

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 129

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N^o 129

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Thursday
21 November 2019

1^{re} session
42^e législature

Jeudi
21 novembre 2019

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et de l'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 November 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 novembre 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 136, An Act to enact the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019 and make consequential amendments with respect to animal protection, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 136:

—That the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be authorized to meet on Friday, November 29, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. for public hearings on the bill; and

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 3 p.m. on Wednesday, November 27, 2019; and

—That the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee and their designate following the deadline for requests to appear by 4 p.m. on Wednesday, November 27, 2019; and

—That each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, November 27, 2019; and

That each witness will receive up to 10 minutes for their presentation followed by 20 minutes divided equally amongst the recognized parties for questioning; and

That the deadline for filing written submissions be Friday, November 29, 2019, at 5 p.m.; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be Monday, December 2, 2019, at 12 p.m.; and

That the Standing Committee on Justice Policy shall be authorized to meet on Tuesday, December 3, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That on Tuesday, December 3, 2019, at 5 p.m. those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Wednesday, December 4, 2019. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That notwithstanding standing order 81(c), the bill may be called for third reading more than once in the same sessional day; and

That in the event of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 20 minutes; and

Third reading debate is to be limited to three hours, with one hour and 20 minutes for the government, one hour and 20 minutes for the official opposition, and 20 minutes for the independents.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Jones has moved government notice of motion number 70. Further debate? I recognize the Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Good morning again, Speaker. I'm pleased to join the debate on this motion for time allocation on Bill 136, the animal welfare services act.

I would like to start my remarks by thanking the members from both sides of the House who have risen to speak to Bill 136 during the debate thus far.

One theme that has emerged throughout the debate is that many members of this assembly have their own personal stories of having a pet. Many members shared their stories of growing up with a cat or a dog—or, in the case of the member from Perth–Wellington, growing up with his dairy calf. It is clear that so many of us have a cherished pet in our lives. For example, we know that 60% of Ontario families own at least one pet, and we know that Ontarians want an animal welfare system that is robust, transparent and accountable.

Today, I want to speak to why it's urgent for the PAWS Act to be passed.

As the members will know, after the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ended their role as the enforcement agency for Ontario's animal welfare legislation, we consulted the public and stakeholders to inform our long-term model. In developing this revolutionary approach to animal welfare, we consulted with over 50 groups and organizations, including technical experts, academics, the agricultural community, veterinary experts, shelter organizations and advocacy groups. We received input from 155 municipalities and 45 police services. I am pleased that over 16,000 members of the public responded to our online survey.

As I've said before in this chamber, animal welfare is the topic most frequently written about to my ministry. Throughout all of our public consultations on animal welfare, we have heard loud and clear from the public about how important it is to get the long-term model right. In fact, 89% of respondents—nearly nine in every 10 people—said that the welfare of our animals is “extremely important” to them. The overwhelming direction from the public speaks to the need for this House to pass the PAWS Act without delay.

Of course, that is not the only factor influencing the urgency of passing the PAWS Act. As members know, for over 100 years, the enforcement of animal welfare laws in Ontario was the responsibility of the OSPCA. The OSPCA, a private charity, was the agency responsible for appointing a chief inspector for animal welfare and the inspectors who would enforce those laws. In January of this year, a Superior Court justice struck down key provisions of the OSPCA Act, ruling that giving police powers to the OSPCA without appropriate oversight was unconstitutional. On short notice, and at a crucial time, the OSPCA announced it would withdraw its enforcement responsibilities despite the opportunity by the courts to resolve these provisions within a year.

The court decision, combined with the OSPCA's sudden withdrawal, left our animals vulnerable to abuse. That is why I committed to ensuring that a new, long-term model would be in place in January 2020, to ensure that animals remain protected in Ontario and to ensure that those convicted of animal abuse face the strongest penalties in Canada.

The Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act fulfills that commitment by ensuring that those who love or care for animals have peace of mind. Ontarians can rest assured: The new model is robust, accountable and transparent.

I'd like to thank the members from all sides of this House for their words of support of Bill 136. In particular, I am pleased that members from opposition parties have indicated their support for many pieces of the bill.

For example, I want to note the comments from the member for Guelph supporting the increased fines for repeat offenders that are proposed in this legislation, as well as supporting first responders in taking action when animals are at immediate risk.

0910

As well, I want to note the support of the member from Brampton North—the opposition critic on this file—for

the tougher penalties and new offences that are proposed under Bill 136.

We can all agree that cross-partisan support is a laudable goal, and I'm pleased that this bill has received some praise from across the floor.

Speaker, I also wanted to address some of the concerns that have been discussed in this chamber. For example, some members have raised the question of funding for this system. While they are broadly supportive of the penalties and offences proposed under the act, they question whether the system will successfully convict animal abusers. The answer is yes. Under the proposed new system, funding allocations would represent a large net new increase over and above what had previously been allocated to the OSPCA for their role in enforcement.

Additionally, the proposed new system would provide for over 100 inspectors to help enforce the law. These inspectors would be part of the broader Ontario public service and would report to the provincially appointed chief inspector, providing a direct line of accountability, which would include specialized teams for agriculture and to provide advice and support to inspectors and/or police.

Not only are we proposing a strong system of offences and penalties to protect animals in Ontario; we are providing the necessary funding and inspectors to enforce the law and to ensure successful convictions.

In conclusion, before I hand things over to my parliamentary assistant, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, I want to conclude with a few comments about the importance of passing the PAWS Act.

This system is a made-in-Ontario model. It demonstrates that our government understands that the people of this province expect us to keep animals safe.

The proposed model would:

- protect animals across the province;
- provide appropriate powers and tools for inspectors;
- start to rebuild public trust by increasing responsiveness, accountability and transparency compared to the previous model; and
- finally, but most importantly, introduce the strongest penalties in Canada for offenders.

I have said from the beginning that animal protection in Ontario can and will be made better, and today “better” is within our reach. I want to encourage all members to stand in support of this motion so that we can turn this model into a reality.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Good morning to everyone. I'm pleased to continue the debate on the motion for time allocation on Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act. I'd like to start by thanking the Solicitor General for leading off this debate and for her continued leadership when it comes to animal welfare and, indeed, all aspects of community safety.

It has been a pleasure to play a role in the debate thus far, sharing my own personal stories about the furry friends in my life and hearing so many stories from members of all parties about the pets in their lives.

In my remarks, I'll be picking up where the Solicitor General left off by commenting on some of the feedback that we've received regarding the PAWS Act.

Here's what we're doing.

One of the comments that have arisen from the debate has been about regulations that will be developed under the bill. I'd like to take the time here to discuss what these regulations would accomplish and why they're so important. In order to highlight that point, it is helpful to look back in time a few months.

Last March, I was incredibly pleased to debate my first private member's bill, the Protecting Our Pets Act. The Protecting Our Pets Act proposed a companion animal wellness review committee that would make recommendations to the Solicitor General about reviewing the standards of care for companion animals and tackling the critical issues of puppy mills in Ontario. I'm grateful for the support the bill received from the Solicitor General in the House and the unanimous support it received in second reading debate.

Of course, since then, there has been a major change in the animal welfare landscape across Ontario. Before the Solicitor General could introduce Bill 136, the PAWS Act, our government had to fill the void caused by the OSPCA's decision to withdraw from enforcement. That was a big gap to fill and could not have been possible without a lot of people rolling up their sleeves and putting animal welfare first. Since the House passed the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act (Interim Period)—that's a mouthful—in 2019, we have acted swiftly and decisively to ensure that animals remained protected and their abusers would still be brought to justice.

In June, the Solicitor General appointed Paula Milne, an experienced OPP investigator, as Ontario's interim chief animal welfare inspector, to take over the role previously appointed by the OSPCA.

And, of course, we launched 1-833-9-ANIMAL, a new toll-free number for the public to report cruelty to animals and any concerns that they have about animal welfare.

We reached out to SPCAs and humane societies and asked for their support during this challenging time. Many stepped forward even before we asked, as many people who really care for animals always want to be there to help. One of those affiliate societies was Lincoln County Humane Society, led by executive director Kevin Strooband. I was proud to stand with him during both the announcement for my private member's bill, the Protecting Our Pets Act, and the recent announcement introducing the PAWS Act.

During the interim period, our chief inspector appointed over 66 provincial inspectors, including provincial employees, some who work for local SPCAs and humane societies and some with expertise in inspecting zoos, aquariums, equines and livestock. As the Solicitor General has said previously, under our new proposed animal welfare model, that number of inspectors will increase.

I want to personally say thank you to the many SPCAs and humane societies out there and all of the volunteers

who supported our government's leadership and are helping with the transition to a new animal welfare enforcement model by providing animal welfare enforcement during the interim period. These outstanding men and women allow the government to build a more robust, transparent and accountable animal protection system in the province of Ontario. Speaker, we owe them all our sincere gratitude.

This brings us back to the legislative and regulatory framework for animal welfare that is being developed under Bill 136. As the Solicitor General and I previously explained, through this bill we are proposing a modern and more adaptable legislative framework, which includes the ability to develop regulations to continue to strengthen the system.

A part of this framework that I'm particularly excited about is the establishment of a multidisciplinary advisory table, made up of a wide range of experts, including veterinarians, agriculture representatives, academics, animal advocates and others, to provide ongoing advice to the ministry to improve animal welfare. The table will provide ongoing advice for consideration on best practices, issues and evidence to inform the development of regulations. We are proposing that the table include representatives from a wide range of stakeholders.

Some of the issues that this multidisciplinary table would consider would include tackling the concerning issue of puppy mills, as well as the inappropriate ownership of exotic animals; and the development of strong standards of care for animals, including the potential for standards of care in the agriculture sector, taking into consideration existing national codes of practice.

This framework allows our system to nimbly respond as experts continue to develop new and updated best practices for the care of all of our animals. It also allows us to continuously strengthen the system while ensuring that animals continually be protected. This proposed framework would enable Ontario to be a leader when it comes to continuing protection of animals, and I think we all should be very proud of that.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to chat a little bit about inspectors. As we've said before, a major priority in developing this new animal welfare system has been ensuring that it's robust, transparent and accountable. The people of Ontario expect and deserve nothing less. We know that the previous system was opaque and not at all as effective as it needed to be, as we all heard stories over the last couple of days. It wasn't working for Ontario, and it certainly wasn't working for our animals.

During many of the consultations regarding animal welfare, including the consultations that I had in my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, that theme emerged time and time again. People shared their stories of how the system was broken. That's one thing that we needed to do: create a new system. In fact, many of those I spoke with shared their own story about the OSPCA—a time when they were concerned about the well-being of an animal and they didn't get an adequate response back, which meant they felt the animal wasn't properly looked after. That is why

we are moving to a provincial enforcement model, one that is accountable to the public and has the capacity to respond to concerns.

0920

As the Solicitor General outlined in her remarks, we are increasing the number of inspectors across this province so that the public can have confidence that complaints will be investigated in all corners of Ontario. It doesn't matter where you live: Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Ottawa, Toronto. These inspectors will be accountable under the chief inspector, who is appointed by the provincial government. This ensures that a direct line of accountability exists from the top to the bottom.

In conclusion, we know that animal welfare is important to the people of Ontario, and that is why nearly 17,000 people responded to our consultation that informed the PAWS Act. That's a great number of people who care about our animals and their welfare. That's why nearly nine in 10 respondents told us that the welfare of animals was extremely important to them.

Madam Speaker, we are committed to implementing a system that is robust, accountable and transparent by the new year. That is exactly what we intend to do by voting in favour of this time allocation motion.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I am not with any pleasure getting up, yet again, to have a debate on time allocation here in this Legislature. I just want to come at it in a little bit of a different way in the hopes that this House and this government are able to find a better way of moving legislation forward through the House.

There used to be a time—it's not that long ago—both in the Canadian Parliament and the Ontario and other provincial Parliaments, when we were much more in line with the Westminster model in England, where there are very few rules that allow the government to do the types of things that we do here in Canada when it comes to time allocation. There's a reason for that, because if you look at the history of how Parliament has been set up, Parliament was set up as a place where commoners—that's why we call it the House of Commons—were able to come and to keep check on the king or the queen. Prior to that, kings and queens—mostly kings—ruled; they decided what the law was. If they didn't like this law, they just did another law. If they didn't like that law, then just off with your head. They could do what they wanted.

Because of many things that have happened in regard to excesses of certain monarchs in the past, the first—not so much the public, but certainly the landed gentry and others started pushing back. “Hang on. I believe in the monarchy, I believe in the king, and I want to be loyal,” said the citizens of that day, “but there need to be checks put on the king's power.” So over the years, the House of Commons adopted a way of running its business where the commoners, the people who are elected to represent the people, had the larger say about which direction the country should take and how that should be done.

I think the beauty of the Westminster model is that it has worked. It's both simple in concept but complicated in

its actions, as far as how the rules of this House are put together and work. But the beauty of it is that if you look around the world, most countries governed by a parliamentary system tend, by and large, to do better when it comes to being able to advance the important issues of the day in a way that is meaningful for their citizens. For example, if you look at after the Second World War—was it after the second? No, after the First World War, the soldiers came back from the front and then the Labour government—that's the very first Labour government elected—decided that they were going to move in the direction of providing things like health care to individuals, so they didn't have to pay out of their pocket, and providing pensions for seniors etc. The parliamentary system allowed that to happen even though not everybody was in agreement.

Obviously, the peers, who were the upper chamber, had a bit of a problem with what the government of the day was doing, but the government didn't use its majority to ram that through. There had to be a discussion amongst all members of the House. Back in those days, it was Labour, Conservative and some Liberals, and the parties from Ireland and others. They had to come to some sort of consensus on how it was going to be done, and so they developed a unique system at that time for Great Britain that still works today.

The same could be said about what happened here in Canada. If you look back in the day when Tommy Douglas was in power in Saskatchewan, they decided—I think it was in his fifth term, actually; it might have been his fourth. I may be a little bit wrong on this. But when they took office, the province was pretty well bankrupt, and the very first thing that the Tommy Douglas government did was to try to balance the books. They did a number of things to put the fiscal house in order. Once that was done, they developed what we now know as our health care system.

The important point here, and how it relates to time allocation, is that the government had a majority back in the day when this particular concept of health care was first introduced in Canada, in the province of Saskatchewan. But they didn't have time allocation on the books at that time. I don't even know if they had closure. I guess you could have moved a closure motion. I guess it would not have been out of order, but the Speaker would have had to accept the premise that nobody else wanted to debate.

For those of us who may remember the whole fight that happened as a result of bringing public health care to Canada, there was a huge pushback in Saskatchewan and there was a huge pushback across all of Canada, by the medical community and others in the medical field, and also by a great number of people in the public. Certainly, people on the right wing of politics were very opposed to the idea of bringing in what they called “state-run medicine.” But the parliamentary system prevailed, because the government of the day had to pass legislation through the House. For that to happen, they had to work with the opposition to come to a model that at least allowed the

debate to move forward so that it could finally be voted on. And because the government had a majority, they were able to pass it.

But my point is that the government had to listen to the public and to the opposition, and they had to moderate what they were doing in some way so that they could get the bill through the House, because otherwise the opposition could filibuster the bill back then. Any member could take the floor and talk for as long as they wanted, and there wasn't very much you could do about it, because that's the way that the parliamentary system was set up in the model of Westminster, back in the day. But it served us well, because what it did was provide that a government had to moderate what they were doing to a certain extent and still do what they wanted to do, but listen to the voices out there that may see things differently, and then bring the idea forward, amended based on what they heard.

I think it worked. If we look now, there's hardly a Canadian politician, left or right, who will campaign against public health care. Why is that? Because the Canadian health care system has been, quite frankly, quite a success story. We often hear people say that our health care system is one of the things that define us as Canadians. So we have all accepted—left and right, Conservative, Liberal, NDP or Greens—that the idea of what Tommy Douglas brought to Canada in Saskatchewan—state-run medicine, our public health care system—is something that's worth keeping and something worth fighting for and something worth trying to strengthen as much as we can.

But again, let's remember why that happened. Other than the political will on the part of the government of the day, and the tragedy that was going on when people were getting sick and they couldn't afford to go, the hospital, and many of them died—I always remember my dad telling me a story. My grandfather died before I was born. I think he died in 1953. He ended up with some sort of an illness. But when he went to the hospital, he didn't have money in order to get treated. His health care system, my dad would say, was a high-speed rosary: He went back home, he prayed and he died. That essentially was his health care system.

My point is, it became a success because of the way that it was created. It was created within a Westminster model of Parliament that allowed us to develop legislation in a way that is thoughtful and a way that allowed the government to get their way, because the government always has to be able to pass their legislation if they have a majority. Nobody in the opposition will argue otherwise. But there has to be an opportunity for the public to be heard, and that's the job of the opposition: to bring that other voice into the chamber in representing those that may have a different view of what the government of the day is trying to do.

0930

So this use of time allocation, I believe, is becoming increasingly more relied on, on the part of governments, and I think there's a direct correlation—that how people are now disengaged in politics is related to how this chamber doesn't function the way that it used to. There

used to be debates in this House where people would come and sit in the media galleries and in the public galleries to listen to what members had to say, because you had debates of the day that would go on for a fair amount of time where the people had a chance to listen to the debate by way of reading in the paper, listening to the radio, watching TV, or coming to this place, because back then—this place was not televised until about 1987, somewhere around there. Was it 1987? I was looking at the Clerks for an answer, but it was somewhere in the mid-1980s when we televised.

But the point is, people used to pay attention much more to what was going on in the Ontario Legislature, as they did in the House of Commons. The reason for that was the public got to know what the House was doing because the House didn't speed legislation through in a period of a week or two. It would take introduction of a bill in the fall. There would be debate of some type in the fall; it could be lengthy, depending on the controversy of the bill. It was then referred out to committee in the inter-session, and then it came back in the spring for third and final passage, with a debate of some note when that bill did finally come back to the House. But the public in that process had a chance to engage themselves in what we were doing.

I think we can all remember, as young people growing up in Ontario or wherever you happened to grow up, paying attention to some of those debates of the day. I remember debates—for example, back in the 1960s, the long debate in regard to the Canadian human rights bill. That was a huge debate of the time that was happening in Ottawa, and it was talked about repeatedly by the media, repeatedly by people at coffee shops and at kitchen tables. People talked about what they were doing in Ottawa because it was important, but it also gave the legislators of that day, in that case federal MPs, the chance to hear what their constituents were saying so that some of the values that were being brought forward by the constituents actually made it into the Canadian Bill of Rights. I think that was good. We didn't do that in five days. We didn't do that in 10 days. That debate took the better part of a year. But is that a bad thing, Madam Speaker? I don't think it is a bad thing.

The problem now is we've gotten into this habit that we measure the success of a Parliament or we measure the success of a government by how many bills they've passed. Well, if they're not good bills, I don't think it's a very good measure. Even if the government had a great idea and put it in a bill, the odds are they didn't get it right in the drafting. I think we've all been here long enough to see that when legislation is drafted quickly, the intention might be good—the government may be trying to do the right thing—but when it comes to finding out how that juxtaposes against the reality of life, there are problems in the bill. We've all seen it, where governments draft legislation—“We gotta get this done. We gotta get this done now”—and a time allocation motion comes in after six and a half hours of debate, and there's no committee time, and the bill is passed at third reading. And before you know it,

the LG is signing the bill within a couple of weeks of it being introduced. The government, by the way, is proposing rule changes that would allow them to do that in three days, by the way they're trying to change these particular standing orders.

I think what the government and all the members of the House have to think about is, who are we shortchanging here by using time allocation in the way that we do? Now, there are cases that you may have to use time allocation. That's pretty big, coming from me. I've always been opposed to time allocation. But there are times where legitimately the government gets caught, where they can't get something through the House. I was just reading an article my deputy House leader, the member from London—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: West.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member from London West gave me an interesting article written by an intern in Ottawa in regard to the use of time allocation and the use of closure. This is like *déjà vu* all over again, except that the players are different. Back in the 1950s—would it be the 1950s or 1960s? It depends on which pipeline. The TransCanada pipeline would have been in the 1950s—they were trying to move oil and gas from western Canada into eastern Canada. They had to build a pipeline, and at the time, the Liberal government of the day decided they were going to do that, so they introduced legislation to build the pipeline.

Well, there were parties that were opposed. You'd be surprised who the parties were. It was, yes, the NDP, also the Conservatives. The Conservatives of the day in Ottawa didn't want to see that pipeline built, for whatever reason. They took a position that was anti-building a pipeline at that time. The debate was passionate. Apparently the debate on the part of those who didn't want the pipeline to go forward in the way that it was being proposed was passionately debated from the other side of the House, from the then CCF and now the Conservative Party.

Eventually the government had to use a closure motion in order to be able to get the bill to go through the House. It wasn't the first time, but it was one of the very rare times that closure was used—not time allocation, just closure. That's when the government gets up and says, "Mr. Speaker, I move closure," and all of a sudden the Speaker has to determine: Has there been enough debate? Have all members who want to speak spoken to the bill? Is this a repetitive debate, and are people just saying the same things? The Speaker has to come to the conclusion and decide—he or she—if closure should be allowed. That's the only tool of the day that they had. Eventually the government had to use it.

My point is, I understand. You can be in a situation where you're trying to get something done and the opposition decides just to put the brakes on entirely. The government may have to use time allocation, or closure, to be able to move things forward. But I think you have to be very measured in the way that you use it.

I speak from experience because I was a member of the government that did use closure. I remember, at the time,

feeling rather uncomfortable, but I understood why. We were trying to get, I think, our first budget through the House—or was it the second budget through the House?—and the opposition Conservatives of the day decided to just stop it—in other words, not allow us to move forward with our budget. They did all kinds of things, including naming names of lakes and rivers, as you might have seen in this place before, and taking the floor during debate and not ceding the floor to other members. Eventually we had to compromise with the then Conservatives and Liberals in opposition in order to find a way for us to move forward, to be able to get our legislation through the House.

I understand that at times a government can be frustrated because they don't seem to feel as if they're moving things at a pace in keeping with what they look at as being reasonable. Well, "reasonable" is in the eye of the beholder. What's reasonable to you may not be reasonable to another person.

My point on time allocation is, it's a tool that is used, but should be used sparingly. When governments use it as a regular way of being able to legislate, what we're really doing is saying to the public, "We're not listening to you." "At this point we know we're right," says the government of the day, "and we're just going to pass our legislation. We're just not going to listen to you, because we've got it all figured out."

And we wonder why there's only a 50% turnout in elections. We wonder why people are more interested in watching their favourite television show or their favourite YouTube videos instead of tuning in to what's happening in the House of Commons or the Ontario Legislature. I don't propose that everybody should be watching us all the time, but they should at least be aware of what we're doing. Because I think for the public looking into a Legislature like ours—"Well, what are they talking about today? Oh, what happened to that other thing they were talking about the other day?"—they never can get their heads around what it is that we're doing here.

That's why it's important to have, when necessary, a full debate at second reading on an issue. The way that it should work—and used to work here before the time of time allocation—is, there are a lot of bills that didn't get a lot of debate at second reading. There are a lot of bills where the opposition would say, "Okay, we're cool. We're going to have two speakers, three speakers, and then we want to have two weeks in committee in the intercession and a couple of speakers at third reading." Those bills just went that way, and there wasn't very much of a fuss.

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For example, this bill would have been that type of bill. We probably could have gotten this bill done a lot quicker by doing it outside of the time allocation process; not within the time allocation process, because we had already indicated to the government that we support this particular bill that's before us now, and that we did not have any strong objections to the government finding a way to get it to move forward to committee and to do what has to be done. For whatever reason, the government never engaged with the opposition to make that happen, which I thought

was kind of interesting. My argument is, this is the type of bill that, quite frankly, we could have come to an agreement on and it could have been through the House fairly quickly—through a committee process where the public gets a chance to have its say, and then we bring back the bill, we look at it and we amend it accordingly.

But the government is now using time allocation—as they do with pretty well every bill that has gone through the House—and we have shortchanged the public's ability to participate in committee. We're going to do that committee work while the House is in session within the next three weeks, which means that if you happen to live in Kenora, Kapuskasing, Cornwall or Point Pelee, you're not going to be able to come to Queen's Park, more than likely, to give your ideas about what you like about this bill or what you would like to see changed or where it may be flawed, because there are very limited hearings, there are only so many people who are going to be able to present, and the bill doesn't travel. It's only going to be in Toronto.

