undertaken this year and all the expenditure management initiatives the government has taken. It also confirms the work our government is doing to protect this province's finances and its people. I urge all of the members of this House to support the passage of the supply bill so that our government can meet its financial obligations and continue the hard work of restoring trust and accountability to our province's finances so that we can protect what matters most.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say, first of all, that the finance critic for the official opposition, I think, did a good job of not only laying out the argument about how this particular supply process has gone in this budget here, but I thought she laid out a good understanding for members to understand that Parliament was initially set up as a way of being able to check the executive, in that case the king. There weren't queens, because the last time a queen tried at that time, her name was Matilda, and it didn't work out too well for her. It was Stephen who ended up taking over, but that's a whole other story.

My point is, it was an attempt on the part of the barons—she's right—to exercise control over the king, who was the executive of the day, so that monies being spent couldn't just be decided by the king without any consequence from what the barons and others had to say. She's right to point out the church, because the bishops were a big part of the government at that time—because there were actually two parallel governments. You had the lay government, which was the king's law, and you had the church law, the canon law, that happened at the same time. But that's for a whole other debate.

The point that she makes is an important one, and we should reflect on it: that people spilled blood back in the 1300s, and again during the English Civil War under King Charles I, in order to exercise control over the executive to make sure that Parliament had the right to be able to keep the crown and the executive in check. What's happened over the centuries, which I think is a fascinating subject for those who like parliamentary history, is that the British parliamentary system, especially after the Civil War—what they call the Glorious Revolution—essentially evolved itself into something pretty unique, where you had a constitutional monarchy that was responsible for the duties of the monarch, but where Parliament slowly made it more of a constitutional monarchy by taking some of the powers away from the monarch in order to make sure that it was the people who made decisions on how their taxes would be raised and how their taxes would be spent.

The biggest thing we were given as an assembly is that one of the primary functions this place has is the appropriation of dollars. The sad part is, if you look at this budget process, it's really wanting. What you ended up with, unfortunately, is a very un-transparent process that doesn't

give legislators and doesn't give the public a full view of the expenditures of the province of Ontario, and it has been done in a way, quite frankly, that I think is very much in the shadows.

Let me explain. There are two parts to this. The first part is what my colleague talked about, which is that the previous government introduced a budget, as they are responsible to do under law. They tabled their budget in order to make sure that we had the authority to spend. But then, when we came back after the election, the government decided they wouldn't retable the estimates.

They had to retable the estimates after the election. People say, "What's that? What does that mean? What are the estimates all about?" Well, the estimates are details as to what each ministry will be spending—as we all know. This is not a lesson to members; members know this. This is just a comment to those who are watching the debate here in the House and those who are watching back home.

The difficulty, and why I say it's less transparent—and I think the critic responsible for the official opposition when it comes to both Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance points it out—is that the government didn't immediately retable its estimates. It picked up the standing orders, looked at the standing orders and said, "If you table the estimates after the third Thursday in November, they're automatically deemed to be reported to the House, so therefore we don't have to have the scrutiny of the estimates committee"—which has members on both sides of the House looking at the various estimates and deciding which ones they want to call before the committee in order to ask questions.

She raised some very important questions that needed to be asked. We'll both agree—both the government and the official opposition—that the government previous, the Liberal administration under Premier Wynne, made some pretty interesting decisions when it came to its spending policy in that particular budget they did last spring. Rightfully so, I think the public needed to know how much of that money was actually being spent, because the Liberal government announced all kinds of new spending on things, but we had no idea if that money was being spent, how it was being spent or any details about it, because there was no estimates process in order to look into it.

Then comes a new administration in the name of Premier Ford and the Conservative government. They make some decisions around things like autism and housing and mental health expenditures and a number of other things. These decisions are made, and there's no scrutiny of the Legislature when it comes to how that money is being spent. I think that as legislators we should be somewhat offended by that.

It's not that the government doesn't have the right to make the decision. Nobody argues that; the government has every right to make the decision. It's not that the government doesn't have the right to pass, by majority, its estimates and, eventually, its supply motion; we know that the government can do that. That's not the issue. But we as legislators on both sides of the House, the official

opposition and the government members, have an obligation to the people who sent us here to pick up the estimates, read them and say, “What’s this all about?”