I've got nothing against Toronto. I think all of us who are living here four days a week because of the Legislature think this is a great city. This is a world-class city. I've travelled around the world, and it's pretty hard to beat Toronto as a city. It's strong, vibrant, multicultural. It has all kinds of things to attract our attention and to make life pleasant living here.

However, there's more than Toronto in this province. It's a big province, and people care about this legislation in places across Ontario. This bill would have been better served to be able to have travelled in the intersession last summer. The government knew, because of the court challenge, that they had to get this legislation done within a year. Why didn't they introduce the bill last spring? We would have said, "Fine. If you want to put it out into committee, give it a couple of weeks to travel around Ontario." That bill would have been passed at second reading, it would have had hearings by now, and we would have passed that legislation already instead of trying to rush it.

My guess is, and I may be proven wrong on this—I'm not going to stake my reputation on it—that there are probably some parts of this bill that should be changed in order to strengthen it and make sure it does what it is that has to be done. But when you don't have a strong process by which the public could be engaged and help us draft better legislation, we will not find those errors until it's too late. By that time, the bill will be law and the only way to amend it will either be by regulation, if it's allowed in the bill—which is a whole other debate—or by bringing the bill back into the House for amendment—a new bill, in other words. So I think the government is really shortchanging the public when it comes to the role that the public should play in drafting the legislation.

They called it the House of Commons for a reason—not ours, we're a Legislature; but in Ottawa. It's the House where the commoners got elected and came in order to represent their constituents. As I said at the beginning, everybody represents their constituents the best they can—

government members and opposition. But when it comes to debating bills, our job is to say what we like about a bill and what we don't like about a bill, based on the consultations we've had with our constituents and the stakeholders we work with on a daily basis here, depending on what your critic portfolio is etc.

I just want to divert a bit onto what has happened lately in England when it comes to Brexit. I think it's a good illustration of how Westminster actually works, contrary to what Mr. Johnson, the Prime Minister of England, is trying to say. Mr. Johnson is saying that if he wins a majority, he's going to change the rules of the House of Commons—that you couldn't have happen what happened, where a Labour Party opposition member tabled a piece of legislation that forced the government—that they just couldn't jump out of the European Union without coming back for a vote in the House. He was very frustrated by that, the Prime Minister. But the rules of Westminster are different than they are here in Canada: A member of the opposition can table legislation—as we do here as well—but the Speaker has the right to call that legislation and to schedule it for debate. In other words, our rules here in Canada are that only the government can move things in the House when it comes to deciding what's going to be debated. It's not the opposition. We can propose, but it's up to the government to call it. In Westminster, it's different. There is a mechanism by which opposition members can be heard when it comes to issues at hand.

To the point of Brexit: The House actually represents exactly what's going on in England. There is a 50-50 split in that country when it comes to "Am I in or am I out of the European common union?" There are valid reasons on both sides. I can well understand the nationalistic argument that some people would feel about why they shouldn't be part of the union, and there are obviously arguments on the other side. For some in the media and others to say, "Oh, that's a proof that Parliament doesn't work"—no, it proves that Parliament is doing exactly what it was set out to do. It's reflecting what the people have to say and what the people want.

But the danger in England is that they may end up going the way of Canada, because the Canadian governments, nationally and provincially, have moved away from the Westminster model to a certain degree, and have allowed time allocation to be used in a way that it was never intended to be used ever.

I just say to the government to think about the way that it orders up the business of the House, because use of time allocation in the end—although it may be necessary at times, and I will say that; there are going to be times when, if we're government, we may have to use it—I hope would be very measured and not too often. I would hope that governments today and in the future reflect on how we set up our parliamentary system in the beginning, and that is to give the government the ability to govern, the government the ability to propose its legislation, to have it debated in the House and passed. Governments should always, always be able to pass their legislation, or at least,

if enough members in the House vote in favour, but they should never be denied the ability to do so.

Conversely, the government has to listen to the people who are being represented by the opposition. The opposition has a key role to play in the drafting of legislation. I just say to the government across the way that they should think about the use of time allocation.

They should rethink what they're trying to propose when it comes to rule changes, because where we're going with the proposed rule changes, if the government decides to do what it is they have proposed, the government will be able to introduce a bill here on Monday and have it done by Wednesday night. That is not good for democracy. That is a completely anti-democratic move and completely freezes the public out of the debate and the process of drafting legislation. I think it will make Ontarians even more cynical about this place and politicians, because the reality is they see us as all the same. They don't differentiate. You're government; I'm opposition. We're just a bunch of politicians. That's how the public sees it. When you start having the public disconnect because they're just saying, "Ugh, there they go again," it diminishes our democracy. There are far too many people—we all have family members who have served in wars, or friends who have served in wars, and some who have died in order to protect our right to have the debate that we're having today and to do it in a way that, yes, may take a little bit longer, so that the public is able to have its say when it comes to the drafting of legislation. I would ask the government to reflect on that.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Cambridge.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: We're playing some musical chairs there, it seems.

I'm very pleased to be able to stand and speak in support of Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, or the PAWS Act, for short. And it's a pleasure to share the floor with the Solicitor General, and my colleague the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore and the parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General with this file.

I know this means a lot, especially to the MPP from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, as her PMB, the Protecting Our Pets Act, is something she worked very hard on, and it means very much to her. I was really pleased to be able to speak in favour of that bill, and this is another great step towards something that she feels very passionately about. So good on you, my friend.

It's a pleasure—

Interjections.

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Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Yes.

Previously, both the Solicitor General and the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore have spoken about the urgency of passing the PAWS Act. They've touched on our commitment to having animal welfare legislation in place by the new year so that animals remain protected. They have

also spoken about what we've heard during the debate in this chamber. We've heard touching stories from many members about the animals that they've had in their lives—like myself with my Cardigan Welsh corgi, Julie, who I think is now on the record in Hansard four times, so I'm kind of excited about that. I know about Bruce, which is the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore's animal. I know that my colleague from Ottawa–Nepean, I believe is his riding, has Apollo, his giant-sized Great Dane. So we've got a lot of members on all sides of the House who have dogs and cats, and it's great to be able to hear everyone's personal stories about their animals.

I'd like to thank all the members for their debate thus far on the PAWS Act. It has been really interesting to hear everyone's views on this, and the support that it has received. I commend the Solicitor General on drafting such a great bill. It's not often that we are able to create legislation that is so well received by those from other parties. I know that a lot of thought went into this and a lot of work went into this, so again, thank you for that.

We have demonstrated that consensus has formed around the importance of protecting animals in Ontario among members of this House, stakeholders and the public. I'd like to start with comments from the SPCAs and humane societies that partnered with our government to ensure that animals remained protected in the interim while the Solicitor General developed the PAWS Act.

As members of this House may remember, the Solicitor General introduced the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act (Interim Period), 2019, which this House gave third reading to last spring. That bill allowed our partner SPCAs and humane societies to partner with our government to ensure that animals remained protected in the interim. Last month, when the Solicitor General announced our new animal welfare system, she was joined by Kevin Strooband, the executive director of the Lincoln County Humane Society. The Lincoln County Humane Society was one of our partners who stepped up in the interim, and I want to join my colleagues in thanking each of them for their important service. Mr. Strooband described this as "an exciting time for animal protection in our province" and described the PAWS Act as "a critical first step for establishing a new solution for protecting animals in Ontario."

We will continue to rely on the knowledge and experience of Ontario's dedicated local SPCAs as we continue to develop regulations under the bill.

Similarly, Cindy Ross, the shelter manager with the Sault Ste. Marie Humane Society, said that that it was great day when the Solicitor General introduced the PAWS Act and that she was pleased with our progress on animal welfare so far.

Under this proposed new system, local humane societies and SPCAs will continue the good work they do helping and sheltering animals.

Another aspect of our proposed new animal welfare system is support for crown attorneys. The PAWS Act proposes updated penalties for those who abuse animals—and I have mentioned before that there is a correlation

between those who harm animals and those who eventually go on to harm human beings. So it's important that we are aware of this and that we monitor things like that, which is why it's so good that the minister is proposing stricter penalties. Examples of those are new minimum penalties, increased maximum penalties, and scaling penalties for repeat offenders, including both individuals and corporations.

While these new proposed penalties are essential in a strong animal welfare system, they must go hand in hand with support for crown attorneys. By supporting crowns through extra training in animal welfare cases, we hope to achieve a higher conviction rate in relevant cases.

I was very pleased to see this aspect of our plan supported by Barbara Cartwright, the CEO of Humane Canada. Humane Canada supports humane societies and SPCAs, and they've provided invaluable advice as we moved towards the introduction of the PAWS Act. Barbara Cartwright hailed this support for Ontario's crown attorneys as a "breakthrough in Ontario ... animal welfare."

As has been said before, during the development of the PAWS Act, we consulted with over 50 groups and organizations. This includes technical experts, academics, the agricultural community, veterinary experts, shelter organizations and advocacy groups. We received input from 155 municipalities and 45 police services and received feedback from more than 16,000 members of the public who responded thoughtfully to an online survey.

Madam Speaker, I am so pleased that the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act is supported by a diverse group of stakeholders. For example, we have heard from animal advocacy stakeholders like Camille Labchuk from Animal Justice, who has indicated her encouragement with how robust the PAWS Act is. Additionally, Liz White—whom I had the pleasure of meeting with yesterday, with her colleague Ainslie—from the Animal Alliance of Canada has said that she welcomes our commitment to train inspectors and that she supports our plan to put in enforcement, which up until last year had been handled by the OSPCA, a private charity, under the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

This is a good opportunity to remind this House that, as the Solicitor General and the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore have said, we are increasing the number of inspectors across our great province. This will ensure that the public can have confidence that complaints will be investigated in all corners of Ontario. These inspectors will be accountable under the chief inspector, who is appointed by the Solicitor General.

I want to thank all of our animal advocacy partners for their input and encouragement to date. We know that they will continue to advocate for the strongest protections for animals.

We also understand that our agricultural sector is unique, and I'm pleased that we have a strong relationship with agricultural stakeholders across Ontario. As the member for Cambridge, whose riding is a mix of both urban and rural—I have quite a few farms in my riding, as

I mentioned a few weeks ago when I listed off the amount of farms that we have in the riding—this was especially pleasing to me and to a lot of my farmers. What I've really enjoyed so far is seeing the amount of engagement that a lot of the members from this side and from across the way are doing with the agricultural sector. I think they are an extremely important sector for our province, and engaging with them and ensuring that they have a voice at the table is extremely important. Because at the end of the day, farmers feed cities, so we should support them.

Our proposed new system will work with our agricultural partners and ensure the strongest protection for animals. For example, as part of our deployment of provincial inspectors under the proposed new system, specialized inspectors for agriculture and equines will also be available to provide advice and support to inspectors or police. This will ensure that we leverage the expertise of our agricultural sector. The proposed new provincial animal welfare enforcement model provides a new approach to oversight that increases transparency and accountability, two things which I believe are very, very important. Addressing concerns about a lack of oversight that existed in the previous system will be done by increasing transparency and accountability.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to share words from a recent Toronto Star editorial in support of the PAWS Act. The writer described our proposed system as "a considerable advance over the old one where" a "charity was given police powers to do the job."

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It is clear that those on all sides of the political spectrum support the need for an animal welfare system that is robust, accountable and transparent. And it is clear, as I said at the outset, that a consensus is forming from a diverse group of stakeholders in support of this bill.

As the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore has said before, our pets have no political stripe. All of us, from advocates to animal experts to those who care for and work with animals and those of us who simply love our pets, including so many of us here in this House, want what's best for Ontario's animals. They deserve nothing less.

While I still have the floor, Madam Speaker, if I may, I would just like to say that the nice part about debating this bill has been the healthy debate that we have had during it. I have, like I said before, really enjoyed listening to members of the opposition and our independent member from Guelph talk about how this has affected them, and their thoughts on it. It's interesting, because owning an animal humanizes people. I know that sounds silly, but in the role that we are in, we are political figures, and sometimes people will view individuals like us as heartless or just not human. But us speaking about our dogs or our cats, or whatever animal you may own, or even seeing colleagues—like I said, the member from Waterloo was at the Kidney Foundation walk, a few months ago at this point, and she was with her husband and their dog. It's just great to see people—again, it puts people in a different light. So, I found this has been very nice, a very nice debate overall.

The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and I often talk about our dogs Bruce and Julie. They sound like an old married couple when you talk about them that way. But it's something that we bonded over, as we were prior seatmates before things got moved around. It's just something we both feel very strongly about.

Animals are innocent and, for the most part, defenceless, and it's really important that we take the steps to ensure that they are kept safe and that people are respectful of life in general, because these animals depend on us. A lot of them depend on us to stay healthy, to be fed, to be sheltered, and we know that, unfortunately, there are individuals out there who don't do those things.

It's great that we're recognizing it, number one, because that's the first step; that we're educating, number two, which is the second-most important step, teaching our kids and teaching others that treating animals unfairly is not appropriate; and then, third, actually having some real penalties around this, some real teeth to the legislation, because, unfortunately, human beings are such that when there are no penalties for things, people will continue doing these things.

Again, excellent work, Solicitor General. I very much enjoy working with you. I know we didn't work together on this file, but I have had the honour of being able to work with you on my file, and your leadership is very much appreciated. I do look up to you and what you do every single day. Thank you for that.

In conclusion, I want to urge all members of this House to support the motion on time allocation because it is such an important bill. And why wait? Why would we wait on this? Why wouldn't we just get this great bill to move forward, get it passed, and make sure that we're giving animals the protections that they need, make sure that we're sending that positive message out to the public to let them know that we need to treat all things with respect, and to let them know that there are real, strict penalties if you're going to do things like harm an animal.

It also gives us a chance, like I said, to keep an eye on those individuals who are doing this, because they have ulterior motives and they may escalate that violence to human beings. So, there's that prevention piece that's included in this bill as well. Unintentionally, we're preventing further escalation of crimes if we can get these individuals penalized earlier and prevent them from doing further harm.

It is time for us to get moving towards a new day for animal welfare in Ontario. That's why I will be supporting this bill. I know others that will be supporting this bill. I urge you, if you haven't thought about it yet, to please support this bill. I look forward to further debate.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am rising today to participate in the debate on this time allocation motion for the government's animal welfare legislation, not so much to comment on the contents of the bill but, rather, to raise concerns about the government's routine use of time allocation as a method of managing this Legislature.

Certainly, we know the Westminster model, the parliamentary democracy in which we live, gives the government the right to govern. No one questions the government's right to move forward with its agenda. But at the same time, there are some pretty fundamental principles about responsible government, about engaging MPPs who are the voices of the communities where citizens elected us to come to Queen's Park to bring forward their concerns, as well as the right of the public to participate in the development of legislation and to bring forward suggestions for amendments so that MPPs can then move through the legislative process, as a bill makes its way through the phases of becoming law.

I think it's important, as we reflect on those principles, to review what has happened since this government was elected 18 months ago. Currently, at this point, 21 government bills have been passed. Every single one of those government bills has been passed by means of a time allocation motion. Seven of those bills had a time allocation motion introduced even before the bill had reached the seven-hour mark of debate. Practically as soon as the government had the ability to introduce a time allocation motion, as soon as the bill passed the six-and-a-half-hour mark, this government was right there with a time allocation motion.

The other important thing to note is that five of those time allocation motions moved a bill right from second reading to third reading. The time allocation motion did not refer a bill to committee so that stakeholder organizations could come—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member, but the side conversations have reached the point that it's too distracting. I would like to give my full attention to the individual who does indeed have the floor. Thank you.

Please continue.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Five of those government bills that were passed through a time allocation motion, which reflects the entire body of legislation that this government has brought forward, went straight from second reading to third reading without any opportunity for experts, the citizens, the public and stakeholder organizations with deep knowledge about how this legislation was going to impact the organizations and the people that they represent on the ground—no opportunity to have any kind of input into the legislative initiatives that were brought forward by this government.

The other thing to note is that of those 21 bills that have been passed, the great majority have in fact been omnibus bills. Not only has this government limited debate on each of these bills to the very lowest threshold; they have packed so many changes to legislation within a single bill that it has been very difficult for the official opposition, for the people we represent, to unpack what's in this bill and really look in depth at each of the schedules that are included within the bills that have been brought forward.

When governments govern by means of omnibus bills, when they package numerous amendments to multiple pieces of legislation, when they govern by time-allocating

every single piece of legislation they bring forward, when they govern by ignoring public input and not providing any kind of opportunity for public input, that's not how you improve democracy, Speaker. That's not how you engage the people of Ontario in the bigger project that we should all be concerned about, which is the health and the well-being of the people that we represent.

Speaker, the final point I want to make about the way that this government has managed their legislative agenda is, let's not forget that one of the pieces of legislation that the government brought in—in fact, its second bill—was brought in along with the hammer of invoking the “notwithstanding” clause. We had a protracted debate in this Legislature about the appropriateness of using the “notwithstanding” clause to cut the size of Toronto city council in half. The framers of the “notwithstanding” clause were very, very clear that this is a tool that is to be used rarely, only in extraordinary circumstances. But this government was prepared to use that tool to ram through a piece of legislation that reflected only some kind of historical vendettas that the Premier was trying to move forward with. I think that that really exemplifies the approach to governing that we have seen from that side of the House.

To a much lesser extent, time allocation, like the “notwithstanding” clause, was always envisioned as a legislative mechanism that is meant to be used sparingly. It's meant to be used by the government when there are urgent legislative initiatives that have to be dealt with because of some kind of external requirement that's in place. Sometimes it is used to deal with highly contentious legislation, but time allocation is not intended to be used as a regular course of business. Every single bill that this government has introduced, they have time-allocated.

There are other options available to this government to manage their agenda and to help move legislation through this place. The government could engage with the official opposition. The government could have some kind of dialogue and negotiation and discussion about their priorities, and work with the official opposition as to how they're going to achieve their priorities.

But instead of seeing that kind of give-and-take process—we had some high hopes when we came back here on October 28 after a five-month recess, and after losing 24 sessional days, I might also point out, when we could have been dealing with this legislation. Regardless, we had some high hopes that there would be a change of tone in this Legislature, that there would be more collaboration, more discussion across the way. Instead, the very first bill that this government is moving through has got a time allocation motion attached to it.

We also saw a package of proposed changes to the standing orders that would allow the government to introduce a bill and move a bill through the process even faster than it currently has done, with even less public input than it has currently enabled—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member, but it is 10:15. Therefore this House stands in recess until 10:30.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would like to introduce some guests who are with us in the Speaker's gallery this morning. From the Ontario Kinesiology Association, we have president Krista Crozier, Devon Blackburn, Steven Fischer, Greg Gillam, Sabrina Francescut, Renee Raymond, Matthew Assiniwe, Jory Kettles and John Armstrong. Welcome to Queen's Park. We're delighted to have you here today.

Mr. John Vanthof: This morning, I had the pleasure of meeting Theresa Osezua. She's visiting from Orléans to watch her son, Augustine, be the page captain today.

Augustine comes from a long line of pages. Patrick, his brother, was also a page here.

Mrs. Robin Martin: It's my pleasure to introduce Roberta Scott again from Cardiac Arrest Response and Education, who is here for my private member's bill this afternoon.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'd like to welcome my constituents Sonia De Laurentiis, Roberto De Laurentiis and Davide De Laurentiis.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: On behalf of the President of the Treasury Board, it's my honour to welcome the Brown family: Beth, Patrick and Hillary, as well as Jane and Phil, who have come from Illinois.

The Brown family is visiting us at Queen's Park today to see Luba Brown, who is here serving as one of our pages. I know that the President of the Treasury Board is very proud of her. Welcome to you all from Queen's Park and this caucus.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to do my daily introduction of parents and advocates of autism: Stacy Kennedy, Angela Brandt and Michau van Speyk. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: They're running a little bit late, but I have many board members from my riding association here today who are going to be joining us in the members' gallery: Alan Sakach, Ian Barrett, Phil Besseling, Tom Bishop, Ken Durham, Peter Forsberg, Alice Helder, Ruthann Joesse, Tony Joesse, Dave Klassen, Catherine Kuckyt, Wilma McNall, Aaron Oosterhoff, Evert Ras, John Venneri, Jim Visser, Jim Wheeler, Susanna Campbell and Valerie Cickello. I want to welcome them all to the Legislature. They'll be joining us shortly.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to welcome a constituent of my great riding of York South–Weston, Renee Raymond. Welcome to your House here—Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'd like to welcome this morning some special guests and friends to the Legislature: Sonia, Davide and Roberto De Laurentiis. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Simcoe West.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Way over here, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Simcoe–Grey. Sorry.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature today—and they're just coming in—Sasha Haughian

of Tottenham, and Beth and Madi Vanstone of Beeton. They're here to watch question period. As members will recall, these individuals are parents of cystic fibrosis patients, and one is a patient. We welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Doly Begum: I would like to also welcome members from the Ontario Kinesiology Association this morning. They had a wonderful reception. Welcome to your House.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to welcome the fabulous and fabulously tall Roberta Scott, who's here today.

DEATH OF MEMBER'S FATHER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Energy has informed me that he wishes to raise a point of order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. It is with a heavy heart that I announce to the House that Ed Yurek, the father of the Minister of the Environment, Jeff Yurek, passed away last evening.

Ed Yurek of St. Thomas was a loving husband to his wife, Mary, who passed away last year. Together, they raised six children: Peter, Mike, Sue, Diane, Joe, and the youngest and our friend, Jeff.

Our thoughts are with Minister Yurek, Jenn and Maggie, and the entire Yurek family during this difficult time.

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

It is now time—is there a point of order?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, we're going to stand down the leads. I'm told that the Premier is coming, but he's been delayed.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Are you seeking unanimous consent to stand down the lead questions?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think we're just doing it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We're not. Okay.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I do want to, on behalf of the official opposition, send our sincerest condolences to the Yurek family. It's a very sad piece of news that was shared. We all have their family in our thoughts and prayers.

Applause.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Absolutely.

Speaker, my first question is to the Premier. I hope that he's going to take the opportunity to answer this question personally, because the buck is supposed to stop with him.

When did the Premier learn that the cost of cancelling renewable energy contracts has soared to at least \$231 million?

Hon. Doug Ford: Our condolences also go out to the Yurek family. Our prayers and thoughts are with them. I had an opportunity to speak to him last night and passed on our condolences.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: I am so proud that during the election, we cancelled the cap-and-trade carbon tax, the worst tax on the backs of the hard-working taxpayers. I'm also proud that we saved the taxpayers \$790 million. That's \$790 million that would have gone on the backs of companies and the backs of the hard-working taxpayers.

These wind turbines were rammed down the throats of communities that didn't even want them.

The reason that people are doing their laundry at 9 o'clock at night and 10 o'clock at night is because the opposition and the former Liberal government were gouging, absolutely gouging, the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last year, the Ford government repeatedly claimed that there would be no cost to cancelling these contracts—no cost. We know now that the cost has climbed to at least \$231 million, and the Premier won't say when he found out.

The government has budgeted \$231 million for the costs of cancellation this fiscal year. My question is, will there be further cancellation costs added next year?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, the reason that we have the highest hydro rates in North America is because of the NDP and the Liberals. They put this plan together that has destroyed our energy file. As I said out in the news conference, we went to raise some money down in New York and one of the big banks came up to us and said, "Even if we tried to destroy a country's energy file"—not that they ever would—"no one could have done a better job than the previous Liberal government and the current federal government." He said that all the investment, billions and billions of dollars, has left the country.

And the NDP condoned this. They're for it. We saved the taxpayers \$790 million as they stood by as the hydro rates were raised to be the highest in North America—again, going on the backs of the hard-working people.

There has never been more of a transfer of wealth from the ratepayers to the political insiders because of the NDP and the Liberals.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that the Premier and the Conservatives live in a glass house, because they started selling off and deregulating our electricity system when they were in office, which was exactly the cause of the increase in our electricity rates in the history of this province.

But today, we're talking about this Premier's leadership. When the world was moving toward clean energy initiatives in the midst of a climate crisis, the Premier took \$231 million away from our schools, away from our hospitals and handed it to private companies so that they can tear down wind farms and not supply green energy.

If that wasn't bad enough, the Ford government didn't even tell the people of Ontario that they were going to be

hit with the bill. Today, the Premier is shameless enough to say that he “couldn’t be more proud” of this mess.

Why is the Premier showing so little respect for the people of this province?

1040

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: The only people who were disrespected were the people of this province under the NDP and the Liberal government. They didn’t worry about it.

As I was saying in my previous answer, there’s never, ever, in the history of Ontario, been more of a transfer of wealth from the hard-working ratepayers to the political insiders from the NDP and the Liberals. These people are making tens of millions of dollars off the backs of ratepayers. Something is wrong.

We saved the taxpayers \$790 million cancelling these terrible, terrible wind turbines.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. The people of Ontario simply can’t believe this government when it comes to the cost of these cancelled contracts, Speaker. As the Premier knows, he has the power to request a special review by the auditor. Yesterday, the government refused to do so.

Today, I hope the Premier will actually show some leadership. Will he do the right thing by the hard-working people of this province, who have had \$231 million sucked out of their pockets because of this government’s decision—as far as we know, \$231 million—and actually ask the auditor to confirm the numbers, to conduct a complete review of the total cost of these cancelled contracts?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, Mr. Speaker, the reason there are 252,400 people working is because we looked at the energy file. We made sure that we’re saving costs rather than increasing costs. Every single company and every single person I went and spoke to during the election, their number one concern was their energy costs.

It came to the point of heating or eating for a lot of people. I remember one person came up to me in tears, showing me their bill that they couldn’t afford, all because of the reckless, careless spending under the NDP and the Liberals. We saved the taxpayers of this province \$790 million.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I’m sure that person is still crying, because their bill went up by about 2% just last week.

When the previous Liberal government refused to disclose the real cost of cancelling the gas plants, the Premier himself, at the time, couldn’t contain himself. He said that there was “zero accountability.” This is what the Premier said at the time. He claimed the people of Ontario had been “hoodwinked.” He said, “I can’t wait to bring responsible government to the folks of Ontario.”

Speaker, how can this very same person, now that he sits in the Premier’s chair, possibly justify refusing to call

in the Auditor General to make sure the people of Ontario know how much their energy boondoggle is costing them?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: For the first time in 15 years the people of Ontario have seen accountability and transparency. They’ve seen us save \$6 billion for the taxpayers, making sure that we lower taxes, cut red tape, cut regulations.

The economy is absolutely booming right now. We need more people to fill the jobs. We need a couple of hundred thousand people to fill the jobs that are out there, to keep up with the production requirements.

But again, the NDP supported their buddies over there, the Liberals, 90% of the time. They were supporting the gas plants. They were supporting the big scam that was going on. Side by side, they were partners, and they’re to be blamed for all the scandals and the disaster of our economy and for losing 300,000 jobs.

My friends, our economy is booming, absolutely booming. People around North America know it. We’re an economic powerhouse in North America because of our government’s policies.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps the Premier doesn’t realize it, but when you get rid of independent officers of the Legislature, you reduce transparency and you reduce accountability, which was exactly the first move this government made when they took office.

But that does not change the fact that governments all over the world are scrambling to embrace clean energy, and the Ford government is handing at least \$231 million to companies so that they can tear down renewable energy projects. That’s enough money to completely repair every single school in Etobicoke North and in King–Vaughan.

When people are looking for transparent and honest government, the Ford government, just like the Liberal government with the gas plants, is choosing to stonewall. They are choosing to stonewall, Speaker.

People deserve so much better than this. The Premier can fix it today by calling in the auditor. So my question to the Premier is, will he do that?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, through you, Mr. Speaker: We saved \$790 million for the hard-working taxpayers of this province. If we had had a chance—and it’s unfortunate that we weren’t elected 10 years ago—we wouldn’t be in the mess right now that we’re in. We’re in an absolute mess.

We’ve been working hard to turn the corner. We’re turning the corner, increasing health care spending, increasing education spending. The economy is booming. There are more jobs out there than people that can fill them. So we’re going to continue looking at efficiencies.

If we had the chance to get rid of all the wind turbines, we would, because it’s totally unrealistic. We’re paying 80-some-odd cents a kilowatt versus seven or eight cents. Something is broken here. There’s no one out there that agrees on paying 80 cents a kilowatt and making all the wind turbine folks multi-multimillionaires on the backs of the ratepayers.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Minister of Education refused to own up to the fact that his actions are actively sabotaging teacher bargaining. The minister changed bargaining teams at the last minute, cancelled meetings and dropped poison pill positions on the table, expecting teachers to thank them for it.

The minister doesn't have to call a press conference for us to know that this government has no intention of actually negotiating with teachers.

Why won't the Premier admit that the only deal they're looking for is one that includes pink slips for teachers and overcrowded, underfunded classrooms for our kids?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to remind the member opposite that it was this government that got a voluntary agreement with CUPE just one month ago by negotiating in good faith. That cannot be left out of the basis of the question.

Let's not forget that it's this government that has made reasonable offers at the table with OSSTF and so many others, because we believe that continuing education should not be stopped, should not be impeded because negotiators cannot agree on an outcome.

I want an outcome. That's why we have turned to mediation. It's why we've looked at this approach in the past. It is our aim, it is the Premier's aim, to get deals that keep kids in class and improve education for every child in this province.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Parents are scrambling right now. They don't really care about what the minister managed to pull off at the last minute during a federal election a month ago.

The government has shown nothing but contempt for the people who teach and support our children. Their refusal to reverse education cuts and their absolutely chaotic approach to bargaining have left negotiations going nowhere.

But despite the government's actions, teachers remain willing to bargain, and there is still time to reach a deal that protects and strengthens our education system.

Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: Will he stop this reckless game he's playing, reverse these heartless cuts, and get back to the bargaining table? Or does the Premier just think that students aren't worth it?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The parents of this province, from Dundas to Davenport and everywhere in between, actually do care that this government got a good deal for parents that kept kids in class. They do care.

They do care that we're investing more in this budget than ever before. They care that we're supporting positive mental health in the classroom. They support our improvements to the math curriculum, to go back to basics. They support our initiatives to ensure that STEM is at the front of class.

Mr. Speaker, everything we do is about ensuring that our students are able to achieve their potential, graduate and get access to good-paying jobs. We will not be deterred from our mission.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

Ms. Jane McKenna: My question is to the Premier. I'd like to wish him a happy belated birthday to start off.

Premier, I know that our government, and you in particular, have made the issue of national unity and bridging diverging regional interests across this country one of our key priorities. We have seen a growing concern in this country about regional economic divisions and a sense of national disunity.

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This concern was even captured in a recent Globe and Mail Environics Institute poll which indicated the growing concerns of disunity in this country. When asked about the satisfaction and the direction of this country two years ago, there was an 11-point difference between the regions. That gap now stands today at 28 points.

Premier, can you elaborate more on the historic announcement that you made this morning about what steps our government is taking to bring this country together?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the MPP from Burlington. The people absolutely love her out there. So thank you.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the federal minister appointments yesterday. We really look forward to working with them and rolling up our sleeves, getting our ministers involved and having a real collaborative relationship with them and building infrastructure, making sure that we focus on things that matter: the infrastructure, the transit and broadband across this country. As we've always said, what is good for Ontario is good for Canada, and what is good for Canada is good for Ontario.

I'm really looking forward to having the Premiers here in Toronto for the first time in recent memory. I can't even remember all of the Premiers gathering here. It's going to be great.

We have to respect the concerns of the people from the west. We also have to respect the people from the east. I always believe that there's always common ground when we come together, because we all get along quite well.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: Premier, that is truly historic news and speaks to the important role that Ontario plays in the federation.

As we all know, Ontario and, specifically, past Ontario Premiers have played a major role in supporting national unity and discussions with the federal government. This includes the strong leadership of Premier Robarts spearheading the Confederation of Tomorrow conference, Bill Davis and the 1982 constitutional discussions, David Peterson and Bob Rae with the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords, and Mike Harris, following the 1995 Quebec referendum.

Premier, can you speak to the Legislature on what priorities this new council on provincial-federal relations will have regarding Ontario-specific interests?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank our member. As we announced, there are key areas where we believe that we can work together. We've been in dialogue with the Prime Minister's office, and we've come up with common ground. There are so many areas that we can support the people of Ontario in and also support the people of Canada.

One of the areas is the subway expansion plan. It's an amazing plan. I want to thank the federal government for their contribution so far, but we're going to need more support there from the federal government to make sure that they hit the threshold of 40% through the Canada infrastructure program. We need shovels in the ground. Let's put politics aside. Let's start getting things done for the people of Ontario.

Again, as I said earlier, another area that we have to focus on is health care. No province can go alone on health care. We have a great minister who's going to end hallway health care.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question today is for the Premier. The people of Hamilton learned last night the disturbing news that 24 billion litres of untreated sewage have been seeping undetected over the past four and a half years into Chedoke Creek and Cootes Paradise.

Can the Premier please tell the House when exactly the ministry was aware that raw sewage was leaking into the water of Hamilton?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: My thoughts go out to my colleague Jeff Yurek today.

It is the ministry's role to ensure that the city of Hamilton is taking all necessary steps to clean up the sewage spill to the natural environment, fix the combined sewage overflow tank equipment and prevent future discharges.

The city reported the discharge to the ministry's Spills Action Centre on July 18, 2018. Shortly thereafter, the city was ordered to, among other things, quantify the amount of sewage and what was in the sewage discharged to the creek; evaluate the impacts to the creek; assess the need for remediation and/or mitigation to provide the most effective method, including timelines; submit that spill report with the cleanup efforts to date; and identify all combined sewer overflow locations, Mr. Speaker. And that work continues.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Back to the Premier: Since the Premier hasn't answered, and what we hear now is that the ministry has known for over a year and a half that 10,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools of sewage have been seeping into Hamilton's fresh water supply, it's beyond disturbing that the ministry knew this for over a year—they knew that this was happening—but refused to make

this public. And they also refused to step in and help the city with this emergency cleanup.

Why did the ministry not immediately notify Hamilton residents that a spill had taken place and immediately assist with the emergency cleanup?

Hon. Greg Rickford: To continue, while the city submitted information, the ministry has required by the order—we issued a second order November 14, 2019, requiring clarification and confirmation of impacts, recommendations for remediation, mitigation and monitoring. The matter has been forwarded to the ministry's investigation and enforcement branch.

It would be inappropriate to make any additional comments except that the ministry will continue to work with the Hamilton public health unit, the city of Hamilton, the Hamilton Conservation Authority and other agencies in order to ensure that the appropriate corrective actions are being taken to mitigate the impacts of this sewage discharge.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, my constituents Jamie Larocque and Sasha Haughian have two young sons, aged 7 and 9, who have cystic fibrosis, which, as you know, leads to the destruction of the lungs and early death. Orkambi can help prevent that destruction, yet the Ministry of Health has attached stringent prescribing criteria to this medication. The ministry claims Ontario is providing coverage for Orkambi for pediatric cystic fibrosis patients on an exceptional, case-by-case basis, yet not a single patient in Ontario has qualified for access. My constituents are having to watch their sons struggle with this disease. One son is on a drug trial while the other son is not.

Speaker, will the minister adjust the prescribing criteria for these lifesaving drugs to allow doctors, and not bureaucrats, to allow access to these drugs?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for your question. I know this is a very serious issue for many families across Ontario, including some of your guests who are here today, whom I would also like to welcome to Queen's Park. I look forward to meeting with several passionate advocates for cystic fibrosis next week.

This is an issue that we have been studying. Orkambi, I know, is only available under limited circumstances at present. But it is the requirement that any new products that are being introduced in Ontario have to go through the same trials. They have to go through the same process. It wouldn't be appropriate for any Minister of Health anywhere to jump in and make decisions. I'm not a physician; I need to leave it up to physicians to make that determination as well.

But I can tell you that this is a matter of priority in the government. I am working with the assistant deputy minister, who is dealing with approval of medications, and we hope to have a solution produced very soon, because again, I know this is a very important issue for many Ontarians.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: I thank the minister for that answer. As you know, Minister, when we were in opposition, some five years ago, we went through this very same process for the drug Kalydeco for Madi Vanstone, and Madi is here today. I think what we've learned since then is that the fundamental root of this problem, the approval of cystic fibrosis drugs across the board—there are many other drugs—we never really got to the root of the problem, which is that we need a special drugs program in this province. I know the minister is well aware of that.

Vertex is the company that makes most of these cystic fibrosis drugs. I know that you've met with the company and that you're meeting with them again. But it is hard for my constituents and for cystic fibrosis sufferers across Ontario to try and understand that 18 other countries in the western industrialized world cover these drugs under their drug plans, and Canada is one of the only westernized countries that does not. So I would encourage the minister to keep this as a priority and to work as quickly as possible to help put Canada on the map, make Ontario a leader and provide these life-saving drugs to cystic fibrosis patients.

1100

Hon. Christine Elliott: I certainly recall the situation a number of years ago with the use of Kalydeco. It's wonderful to see Madi here today looking so well. We want all young people to have the opportunity to live a happy, healthy childhood, youth and adulthood, so it is important that government concentrate resources and make sure that we bring forward medications that are going to allow them to live those happy lives.

With respect to Orkambi, we have been in conversations with Vertex. We are working with, as I said, the assistant deputy minister. My office is also involved, because I know that this has been a long procedure, especially considering that other jurisdictions have already approved Orkambi. We hope to come to a satisfactory resolution very soon to make Orkambi more immediately available.

I know there are other medications that are being considered: Symdeko and Trikafta. The former is with Health Canada right now; the other one has not come before Health Canada yet. It has to go through that process first, but we will deal with it very quickly as soon as it comes to the provincial level.

Thank you again for the question, and thank you to your guest for being here today.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Michael Parsa: My question is also for the Minister of Health. Our government is working tirelessly to address the concerns that Ontarians have about our public health care system. The previous Liberal government neglected Ontario's health care system, leaving it on life support. I'm sure we can all agree that it's time to bring more accountability and transparency back to the system.

As part of the fall economic statement, the Minister of Health brought forward proposed changes that would promote accountability in our OHIP program, one of the largest expenditures of government. These proposed measures will help to prevent incorrect billing for our publicly funded health care service.

Our government is committed to ensuring that Ontarians get the best value for their tax dollars. Will the minister please tell the House why these changes are being implemented?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for your question. Our government is introducing changes that, if passed, will make OHIP more accountable and transparent. OHIP is a \$16-billion program, representing more than 25% of all health care spending. That's approximately 10% of the entire government spending.

These changes were brought forward directly with respect to recommendations that have been made for several years by the Auditor General. For several years, the Auditor General found long-standing weaknesses in the laws, policies and processes that oversee physician billings. Recognizing that incorrect billing is often done inadvertently, rather than by directly doing so, we're also committed to improving education to help providers understand how to bill and how to correct billings.

Similar to the process to review Canadian taxes, it is important that the government meet its responsibility to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being accounted for and then, should there be a need, to be able to recoup those funds that are not met. We are taking our responsibility as financial stewards for Ontario taxpayers very seriously.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you to the minister for taking steps to address this long-standing issue. These changes are fair and reasonable, and will ensure Ontario taxpayers have the confidence they need and deserve in their public health care system. Our proposed changes would strengthen OHIP accountability measures and will ensure a sustainable, healthy insurance plan today and into the future. The principles of accounting, transparency and value for money are what these changes are built on. I know that it's important to my constituents that our government remain transparent and that we ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

Would the minister please tell the House about the steps we've taken that have led to these changes?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government remains committed to working with our stakeholders, including the Ontario Medical Association, to build the policies and process that underpin this legislation.

In fact, these changes follow many months of consultations with the Ontario Medical Association. We have ensured that their input be included in many of our changes, such as limiting the recovery period to two years, the new audit process occurring on an ongoing basis, only and establishing a target to complete audits within 12 months. Speaker, the list does go on.

Our government values doctors' immeasurable contribution to the health and well-being of Ontarians. However, I am sure we will all agree that no doctor should be able to bill OHIP inappropriately. Ontario taxpayers deserve increased accountability, including a fair audit process, so that public money is spent in the most comprehensive and cost-effective manner. That is what we will—

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

PREMIER'S BUSINESS

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. The Members' Integrity Act states that all cabinet ministers must put their business assets in an arm's-length trust. This morning's Globe and Mail reports that US corporate filings made in July by Deco Labels, the company the Premier owned and operated for many years, indicated that Doug Ford was still the president of the company. Since Deco Labels should be in an arm's-length trust, how is it that the Premier is still being listed as the president on legal documents?

Hon. Doug Ford: The company is in a blind trust. It went through the Integrity Commissioner and he approved it. I have nothing to do with the company and day-to-day operations.

I appreciate the question.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: The provisions in the act are designed to ensure that there is not an appearance of a conflict of interest. It's important for any cabinet minister to be completely at arm's length from business interests.

According to filings with the Canadian government, Deco's five directors are family relations of the Premier. Each director lists the Premier's family home as their business address. In fact, the Premier's personal home is listed as the mailing address for Deco.

In comments to CBC News this summer, Premier's Office staff claimed to have knowledge about Deco's current client list.

And now we see that in the US, the company still seems to think the Premier is running the company.

The Premier just stated that he has nothing to do with the day-to-day activities of Deco Labels, but can the Premier say in the Legislature today that he is absolutely at arm's length and has no dealings with the company at any level?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, again, the company is in a blind trust. I'm too busy turning this province around from the mess that they left.

SPORTS FUNDING

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question is to the minister of tourism, culture and sport. Speaker, our government is supporting the 2021 Canada Games in the Niagara region by committing to a cost-shared investment of \$29 million for the construction of new and upgraded sports facilities

for the 18 sports teams from every province and territory that will be coming to Niagara.

The games will feature an estimated 5,000 participants and 4,000 volunteers, in addition to the tens of thousands of visitors from across the province and across the country, from home and abroad, who will be cheering on their favourite athletes.

With this in mind, could the minister please explain to the members of the Legislature how this provincial funding will help drive economic activity not only in Niagara, but across the province?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to say thank you to the member from Niagara West, for his strong advocacy for sport across the province, as well as the two New Democratic members from Niagara Falls and St. Catharines, who joined us on a lovely afternoon in Niagara as we announced our government's support for this important initiative.

We spend \$25 million investing in sport across the province of Ontario, and it yields a \$12.6-billion economic imprint. In this particular case, the government of Ontario is representing \$10.3 million in investment for capital and operating costs and an additional \$29 million investing in infrastructure and facilities.

In Red Deer, this year, there's a \$132-million economic imprint. But in Niagara, in 2021—this number will astound you—we will create over \$400 million in economic activity, contributing to 2,100 jobs across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this is a great return on investment, and it's a great return on sports.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you, Minister, for your response. It's clear these games will have a significant economic impact in the Niagara region and across Ontario. In fact, the 2021 games, as was mentioned, will spur an estimated \$400 million in economic activity, with an anticipated 2,100 jobs to be created.

The games, however, are more than an investment in our local economy. They also provide opportunities for local athletes to compete on a national stage. Of course, this could not happen without the dedication and knowledge of our athletes' coaches.

Could the minister please highlight the way our government is supporting our coaches and the development of our teams across Ontario?

1110

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: That's an excellent question, because not only do we top the charts with Shawn Mendes through this ministry, supporting our artists, but we also top podiums around the world.

Speaker, did you know, for example, that through our provincial sport organizations that this ministry funds, we supported Bianca Andreescu? Through our Canadian Sport Institute we've invested \$8.2 million, and they are training Andre De Grasse as well as Penny Oleksiak. We are topping the podiums worldwide, and I have no reason

to doubt that in Niagara 2021, our athletes are going to be the top performers.

But they will also be the safest because, for the first time in Canadian history, every single athlete in Canada will have to adhere to Canada's first and only concussion legislation, Rowan's Law, and that will be happening in Niagara 2021.

This province isn't only open for business or open for jobs; we're also open for athletes.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My question is to the Minister of Health. This year, my constituent Sonia De Laurentiis was diagnosed with a form of metastatic lung cancer that had travelled to her brain, liver and vertebrae. She is with us in the members' gallery today with her sons Davide and Roberto.

Sonia receives treatment at one of the best cancer hospitals in the world, the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre. Her oncologist recommended a specific medication that was her absolute best chance to fight her cancer, but this medication costs her family \$10,000 a month because it is a take-home cancer drug. This is an immense burden on her family.

Minister, will you commit today to help this family and cover the cost of Sonia's take-home cancer drugs?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. I'm very sorry for your constituent's situation, and I thank her for being here today.

This is a situation that we are reviewing—medications. We are reviewing the items that can be on our Ontario Drug Benefit Plan that can be available to people. We do have the Trillium program that is available for people who find it difficult to pay for their medications. But I would certainly be happy to meet with your constituent to understand more particulars and see what we may be able to do to assist her.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you, Minister, for agreeing to meet with her, but she's tried everything.

If Sonia and her family lived in any province west of Ontario, she wouldn't need to ask for help because take-home cancer drugs are publicly funded there. In fact, most cancer treatments are now available as take-home medication to meet the needs of patients, improve their quality of life and reduce hospital trips.

Just last year, this government voted against an NDP motion to cover take-home cancer drugs. That was wrong. It's time for Ontario to catch up to the rest of our country.

Will the Minister of Health do the right thing and finally cover take-home cancer drugs under OHIP, so people like Sonia get the help they deserve?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I understand there is an issue with respect to take-home cancer drugs, and I know this is not of comfort to your constituent today, but that's one of the reasons why we are doing our transformation of our health care system: to bring it into the 21st century. I mean that in respect of everything that we're doing in health—our policies, our processes, our technology, everything.

I can't make a promise on the spot with respect to this particular issue, but I can tell you that we are reforming our system so it will be more responsive to the needs of Ontarians in the future.

Again, I reiterate my willingness to meet with Sonia and her family to discuss how we might specifically be of some assistance to her as she's dealing with her health problems today.

REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: My question is for the very lovely Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Our government heard loud and clear from consumers and real estate professionals alike to review aged legislation to reflect the modern marketplace. That is why we've introduced the Trust in Real Estate Services Act.

Yesterday, the minister highlighted five key messages in the act, one of the messages being enhancing consumer choice and confidence.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please explain how the Trust in Real Estate Services Act would enable regulatory changes, giving consumers more choice in the real estate sector?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I very much appreciate the question from the member from Cambridge. She's doing a great job for her riding, and clearly she's demonstrating that she is as committed to getting consumer protection right in Ontario as we all are in our caucus, because we're introducing a more modern regulatory system that will reflect today's real estate sector. It has changed so much in the last 20 years.

Our government is giving consumers more choice in the purchase and sale process by permitting real estate professionals and brokerages to disclose details of competing offers at the seller's direction. Currently, in multiple offer situations, brokerages are required to disclose the number of competing offers to every person who has made an offer. But the regulation does not allow the brokerages to disclose the substance of the competing offers. If the bill passes, potential sellers could choose whether to participate in this more open process by providing—

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

The supplementary question.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you to the minister for her kind words and for her answer, and also for working so hard with consumers and real estate professionals across our province to enhance consumer confidence and reduce burden in the real estate industry. Our government is committed to continue consulting with consumers and stakeholders to develop proposed regulations that will help consumers make more informed decisions.

Minister, you have also spoken in this House about some of the key elements of the Trust in Real Estate Services Act, for example, ensuring efficient and effective regulation of the real estate industry.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain how our government will ensure efficient regulation in the real estate industry through the Trust in Real Estate Services Act?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Absolutely. Our government intends to improve the regulation of the real estate sector by updating the powers available to the Real Estate Council of Ontario and its registrar. It's known as RECO, and we're allowing RECO's registrar to consider a broader range of factors when considering eligibility for registration. We are giving RECO the authority to levy administrative penalties. We are providing RECO's discipline committee the authority to revoke or suspend a real estate professional's registration.

Consumers have been asking for this. We've listened, and we're acting. Speaker, these are just some of the changes of our proposed legislation, and these updates will not only enhance consumer protection, but improve the information consumers receive about what real estate professionals and brokerages must do for them.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Suze Morrison: My question is to the Premier. In 2018, your government eliminated rent control for new units. Yesterday, I heard from a group of tenants at 22 John Street in York South–Weston who all live in units that are no longer protected by rent control. As their leases have come up, some of these tenants are facing rent increases as high as 25%. Speaker, that's \$375 a month in increase, almost \$4,500 a year. I don't know about you, but most people I know simply cannot afford a rent increase that high.