This whole argument around the autism file that there was a request for another \$103 million or whatever it was—over \$100 million was requested by the minister in order to augment the money for autism. That may be true; that may not be true. I have no way of knowing, because there was no ability for us to call that estimate before committee in order to ask those questions. The government had a very in-the-dark, clandestine process to figure out how they were going to deal with the spending of money for this fiscal year.

It’s one of the first times since I’ve been here when we’re so much in the dark when it comes to understanding the details of government budgetary decisions when it comes to expenditure. They couldn’t deal with revenue—we know that, because it takes a budget bill to deal with revenue—but at least on the expenditure side, the government, I think, had an obligation to us as legislators, and we, in return, take a responsibility for citizens back home—in order to at least review the estimates, because there may be things in the estimates that Conservative members may have some questions about as well.

This is the point that I really want to stress. The beauty of the British parliamentary system, and what we’ve walked away from in Canada more so than England, is that it used to be that even though we’re parties—Conservative; NDP—there was an ability for individual members to have an effect on what government policy should be. If you looked at the rules in the past, before the days of David Peterson—and that’s really where we started the big downhill slide: in the 1987 to 1990 period. Mr. Peterson and every government thereafter changed the standing orders, to the point that they kept on taking power away from the assembly—meaning you and I as individual members—and moving that power into the corner office, the Office of the Premier.

1710

So now decisions around budgetary matters that are rightfully our jurisdiction as legislators, by and large are leaving us strictly with rubber-stamping what the corner office decides to do. That’s not what this Parliament is all about. Magna Carta was about making sure that people had their representation when it came to how you’re going to spend money and how you’re going to raise money within the realm—at that time, England—within the province of Ontario.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It’s called the public purse for a reason.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It’s called the public purse for a reason, as my colleague says.

The point is, we’re now in a weird spot, where we’ve gone from King John, who was the extreme at the other end—we’ll both agree, King John was a colourful king; we’ll just leave it at that. He was good, bad and indifferent—more bad and indifferent than good, but that’s a whole other story. We’ve now come full circle, and we no longer have kings and queens, as far as executives; we

now have Premiers and Prime Ministers as executives. The Premiers and the Prime Ministers are, in fact, the old King John. I look at my good friend across the way. He knows. He worked in a Prime Minister’s office and understands what I’m talking about. There’s a lot of power that rests in the offices of the Premier and the Prime Minister that rightfully should be powers that rest here in the Legislature. I think we do ourselves a disservice by allowing—and I was part of that. I’m not going to pretend that I’m lily white on this, because I was part of a government that made some of those changes, as well. Every government since Peterson has weakened the ability of individual members to do their job when it comes to expenditure of dollars.

The other point that I want to make is this, and this is just in response to the previous speaker: There was a pride stated by the member that the government decided that it was going to have some independent reviews of expenditures in regard to how the government came up with the numbers that they did in the previous budget and what the actual deficit numbers are. They decided that they were going to look at that, which in itself is not a bad idea, and then they said, “We’re going to do our own process in order to take a look at budgetary decisions.” I’ll be honest; I get offended, as a member, when governments, the corner office, the Premier’s office, say they’re going to bypass the Legislature to do what rightfully we should be doing. Those types of discussions around, did the previous government cook the books—because that’s what you’re asking, simply put—should have been a question referred to a standing committee of this assembly, in the full transparency of the rules of this House and committee, to allow us to do our job as members, both government and opposition, to ask that question.

I think you’re right; the previous government made some pretty bad decisions under former Premier Wynne, and even Premier McGuinty before, when it came to how they were going to spend money. You look at that Fair Hydro Plan that you guys are now amending—all you’re doing is you’re keeping the Fair Hydro Plan that existed before and you’re calling it the Conservative hydro plan. Essentially, that’s what you’re doing.