How can this Premier justify such steep rent increases, and all in the name of rolling out the red carpet for his developer friends?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the honourable member for that question. Our government believes that every Ontarian needs a safe place to call home. That's why we're committed to listening to both sides of the equation, to try to make the system fairer for both tenants and landlords. We want to encourage a continued dialogue.

That's why, as part of our Housing Supply Action Plan, we consulted with both tenants and landlords, and we are reviewing what we heard as we move forward with the system. I know that I've kept my colleague the Attorney General informed as we've moved through the consultations, because I know that he and I have a shared responsibility when it comes to the Residential Tenancies Act and the Landlord and Tenant Board.

We're going to continue to analyze what we've heard and we're going to move forward with some legislative

and regulatory changes. I encourage the member to have her constituents continue to have the dialogue—

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

Supplementary? The member for York South–Weston.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: My question again is to the Premier. This government's decision to slash rent control for new units means that residents in my riding of York South–Weston are seeing rent increases as high as 25%. This is shameful, Mr. Speaker. People cannot afford these kinds of increases.

1120

In an email reply to one of the tenants, the Premier's office said that exempting new units from rent control will “encourage both big developers and small landlords to create more affordable apartments.” Hundreds of dollars' worth of rental increases a month is the opposite of affordable.

Will the Premier rise in this House today and commit to reversing the cuts to rent control?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, to correct the member's record, our government was elected on a promise to not just increase housing supply; we kept our promise to preserve rent control for existing tenants. However, to stimulate construction of new rental housing, our government announced an exemption from rent control on new units.

Actually, our research has shown the complete opposite. Since our announcement last November, we have been seeing some very promising signs of increased development. Our examples include that over the first 10 months of 2019, there have been 3,838 rental starts in the Toronto area. That is the most for any period in any year since 1992. Developers have nearly 53,000 new units of rental housing planned for the Toronto area in the third quarter of 2019.

Our research has also shown that the rent control exemption for new units has seen significant impacts in the province of Manitoba. So our research shows the complete opposite, Speaker.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Minister of Health. Over the past year, I've met with patients, administrators and health care workers, and every one of them recognized that our health care system needs significant change—that it needs to become more patient-centred.

Burlington's Joseph Brant Hospital has served our community since 1961. The Minister of Health earlier this year visited Joseph Brant Hospital to learn more about how their integrated care model has improved patient outcomes in Burlington, especially for seniors.

Yesterday's announcement on the free dental program for low-income seniors will make a huge difference for people in my riding, like Ann and Judith, who have been asking for this kind of support for years. Can the minister tell this House about our strategy and how this new

seniors' dental program fits into ending hallway health care?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member from Burlington for her question. Our government is taking action to end hallway health care through a comprehensive four-pillar strategy, and it's already making a difference.

A main part of our strategy is prevention and health promotion. A lack of preventive dental care can lead to serious health problems down the road. This can require hospitalization or intensive treatment in order to fix. Unfortunately, not every Ontarian has enjoyed access to preventive dental care.

Yesterday, the Premier, the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility and I announced our government is keeping our promise to provide publicly funded dental care to low-income senior Ontarians. By helping low-income seniors with preventive dental care, our new seniors' dental program will help keep people out of hospital emergency rooms.

Speaker, this is just one part of our comprehensive plan to end hallway health care, and I look forward to discussing more about the other pillars of the plan in my supplementary answer.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the Ministry of Health, which was involved in making yesterday's announcement possible.

Health promotion initiatives like the free seniors' dental program are a great way to improve the quality of life for our seniors. We know that there is a relationship between oral health and overall wellness. The Academy of General Dentistry found that over 90% of all systemic diseases produce oral signs and symptoms. That's why this free dental health program for low-income seniors will improve overall health while helping to reduce pressures on hospital emergency rooms.

Our four-pillar plan to end hallway health care is just getting started, and it will lead to better outcomes for all Ontarians. Can the minister tell this House more about the work our government is doing to end hallway health care?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Preventive care and health promotion is the first pillar in our plan to end hallway health care.

As a second piece, we are placing a focus on ensuring that patients receive the most appropriate care possible, which is why we've introduced new models of care for 911 patients. We will help keep patients out of hospital when a more appropriate health care provider can be found.

Next, through Ontario Health and the upcoming implementation of Ontario health teams, we will better integrate care to improve patient flows. We are working to help Ontarians who no longer need to be in hospital to return to their homes with the extra supports that they need.

Finally, Speaker, we are investing \$27 billion over the next 10 years in hospital infrastructure projects to increase our capacity, including new and upgraded hospitals and community care facilities. This is the most comprehensive,

connected plan in the history of our province, and we are going to continue towards working at our goal of ending hallway health care.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jeff Burch: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. For months, the tens of thousands of Niagara drivers who rely on the Thorold tunnel daily have experienced inconveniences, delays and frustration. With the recent news that the MTO is closing two-way traffic through the tunnel, many of our constituents and local elected officials have come forward to express deep concerns. The Ministry of Transportation has failed to address the difficulties that this will pose for access to major hospitals, stroke clinics, and ambulance transportation, potentially putting residents at risk. One-way traffic through the Thorold tunnel for the foreseeable future is not a solution. It creates a myriad of other issues and will result in major disruptions.

Is the minister prepared to listen to local elected officials and take the necessary steps to maintain the current traffic configuration in order to ensure that our community is safe, accessible and moving efficiently?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. I received a letter earlier this week from the member opposite as well as from other members of the opposition's caucus from Niagara on this issue. I've also had a chance to have a conversation within our caucus with our member from Niagara West, who had spoken about his recommendation that the ministry consult with municipal stakeholders as we continue to find a solution for drivers in Niagara.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize and appreciate the difficulties that the closures at the Thorold tunnel are causing for motorists in the area. Keeping drivers informed of potential closures is very important, and ministry officials do communicate regularly about construction work through traffic bulletins, transportation authorities, our 511 service, and media channels. But we are always striving to do better, and we will continue to find ways to improve our communication channels with municipalities and with drivers.

Since learning of this issue last week, Mr. Speaker, I've directed senior officials in my office and the ministry to develop new solutions and to report back to me.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary? The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is also to the Minister of Transportation. Over 24,000 vehicles pass through the Thorold tunnel each day. Most of them are either residents of Niagara Falls or travelling to work in Niagara Falls. We have local business owners telling us that this is a disaster for their businesses. Residents tell us about the hardship this will cause them. And there are concerns over response times from first responders.

How is it possible that this lane reduction and closure was planned without accounting for snowplows being able to fit through the tunnel? It makes absolutely no sense.

Local elected officials are demanding a meeting to get answers about when the minister became aware that the tunnel was unsafe.

Will the minister immediately sit down with local elected officials to answer these questions and to commit—and this is important—extra resources to get this tunnel opened quickly in both eastbound and westbound lanes?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you to the member opposite for the question and for raising the concerns of residents and motorists of Niagara region. I want to reiterate for the members of the House that we have heard the concerns that have been raised. The ministry is looking for the best—and a better—path forward to address these concerns.

With respect to concerns regarding snow clearance, a traditional snowplow does not fit in the current state of the Thorold tunnel. That means that if it snows more than two and a half centimetres, we will need to shut the tunnel to clear the snow. We know that this is not an ideal solution and we are looking for better ways forward so that we can provide real, long-term solutions for motorists in the Niagara region. The ministry is currently finalizing a long-term plan and will share the plan with the public shortly.

1130

NATURAL GAS

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is for the Associate Minister of Energy. Natural gas is Ontario's most common heating source and has been proven to be much more affordable than other sources, such as electricity, oil or propane. Yet much of Ontario still does not have access to natural gas. In Durham region, rural parts of the region don't have access, like parts of Scugog, and I know we're really looking forward to progress on this file. Could the minister update us on what we're doing to expand access to natural gas to parts of Ontario that don't yet have it?

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you to the honourable member from Durham for her question and her great representation and service to the people of Durham.

The Natural Gas Expansion Support Program was created under the Access to Natural Gas Act to help extend access to natural gas to Ontarians across the province. The program encouraged communities to partner with gas distributors on new projects and submit them to the Ontario Energy Board.

The success of this program has been incredible. I'm proud to have announced that projects in Chatham-Kent, southern Bruce, and the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation are all under way, with several more coming soon. We will continue to encourage partnerships between communities and distributors to extend natural gas to as many Ontarians as possible, which will make our province more attractive for business and will lower costs for all.

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

Ms. Lindsey Park: I want to thank the minister for just highlighting the importance of that partnership between

communities and distributors. I know one of the great things about our program is that more communities are going to be eligible than under the previous program. I know Ian and Lynn in Scugog are really looking forward to shovels hitting the ground, and expansion on Scugog Island.

Could the minister please update us on just how much Ontarians can expect to save once they're connected to natural gas?

Hon. Bill Walker: Again, what a great question from the member from Durham. The benefits of expanding natural gas to communities in Ontario cannot be overstated. Switching to natural gas can save the average residential customer \$2,200 per year on their energy bill. These are significant savings for families and businesses across our great province. Furthermore, natural gas expansion also signals that a province is open for business. For example, in Chatham-Kent, in the riding of our incredible member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, the additional natural gas capacity in that community could bring back approximately 1,400 jobs in the greenhouse industry alone.

We're going to keep expanding natural gas across our province to realize savings for residents heating their homes and to create a stronger business climate in our province.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Highway 11 is a Trans-Canada highway. Below North Bay, it's a first-class highway, specifically with winter maintenance. It's treated first-class. When you cross over North Bay, it's a second-class highway. Snow removal is second-class. This isn't just the NDP who has been complaining about this, but all our residents across northern Ontario.

I'd like to quote the member for Nipissing in the last Parliament, that his constituents and the municipalities "want the Ministry of Transportation to undertake the evaluation and potential reclassification of all provincial highways to ensure adequate road maintenance." Yet when we put forward to consider making Highways 11 and 17 class 1 for winter maintenance, it was roundly, solidly defeated. Even the consideration was solidly defeated.

Do you believe that drivers on Highway 11, Highway 17 or Highway 11 north deserve class 2 winter maintenance and that their lives continue to be put at risk?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I appreciate the question and the opportunity to respond. Winter months pose significant problems across our province for highway maintenance and clearance, and no more so than in northern Ontario.

Highways are classified along five classes, and these are technical designations. Highways 11 and 17 are classified, technically, as class 2 highways. However, practically, the level of service and highway maintenance that the Ministry of Transportation, through private contractors and through their work, has been able to provide is at a

better standard than class 1 highways in southern Ontario and in northern Ontario. For class 1 highways, the standard to get to bare pavement is eight hours. On Highway 11 and Highway 7, the standard, on average, has been seven hours.

Mr. Speaker, we are focused on making sure that we provide the level of safety and maintenance required across our highway system and especially—

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you to the minister. I'm glad you're studying this file.

I brought up an issue when the Liberals were in power and I'm going to quote it again. The last time we had access to this information—"If your car is registered in the district of Timiskaming and it is involved in an accident on a provincial highway, it is four times as likely that it will be fatal." The Liberals solved that problem by stopping to publish the information.

So if it's true that maintenance is better in Timiskaming than it is in southern Ontario, show us that information, because people continue to die on our highways.

Interjections.

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

I'll recognize the Minister of Transportation to reply.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: The safety of our highways is the number one priority of the Ministry of Transportation. That's why I am very pleased to report to this House that we are continuing to find ways to improve on the already very good record that we have in the province. We are leading in North America on safety on our highways.

Our winter conditions in the north provide very difficult circumstances for our motorists, and we are continuing to work. It is a non-partisan issue. We are looking to provide real solutions to improve. The ministry is looking to find new ways to improve, to deal with conditions that are continuing to worsen. But seven hours to bare pavement is better than the standard that we expect on our class 1 highways. The Ministry of Transportation is very pleased to be able to provide that level of service, but will continue to find ways to—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes our question period for this morning.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for York South–Weston has a point of order.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Mr. Speaker, when answering, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing stated that he was trying to correct my record. As you know, the standing orders state that another member cannot correct another member's record. So I want to state that I stand by my question and the minister hasn't answered my question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is within the standing orders to allow a member to correct their own record,

but there's no provision in the standing orders for another member to correct another member's record.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Niagara West has a point of order.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Speaker, now that they've joined us, I'd like to welcome all of the members of my riding association here—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): No. We're not entertaining points of order to introduce guests outside of the regular time that's set aside by the standing orders to introduce guests.

NOTICES 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 Municipal Affairs and Housing concerning cuts to rent control. This matter will be debated Tuesday at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines concerning a raw sewage spill into Cootes Paradise in Hamilton. This matter will be debated Tuesday at 6 p.m.

This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I want to introduce my good friend Fenil Patel to the House. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to introduce Aris Moussessian, commonly known as "Junior," one of the brightest young people and future politicians. Welcome, Aris Jr.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MAYA MIKHAEL AND BRIAN HOGAN

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Today I would like to recognize two incredibly dedicated members of my community, Maya Mikhael and Brian Hogan, who have been recognized recently for their contributions in Windsor.

Maya Mikhael is an exceptional young woman who has been spearheading social justice causes in Windsor all her life. She's the founder of Maya's Friends and Maya's lemonade stand, through which she has raised tens of thousands of dollars and collected food donations for local causes.

In the spring, Maya received the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers from the Governor General of Canada in recognition of her exceptional volunteer achievements. Yesterday, Maya received the Habitat for Humanity

Windsor-Essex Outstanding Youth in Philanthropy Award.

Maya's dedication continues to be an inspiration to me and so many others in my community, and I want to take the opportunity to congratulate Maya and, again, thank her for everything she does for my community.

I also want to recognize Brian Hogan. He's the president of the Windsor and District Labour Council. Last week, Brian deservedly received the Charles E. Brooks Labour Community Service Award. Brian has been involved with the labour council for over 20 years, but he is also a retired teacher, a volunteer and an activist, devoting much of his time and energy to community service and social justice. He is an unstoppable force, motivated by his desire to better our community any way he can. I have had the honour of working with Brian over the years and have seen his dedication and good work firsthand. I am proud to call Brian a friend.

I am sincerely grateful to both Maya and Brian, and want to congratulate them once again. Thank you for making the Windsor community stronger.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Lindsey Park: I rise today to update this House on the work our government has been doing over the last many months to support GM workers in Oshawa and Durham region.

On October 23, GM and Unifor, in partnership with our government, hosted a job fair for GM workers and parts suppliers at Durham College. There were approximately 50 employers, community, government and education partners at this job fair, eager to meet GM workers and eager at the idea of GM workers becoming a part of their team.

A couple of weeks ago, on top of that—actually, on the same day—I was pleased to join the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development at GM in Oshawa to announce that our government, in partnership with GM and Unifor, have opened an action centre for impacted GM employees, providing local, targeted employment and retraining supports to help them in this transition.

Also, before that, between February and June 2019, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, as it was then known, held 42 information sessions for affected auto workers and those throughout the auto parts sector. These sessions included drop-in times where employees could ask any questions or get one-on-one support, and I know that there have been another 16 of those sessions since June.

This past year has been difficult for GM workers and their families, but I also know how resilient our workers and community members are, and I know that new employers will be blessed to have such committed, resilient employees join their team.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Joel Harden: On November 30, our MPP office in Ottawa Centre is going to be hosting a town hall to talk

about an issue that's on everybody's mind in Ottawa right now: public transit. Like the rest of our city, I was actually thrilled when the light rail transit launched in September, but what has followed since has been discouraging, to say the least, with thousands of commuters stranded with mechanical failures. The entire system has routinely ground to a halt. I'm talking about moms and dads who can't pick up their kids on time and I'm talking about employees who can't get to work. It's a complete mess.

The problems plaguing the LRT are yet another indictment, in my view, of the public-private partnership model that both Conservative and Liberal governments have embraced over the years.

I want to be clear: They're absolutely not an indictment of the drivers and mechanics who keep public transit in the city of Ottawa going. Those folks are doing their very best under great circumstances, and I want to thank the members of ATU 279 for everything they do in our city.

Until now, there have been far too few opportunities for citizens to come together and have a conversation about what kind of transit system we want in our city. That's why, on November 30, we are going to be hosting that conversation, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., at Centretown United Church, in the basement. I'm going to personally make a batch of my own chili. I welcome you to come out and take part in it. We need a better transit system. We need you to turn out. Your kids are welcome. Your ideas are welcome. Please turn out—1 p.m. to 3 p.m., November 30. Ottawa, we'll see you there.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Vincent Ke: On Friday, November 8, on behalf of the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, I was happy to announce new funding for the Tropicana Employment Centre's pre-apprenticeship program in my riding of Don Valley North. This centre will receive over \$269,000 for their Autobody and Collision Damage Repairer program.

The Tropicana Employment Centre has been a great resource in my riding that we often refer constituents to who need jobs or who want to upgrade their professional skills.

This program will help those who are at risk to learn a new skill, get into the flourishing skilled trades field and allow them to invest in their future.

Speaker, the skilled trades is a large and growing field that we need to encourage our youth to get involved in, especially now, since there is a skilled trades shortage and a high demand for skilled trades workers. By 2021, one in five new jobs in Ontario will be in trades-related occupations. Due to the high demand, I'd like to encourage anyone who wants to get involved in the skilled trades to be a part of this fascinating field.

WESTON SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I rise today to extend congratulations to the Weston Santa Claus Parade organizers, the Weston Village BIA, which is celebrating its 41st season.

The 41st annual Weston Santa Claus Parade will be this Sunday, November 24. It is the cutest Santa Claus parade in the entire city. The Weston Santa Claus Parade starts at Weston Road and Church Street and goes all the way south to Weston Road and Sidney Belsey Crescent. As many as 20,000 spectators are expected to line Weston Road to see Santa and the largest parade in the event's history, featuring many entries of floats, marching bands, beautifully decorated and costumed characters from Christmas movies, TV shows and books.

Many people who came to the parade as kids with their parents are now coming back with their children.

Bands are a huge part of the parade and, true to form, this year's parade will feature eight of the best. The Burlington Teen Tour Band, with its 120-member ensemble, is back this year. They are consistently rated as the top parade band in Canada and will once again lead Santa into the parade.

Mr. Speaker, I invite the House to join me in congratulating the Weston Santa Claus Parade organizers on 41 wonderful years.

We look forward to seeing you there.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. John Fraser: Our most important job as legislators is to listen to the voices that are hardest to hear, and adults with developmental disabilities and their families are amongst those.

Yesterday, Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs was here at Queen's Park helping us hear those voices. Here's what we heard: that after the age of 21, the supports for those living with developmental disabilities and their families are dramatically reduced; that too often, it's a life of wait-lists and precarious programs, with parents in their seventies or eighties sometimes not knowing who's going to care for their child should they become ill or die. That is the reality that too many families in Ontario are living right now.

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Last week, we learned that the government hired a consultant for up to a million dollars to find half a billion dollars in savings from the developmental services budget. We need to build their services up, not cut them back. I'm appealing to the government to commit to not cutting the developmental services budget. The government needs to annualize the stabilization fund and keep Passport as an entitlement program.

The government must sit down with adults with developmental disabilities, their families and the people who serve them, and consult them before making any major changes in this field.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr. Billy Pang: Today I would like to speak to the amazing work that first responders are doing in Markham—

Unionville and across York region. I've recently had an opportunity to visit and speak with our first responders over the past several weeks. Not only do they save lives and keep us safe; our police, firefighters and paramedics are also educators, mentors, service workers, volunteers, parents and so much more.

The emergency service workers of York region are developing innovative programs, systems and procedures to be as efficient and effective as possible. For example, York region paramedics have made incredible strides in community health and care programs, doing their part to reduce hallway health care in York region and doing their best to deliver faster, more sensitive, contextual emergency responses.

Despite the amount of work that first responders do, they continue to volunteer selflessly when and where they can. A perfect example of this is the Random Acts of Christmas initiative that York Regional Police and Jewel 88.5 are doing this year to make Christmas an extra-special time of year. It was a tremendous success last year, and is only one example of the ways that all three emergency service branches not only serve, but give to our municipalities.

I am honoured to recognize them today.

PEARL HATFIELD

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I want to say a few words today about my mother, Pearl. She'll turn 96 in a couple of weeks and she has led a remarkable life.

She survived the tidal wave that hit the Burin Peninsula in Newfoundland 90 years ago this week. The first wave swept their home out to sea; the second wave brought them back closer to shore. A neighbour rode his dory out to them and they escaped. Her mom, herself and her two older sisters crawled out through a broken kitchen window into the boat. Twenty-eight Newfoundlanders died in that tidal wave; hundreds of others were left homeless or destitute.

I took away my mom's car keys a couple of years ago, sold her car and her home, and helped her move into a retirement centre down the road in Marystown, Newfoundland. She wasn't happy about that. She had lived on her own since my father died back in 1993.

Mom and Dad met during the Second World War after crossing from Nova Scotia on the SS Caribou. Well, a German submarine sank the Caribou on its very next crossing, on October 14, 1942, and 136 of the 237 people on board were killed.

After the war, Mom and Dad moved to New Brunswick and tragedy struck again: My older brother, Billy, died in a house fire along with one of my cousins. I can't imagine how that loss affected my mother and father, losing their first child.

Mom learned how to drive when Dad retired from the military and they moved back to Burin to look after her parents. She was the president of the ladies' auxiliary of the Legion, sang in the United Church choir and joined neighbours at the evening service at the Salvation Army.

Speaker, mom's memory isn't always what it used to be, but when the music starts, when that accordion kicks in, she's the first one up on the dance floor step dancing.

I know my brother Barry up in Ottawa, a retired air force chief warrant officer, joins me today when I say, "Happy birthday, Mom. We love you, and we hope to see you soon."

ABILITIES CENTRE

Mr. Lorne Coe: The Abilities Centre in Whitby is an internationally renowned and innovative community hub and sports centre where people of all ages and abilities engage in various social, health and cultural programs.

On November 8, together with the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Health, the finance minister, MPP Park, the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility and the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, we announced \$1.07 million for the Abilities Centre. This funding will benefit the centre as it engages with community partners, school boards and municipalities to identify service gaps. In addition, it will help create pilot projects for adults with disabilities and a new pre-employment skills program.

Speaker, the Abilities Centre was inspired by the vision of the Honourable Christine Elliott and her late husband, James Michael Flaherty, and has a growing importance for everyone in the community. It continues to enrich lives in the town of Whitby and across the region of Durham.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to tell you that Ontario has a plan to make government processes and services smarter and better. We will do this by finding ways to spend more efficiently while ensuring value for every taxpayer dollar. This plan includes:

—making government services easier and more efficient so people can access the services they want, when and where they want, including delivering simpler and faster online transactions such as renewing a driver's licence or getting a health card;

—modernizing provincial procurement and supply chains to make it easier for companies of all sizes to do business with the province and to combine and leverage public sector-wide purchasing agreements; and

—making government agencies more efficient through opportunities for back-office consolidations, the use of digital tools and dissolving inactive or duplicative agencies.

This plan also includes exploring new non-tax revenue-generating opportunities such as advertising and naming rights for GO stations. These are revenues that can then support health care and education.

Mr. Speaker, I can promise you that we will always be looking for ways to deliver better and smarter government services.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DOORED BUT NOT IGNORED ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 RECONNAISSANT LES INCIDENTS D'EMPORIÉAGE

Ms. Bell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to reporting of incidents of unsafely opening a motor vehicle door on a highway / *Projet de loi 148, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les rapports sur les incidents d'ouverture non sécuritaire des portes d'un véhicule automobile sur une voie publique.*

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the member for University–Rosedale to explain her bill.

Ms. Jessica Bell: The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to require police officers and other prescribed persons to gather information about incidents in which someone is injured or property is damaged following a potential contravention of clause 165(1)(a) of the act, which requires individuals to take due precautions when opening the door of a motor vehicle on a highway, and to report that information to the registrar of motor vehicles. The act is also amended to require the registrar to keep records of and report on these incidents.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL HOUSING DAY

JOURNÉE NATIONALE DE L'HABITATION

Hon. Steve Clark: I rise in the House today to mark National Housing Day, which is celebrated on November 22. It's a day to reflect on the importance of having a place to call home.

Speaker, National Housing Day was declared 19 years ago. At that time, municipalities, members of the public and communities all across the country called on all levels of government to take action on housing. Housing is something our government cares deeply about, because homes are more than just bricks and mortar. They are the foundation to raise happy, healthy families. More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan cuts through red tape to make it easier to build more homes more quickly, because our government believes that everyone deserves a place to call home, one that meets their needs and their budget—parce que notre gouvernement est d'avis que chaque personne mérite d'avoir un chez-soi, un endroit qui répond à ses besoins et à son budget.

More Homes, More Choice includes a broad range of measures to address the speed of development approvals, the mix of housing types, the costs of development, the

supply of rental housing and other innovative ideas to increase housing supply. Our Housing Supply Action Plan will help build the right types of homes in the right places to make housing more affordable and to help taxpayers keep more of their hard-earned dollars.

A strong and effective community housing system is also vital to making a place to call home a reality for over 250,000 families and individuals across Ontario. That's why we launched our Community Housing Renewal Strategy to help sustain, repair and grow Ontario's community housing system. Un système de logement communautaire solide et efficace est également essentiel pour réaliser le rêve de plus de 250 000 personnes et familles en Ontario d'avoir un foyer bien à elles. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous avons lancé notre Stratégie de renouvellement du secteur du logement communautaire, pour aider à viabiliser, à réparer et à agrandir le système de logement communautaire de l'Ontario.

Speaker, we're simplifying the rent-geared-to-income calculation so that it's easier for tenants to predict their rent and so housing providers can also spend more time with their community and less time on paperwork. We're removing the rules that penalize people for working more hours or for going back to school, so they can seek opportunities, further their education, accept work and become economically self-sufficient. We're also protecting tenants who receive child support by excluding those payments from their rent calculations. Our government is helping people who rely on community housing and ensuring that the system is more stable and sustainable for the future.

I've been to so many community housing events and conferences over the past few months where I've heard that our government's actions are making a real difference. But, Mr. Speaker, there is much more work that needs to be done to transform Ontario's fragmented and inefficient community housing system into one that is more streamlined, sustainable and able to help the people who need it most.

As we move forward, our decisions will be based on four core principles. People should be matched with housing based on their needs. Supports and services should be flexible to meet local realities. We need to ensure strong and effective relationships between all levels of government, housing providers and tenants. Finally, Mr. Speaker, our approach should promote innovation and help housing providers build long-term sustainability.

People who live, work and volunteer in the community housing sector care deeply about their communities and are dedicated to helping people find the housing they need. As National Housing Day approaches, our government recommits to consulting and working with all of our partners. Together, we are creating a community housing system that is sustainable today, tomorrow and for years to come to support the people who need it most.

Ensemble, nous créerons un système de logement communautaire qui est viable aujourd'hui, demain et pour les années à venir, afin d'appuyer les personnes qui en ont le plus besoin.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup. Responses?

Ms. Sara Singh: I'd like to thank the minister for his statement on National Housing Day. I think we all understand that housing helps people achieve a decent life. Safe and affordable housing should be a basic human right, a moral and economic obligation, and a responsibility for all members here in this House.

On National Housing Day, I think it's important for us to acknowledge that we are in a state of crisis when it comes to housing, not only in this province but across this beautiful country. In Canada, 3.3 million people—people like me, people like you—cannot access the housing they need at a cost that they can afford. This is a crisis.

Some 235,000 people in this country are still experiencing homelessness. That means that they do not have a safe place to rest their heads at night. They do not have a safe place to live in dignity. That is not okay.

Young people are still struggling to find affordable housing options, whether that is a rental or whether that is the first home they're going to be purchasing. Young people cannot afford to enter the market. As our rents increase 25% in some instances, many of us are being pushed out onto the street, experiencing what we call hidden homelessness—sleeping on couches, living in our parents' basements—in order to have a safe place to live. Some people are staying in violent, unpredictable situations in order to have housing.

It's important that we acknowledge that there's still so much more work to do. I know that the minister has acknowledged that, but I think we differ on the types of solutions that are needed in order to address the problems.

In fact, what we've seen this government do is cut a significant amount of money out of the budget around housing. We've seen this government cut the ending homelessness program by 25%. They have eliminated the housing and homelessness program completely. They've cut \$161 million from Ontario's Affordable Housing Program. They've eliminated the Basic Income Pilot and frozen OW and ODSP rates so that those people cannot afford rents rising any further.

The minister spoke at great length about the importance of creating affordable housing, but we haven't heard about the importance of the most vulnerable people, like women fleeing domestic violence who cannot find emergency shelters when they need them, and people with developmental disabilities who have been wait-listed because of the previous Liberal government's failure to provide supportive housing to those individuals. We see this current government perpetuating that problem rather than making it better.

We understand that there's an aging population here in this province, and those seniors are looking for affordable housing options. Yet they hear nothing from this government in terms of addressing a looming crisis for that aging population.

On National Housing Day, I encourage all members of this House not to celebrate the gifts we're handing to developers, but to reflect on the real work that needs to happen to ensure that we actually provide innovative solutions, not cut services; that we look at building

affordable housing well below market rental rates so that people can actually find a safe place to live; that we address rent control and we put in measures that will protect people from those landlords who are looking to exploit them—but also make the system fairer so that those landlords are also protected.

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I'm sure that members on the opposite side of the aisle don't expect us to be advocating for landlords as well, but I understand that we need to have both parties protected in order to find a real solution and address the affordable housing supply problem that we have here in the province.

I encourage the minister and, again, all members of this House to think about the work we need to do today as we celebrate National Housing Day. Let us reflect on how we're going to provide real solutions to the housing crisis and to the people of this province.

Mr. John Fraser: C'est un grand plaisir pour moi de me lever pour célébrer cette journée internationale du logement.

National Housing Day is an important day here in Canada. I want to congratulate the minister on his French. We have the same French teacher, and obviously he's working much harder than I am.

Having a safe, affordable place to live is key to family success. I grew up in Ottawa South, the place that I represent. I've lived there all my life. I spent 22 years living in an affordable community that was built in the 1970s, a place called Heron Gate, half of which just got torn down. We lost perhaps 300 homes: three- and four-bedroom townhouses. There were a lot of families that were displaced. It was over two successive governments and it was in keeping with the legislation. The landlord met their obligations, which are a bit more than minimal but still minimal.

One of the first things we did was go out and knock on doors as soon as we found that out and talked to people about what was important. They needed housing, but sometimes moving is the most stressful thing next to marriage and having a baby. This was dumped on them with five or six months' notice. That was a community of a couple of thousand people. Can you imagine doing that to a small town in Ontario, some small town in the north? "You've all got to move." This place would be on fire, I think.

We need to make some changes. I'm concerned about affordable housing.

Luckily, everybody worked together. We found people places to live that were affordable or maybe a little bit less affordable than what they had, and that was okay. But we also tore the fabric out of what was a community. I remember growing up there for 22 years. It changed over the 40 years that it was there.

I think we have to do more to encourage landlords to build the type of housing that families can afford. It's going to take some ingenuity on the government's part. You just can't blow it wide open and say, "No more rent control on these units." I understand that it will encourage

people to build units. That will work, but it won't work for a good number of people.

Housing is so important. It's not just for being safe and warm; it's being healthy and being successful at work or in your education. I know that the minister understands those needs. I know that he talked to some of the same people that I talked to in my community, and I really appreciate that very much. But it's a very serious problem because the housing that's being built where that housing was taken down is not even close to being affordable for those families, and not big enough. What do you do if you have a family of five or six or seven children, as a lot of families do that come to this country? Where do they live? If we're only building one- or two-bedroom places that are \$1,800 a month—I know that doesn't sound like much here in Toronto, but in Ottawa, for these families, that's a lot.

I think the minister and the government need to do more to partner with landlords and developers to create that space. I would encourage the minister very much to do that. I think it's needed in communities. There are a lot of other things we can do. There's also partnering with existing providers that are community-based, like Ottawa Community Housing, and working with other partners.

The last thing I'll say is that we're talking a lot about national unity, about the Prime Minister reaching out to the other provinces and being a unifier. It's not what we want as politicians that is going to unify this country; it's what the people we serve want. The thing that keeps people awake at night, or concerns them, are, "Am I going to have a place to live? Is my son or daughter going to have a place to live? Are we going to leave them a clean place? Are we taking care of the environment?"

So, going forward, I would suggest that housing is one of those things. If you want to build national unity, to get governments working together, you need to do that, because that's what's important to people. It's not because it's important to us.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My petition is "Increase Grants Not Loans, Access for All, Protect Student Rights.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

“—provide more grants, not loans;

“—eliminate tuition fees for all students;

“—increase public funding for public education;

“—protect students’ independent voices; and

“—defend the right to organize.”

I completely agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to Alexandra to take to the Clerk.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

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

“Whereas on June 28, 2019, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) stopped enforcing Ontario’s animal welfare laws; and

“Whereas on June 6, 2019, royal assent was given to Bill 117, Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act (Interim Period), 2019, which provides an interim solution to ensure that animals remain protected while the government develops a new permanent animal welfare enforcement model; and

“Whereas the continued protection of animals across this province is an urgent priority to the people of Ontario;

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

“To unanimously support the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act (PAWS Act) so that Ontario’s pets and animals can be protected without delay under a system that establishes the strongest penalties for animal abusers in Canada.”

I am pleased to sign my name to this.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition that’s titled, “Disabilities Do Not End at 18 Years of Age. The Time for Urgent Action Is Now!

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas on their 18th birthday, children living with developmental disabilities are cut off childhood support and services and put on two- to five-year-long wait-lists for adult support and services. There are approximately 14,000 people with developmental disabilities on the Passport wait-list in Ontario;

“Whereas there are approximately 15,000 people living with developmental disabilities on wait-lists for supported housing in Ontario, forcing people with developmental disabilities to wait decades;

“Whereas families are falling apart due to the lack of supports and services for adults with disabilities, due to enormous financial, physical and emotional stress;

“Whereas ODSP forces vulnerable adults with disabilities to live in poverty;

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

“(1) To take immediate action by passing Noah and Gregory’s Law which will ensure people with developmental disabilities and their families can live quality lives by ensuring government support;

“(2) To immediately address and fund solutions for the supported housing crisis in Ontario;

“(3) To increase monthly ODSP for people with disabilities, enabling them to live quality lives.”

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

FOOD SAFETY

Ms. Lindsey Park: I present the following petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, states that ‘every room where food is prepared, processed, packaged, served, transported, manufactured, handled, sold, offered for sale or displayed shall be kept free from live birds or animals’; and

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“Whereas low-risk food premises serving only beverages and/or only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods have for many years in this province allowed customers to be accompanied by their pet dogs for their convenience and social benefit; and

“Whereas the decision whether or not to allow dogs on site should be driven by the business needs of such premises, so long as sanitary and safe conditions are upheld;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create an exception to Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, for low-risk food premises serving only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods, for the benefit of all Ontario pet owners and the businesses that serve them.”

I affix my name to this petition and I hand it to page Clara.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Madame Julie Gionest from Capreol in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

“911 Emergency Response....

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

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

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

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

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

FOOD SAFETY

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, states that ‘every room where food is prepared, processed, packaged, served, transported, manufactured, handled, sold, offered for sale or displayed shall be kept free from live birds or animals’; and

“Whereas low-risk food premises serving only beverages and/or only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods have for many years in this province allowed customers to be accompanied by their pet dogs for their convenience and social benefit; and

“Whereas the decision whether or not to allow dogs on site should be driven by the business needs of such premises, so long as sanitary and safe conditions are upheld;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create an exception to Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, for low-risk food premises serving only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods, for the benefit of all Ontario pet owners and the businesses that serve them.”

I support this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Emily.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Sara Singh: I’m proud to present this petition here today entitled “Support Ontario Families with Autism.” I want to thank all the self-advocates who went out and collected these signatures.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas every child with autism deserves access to sufficient treatment and support so that they can live to their fullest potential;

“Whereas the Ontario Autism Program was badly broken under the Liberals, and the changes introduced by the Conservatives have made it worse;

“Whereas the new funding caps are based on age and income, and not the clinical needs of the child;

“Whereas Ontario needs a true investment in evidence-based autism services that meets the needs of autistic children and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to invest in equitable, needs-based autism services for all children who need them.”

I am proud to sign my name. I support this petition fully, and send this off with page Augustine.

FOOD SAFETY

Mrs. Robin Martin: I present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, states that ‘every room where food is prepared, processed, packaged, served, transported, manufactured, handled, sold, offered for sale or displayed shall be kept free from live birds or animals’; and

“Whereas low-risk food premises serving only beverages and/or only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods have for many years in this province allowed customers to be accompanied by their pet dogs for their convenience and social benefit; and

“Whereas the decision whether or not to allow dogs on site should be driven by the business needs of such premises, so long as sanitary and safe conditions are upheld;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create an exception to Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, for low-risk food premises serving only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods, for the benefit of all Ontario pet owners and the businesses that serve them.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature hereto and hand the petition to page Emily.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario named “Communities, Not Cuts.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I wholeheartedly support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Alexandra to bring to the Clerk.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Eric Lanois from Hanmer in my riding for this petition, which reads as follows:

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

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

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

FOOD SAFETY

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, states that ‘every room where food is prepared, processed, packaged, served, transported, manufactured, handled, sold, offered for sale or displayed shall be kept free from live birds or animals’; and

“Whereas low-risk food premises serving only beverages and/or only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods have for many years in this province allowed customers to be accompanied by their pet dogs for their convenience and social benefit; and

“Whereas the decision whether or not to allow dogs on site should be driven by the business needs of such premises, so long as sanitary and safe conditions are upheld;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create an exception to Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, for low-risk food premises serving only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods, for the benefit of all Ontario pet owners and the businesses that serve them.”

I agree with this petition, affix my name to it and hand it to page Laura.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms. Jill Andrew: This petition is called “Petition to Restore Arts Funding and the Indigenous Culture Fund at the Ontario Arts Council.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has cut its level of base funding to the Ontario Arts Council (OAC) by \$5 million for the 2018-19 fiscal year, from \$69.9 million to \$64.9 million;

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“Whereas the Ontario government has also cut its funding to the Indigenous Culture Fund (ICF) at the OAC by

\$2.25 million for the 2018-19 fiscal year from \$5 million to \$2.75 million;

“Whereas the ICF will not accept new grant applications this year while the program is under review, entailing the layoff of Indigenous staff in permanent positions;...

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

“(a) Restore OAC’s funding ... and maintain this level moving forward;

“(b) Restore the ICF’s funding” and “retain all ICF staff positions, and commit to funding the ICF at this level in the years moving forward.”

I absolutely agree with this petition. I will affix my signature and hand it to page Augustine.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (AIR BRAKE ENDORSEMENTS), 2019

LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (INSCRIPTIONS AUTORISANT L’UTILISATION DES FREINS À AIR COMPRIMÉ)

Mr. Sandhu moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to air brake endorsements / Projet de loi 142, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les inscriptions autorisant l’utilisation des freins à air comprimé.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I’m privileged to have this opportunity to rise today and speak on my private member’s bill that I tabled in this chamber on Monday, November 18. Bill 142, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Air Brake Endorsements), 2019, is an attempt to remove the retest requirement for air brake endorsements in trucking at the time of the renewal of the licence, with the only exception being in cases where drivers allow their licensing to become expired for three or more years.

Speaker, Ontario’s and Canada’s economic strength relies heavily on an efficient, safe, secure and sustainable freight transportation system. Whether it’s moving a load from one end of Canada to the other or cross-border trucking from Canada into the US, the system must provide for the reliable, flexible and economical movement of goods.

Truckload transportation adds to the provincial and national economy by providing jobs for millions of people. While the number of jobs in the trucking industry continues to rise, the key to keeping this interconnected

network in balance is ensuring the capacity for growth and reliability of services.

Financing truck drivers is a growing problem for the industry. According to Stephen Laskowski, president of the Ontario Trucking Association, trucking companies have a shortage of about 20,000 drivers per year in Ontario, and the average age of a truck driver in Canada is over 55 years. In northern Ontario, it is even higher. The situation gets worse when prevailing red tape puts our trucking industry and drivers in a disadvantageous position which is against creating any conducive environment for our businesses and jobs in the province. I'm glad that under the leadership of Premier Ford, my colleague coming from the riding of Brampton South, Mr. Prabmeet Sarkaria, is working hard and aiming at reducing red tape and modernizing regulations in Ontario.

Currently, Ontario requires drivers with an air brake endorsement to take a written knowledge test when renewing their driver's licence in order to renew their air brake endorsement. I, along with the member from Brampton South, did a series of consultations with representatives of the trucking industry in Brampton. During these consultations, people working in the industry were of the opinion that the trucking industry is mired in red tape and regulatory processes that often impede the ability to conduct business.

Based on the concerns raised by the representatives of the trucking industry regarding the air brake endorsement retesting requirement, it appears that other provinces do not have renewal requirements such as written knowledge retesting for drivers at the time of renewal of licence once the air brake endorsement has been obtained.

This issue is not confined to one area or region; this is prevailing across the province. While trying to ensure a higher representation of voices of truck drivers, we tried to seek further feedback in some other ridings. Similar issues were also conveyed in MPP Parm Gill's riding by truck drivers. These are all first-hand experiences that we learned during the process.

Speaker, following research on the renewal requirements for drivers regarding air brake endorsement in Ontario and other Canadian jurisdictions, I was surprised to learn that Ontario is the only jurisdiction that requires drivers with an air brake endorsement to take a written knowledge test when renewing their driver's licence in order to renew their air brake endorsement. The requirement of written air brake endorsement tests at the time of the renewal of the licence is not existing in British Columbia. It is also not existing in Alberta, nor in Saskatchewan, nor in Manitoba, nor in Quebec, nor in New Brunswick, nor in Prince Edward Island—just to name a few. In all these provinces and jurisdictions, the driver would generally be required to retest for the air brake endorsement only if they allow their licensing to become expired beyond a set period of time.

Speaker, through you, I am going to mention something very important now. As a responsible government, the safety of people, highways and roads remain paramount to us. In order to ensure it does not have any impact over the

road safety, inquiries were made in order to clarify whether the new requirement for a written knowledge test is based on any of the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators's—CCMTA—National Safety Code standards or other best practices related to driver and road safety.

I would like to take this opportunity to briefly explain to the members about the mandate and scope of the work of the CCMTA, which is the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators. CCMTA is an agency that provides advice and makes recommendations on matters relating to transportation and highway safety. The CCMTA's board of directors consists of representatives from each of Canada's 14 provincial, federal, and municipal governments. Each representative is appointed from government departments, commissions, agencies or crown corporations responsible for the administration, regulation, or control of transportation and highway safety.

Speaker, it is important for us to note that while not based on any CCMTA safety standard, it was found that the requirement for drivers with an air brake endorsement to pass a written knowledge test when renewing their driver's licence in order to renew the air brake endorsement has been long-standing in Ontario. It is also to be noted that a practice that does not need a retest for air brake endorsement has been prevailing in other jurisdictions, and there's no empirical evidence to suggest this leading to any threat over highway or road safety in those provinces in Canada. As suggested by CCMTA and other highway safety research organizations, the sooner we get rid of such red tape, the better.

Today, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Minister Caroline Mulroney and her team for acknowledging the issue and for their prompt and continued support to the truck drivers and the trucking industry in Ontario.

Such red tape with time-intensive requirements keeps vehicles off the roads and prevents drivers from delivering their loads. The impact of reduced trucks on the street due to such red tape imposed on the trucking industry impacts truckers and everyone else who works in the industry. Fewer trucks on the street prevents retailers and others that rely on ground transportation from getting their deliveries on time, which in turn affects consumer spending and the economy in Ontario. Such red tape can absolutely be avoided, especially when the drivers trained on air brakes are not allowed to touch or adjust the air brakes even if it is needed.

People in Ontario expect their government to work for them and not the other way around. Ontarians have asked the government to invest in them, in their communities and in the economy to create jobs and build a better future for our children and future generations. As a government, we remain committed to reducing red tape to help lower costs and make it easier to start and grow a business in Ontario. This was the reason I am putting forward my bill to remove the retest requirement for air brake endorsements, with the only exception in the cases where drivers allow their licensing to become expired for three years or more.

Our approach is to give all Ontarians a real chance at success, and we will continue to support and reward the

people who contribute to make Ontario a better place to live and succeed by removing unnecessary hassles blocking their path, without compromising on the safety of the people. In Ontario, we believe in celebrating our collective growth and development, rather than protecting the interests of a privileged few.

1400

Speaker, we should be mindful of the fact that the greater Toronto area is the largest trucking hub in the entirety of North America, and a sizable percentage of population residing in Brampton and the greater Toronto area is associated directly or indirectly with trucking and cargo businesses. Removing this red tape would be another step to modernize and streamline regulations, updating old requirements and simplifying complicated rules.

We're committed to delivering on our plan for the people by working on the priorities that matter to the people of Ontario. A strong Ontario makes a strong Canada, and a strong Brampton and a strong GTA make a strong Ontario. The message is clear: Ontario is open for jobs and open for business.

Speaker, red tape causes frustration, delays and complication in everyday life. We're working to make life better for people and to remove regulatory roadblocks for businesses and reduce their cost of operations. We are aware that Ontario's economic competitiveness is highly dependent on the trucking industry as the dominant mode of freight transportation in the province. Removing this red tape would be a positive step in providing a conducive environment for the trucking industry, which is already struggling with a shortage of drivers in the workforce.

I will reiterate, Speaker: We want to give Ontarians the tools and necessary resources to live well, create better jobs and grow the economy. In just 17 months, we have done a lot together, and there's much more to do. With a focus to remove red tape, the future of Ontarians is looking brighter than ever, and, by working together, we will ensure that our people in Ontario have every opportunity to succeed and every opportunity to build their future and a beautiful society we can all be proud of.

Today, we have two options to choose from. Today, we have a choice to make. We can either choose to stand with red tape-ism in Ontario, or we can choose to stand with the truck drivers and the trucking industry in the province. Through you, Speaker, I would urge all honourable legislators present here this afternoon to choose to stand with truck drivers and the trucking industry and join me in supporting Bill 142, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2019, and support all truck drivers in Brampton, the greater Toronto area and across the province, because a strong trucking industry means a strong economy and a strong Ontario.

As a representative of the great riding of Brampton West, today I'm proud to be standing with the truck drivers in Brampton and across Ontario, and standing for what matters to them: to work, succeed and live a better life.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Before I call for further debate, a reminder to all members:

You must refer to members by their titles or ministry, not by their personal names. All members have been reminded.

Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Bill 142, the air brake endorsements: I'm going to talk a little bit about it, some of the licensing requirements as well as some of our recommendations here with the NDP.

First of all, Bill 142 would amend section 32 of the Highway Traffic Act. It provides that a person who holds a driver's licence with an air brake endorsement would not be required to retake any examinations with respect to the endorsement when they need to renew their driver's licence. In addition, if a person has held a valid driver's licence with an air brake endorsement within the last three years, such person who applies for an air brake endorsement would not have to retake the examination. This is what this is all about.

The air brake endorsement licensing—let's go through that. In Ontario, most large commercial vehicles are equipped with an air brake system. You must have an air brake endorsement on your driver's licence to drive these vehicles. Anyone who drives a vehicle fitted with an air brake system or an air-over-hydraulic brake system is required to have a Z endorsement on their driver's licence. The licensing process includes a written knowledge test and a practical test. A written knowledge test costs \$16, and the practical test costs \$50.

The current licensing renewal process: How does that work? Right now, when a commercial driver needs to renew their driver's licence, they are required to retake their air brake endorsement knowledge test portion of the licensing process in order to maintain the Z endorsement on their driver's licence. This additional test can be burdensome, as we've just heard from the member from Brampton West, especially since commercial drivers must already pass a written test and a vision test when they renew their regular commercial driver's licence every five years. The bill will remove the Z endorsement renewal requirement. This will save drivers the additional fee of the knowledge test and will save them the time and hassle of finding a DriveTest centre that offers the service, booking the appointment, and retaking the knowledge test. Z endorsement testing is available at around 75% of DriveTest centres in Ontario. Some may have to travel a fair distance if the service is not offered in their area.

Some of the recommendations that we have in the NDP: We believe in evidence-based actions to reduce burdens on Ontario truck drivers while maintaining high safety standards. We understand the importance of ensuring that operators have the skills they need to do their jobs and keep our roads safe. According to the preliminary 2018 Ontario Road Safety Annual Report, large trucks were involved in 16.1% of fatal collisions in Ontario, resulting in 93 fatalities. If we're going to allow drivers to maintain their Z endorsement without retaking the knowledge test, we need to ensure that they are properly trained and tested in order to maintain their licences.