The point that I want to make is, these types of decisions, as far as reviewing all of this, should properly be done at a standing committee. The government, since it has been sworn in as the new government under the current Ford administration, now finds itself where they keep on having these, supposedly, consultations that they control—consultations around education, consultations around budget-making, consultations about all kinds of different matters that are being controlled by ministers’ offices and not the Legislature. A minister’s office is akin to the power of King John. Why did the barons all the way back in the 1300s decide that that was not a bad idea? Would we put ourselves in a position of saying, “Maybe King John was right. Maybe elected politicians and the public should not be listened to?”

I just wanted to say in this particular debate that the member raises an extremely good point when it comes to

how we should respect the process that was established over many, many years and the creation of our parliamentary system and allow the system to work because—you know what?—it does work. One of the most successful governments—I wouldn't even say "governments." One of the most successful Parliaments that existed in Ontario in many, many years was that period in the mid-1970s when there was a minority Parliament. It lasted for two minority Parliaments: one for two years and one for four years. The reason it was successful was that the Premier of the day decided that he would trust the assembly.

When you talk to the old-timers who were there at the time—and I've spoken to some of the former Conservative House leaders and NDP House leaders who were there—there was a trust of the assembly. The Premier of the day said, "Do you know what? I trust that members will do the right thing. I will refer matters to the House, and refer matters to the committee if they so choose, in order to make decisions about how we do whatever it might be." I think if we got back to that, there may be a bit of restored confidence to the public when it comes to their local politicians. Maybe the public would look at us and say, "Do you know what? These guys are trying to work at trying to find a solution to the problem."

I'm just going to end on this, because it's Thursday night and people want to go home, and I shouldn't take all of the time. But I'll just end on this: Imagine that the government takes on a major issue, as you are now, under The People's Health Care Act. The government has a stated goal. The stated goal, I think, most of us can agree on.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, the goal is good.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The goal is fine. We need to find a way that when a patient interacts with the health care system, it's simple, it's easy and there's no confusion about how to dispense services. We can all agree.

We can also all agree that we need to find a way to make it work better so that there's not duplication—not so much duplication but that it's more seamless, that there's better co-operation within the health care system and you break down the silos, as the government likes to say.

But here's the process that the government follows: They're going back to King John. This is the King John syndrome. The government executive drafted a bill called Bill 74. They tabled it in the House. The question was called after 10 hours of debate in the House. I expected that by 5 o'clock I would have a time allocation motion—but I don't think I got it yet—in order to move that bill through committee. We're going to have very little time in committee to have the public come in and have its say when it comes to one of the most major reforms in health care we're going to see in a long time. Would we not be better served as citizens, and would we not be better served as MPPs, if we actually trusted the Legislature to do this work? That's what we got elected for. The whole reason why we stood for office is so that we can all do what's best for the people back home. You may be a Conservative and I may be a New Democrat and we may disagree—and that's fair—on some of the ideology behind what the final

product should be, but we should not have an argument about how we do it. We should trust our committees and trust the assembly to come up with the suggestions about how you deal with some of the things that the government wants to do. I would argue that if we did that, we'd all be better served.

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

Mr. Doug Downey: I want to thank the President of the Treasury Board for the overview of the supply bill he shared. Actually, if people get Hansard, it's a really good backgrounder on how things work. It doesn't go back to the 1300s, as my friend was discussing, but it does lay it out nicely.

Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker, rather—I also want to thank the Minister of Finance and the PA for the Treasury Board. I'm just thrilled to be part of a fiscal foursome that is trying to get Ontario back on track. Considering that this is the first supply bill this government has put forward, I think the Treasury Board president provided a really valuable overview of the whole fiscal cycle. He put in context where we are in the province and what the supply bill will do for us today.

What I'd like to do, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker—this is the problem with prepared notes.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Just say, "Speaker."

Mr. Doug Downey: "Speaker." Thank you, Minister. I will say "Speaker."

Speaker, I also would like to note that my—

Interjections.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'm not even an old dog; I can learn new tricks.

Speaker, I do want to note, actually, before I go any further, that I got a text just moments ago that my 11-year-old daughter is watching. She's learning how the process works. It's fascinating how engaged people at every level are interested in what's happening in our province. That's part of the reason that we work so hard in trying to get the province back on track.