I'm just going to skip ahead because I have a lot of information here.

This government needs to get their priorities in order. We'll look at winter road safety. As we head into the winter season, we also need to make sure that our roads that we drive on are safe. Our member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay and other northern riding members have mentioned that this government refuses to support our bill to provide the safer road conditions they so desperately need as we head into another winter season. So their priorities are a little bit skewed.

Another thing is, of course, insurance. A lot of truck drivers pay high insurance. This government is not doing anything to lower the insurance rates.

So there are a couple of things we need to clarify with this government before we, obviously, support this endorsement.

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

Mr. Parm Gill: I appreciate the opportunity to be able to rise in this House and represent my constituents in the great riding of Milton. First and foremost, let me thank the member from Brampton West for introducing this piece of legislation. Reducing red tape and trying to help businesses right across this province is, of course, a very important part of our mandate and is something that our government has been focused on. This really addresses the issue that has been brought to my attention in my riding of Milton. Of course, I know that many of my colleagues in this House have heard it loud and clear in terms of the hardship and the unnecessary delays that this causes.

The transportation industry in the province of Ontario is a huge part of our economy. It is no secret, Madam Speaker. Some of the stats are absolutely mind-boggling: We have, on average, 200,000 trucks on provincial roads each and every day; seven million trucks cross the Ontario-US border every year; and 90% of consumer goods and food in Ontario is shipped by truck. As a matter of fact, I can't really think of anything that is not shipped by truck. I remember that a few years ago I was driving on Highway 401 and I saw a sticker and a picture of a baby on the back of the truck. It said, "The only item that's not delivered by truck." It just kind of goes to show you the importance of the trucking industry and the individuals that are employed in the trucking industry and the contribution that they make towards our economy.

So addressing the air brake endorsement which each driver has to go through every time they need to renew their driver's licence every five years—we feel it's unnecessary red tape that they need to go through every five years when they're renewing. As my colleague pointed out, CCMTA, which is the agency that addresses a lot of safety issues and is, of course, in favour of this piece of legislation, has clearly said that the current air brake endorsement that's in place, that the drivers are required to go through, does nothing from a safety perspective. It is completely unnecessary.

1410

If we can help more drivers be on the road—if they're not with their families, if they're not doing anything else on a personal level—instead of having to spend time at a

driver testing facility, sitting—we all know the wait times. Sometimes you go and you have to sit there, you have to take a number, you have to wait for your turn, you've got to go through the testing and then obviously hope that you pass the test and you don't have to spend lots of time preparing before you're going for the test, either.

This is very important. I can tell you, in my great riding of Milton, the transportation industry is a huge part of the employment force. As a matter of fact, three of the top five largest employers in Milton are in the logistics/distribution companies; to name them, Gordon Food Service, Sobeys distribution, and DSV Logistics. They employ a lot of people in the transportation industry. Those are the top three, but there are many other great companies that serve our economy and serve our little town of Milton in the transportation industry, and they continue to do a tremendous job in terms of creating jobs.

We also as a government have introduced a number of different pieces of legislation, including Bill 132, which was introduced by my colleague from Brampton South. That was a tremendous piece of legislation, once again, in terms of helping Ontarians, helping small businesses succeed and prosper.

I know we're running out of time, Madam Speaker. I can go on and on. I will stop with that. Thank you very much, and I appreciate the opportunity once again.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always a pleasure to stand in the House, especially when I get up and I look over and I see the Rev. Dr. Cheri DiNovo here, who spent 15 years as the member for Parkdale—High Park. Welcome back to your House, Cheri. Thank you.

As you know, Speaker, Windsor is the busiest border crossing in all of Canada. We have the privately owned Ambassador Bridge and the municipally owned tunnel between Windsor and Detroit, as well as a railway tunnel for freight cars. We're in the final stages of planning a new international border crossing—another bridge—down-river from the existing Ambassador Bridge.

When it comes to trucks, depending on the day of the week and just-in-time delivery, especially in the automotive industry, between 8,000 and 10,000 trucks a day drive over the Ambassador Bridge. It's a lot of trucks and, of course, a lot of truck drivers, many of whom come from Brampton: drivers who have to apply their brakes a lot. Over the course of a year, one quarter of the \$700 billion in international trade between Canada and the United States crosses this bridge. That's more than \$300 million worth of goods each and every day of the year.

Ontario built a highway up to the point where the new bridge will be built. It's called the Herb Gray Parkway, and it is a marvelous piece of infrastructure. It's designed to get the trucks off our city streets, Speaker. Between Montreal and the Mexican border—you may know this—there are 18 traffic lights, and they're all in the city of Windsor. When the new bridge is built, those truck drivers will have a real option, and it won't involve braking or stopping at red lights or running yellow ones.

The bill is of concern to all of the men and women who earn a living driving through my community hauling freight across the border. I agree with my friend from Brampton West: This bill is designed to cut red tape, and also it was put there by the cunning ways in which the previous Liberal government turned an attack on taxpayers into a cash grab as they struggled to balance their books to pay for all the overspending and scandals the Liberals became mired in. You shouldn't be taxed and made to pay for taking a test you've already taken and passed with flying colours, just as the Liberals taxed us on so many things to boost their treasury.

Truck drivers are being beat up as it is when it comes to their insurance rates—especially truck drivers in Brampton. There's a bias against their postal code. We in the NDP have been talking about that long before I arrived here six and a half years ago. Speaker, 40%: That's how much rates for insurance in the commercial trucking industry have gone up over the past two years.

Drivers who haul aggregates have been dropped. Many of them have lost their ability to get insurance unless they have three years of driving experience. How do you get three years of driving experience when you can't get insurance? How does someone get a foothold into the industry? How can you possibly overcome that criterion? We all need aggregates. We need to build new infrastructure and we need to repair our roads and highways. Why do we punish those who drive the aggregates to the job site from the quarry or the storage yard?

This proposed bill could have been improved had the sponsor included language to tackle the horrendous problem of rising insurance rates in the trucking industry. Don't get me wrong, Speaker; this bill is worthy of support at this stage of the process. We'll need to hear more from the safety experts, of course, and more representatives from the trucking industry to get their take on what's being proposed, but, on the surface, it appears that it will take care of the Liberal cash grab wrapped up in a bundle of red tape. I congratulate my friend from Brampton West for bringing it forward.

Truck drivers work hard and they keep our commerce flowing. We shouldn't be throwing roadblocks in their way. We shouldn't be overcharging them for the cost of doing business. We should be streamlining the rules and regulations, always keeping safety at the top of mind.

As I say, for the past 10 years, New Democrats have been arguing for lower insurance rates, especially in the Brampton area.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I'm very happy to speak to this private member's bill that has been brought forward by my colleague from Brampton West. I have to say, in the past couple of days I've heard so many positive comments from the hard-working truck drivers across the province. So I really want to take an opportunity to thank the member from Brampton West, who has done an excellent job reaching out to various industries and then focusing on truck driving and truck drivers specifically.

I really want to highlight the fact that our government has been committed to reducing burdens across various sectors. I had the opportunity to specifically focus on red tape reduction, but it's about making common-sense regulatory changes that will have an impact across the province and don't compromise public health, safety or the environment. Specifically, in this case, this is a burden on professional truck drivers and it has absolutely nothing to do with safety.

For example, for those who might be watching, a truck driver will basically have to do their G1 every five years—the only province in all of Canada that forces truck drivers to do this, although we have one of the strongest training programs across all of Canada. We are leaders in truck safety; we are leaders in road safety. When we are forcing truck drivers to routinely get this G1 test done every five years, we're taking truck drivers off the road and we are taking individuals away from their jobs when there's absolutely no support to say that it's increasing safety. Across the country, no one else has adopted this type of model. There have been no proven statistics to show that this has helped in any way.

Specifically, when we're talking about the air brake endorsement, you're not even allowed as a truck driver to touch the air brake endorsement. As truck drivers and as individuals we have the opportunity to go through the extensive process of training, there shouldn't be another onerous requirement singling out truck drivers who are moving goods across our economy, across this province, working 14 or 15 hours a day to provide for their families—to really force them to do an extra step like this.

I want to take an opportunity to commend my colleague in Brampton West. I know that the truck drivers have been petitioning governments for years to get this removed, because they recognize the burden that this puts on them and recognize the fact that this has absolutely nothing to do with safety.

That is exactly what our government is really wanting to do: make life easier for businesses, for the hard-working people across this province, and really give back and make sure Ontario is open for business, open for jobs and allow hard-working Ontarians and hard-working job creators in the province to do what they do best, which is create opportunities.

1420

I'm so happy to be able to speak to this and to support truck drivers, whom I have a great admiration for, especially because in Peel region, where I'm from, Brampton is a logistics hub, a trucking hub across North America. So any time we can support our truck drivers, hard-working Ontarians, I'm happy to do it.

Thank you, once again, to the member for Brampton West for his leadership in starting the process on this very important piece of legislation.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: It's an honour to rise and speak on our member from Brampton West's bill, Bill 142, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act. As we've heard from

many of the speakers earlier—the member from Brampton West, the member from Milton, the member from Brampton North, the member from Windsor—Tecumseh and the member from Brampton South—I think we've all acknowledged the importance of the trucking industry and transportation and logistics in our community of Peel, specifically in Brampton, where we know that it's home to a very large community in the trucking industry.

In Peel region, for example, we have 86,000-plus businesses of all sizes, ranging from small family trucking companies to Canadian National Railway and Canadian Pacific Railway, that all operate out of our community. They move approximately \$1.8 billion in goods across the region and through the province, and I think that's a significant contribution.

I want to commend the member from Brampton West for bringing forward this motion to address a problem that is present in terms of the constant applications that trucking folks have to go through in order to have their licences renewed. But as we've heard from many of the members, while this is commendable, there are still a number of issues that are present within the commercial trucking industry that are not being addressed by this government.

Just last week, we saw that a bill that was brought forward by our member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay to address issues on Highways 11 and 17, where we know goods are routinely moved nationally throughout Canada from Brampton up into the north—those highways are death traps. It was unfortunate to see that this government didn't support highway safety in that respect but is trying to do something else here.

As we heard from some of the members, commercial insurance rates for truckers are astronomical, in some instances increasing 40% or more without notice for those business owners. So when we talk about reducing red tape or making life more affordable, I think those are also priorities that this government needs to be looking at for that industry in order to ensure that they can continue to move goods across this province and across this country in a timely and affordable fashion.

We're also very disappointed that this bill doesn't really address any of the other rising costs that the trucking industry may be experiencing. We know that this government campaigned on helping to reduce the price of gas, for example—and in fact, we've seen the opposite happen. Those costs have gone up for the industry.

This is a step in the right direction, but at the same time we're looking forward to hearing what industry experts, drivers and other safety professionals have to say about this bill and its implications.

I also want to highlight that we have a number of new drivers entering the industry, and regulations like this are important to ensure that they are safely trained, that they do meet the safety requirements when they're out on the road. We've been hearing from a number of people across the province who have a lot of concerns with respect to the safety of those drivers.

I just want to encourage this government to think about the scope of this piece of legislation that they've put

forward. While it does address one aspect of a problem for the industry, I think we need to look at being a little bit more broad in addressing the overall affordability issue.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: It is my absolute pleasure to rise today to speak to this piece of proposed legislation, Bill 142, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Air Brake Endorsements).

This private member's bill was introduced in the Legislature by my friend and colleague the member from Brampton West. I know how important this bill is to the member from Brampton West, as in his riding approximately 60% of the residents are associated either directly or indirectly with the trucking industry. This represents a huge portion of his constituents, and if this House can do something to help them with their everyday lives and employment situations, that would make a meaningful difference to them and their families.

In Ontario, all class AZ, BZ, CZ, DZ, EZ, FZ and GZ licence holders are required to satisfy the air brake endorsement knowledge test prior to renewing their licence, which they must do every five years to remain valid. Of course, they also undertake this same requirement plus a practical test when first applying for one of those Z endorsements I mentioned previously.

What this bill will do, if passed, would be to cut through the red tape and save time for Ontario's commercial truck drivers by removing that requirement to pass a knowledge test on air brake endorsements every time they renew their licence.

Currently, Ontario is the only North American jurisdiction that requires commercial licence holders to complete knowledge testing before renewing their licence. In every other province and state, there's no such requirement.

Madam Speaker, I believe this gets to the heart of what our government's mandate from the people of the province is. Red tape reduction is at the core of our mission, and I know that the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction has been laser-focused on his mandate to reduce red tape and unnecessary regulation. I believe this proposed legislation from the member from Brampton West goes right to the core of our colleague's mission.

I recognize that safety is the most important aspect of our roads, and we must always keep that in mind when proposing new legislation, regulations or red tape reduction surrounding transportation matters. In this case, it seems that there are no tangible safety concerns. Research does not provide evidence of a correlation between this retesting and road safety. And let me repeat myself: Every other jurisdiction in North America does not require this retesting.

Before I finish my time, I would like to thank the member from Brampton West for bringing forward this piece of proposed legislation, as it fits with the mandate of our government and our mission to make life easier and more affordable for families and businesses throughout the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Brampton West has two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: First of all, I want to thank and recognize all the members who participated in this debate: the member from Brampton North, the member from Milton, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, the member from Brampton South, the member from Brampton Centre and the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park.

Madam Speaker, it does not make any sense that—a requirement that is not prevailing in any other province in Canada and which is also not based on any Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators safety standard is certainly red tape. We already know that CCMTA has a mandate to provide advice and make recommendations on matters relating to transportation and highway safety, and it consists of a representative from each of Canada's 14 provincial, federal and territorial governments. These representatives are appointed from government departments, commissions, agencies or crown corporations responsible for the administration, regulation or control of transportation and highway safety. We should remove red tape like this without compromising the safety of people in Ontario—the sooner, the better.

I would reiterate that none of the experts on road and highway safety have suggested that removing the retest requirement for air brakes—as it is already in other jurisdictions—has adversely affected road safety.

Thank you to all the members for your support. Today I'm proud to be standing with the truck drivers in Brampton and across Ontario, and I decide to stand against red tape in Ontario.

DEFIBRILLATOR REGISTRATION
AND PUBLIC ACCESS ACT, 2019
LOI DE 2019 SUR L'ACCÈS PUBLIC
AUX DÉFIBRILLATEURS
ET LEUR ENREGISTREMENT

Mrs. Martin moved second reading of the following bill:

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

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

1430

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'm very pleased to rise today in this Legislature to speak on my first private member's bill, Bill 141, the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act. I had to wait until almost every other member in this House had brought forward their own bills before my turn came, but I'm certainly delighted that it has finally arrived and that I'm able to bring forward this bill to improve defibrillator availability—a bill that I'm convinced will make an important difference in the lives of Ontario's residents, which is the reason, I believe, that we all wanted to get elected in the first place. This bill will literally save lives.

Although none of my colleagues have yet brought forward for debate in this sitting such a bill to improve access to defibrillators, I know from discussions with colleagues and stakeholders that there is broad support for the concepts of defibrillator access, registration and availability on all sides of this House. I hope we will be able to find common ground today by sending this bill to committee.

I want to start my remarks today by expressing my gratitude to a few people. I would like to start by thanking my friend Roberta Scott, a retired paramedic, who first brought this issue to my attention. Roberta then brought in a group called Cardiac Arrest Response and Education, or CARE—some of whom are here today—which she is on the board of. In particular, she brought in Dr. Paul Dorian and Dr. Katherine Allan from St. Michael's Hospital as well as Peel region paramedic John Snobelen. Together, they gave us a very comprehensive presentation on the issue, including what other jurisdictions are doing and in particular the legislative framework currently used in the province of Manitoba, which I looked at as a model for the legislation that we are debating today. I would like to thank the members of CARE and Heart and Stroke who joined me this morning for a press conference and some of whom are here today.

As I said, this bill is about saving lives, ensuring that those Ontarians facing a sudden cardiac arrest, which is a sudden stoppage of the heart due to an abnormal heart rhythm, have the best chance to live and the best possible hope for a full recovery. To put it simply, defibrillators save lives.

In the province of Ontario, we know there are 7,000 cases of sudden cardiac arrest each year. In the city of Toronto alone, there are 500 or more per year that occur in a public place. Overall, 85% of cardiac arrests happen outside of hospital. The most effective treatment is a life-saving electrical shock from a defibrillator, administered along with CPR. But, as everyone knows, in the case of a sudden cardiac arrest, time is of the essence. For every minute lost without medical intervention, the survival rate drops between 7% and 10%. Often when there is a sudden cardiac arrest, 911 is called and the paramedics will arrive on the scene. Unfortunately, despite the heroic efforts of our first responders, it's often too late to help someone or to ensure a good outcome by the time the paramedics arrive. The survival rate is 10%. Clearly, that is not a great rate of survival. But if a bystander is there and applies a defibrillator within minutes, the victim can be saved in more than 50% of cases.

Unfortunately, automated external defibrillators are seldom used—in about 3% of cases, to be exact, not only because there aren't enough of them but often because bystanders do not know where they are, cannot find them or they're just not easily accessible. One of the best ways we can fix this problem is to connect 911 dispatchers with a registry that would allow them to guide members of the public to the closest accessible defibrillator.

Although there are an estimated 20,000 or more defibrillators in the greater Toronto area alone, only about

1,500 of them are currently registered with the existing provincial registry of publicly funded defibrillators or with local paramedic services. The fact is, these defibrillators are already out there. As I said, there are an estimated 20,000 in the greater Toronto area alone and even more across the province. But registration is just one component of this bill—admittedly, in my view, one of the most important ones. But there are other steps that we can also take.

This legislation also introduces mandatory accessibility inspection and maintenance requirements for the owners of automated external defibrillators located in public places. The reason for these requirements, like the registry, is really quite simple: In order to save a life, a defibrillator must be accessible, it must be functional and it must be maintained.

Let's start with accessibility. When a sudden cardiac arrest strikes, time is of the essence. Every minute spent looking for a defibrillator is a minute lost. It's great to have a defibrillator in a public space, but if it can't be quickly accessed, it can't be relied on in an emergency. Now, we're lucky that most defibrillator owners in the province of Ontario already understand this. Many are installed in prominent locations with clear signage and easy instructions to be followed in the case of an emergency. But some are kept behind a security desk, in a management office or elsewhere under lock and key. Many defibrillator owners who do this think they're doing the right thing, ensuring that these aren't vandalized or damaged, but the issue with this sort of installation is, what happens if the security guard is occupied or nobody's in the management office to unlock it when the cardiac arrest occurs? The simple fact is, if a defibrillator is locked up, is behind a counter or in an office, it cannot save a life. As I said earlier in my remarks, every minute lost trying to get access to a locked-up defibrillator is a 7% to 10% drop in survival rates. This bill sets out clear signage requirements and ensures defibrillators are installed in accessible locations so they can be quickly accessed in an emergency.

And it's true that there are some places that probably should have defibrillators installed that don't currently have them. This legislation also gives the Minister of Health authority to designate types of public premises where the owner of the facility would be required to install an automated external defibrillator. I don't want to make any assumptions on what decisions the government, current or future, would make with that authority, but I do think it is an important tool for the minister to have, particularly for locations where sudden cardiac arrests are known to occur—locations like fitness centres, hockey arenas or school gymnasiums.

But don't take my word for it. I want to quote Dr. Anthony Graham, who, among many other roles, is the medical director of the Robert McRae heart health unit at St. Michael's Hospital. In a statement on this legislation, he said, "As a cardiologist, I have worked for many years to ensure AEDs are as publicly accessible as possible because the chances of survival double when an AED and CPR are used within the first few minutes after a cardiac

arrest. Registering and maintaining AEDs in this province will save lives. This legislation is a significant step forward and I encourage all MPPs to support it."

Or the words of Avril Goffredo, who is the executive vice-president, Ontario and Nunavut, for Heart and Stroke, who said, "Heart and Stroke strongly supports the creation of an AED registry integrated with 911 in Ontario. A survey we commissioned in September showed that more than 90% of Ontarians do as well. We are very excited about this legislation and to work with the government of Ontario to support this critically important initiative once it is passed."

On that note, Madam Speaker, I would like to close my remarks today by recounting the story of William Jones, who joined me earlier today at Queen's Park, where we held a press conference to discuss this proposed legislation. Many of you may have met him when Heart and Stroke had their day here as well, because I know he was at that event.

In 2004, Will was a high school athlete in Toronto. He was 17 years old. He was in the classroom and suffered a sudden and unexplained cardiac arrest. Within a minute, his teachers began to apply CPR and firefighters arrived with an automated external defibrillator. Will credits this quick response with saving his life. Since that time, Will has attended university, started a career, married and become a father.

1440

Applause.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Yes, it's something to cheer for.

Will has also become an advocate for improving community access to defibrillators. He is a living example of what is possible with a quick response to cardiac arrest. He said it best today when he said, "Implementing legislation that improves community access to functional AEDs will save more lives from the uncompromising effects of sudden cardiac death."

As Will also pointed out this morning, while we have mentioned some significant numbers, like going from a survival rate of 10% to 50%, or having 20,000 defibrillators registered as opposed to 1,500, this is really not about the numbers, as we all know. It's about saving people—saving fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters.

I want to thank Will for his advocacy, and I want to thank CARE and all the other stakeholders who worked with me on this important legislation, including Heart and Stroke and Liz Scanlon and Orli Joseph from that organization. Without your input, your suggestions and your assistance, this bill would not have made it to the floor of the House today.

To my colleagues on all sides of this House: I'm sure you'll agree with me that a 50% survival rate sounds much better than 10%, and I hope that we can work together to make that a reality. I look forward to your comments during the debate.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to congratulate the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. As she said, she has been waiting for her opportunity to present her first private member’s bill. It’s a very good initiative, because as she said, it’s about saving lives. Anything we can do, especially in this Legislature, to save lives is extremely important. That leads me to think of topics we’ve discussed in the Legislature that we need to pay a lot of attention to—things like the opioid crisis and people going to the ER and getting help and having those wait times.

This is an initiative that is going to have an impact. Having a registry is a good idea. These machines are everywhere in Ontario, but there is no convenient or exhaustive list that the public and first responders can check quickly. So it’s a good thing that we have come up with this registry in order to coordinate that service that can help people save lives.

I’m going to start with a little bit about a story in London, actually, maybe about 20 years ago, so it’s a while. A city councillor I was very close to got a call from a constituent saying that her father had to wait for an ambulance above and beyond the normal time of an ambulance responder—because sometimes ambulances are pulled in many different directions. Luckily, her father did get to the hospital, but time was of the essence, and if it came a little earlier the results could have been better. She and the city councillor talked about the situation and how to improve it. He thought of an idea, about having—ambulances had defibrillators back in the day—fire trucks have defibrillators, so that if ambulances weren’t available, you could deploy a fire truck and they would be able to administer the defibrillator. He pushed really hard, and sure enough, defibrillators are on fire trucks.

When I met with the Heart and Stroke Foundation, they knew a little about that history. That special city councillor is my husband, Bill Armstrong. That was one of the great things he did as a representative of the city of London.

What is in this bill? There are some good pieces here. Of course, there are some requirements about the installation, access and maintenance. That’s important—also, the registration of a defibrillator. The inspection is also very important—putting in the defibrillator and making sure it’s maintained and there to be used when it’s needed. They also went a little bit further about offences and penalties. You’ve covered it very well, so congratulations on that.

France Gélinas—and I have to also give her some credit, because France did one of our—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I’m sorry to interrupt the member.

I will remind everyone to please refer to members by their titles or ridings. Thank you.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My apologies. The member from Nickel Belt, our health care critic, also put a bill forward. It’s Bill 140, and the title is the Defibrillator Registry Act. It’s a little different from the member for Eglinton–Lawrence’s bill. It speaks directly to the registries used by 911 callers and dispatchers. It’s something that we all acknowledge needs to be done. It’s very important.

I also want to talk a little bit about defibrillators, because when I was reading this, I thought, where did defibrillators come from, and how long have they been around? I did a little research; Google is a great resource. Of course, we all know that defibrillators basically deliver an electric shock to the chest and to the heart. They cause the muscles to be re-established in a normal conduction of the heart’s electrical impulse. That’s what it does. It stimulates the heart back into action.

But how old is the defibrillator? I found out that around the 20th century, cardiac arrest became a leading cause of death, and it’s still one of the highest leading causes of death. Innovators had touched on the idea of using electric shock to restart the heart or to correct a heartbeat beginning back in the late 1800s. So that’s quite a history, I thought.

The first heart surgeon: There was a pioneer called Claude Beck. Dr. Beck performed the first successful defibrillation on a 14-year-old boy experiencing ventricular fibrillation during one of his surgeries. So that was one of the first times that we actually saw the success of that happening.

The one that we’re seeing now, the AED that’s in place now—the modern one we saw was in 1978. So that is how it kind of came to be—there’s a little bit in between, but I only have so much time.

There is a history of AED devices that, of course, are successful in saving lives. Do we need to coordinate the defibrillators around Ontario to make sure that we can strengthen the use of them and the impact they have and the outcome? Absolutely. Will the registry be something that can facilitate that outcome? I believe it will.

I want to encourage this Legislature and the government to continue to bring private members’ bills in this fashion that really are going to make a difference to people’s lives. This is a good bill, and it is going to save lives. I just want to say that having this bill come forward is a wonderful idea, and I hope that it can pass and make a difference in people’s lives.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I rise today in support of my friend and colleague the member for Eglinton–Lawrence’s bill to establish a publicly accessible AED registry.

This bill focuses on the automated emergency defibrillator, AED, or, en français, “défibrillateur externe automatique.” Ontarians may have noticed that these devices have been popping up all around in public spaces such as sporting arenas, malls, community spaces, even churches and other places of worship. AEDs are becoming an increasingly common sight. Some may ask, what do these devices do and when are they used? These devices are attached to the chest of a victim experiencing a cardiac event. The machine analyzes the patient’s pulse for an irregular heartbeat, and if the machine determines that it is needed, it will deliver an electrical jolt which can shock the heart back into a normal rhythm.

La fondation des maladies du coeur estime qu’avec l’utilisation du DEA et de la RCP, les chances de survie

peuvent augmenter jusqu'à 75 %. Je veux que nous réfléchissions tous aux avantages de l'utilisation des DEA avec la RCP. Avec l'usage de ce dispositif, notre famille, nos amis et nos voisins ont une plus grande chance de survivre une crise cardiaque. C'est pourquoi un registre public de DEA est si important. Comment est-ce que les premiers intervenants ou secouristes peuvent-ils réagir rapidement sans savoir quels outils ils ont à leur disposition ni où les retrouver? Ce projet de loi créera un registre central afin que, en cas d'urgence, le service d'urgence 911 puisse indiquer l'emplacement d'un DEA aux premiers secouristes qui sont déjà sur place.

According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, up to 40,000 cardiac arrests occur each year across Canada, and as I've heard, 7,000 in Ontario result in death. That's one cardiac arrest every 12 minutes. Without CPR and access to an AED, many of these cardiac arrests will result in death. Thousands of lives could be saved through public access to automated external defibrillators.

1450

The Heart and Stroke Foundation also estimates that for every one-minute delay in defibrillation, the survival rate of a cardiac arrest victim decreases by 7% to 10%. After more than 12 minutes of ventricular fibrillation, which is when the heart quivers instead of pumping due to disorganized electrical activity, the survival rate is less than 5%. The question this poses is: How hard should it be to find an AED when every single second counts? The establishment of a public AED registry will help save time when it matters most, and therefore save lives.

Ce projet de loi stipule également que les DEA doivent être accessibles au public avec une signalisation uniforme utilisée dans toute la province. Ceci permettra de les localiser rapidement, ce qui est crucial quand un délai de quelques secondes pourrait être fatal. Ce projet de loi exige aussi que les DEA soient maintenus en état de fonctionnement, afin qu'ils ne tombent pas en panne en cas de besoin.

Il est clair que la RCP et les DEA peuvent être essentiels pour sauver une vie. Alors, que pouvons-nous faire pour nous renseigner sur ces outils? D'abord, tout le monde devrait chercher et recevoir une formation sur la façon de livrer la RCP. L'autre facteur important est que les Ontariennes et les Ontariens devraient prendre conscience de la localisation d'un DEA près d'où ils vivent et travaillent. Juste comme référence, madame la Présidente, et pour tous mes collègues aujourd'hui, le DEA le plus proche est juste à l'extérieur de la Chambre législative, à la droite. Ceci sont les raisons pour lesquelles la création d'un registre public de DEA est si importante.

Ce projet de loi permet aussi à la ministre de la Santé de désigner l'endroit où un DEA doit être installé. En plaçant ces dispositifs dans les écoles, des complexes sportifs et d'autres centres publics, la ministre peut protéger de manière proactive les Ontariens et Ontariennes, n'importe où ils vivent ou travaillent.

This bill goes hand in hand with motion 83, which was moved by my friend the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and passed a few weeks ago with the

unanimous support of the House. Increasing awareness and continuing to teach high school students how to deliver CPR as well as how to use an AED, along with a public AED registry, will allow a new generation of Ontarians to protect the lives of people whom they care the most about.

This bill will make AEDs easier to find through a public registry and will mandate easy accessibility and consistent signage. This bill will also make AEDs more reliable by mandating their upkeep. Finally, this bill would allow the minister to mandate the installation of these devices in some key public locations where they can do the most good. Let me be clear: Knowledge of how to deliver CPR and how to use an AED saves lives.

This bill is in the same spirit as my own private member's bill, which I was proud to introduce a few months ago, which was on mandatory naloxone training for all police officers and special constables. Saving human lives is a non-partisan issue. It is a human issue. I'm so thrilled to see that we can work collaboratively with all members of this House for issues that matter the most, such as saving the lives of all Ontarians.

I would like to congratulate my good friend the PA to our wonderful Minister of Health for putting forward this bill. I hope to see all members of this House supporting her great work.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to rise in this House, and today to speak on Bill 141, the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act.

I would like to commend the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for bringing this act forward and doing a very good job at explaining the purpose and explaining how it would work. I listened specifically, intently. Time is of the essence. I, too, have been lobbied, even before the member from Eglinton–Lawrence was here, by the Heart and Stroke Foundation. I'd like to commend them for their work, and for all the people here.

But I am going to be pretty direct, and I have a question. This could be enacted already by a majority government. This is a good idea. This is a fantastic idea. It just makes sense. We have the defibrillators out there, and nobody knows where most of them are. This makes sense. The government has passed lots of regulations, has done lots of things in the last year and so many months. This is probably the least controversial, and it could just be done.

Again, I commend the member. I commend the member from Mississauga Centre. In her speech she said thousands of lives could be saved. Some of those lives could have been saved already. We don't know why the Liberal government didn't do it. You've had a year and a half, and you haven't done it either. That's the question. We are all in favour—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Sorry to interrupt the member. Stop the clock. Please address your marks to and through the Chair.

Mr. John Vanthof: I apologize, Speaker. I get wound up.

But Speaker, that is a serious question that I hope the government of the day, of which the mover of this bill is a member—I believe, if I’m not incorrect, she’s a parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health. I hope that she doesn’t wait for the private member’s bill system to take its time, and that the government moves on this tout de suite, because lives will be saved and can be saved.

Now I would like to switch gears a little bit on this bill. One of the issues is that if you call 911, the 911 dispatcher would be able to identify right away where that defibrillator is. Perfect. Once again, perfect. I’d just like to put on the record that there are large parts of this province where 911 doesn’t exist—and they’re inhabited, not parts where no one lives. There are parts of this province in my riding—I’ll use it as an example—where in towns, cottage areas where people rent cottages or own cottages, but specifically use cottages, there’s an issue, and they think they can just dial 911 because everyone should have access to 911. It doesn’t exist, Speaker.

I’m currently working with municipalities to try to get 911, and, guess what? Do you know the process to get 911 in this province? If we can find the map of how you’re supposed to do it, how you’re supposed to lay out the grid system, and if you can find a volunteer to map it out, and if you can collect \$25 or whatever the signs cost along the side of the road, and put the signs in yourself, then you will have an identification number, but you still will not be connected to 911. You will have to call 1-888-whatever and say, “This is my identification number.” You cannot get it directly connected.

I commend the member, but if people from the GTA come to—and we’re not northern Ontario; we’re central Ontario, and I’m sure there are parts all over that have this. This bill still means nothing because someone can have this, and someone will call 911 and it won’t matter that the defibrillator isn’t registered, because there’s no 911. That’s a much bigger issue to the people who don’t have 911.

This you could do next week. You have the power to do this next week. Let’s get that done. You don’t have to wait for this process. We’re all in agreement. But let’s work on 911 too so everyone knows that everyone has the same access, and that people don’t die because they think they have 911 and they don’t, because that’s happening as we speak as well.

1500

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: It is a pleasure to rise before the House in support of Bill 141, the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act. Thank you to my colleague from the riding of Eglinton–Lawrence for your passion and hard work, and for bringing this bill before the House.

Madam Speaker, an automated external defibrillator, known as an AED, is a medical device that recognizes life-threatening cardiac arrest. AEDs specifically diagnose the presence or absence of an irregular heartbeat. In the case of a medical emergency, AEDs help professionals or laypersons trained in first aid to re-establish the regular heartbeat.

As someone familiar with the medical profession, I know that AEDs are one of the most important tools to have when an individual is suffering from sudden cardiac arrest. Bill 141 enhances public health and safety in this regard. It will require designated AED locations to be registered so that first responders, for example, have up-to-date information in the case of an emergency. The act will require that AEDs be accessible to the public, be appropriately labeled for easy identification and be regularly maintained and tested. Bill 141 will require that anyone assigned to use an AED on designated premises receive appropriate training in accordance with prescribed guidelines.

Bill 141 also gives discretion to the minister to determine where the installation of an AED would be mandatory. This regulatory discretion is important, given that sudden cardiac arrest can happen anywhere, at any time. Whether it’s a community centre, a sports arena or a seniors’ centre, Bill 141 will make it easier and safer to help those suffering a sudden cardiac arrest.

In my riding of Markham–Thornhill, this bill will be welcome news to my constituents, especially seniors and the South Asian community, who experience higher rates of cardiac conditions.

Madam Speaker, that is why I rise today in support of Bill 141.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on this important private member’s bill, Bill 141, the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act, 2019, put forward by my colleague, for getting automated external defibrillators, or AEDs, registered in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, every year across Canada, tens of thousands of cardiac arrests happen outside the hospital, in someone’s home, community or workplace. Most critically, every minute that someone in cardiac arrest goes without defibrillation, their survival rate falls 7% to 10%, and after minutes with no intervention, there’s little to no hope of survival. Cardiac arrest is an event that requires an emergency cardiac response system to be in place. According to the Canadian Resuscitation Outcomes Consortium, the current out-of-hospital survival rate for cardiac arrest averages less than 10% nationally. Certain studies have shown that when an AED and CPR are used within the first five minutes, chances of survival are around 200%. Public access to AEDs is proven to save lives in sudden unexpected cardiac arrest in community and business settings.

In order to increase current low survival rates in Ontario, it is really important to (1) connect all publicly accessible AEDs in the province to a registry that is integrated with 911 dispatch; and (2) require appropriate maintenance of those AEDs.

If AEDs are unregistered, they cannot be included in 911 dispatch inventories. This means that dispatch cannot direct bystanders to the closest AED in the event of cardiac arrest. With this bill, an AED registry that is integrated

into 911 dispatch systems can be thought of as a safety net, and if more AEDs are registered, the larger the net becomes. Despite the life-saving potential of AEDs, they're of no value if they cannot be rapidly located and brought to the victim who needs it urgently.

British Columbia and Manitoba have already implemented a comprehensive AED registry that is fully integrated with 911. The registry is accessed by emergency services when someone is responding to a cardiac emergency and they call 911. And any business or organization that wants their AED to be available to the immediate surrounding area can register their AED in those two provinces.

I would urge all legislators to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Eglinton–Lawrence has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to thank my colleagues from London–Fanshawe, Mississauga Centre, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Markham–Thornhill and Brampton West for their comments.

I do think that this is an important piece of legislation. It is important to bring it forward to the House. In my view, this is what a private member's bill is for: for a private member—and in this case, that's what I'm doing—bringing it forward to say, "This is something important." It may not be the first thing on the Minister of Health's list of things that she has to accomplish, but I'm trying to say, "Look at this. This is an important thing to do." We all have this option in bringing forward our private members' bills: to find the thing that we think we'd like to put our weight behind and push on, and to say, "This is something I would like to achieve."

I'm really grateful to the people who brought this to my attention and really did a lot of the work to make this happen today. And I'm really grateful to have heard from all of my colleagues about some of the stories—the member from London–Fanshawe mentioned a local city councillor and work he did with the fire trucks there—and what this will mean to people's communities.

I think it is an important initiative. I think it's something that we can work on together. It's a good-news, positive story for all of us. So I'm looking forward to working with all of you after the legislation has passed—I hope that it is passed and goes on to committee. We're going to make it happen.

PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED TO DOGS
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT À LA SÉCURITÉ
PUBLIQUE LIÉE AUX CHIENS

Mr. Nicholls moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 147, An Act to amend the Animals for Research Act and the Dog Owners' Liability Act / Projet de loi 147, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche et la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Before I get started with regard to this, I want to recognize the diversity of stakeholders who are present with us this afternoon in support of Bill 147, an act to basically end breed-specific legislation. To all of you, thank you so much for being here today. I truly appreciate it.

Interruption.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Speaker, I'm going to read a little bit of legalese—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. I apologize to the member for interrupting.

Just a reminder to everyone in the galleries, please, that while you are certainly welcome to be here, you are not able to participate in any way.

Please continue.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'll take full responsibility for inciting that near-riot, Speaker. Thank you very much.

First of all, what I'd like to start off by saying is that the bill repeals provisions in the Animals for Research Act relating to the disposition of pit bulls under the act. It also repeals provisions in the Dog Owners' Liability Act that prohibit restricted pit bulls and provide for controls on pit bulls.

The act, though, also is amended to "provide that if a court finds that a dog, in an unprovoked attack, has inflicted a severe physical injury on a person or has killed a person, the court shall declare that the dog is a vicious dog, may order that the dog be destroyed and shall order that the owner be prohibited from owning another dog for a period of at least 10 years. An attack is not considered unprovoked if the person attacked was wilfully trespassing or committing another wilful tort on the premises occupied by the dog's owner, was committing or attempting to commit a crime or was teasing, tormenting, abusing or assaulting the dog or if the dog was protecting or defending a person within the immediate vicinity of the dog from an unjustified attack or assault."

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Having gone through all of that legalese, I just basically want to say this: My reason for bringing forward this bill is very simple. It was initiated back in 2005, with very little evidence that pit bulls were vicious dogs—that it was their bites. We look back at it now, and my fundamental goal is to provide safe and humane communities and to be protected against all dangerous dogs of all breeds and types, while protecting dogs from cruel and irresponsible owners.

Speaker, often it's said that maybe we should have owner-specific legislation as opposed to breed-specific, for sure, but our government's fundamental goal is to achieve, as I mentioned earlier, safe and humane communities. Safe communities are in fact our number one priority. Everyone wants to see our communities protected from dangerous dogs. We have a responsibility to keep them safe—full stop, no exceptions. That's why I'm pushing

our government to repeal breed-specific legislation. BSL is expensive, it's ineffective and it is discriminatory.

Our legislation should actually focus on behaviour, with penalties and licensing for owners. We're taking action to address the issue of breed-specific legislation by shifting focus from animal control to responsible pet ownership. This is part of a broader process undertaken by the Solicitor General with Bill 136, known as the PAWS Act. Our goal is to protect people and pets through a culture of safety, personal responsibility and, of course, individual accountability.

I first supported this issue several years ago. I've been in this Legislature since 2011, and this issue came up several times. I'm reluctant to mention names, but I will mention the name Cheri DiNovo, who was a member of the NDP and has her doctorate and is also a reverend. She also helped to bring this bill forward. But the bill was a Liberal bill, and when the Liberals had a majority government this bill was not going to go anywhere. Hence, here it is now. Coincidentally, there's another majority government, but it's a different party.

Applause.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: A rounding series of applause; I love it, I love it.

I want to mention this: Back in 2016, I defended the rights of what we call the Chatham 21 pit bulls. They'd been taken to an unknown area for protection against known criminals. The Chatham 21 was a pit bull dog-fighting ring put together by criminals. Those criminals allowed these dogs to just go at each other. They were trained to be vicious dogs. It wasn't part of their DNA, but they were trained that way. When I look at things such as that, I just shudder.

Again, as I mentioned, three years ago, animal welfare advocates and police broke up that dogfighting ring in a little town called Tilbury in my riding. It became clear to me that the laws on breed-specific legislation just weren't accomplishing their intended goal. We had to send those dogs out of jurisdiction to save their lives.

Earlier today, down at the Toronto Humane Society, I showed a picture of a pit bull. His name is Maurice, four years old—celebrated his fourth birthday. He was, at one point, part of the Chatham 21 dogs. Maurice has been to areas in North America that I haven't been to. He now happily lives in California with a family that loves him and cares for him. You should have seen that picture. It was so cute, with a little number 4 candle burning and a little bandanna around his neck. It was very, very touching. He's there with his family—and children, I might say as well, are a part of that.

We talked about the Liberal legislation that passed and how breed-specific legislation was expensive and very ineffective, but do you know what? I want to suggest this: Dog attacks come from every single breed, not just pit bulls. We've had some vicious attacks down in my riding—and my heart goes out to those who have been attacked. Unfortunately, I wonder: Would that have made the news if it wasn't a pit bull, because of this breed-specific legislation that had been put in place by the then-Liberal government back in 2005? I'm not so sure.

Big-dog attacks, small-dog attacks: Peer-reviewed analysis of all dog bites in Canada as of 2013 showed no difference between jurisdictions with breed-specific legislation and those without. Having said that, we dug deeper. Again, we want this to be evidence-based. What we discovered was that data on dog bites in Ontario in 2018, as collected by public health units, found this: Pit bulls were responsible for only 13 out of 1,429 recorded dog bites. Multiple other dogs of large and small breed had similar numbers as well. The sheer diversity of dogs having a handful of attacks on humans shows that this is a matter of how the dogs are socialized, not what breed they are.

Secondly, you may say, "Well, polls are polls, and it depends on who runs the poll and so on." But I will share this with you. The Toronto Star ran a poll about three weeks ago with regard to getting a feel from the people in this area as to: Should we continue with breed-specific legislation or should we get rid of it? Here's what the results were: over 10,000 submissions, and almost 84% said that we should get rid of breed-specific legislation.

I also want to mention Calgary very briefly. Calgary saw a five-fold reduction over 20 years, from 10 bites per 10,000 people to only two bites per 10,000 people. That was a 20-year span, from 1986 to 2006. Rather than banning breeds, Calgary uses strong licensing with public education programs.

Part of this legislation is to investigate all options to implement evidence-based policy. Repealing this legislation is, of course, the first of many steps along the way. We've consulted with stakeholders from across Ontario. Our government has the support of over 50 animal welfare groups, including humane societies, kennel clubs, veterinary associations, experts and, of course, families—people like those who are in the gallery today who have their own family dog, a family member.

Again, I'm pushing to make this more breed-neutral legislation, not breed-specific. That's discriminatory.

I will agree that dog bites, especially from large dogs—but even small dogs can inflict painful bites as well—are horrible in all cases of attacks from dogs who are not currently banned. Whether it's pit bulls or other breeds, we want safe people and safe dogs. So when you review the data from public health authorities across Ontario for dog bites, as I mentioned earlier, from the last three years, you'll see dozens of breeds, each having a handful of attacks.

1520

Madam Speaker, we cannot ban every breed. We know, from the small numbers for every breed, that it's a matter of how the dogs are socialized, not bred, as I mentioned earlier. So let's not discriminate against pit bulls. This is breed-neutral legislation.

Earlier today, we heard from the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, who strongly spoke in favour of our bill. Here's what they said. They said that there is no discernible evidence linking DNA to aggressive dogs.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to present my bill to this Legislature.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I rise today to speak to this bill on behalf of the thousands of dogs that were euthanized because of breed-specific legislation; on behalf of the numerous families that lost a beloved member of their family; and on behalf of the families that had to move out of Ontario or were unable to move back to Ontario due to BSL. As one of my constituents shared with me, BSL made people live in fear and prevented dogs from finding good homes.

This ban has caused a lot of pain and suffering for many people. What is troubling is that there never was evidence to support a ban. In fact, quite the opposite: plenty of evidence that shows a breed-specific ban is not effective. Every jurisdiction that tried it got rid of it because it didn't work. Closer to home, Montreal repealed its ban, and Quebec, as a province, did not go ahead with its breed-specific legislation. Twenty years of research by the CDC showed that breed-specific bans didn't work. The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association came to the same conclusion.

So, for over a decade, the Ontario government has let the fear and suffering continue, while doing nothing about the actual problem of dangerous dogs.

Speaker, numerous bills to repeal BSL have been tabled before the House. My predecessor Cheri DiNovo was a champion of this issue for years. Many who are in the galleries are people who have dedicated themselves to this issue for over a decade.

There have been moments of hope and moments of despair over the years. Today, after a very long time, I feel that I can say it's a moment of hope again.

With the introduction of the bill yesterday from a member of the government caucus, a lot of people are hopeful that this is the beginning of the end of breed-specific legislation. While it's not a government bill, which would have been ideal, I do hope that this bill will move through the Legislature in a timely manner.

Speaker, I don't have much time left, but I want to spend the remainder of my time speaking about two special people who are here in spirit.

First, Selma Mulvey: When Selma first heard about the Liberal government's ban, she immediately sprang into action. She joined the Dog Legislation Council of Canada and worked tirelessly until her passing in December 2016. She firmly believed in fair and equal treatment under the law. Selma owned numerous dogs in her lifetime, but never owned a dog that would have been a target under the ban in Ontario. She owned and bred Brussels Griffons, but stood with her fellow dog enthusiasts as a tireless researcher, blogger, and activist to repeal the injustice that is BSL. She is dearly missed and would have been so happy that this may finally be repealed after all these years.

The other person is Emily Ugarenko, who, in 2012, made a heartfelt presentation before the committee for Bill 16 when it was a tri-party bill. She described how law-abiding citizens were being harassed and threatened due to

ownership of dogs that were perceived as pit bulls. She herself had encountered harassment and threats from neighbours that rose to such frenzied levels that she had no choice but to leave London in order to keep herself and her dogs safe. In her presentation, she described having to leave her job and her home, and start a new life in a secluded area.

In the most bitter irony imaginable, that seclusion, the desire to be safe, would ultimately end her and her dogs' lives in the most horrifying way. In 2016, a fire tore through her isolated home near Dutton at 4 a.m. That very seclusion made it impossible for her to be rescued. Emily and her dogs perished together. They paid the ultimate price.

Selma and Emily are no longer with us, but we continue the work in their memory and for everyone else who has been impacted by this unjust law.

Speaker, my Ontario includes all dogs, and I hope that this breed-specific legislation will finely be repealed.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It's a pleasure to rise for debate on Bill 147. Let me start: Any dog bite is a tragedy, full stop. This is an emotional issue. This week, we have spent a lot of time in the House talking about animal welfare. It will not come as a surprise to any member here that I have very strong opinions on the importance of pets and how society needs to do a better job of protecting them. As I've said many times this week, Bill 136 is a huge step forward in updating our laws to protect our pets and will give Ontario one of the most effective animal welfare and related community safety laws in the world.

My friend from Chatham-Kent-Leamington has proposed Bill 147. This would eliminate the ban on pit bulls, and I will be voting in favour of this bill as I believe this ban has unfairly targeted one breed of dog as a cause of dog bites and is not based on fact.

I have had many constituents call and email me about this bill in support of repealing the ban on pit bulls, and here is a sample of what I've been hearing.

"Families have been torn apart because of fear propagated by biased media reporting. This was further escalated by the previous government's continued refusal to seek experts in animal behaviour and their unwillingness to accept scientific-based evidence."

"Having a law that targets an appearance of a dog is a scar to the values of the good people of this province, which is the only province or state in all of North America that condemns specific breeds of dog. All dogs have the potential to bite, and any dog in the hands of an irresponsible owner has the ability to become aggressive." Let me say that again: in the hands of an irresponsible owner.