I want to talk about opening Ontario for business—what that really means and what the Supply Act does to help us with that. It has an impact on the finances of the province, of course. It's helping us meet the ultimate goal of balancing the budget and reducing the burden in Ontario. You've heard the Minister of Finance talk about it. We're going to do it in a meaningful and a reasonable amount of time.

1720

The need to open Ontario for business led this government to pass the Making Ontario Open for Business Act last fall. This bold piece of legislation cut the red tape that businesses faced when looking to grow in Ontario. PA Parsa has gone around and done round tables to hear from businesses about the kinds of things that they're facing: regulations and rules and statutes that are just not working and are getting in the way of creating new jobs and better jobs—not just new jobs, but better jobs, higher-paying jobs, more permanent jobs, just really meaningful. We're having a problem now because we've created so many

jobs that we're having trouble filling some of them. We're going to solve that, too, through the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Many of the changes had to do with removing job-killing red tape, including increasing minimum wage and passing the costs on to employers at a time when they needed relief. When this government consulted with Ontarians last year, small business owners shared a number of stories, hundreds of stories. I heard them in my riding. I'm sure you heard them in your riding. Our government heard everywhere we went about the relief they needed.

We heard about staff layoffs if minimum wage was going to go up. We heard about people closing up shop due to regulations they faced. Red tape isn't just a slogan; it's an actual problem. There are hundreds and hundreds of examples of rules that get in the way of creating a job or maintaining a job that actually don't accomplish anything. That's exactly what red tape is and that's exactly what we're tackling. There's too much red tape in the way, too many burdens placed on them as job creators, and they end up being unable to invest in their own industries, in their own operations.

Speaker, businesses told the government that regulations were standing in the way of getting things done and creating good jobs here in Ontario. They told us that it took far too long to get an environmental compliance approval compared to other jurisdictions and it was leaving businesses at a competitive disadvantage.

Now, I want to speak for a moment about Bill 47 and protecting workers. Businesses told us that setting the minimum wage at \$15 an hour this year would have forced them to let employees go. I know that others don't always agree with that, but the Financial Accountability Officer, an independent officer of this Legislature, suggested that 50,000 jobs would be lost if the minimum wage went up to \$15 an hour in January of this year. The Making Ontario Open for Business Act repealed that increase and kept the minimum wage at \$14 an hour until 2020. Now, Madam Speaker, that was still an increase of \$2.40. It was still a huge increase in a very short period of time, but we maintained it at \$14 because businesses had already adapted to it; they'd already changed processes.

One thing that businesses need is stability and predictability so that they can plan their growth, so they can invest in their businesses and invest in their employees. We kept it there and it will stay there until after 2020. The increases to the minimum wage from there will be tied to inflation. For Ontario businesses, this means they have confidence. It's reasonable. It's predictable.

The Supply Act is allowing us to make sure that we are funding the things that need to be funded in a predictable and reasonable way, just as we're expecting these businesses to do. The Supply Act allows us to fund the things that are most important to Ontarians, that are critical. Instead of seeing job losses, we're seeing increases, we're seeing job growth.

We tackled several other parts of that Bill 47 to create stability and to create predictability and to allow reinvestment. It could be PEL days, personal leave days. We kept

the provisions, of course, about domestic and sexual violence leave. That's just common sense. We helped businesses build more skilled employees, more skilled trades. We dealt with the journey-person-to-apprenticeship ratio. We modernized the apprenticeship system, brought it in line with other provinces and territories. We really tucked in and made that stuff happen.

Essentially, the government for the people has taken many opportunities to get out of the way and let job creators put Ontario to work. The Supply Act is allowing us to set a predictable track so that we can get Ontario not only open for business, but operating in a way that we expect others to operate. As the PA for Treasury Board said, we're walking the walk and we're walking the talk. It's critical that we do that.

This government was applauded for reducing red tape. We got the Golden Scissors Award from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They understand what we're doing with the finances. I'd say keep the scissors out because there will be more ribbon-cuttings—red tape and open-for-business ribbon-cuttings. You're going to see more of that, because the Supply Act is allowing us to fund what we're doing and then move forward with the budget, which the Minister of Finance tables on April 11, as everybody in the House knows and those watching also know.

As the government looks forward, it will ensure that the search for unnecessary regulations and red tape will continue. We'll focus on streamlining and eliminating. The Supply Act, again, will not be funding things that are just in the way of business. We're just not doing that. We're not perpetuating this debt and deficit that the previous Liberal government gave us—the \$15-billion debt. We're not perpetuating that.

Madam Speaker, I won't talk a lot about it, but open-for-business was a critical part. The cap-and-trade carbon tax is a critical part; we're fighting that. That's part of the finances of Ontario and leaving money in the pockets of regular Ontarians who are trying to run a business, just as we're trying to balance our own money, to make sure that we get back to balance in a reasonable amount of time.

We're going to end the cap-and-trade carbon tax. I can tell you that in my riding of Barrie–Springwater–Orillia–Medonte, Georgian College—it's estimated that they will have a \$200,000 impact because of the federal carbon tax. Those kinds of things are counter to everything that we're trying to do. So, we will fight that, as we give the resources to our people and our governments who are trying to implement good policy and not get in the way of business.

The other thing that we're doing is strategic investments throughout Ontario. Driving Prosperity, our 10-year plan, the future of Ontario's automotive sector—any investments that we make come through the Supply Act. So, all of these initiatives that we've done come together. You follow the money. You have to follow the money to understand where the real investments are.

It's not just lip service. We're investing in resources, people and structures. We're making sure that—well, just for a sense of the magnitude, vehicle assembly in Ontario accounts for over 100,000 jobs—105,800 jobs just in

Ontario alone. MPP Cuzzetto knows that; he worked for Ford for decades. He understands the impact that the auto manufacturing sector has in Ontario. We're going to put resources to helping that.

We're helping the agricultural sector—the Feeder Cattle Loan Guarantee Program. We're putting resources into—when your livestock are killed in that process, we're making that more efficient. They need the resources, and all that comes through the Supply Act.

The changes reduce the red tape for farmers. They help an estimated 19,000 beef farmers in Ontario to grow their businesses. That's good for Ontario.

When I get an invitation to go to a dinner, and they say, “Do you want beef, chicken or the vegetarian option?”, I always ask, “Is that Ontario beef?” Nine times out of 10 they say, “Oh, nobody has ever asked that before.” Then I get an answer, and I decide what I'm going to eat. Is it Ontario pickerel? Well, who knows?

These are the kinds of things we need to do. We need to look after the basics, and the Supply Act is looking after the basics, making sure things are happening.

The results are clear: From our third-quarter update, our plan to open for business, the climate has brought in more revenue for the government as the business climate improves. The economy continues to grow. We're collecting more revenue through HST and corporate income tax. By reducing the tax burden that businesses face and eliminating red tape, we can put more money in the coffers of government. By cutting, you can grow. It actually happens. If you cut, it can grow.

The government's plan is one that believes Ontario can once again become the economic engine of Canada. We're all working towards that. We're going to make it happen.

Madam Speaker, I'll leave it there, and just to say I am so impressed with the President of the Treasury Board, the

Minister of Finance and the parliamentary assistant for the Treasury Board, and the great work they've been doing from the moment they got elected. I just want to congratulate them on that. I look forward to the budget on April 11.

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

Pursuant to standing order 64, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Bethlenfalvy has moved second reading of Bill 81, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts of the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I have received a deferral slip. Pursuant to standing order 28(h), it is requested that the vote on second reading of Bill 81, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, be deferred until deferred votes on Monday, March 25, 2019.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the deputy House leader.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m. on Monday, March 25, 2019.

The House adjourned at 1731.

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Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Jill Dunlop
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stephen Crawford
Doug Downey, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Kaleed Rasheed
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Chris Glover
Christine Hogarth, Logan Kanapathi
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Dave Smith, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
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Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
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Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
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Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
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Roman Baber, Doug Downey
Catherine Fife, Robin Martin
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Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria, Sandy Shaw
John Vanthof
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