"Combined with the newly presented laws for extreme and harsh penalties for animal cruelty that the Ontario government has presented, having breed-neutral laws will ensure that dogs of all breeds, sizes and types will be dealt with on equal grounds and that dogs who pose a threat to the safety of the public will be dealt with on an individual

basis”—not because of who they are, but what they have done.

Dog bites, unfortunately, happen. What is clear is, they do not stop because of a pit bull ban. It is important to understand that any dog can bite, and we've already had laws in place to deal with any dog that bites people. Singling out one breed is not a good way to deal with this. Earlier this week, I was told that, right now, the number one breed of dog that bites people is a Jack Russell terrier, and no one's talking about them—not that we want to.

The ban was first enacted in 2005. Interestingly enough, eight years later, the city of Toronto recorded its highest number of dog bites this century, despite the fact that the number of pit bulls had dramatically decreased. In repealing this breed-specific legislation, Ontario will not be acting alone. The city of Calgary and the city of Montreal have both repealed their breed-specific legislation.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to hearing from all members on this bill. People are passionate, and I know that these stories—they're emotional, but I believe it's an important conversation to have, and I want to share my congratulations to the member for bringing this bill forward.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: It is an honour to stand and speak in favour of this bill, and I want to thank the member opposite for having brought the bill to the floor of the House. It is so absolutely important.

I want to thank everybody who is here today to see this bill be debated. I want particularly to shout out a couple of people.

Cheri DiNovo: Thank you so much for having brought this bill to the House three times. I am very hopeful that it will finally pass here today.

I also want to mention Debbie Black and Pearl. Pearl passed away just very recently, at 14 years and three months. She was a Staffordshire bull terrier. She was one of the banned breeds. She was all of 35 pounds. If you lived in the Beaches or if you belonged to a Facebook page in the Beaches, you probably saw a picture of Pearl with her bright pink ballerina-type tutu collar. She was absolutely adorable, and I wish she could have been here to see this debate. Pearl, this one's for you.

There is absolutely no question that breed-specific legislation is cruel and outrageous and inhumane, and the Liberal government for all those years should be ashamed for having brought it in and stopping the repeal from passing.

1530

I think it's really important to be cognizant of where the narrative came from. It was an extremely racist narrative that Bronwen Dickey, the author of *Pit Bull: the Battle over an American Icon*, wrote about in a book that she published in 2016. Pit bulls used to be a companion to war heroes and, indeed, were seen as war heroes themselves. But when American cities began to decline due to poverty

in the 1970s and residents of certain inner-city neighbourhoods, particularly Latino and Black residents, used pit bulls for protection and company, they all of a sudden became breeds that were vilified. Shortly after the vilification came the idea that they were particularly dangerous. This is such a deeply and profoundly racist notion that Dickey explores in her book. If you don't believe me, go find the book and unpack it.

This was at the height of the war on drugs, and pit bulls, as well as Black and Latino men, became stigmatized. It is an absolute outrage that this happened, and it's an outrage that that racism and bigotry were imported into Ontario. I am absolutely thrilled that it is leaving today.

It's really clear that there is no pit bull gene for danger. As members have been stating, all dogs can bite and all dogs can be trained not to bite. About a year ago, I was walking in a park near my house, and my neighbours who have a dog which is not a pit bull—it was a young dog. It got off its leash, ran across the park and plunged its teeth into my thigh. My neighbours were horrified, and the first thing they did was to get the dog proper training. That dog is no longer a biter. It wasn't about the dog in the first place, and the owners stepped up and did what they needed to. We need owners to be good owners, and we need to hold the owners accountable for how dogs act and behave.

So I am thrilled today. It is really historical and incredibly important to repeal this, and may it never come back.

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

Mr. David Piccini: It's an honour to speak to Bill 147 and offer a few words of firm support for my colleague's introduction of this private member's bill.

Madam Speaker, I've been standing in this chair for just over a year, but today I stand for all the advocates in this room who have been standing up for these dogs that have been unjustly discriminated against for over a decade, and who have been leading the charge for over 10 years.

I stand today for former members of provincial Parliament, one of whom joins us today: former MPP Cheri DiNovo, who fought against this unjust legislation. I stand for the late Julia Munro, who is no longer with us, who fought against this legislation.

I stand for the young woman in Sault Ste. Marie whose family was torn apart, who had PTSD and whose dog was unjustly taken from her and sentenced to euthanasia. I also stand for all of the other families who have been unjustly torn apart by this.

These folks have long opposed breed-specific legislation, and I stand in solidarity with them because this legislation does nothing to reduce incidents or severity of dog bites, it penalizes responsible dog owners and it kills innocent dogs—thousands to date, which has been mentioned here today. Simply put, Madam Speaker, we are targeting the wrong end of the leash.

In 2012, a peer-reviewed analysis of municipalities across Canada—those with breed-specific legislation and those without—showed no correlation and no reduction in bites. In fact, public health data across Ontario has shown an increase in bites across all jurisdictions since BSL

became legislation. From Vancouver to Cincinnati to the Netherlands to Italy to Calgary, BSL is being rightly tossed into the waste bins of history, where it belongs.

Madam Speaker, we've heard from the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association this morning. We heard from the doctors, who said that there is no discernible evidence linking DNA to aggressive behaviour. Rather, it's the training, which has been highlighted by my colleague today. The US centre for disease control found that not only is it near impossible to calculate bite rates for specific breeds, but any breed can become aggressive if raised to be so. Those who will exploit pit bulls today will turn to another breed tomorrow.

That's why our response since being elected is to target the right end of the leash. Our response is to promote responsible pet ownership. Through the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, or, as we affectionately call it, PAWS, we've introduced some of the toughest penalties in Canada for irresponsible pet ownership. We've introduced a legislative framework for an animal welfare system across Ontario that will be standardized under the direct oversight of the chief animal welfare inspection officer. We've introduced legislation that's going to get tough on dogfighting and tough on animal cruelty.

Under the leadership of our Premier and the Solicitor General, there has been no greater friend to our four-legged friends than this government.

The penalties in PAWS are some of the toughest in Canada, as I said, doubling the penalties and implementing potential jail time for those who abuse animals.

A lot has been made about stigmatization and the about the biased media on this. But I got elected to this Legislature to represent the people of my community, to represent Ontarians, and the day I change seats here with those in the media gallery is the day that we can start responding to their reports. But until then, I'll stand up for Ontarians. I'll stand up for just legislation that doesn't discriminate, that doesn't unjustly target specific breeds. I'll stand up for all animals who can't, unfortunately, stand up in this Legislature for themselves.

Madam Speaker, I'm proud to stand beside my colleague. I'm proud to join members of the opposition. I'm proud to join our Green Party leader and independents in standing up for what is just legislation. I'm not holding my breath with the five other members opposite. But it's an honour to stand here today to speak to this piece of legislation, to stand on behalf of all those in the gallery who have been fighting for this for over a decade. We're going to fight for it until we pass this piece of legislation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to speak today.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: It's an honour to rise and speak to Bill 147, the breed-specific legislation.

I want to thank, as well—I didn't know that it was three times, but Cheri DiNovo brought forward this legislation three times.

I also want to thank all of the stakeholders and the family members who are here. I see a lot of tissue being passed around. But not to worry; you won't be needing it that much longer. I promise you that.

I just want to talk a little bit about how we got here. The member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington did talk about that, but I'm just going to reiterate it once again. Of course, back in 2005, the then Liberal government amended the Dog Owners' Liability Act. In that act, they added the breed of pit bulls to be discriminated against. So what happened at that time under that act: A lot of dogs were either transferred out of Ontario, they were euthanized, or they were sent to research facilities. Regardless of whether the dog had bitten or was a cruel dog at all, these dogs were taken care of.

The Liberals enacted this ban due to a knee-jerk reaction to a vicious attack which occurred in Toronto on a man by two pit bulls. A number of studies have shown over the past 20 years that the BSL legislation—that breed bans are not effective in reducing dog bites. It's quite simple: Breed bans have not successfully ensured the public's safety. Despite evidence presented by the experts, the Liberals refused to accept it and they continued with the ban.

Some of the evidence that's out there—the stakeholders—we heard about the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, along with 4,000 veterinarians in Ontario. They also support the repeal of the BSL. Since the ban went into effect, the veterinary association has said that over 1,000 dogs that have never harmed anyone have been euthanized. In 2014 and 2015—this was a full 10 years after it had been enacted—we saw the highest amount of dog bites. So research shows, obviously, that despite the ban being in effect, it wasn't working.

1540

Research has also shown that animal rights groups and humane societies agree that a more effective approach to dealing with dangerous dogs would be to improve public education. We talked a lot about education, and that is key.

I have a Rottweiler, and not too long ago we sent him off to a doggy resort while we were on vacation. When we came back, the owner said, "Your dog is not a Rottweiler. He acts like he's a small dog." He wanted to cuddle. He wanted to be close to people. These dogs look intimidating, but it all depends on the training that is provided by the owners. So, obviously, it's not the dog, it's not the breed; it is the owners who should be held responsible.

We did hear from the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington about the dogfighting problem that continues, of course, today. So the BSL is not working. We're still seeing dogfights out there. I don't want to get into detail, because we heard about the one in Tilbury.

In conclusion, this could have been done in the PAWS Act. That's all I have to say. We should have put this in the PAWS Act. We shouldn't be going through this. But we'll wholeheartedly support the repeal of the BSL.

I thank everyone for coming today.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: I'd first like to commend the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for bringing this bill forward. We all bring our personal stories to the Legislature upon election—and sometimes it's hard to make those changes, especially when they're not popular. I commend him for doing that, because I know this has been challenging. It's a mixed issue. So good on you for that. That's excellent.

Going back to the discussions we have had so far, I have yet to meet a pit bull—I lived in Trinidad, and pit bulls are not banned there—that was aggressive. They were banned here in Ontario in 2005, as was mentioned. But where does that lead us? Rottweilers—people call them aggressive. German shepherds, Great Danes—a 200-pound Great Dane attacked my 36-pound corgi twice in the same year. It really is about the owners—back to what the member from Brampton North said. It really does come back to ownership.

To the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington: Why I'm going to vote for your bill is because we need to bring this to committee, because we should question things. It's okay to question things. It was passed in 2005. Let's see what the data says. Maybe this wasn't great policy. Voting yes and getting this to committee will allow further discussions to happen and really flesh out this policy so we can potentially get rid of this ban on pit bulls. Like I said, the pit bulls I've known have been very lovable and very nice. But I do know some really bad owners. Their dogs aren't pit bulls, and those dogs are quite aggressive. That's why the PAWS Act is so great—because it does create good legislation around this so that people are punished for raising their dogs in an improper way if their dog is aggressive. I will be supporting this. It should go to committee. It needs to be discussed. We need to not sweep things under the rug, but actually address them and make sure that we properly understand what the issue is.

Finally, to those who have been fighting for this longer than us in the Legislature—if you wouldn't mind standing so we could recognize you—thank you so much for not giving up on your fight.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: First of all, I'd like to thank those who spoke to my bill. I'd like to thank the members from Peterborough-Kawartha South, Cambridge, Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Parkdale-High Park, Beaches-East York and Brampton North.

Our job in this Legislature is to pass laws that protect communities while respecting civil liberties and fiscal accountability. That's why hard data has to trump the one-off story in policy-making. The key to good policy-making is reliable data with all the relevant statistics. As we all know, statistics are only informative and useful with a large enough sample size to review.

Also, we believe that one dog bite is one dog bite too many—there isn't a person in this Legislature who would disagree with that statement—but all dogs can be a source of joy to their owners and communities if they're raised

responsibly. All dogs can likewise become dangerous if irresponsible and criminal elements are raising them to be vicious. That's why we are treating this private member's bill as a first step toward improved enforcement and education around responsible pet ownership, or as I call it, owner-specific legislation.

Also, very quickly, I want to acknowledge my friend and colleague David Piccini, MPP from Peterborough-Kawartha South. David has worked tirelessly connecting the many people in every community of this province together in one concerted effort to replace bad policy with good policy. He's been instrumental in helping our team gain well over 20,000 signatures of support, and I want to thank him for that specifically.

So again, Speaker, I look forward to having this bill pass in this Legislature, getting it into committee and then getting it out again to be voted on. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A reminder to all members that they must refer to members by their title or their riding only.

The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (AIR BRAKE ENDORSEMENTS), 2019

LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (INSCRIPTIONS AUTORISANT L'UTILISATION DES FREINS À AIR COMPRIMÉ)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will deal first with ballot item 85, standing in the name of Mr. Sandhu.

Mr. Sandhu has moved second reading of Bill 142, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to air brake endorsements.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: The Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is a majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed.

DEFIBRILLATOR REGISTRATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS ACT, 2019 LOI DE 2019 SUR L'ACCÈS PUBLIC AUX DÉFIBRILLATEURS ET LEUR ENREGISTREMENT

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mrs. Martin has moved second reading of Bill 141, An Act respecting registration of and access to defibrillators.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee, please?

Mrs. Robin Martin: The Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is a majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed.

PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED TO DOGS
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT À LA SÉCURITÉ
PUBLIQUE LIÉE AUX CHIENS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Nicholls has moved second reading of Bill 147, An Act to amend the Animals for Research Act and the Dog Owners' Liability Act.

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

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1549 to 1554.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All members will please take their seats.

Mr. Nicholls has moved second reading of Bill 147, An Act to amend the Animals for Research Act and the Dog Owners' Liability Act. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Kanapathi, Logan	Roberts, Jeremy
Babikian, Aris	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Sandhu, Amarjot
Begum, Doly	Karpoche, Bhutla	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Berns-McGown, Rima	Martin, Robin	Sattler, Peggy
Calandra, Paul	McNaughton, Monte	Simard, Amanda
Coe, Lorne	Miller, Norman	Singh, Sara
Downey, Doug	Mitas, Christina Maria	Stiles, Marit
Gill, Parm	Nicholls, Rick	Tabuns, Peter
Glover, Chris	Oosterhoff, Sam	Vanthof, John
Hassan, Faisal	Park, Lindsey	Wai, Daisy
Hogarth, Christine	Piccini, David	West, Jamie
Jones, Sylvia	Rickford, Greg	Yarde, Kevin

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baber, Roman	Lece, Stephen	Romano, Ross
Crawford, Stephen	MacLeod, Lisa	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Elliott, Christine	Phillips, Rod	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 36; the nays are 12.

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. Rick Nicholls: General government, Madam Speaker.

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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLAN TO BUILD ONTARIO
TOGETHER ACT, 2019

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

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

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville. And I would ask all members who are not staying for the debate to please continue—

Hon. Ross Romano: Point of order.

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

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wanted to rise here and just welcome some very special guests I have—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member, but upholding the earlier ruling by the Speaker of the Legislature, points of order—it's not appropriate. Introductions have a prescribed time. I'm sorry.

Further debate?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Today I have the honour and privilege to speak on a wonderful plan, Bill 138, Plan to Build Ontario Together, also known as FES. This bill has been championed by the great Minister of Finance and his parliamentary assistant, so thank you so very much for bringing this bill forward.

This fall economic statement is another stepping stone to get this province on track. We have been listening to you and we have a plan. This plan will help us build Ontario together. We have been working hard to get the province on the right track these past 16 months, and we are committed to balancing the budget by 2023-24 while protecting critical services like health care and education.

Our plan focuses on making life more affordable, preparing people for jobs, easing burdens on hard-working

families and job creators. We are making Ontario work better for people and smarter for businesses, and fixing this fiscal mess left by our predecessors.

Through this wonderful piece of legislation, we will be keeping the promises we made. We will be creating a more competitive business environment, connecting people to places, building healthier and safer communities, and making government services smarter and more efficient.

1600

Through the course of this speech I will focus on three top things: building healthier and safer communities; making life more affordable; and cleaning up the fiscal mess.

Through this plan, we are committed to building healthier and safer communities here in Ontario. We are building and will continue to build healthier and safer communities for the great people of this province.

We are focused on breaking down administrative silos within our health care system and directing every available dollar to front-line patient care.

To build healthier communities, we are investing an additional \$400 million in health care. Over the last year, this represents a total spending increase of \$1.9 billion in health care alone. Rest assured, we are making our public health care system more reliable, accountable, connected and efficient for the people of this great province we all call Ontario.

Our government will be investing \$17 billion over the next decade to expand and improve hospitals across the province and ensure the delivery of patient-focused care for years to come.

We are also investing \$68 million in small and medium-sized hospitals this year to help end hallway health care. I know first-hand the need to end hallway health care and create a more connected public health care system. I would like to repeat this: public health care system.

As part of the fall economic statement, our government is modernizing the administration and oversight of OHIP to reduce inappropriate billing and improve efficiency and value. If passed, Madam Speaker, it will make OHIP more accountable and transparent, to deliver the best value for Ontarians. These changes are long overdue and they respond to recommendations made by the Auditor General. For several years, the Auditor General found long-standing weaknesses in the laws, policies and processes that oversee physician billing.

By the way, I want to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on the chair. You look wonderful.

OHIP represents 25% of public health care spending and 10% of all provincial expenditures. I think I'm debating at the right time, since you do belong to a medical field. I'm sure will you understand what I'm trying to say over here as well.

We are committed to working with physicians to ensure that this funding is properly used. Incorrect physician billing is often done by mistake. That's why our plan to strengthen OHIP accountability starts with educating doctors about fee codes, and will provide them with the

tools they need, like a 1-800 number to support correct billing practices.

When the government does identify a rare case of fraudulent billing, we will now have the tools we need to recover those funds. That is only fair for Ontario taxpayers and will help ensure the future sustainability of our health care system.

Our government's proposal to recover incorrect billing will be on a go-forward basis only, not retroactive. We value front-line physicians and the work they do in providing Ontarians with excellent care. We will continue collaborating with the Ontario Medical Association and front-line doctors as we develop the educational resources and implementation plan. Through the FES, we will deliver the best value for Ontarians and ensure taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly.

Madam Speaker, I always give the example of my grandmother, because I remember the time when we had to take—she's 85 years old and may God bless her and give her a long, long life. We always talk about this, the experience we had when we took her to the hospital after her fall. I remember standing in a hallway while she was lying on a stretcher for almost 17 hours before she could even get a bed. On a personal level, I don't want anyone to ever go through that experience.

That's why I'm so proud of our government, and especially our Minister of Health and the PAs. They are doing such a fantastic job of making sure that we end hallway health care. And also I must say that our Minister of Long-Term Care—because together both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Long-Term Care are coming up with a plan. They are coming out with a plan that is going to help us end hallway health care. I'm sure, Madam Speaker, nobody knows more than you do about the great plan that our government is working on. This plan is for the people of this province.

Now we are bringing this province into the 21st century by digitizing and centralizing our health care system. Our Digital First for Health Strategy will bring the patient experience into the 21st century, helping to end hallway health care by offering more choices and making health care simpler, easier and more convenient for patients.

At the same time, this strategy will harness the imagination and capabilities of Ontario's digital health innovators to improve care for all Ontarians. Once this new strategy is fully implemented, patients can expect more virtual care options; expanded access to online appointment booking; greater data access for patients; better, more connected tools for front-line providers; data integration and protective analytics. These secure digital health solutions will fundamentally transform and modernize our health care system to help end hallway health care and help Ontarians like my grandmother.

This plan will also keep communities safer and better in many other ways. Madam Speaker, in the past few years, there has been an increase in violent crimes. This is unacceptable. Our government is working with our police to give them the tools and resources they need to put violent criminals behind bars. I'm proud that our government is committed to protecting Ontarians in every way

we can. Here I would like to acknowledge and thank our Solicitor General, who has been doing a fantastic job in making sure that these crimes that are taking place in our great province never happen. Her ministry, her parliamentary assistant: They are all working around the clock to make sure that we have a safer Ontario. Thank you very much to both of you for doing such a wonderful job.

We are fighting gun and gang violence with the new intensive firearm bail team, which is great for Peel region. This team will support bail hearings and proceedings for gun-related offences in the GTA, and through a gun and gang violence fund to support projects and partnerships to target organized crime and gang operations.

We are working with our federal partners to invest an additional \$105.4 million in our province-wide strategy to combat gun and gang violence.

We are developing an anti-human-trafficking strategy to stand up for victims and bring traffickers to justice.

1610

Not too long ago, I was informed during one of my meetings that human trafficking is a huge, huge issue in our province, but also in Peel region. Madam Speaker, you and I have had many conversations about this—that this is something that has now become our priority. As a father of four kids, of which three are daughters, I cannot imagine what parents have to go through. This has now become something—I really have become very passionate about making sure that no one has to experience this human trafficking. Together, all of us can help stop human trafficking.

This bill is very comprehensive. In addition to building towards safer and healthier communities, it fulfills our promises to make life more affordable for all Ontarians while cleaning up the fiscal mess. We believe that people, not government, know best how to spend their hard-earned money, and that the best way to help families, seniors and low-income workers is to stop taxing them.

Just yesterday, we announced our investment of \$90 million in the seniors free dental care program. We as a government are doing everything possible—and I always say the same thing: Our seniors deserve the best. They have done so much for us. I always talk about my grandfather as well, who came to this wonderful country so that we could have a better future. It is our responsibility to make sure that individuals—our seniors, our parents—are getting the best services possible that are out there right now. I feel that we are a step closer towards doing that for them.

Especially, also, I would like to thank our Minister for Seniors and his PA for doing such incredible work with our seniors communities. I think they deserve our utmost respect and thanks.

For minimum-wage workers, our government brought in Ontario's low-income tax credit to ensure that there won't be any personal Ontario income tax on their 2019 tax returns.

Our government has also given 300,000 Ontario families an average of about \$1,250 a year in tax relief on their child care expenses. Through Ontario's child care tax

credit, parents are given the choice of which child care options work best for their families.

Madam Speaker, I believe that families should have the choice of how they would like to get services for their children, and I believe our government is exactly doing this. It's basically giving choices to families out there. Let the families make the decisions about their child care, however they would like their children to be getting cared for.

To save Ontarians' hard-earned money, we cancelled the previous government's punishing cap-and-trade carbon tax. Our efforts will help save the average Ontario household \$275 a year on items like gas and groceries in 2020.

We are helping approximately 100,000 low-income seniors in this province by providing them with access to publicly funded dental care.

For Ontario's post-secondary students, we cut their tuition fee by 10% this year, and we are freezing tuition next year to help keep more money in their pockets.

Madam Speaker, our plan to make life more affordable is putting \$3 billion back in people's pockets by 2020. This is a plan for the people. Through this great plan, we will clean up the fiscal mess that we have been left in. Strengthening our economy will enable the people of Ontario—not the government—to be the architects of their own future.

As I said when we talked about cap-and-trade, Mississauga East–Cooksville is one of the ridings where the residents are predominantly seniors, and even this summer, when we were knocking on the doors, they were saying to us, "Just please take care of us." I believe that this unnecessary carbon tax was—basically, just remove the word "carbon" and it's a tax—an unnecessary burden on Ontario families who are already struggling to make ends meet. As a government, we cannot burden them with additional taxes. So one of the commitments that I made to them was that we are going to remove the carbon tax. What people don't realize is that this tax is not just on gas; it also brings the cost of other items up as well, such as a loaf of bread. At the end of the day, it's going to be transported to places, and when the gas prices go up, all other prices go up too. During the canvassing and when we were reaching out to people, they all were saying, "Just please make sure"—especially the seniors.

When I mentioned the free dental care program to them, they were all really excited. You could see the smiles on their faces when we were talking about that—"Don't worry. Relief is on its way." I'm so proud that yesterday our government announced the free dental care program for our seniors.

So, as a government, we are investing in programs, and we're going to make sure that we continue to do a great job, under the leadership of our Premier, the Honourable Doug Ford. We have such a fantastic team, who are going to continue to do this great work, making sure that the people of Ontario get the best they deserve.

In conclusion, by unleashing that potential, we can build a safer, healthier and more prosperous Ontario together.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): At the risk of repeating myself several times over: a reminder to all members, please, that we must refer to anyone who sits in these seats by their riding or by their title, not by their first and last names. I'm doing my best to impress this upon all members.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I rise today to take part in this debate on Bill 138. This bill, as many other bills that this government has put forward—this bill is entitled Plan to Build Ontario Together Act. I have been listening to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville—and it's the same thing, that all the bills here, usually they do not consult with the stakeholders, the communities, those affected the most.

There are already tools that this current government can use to address the concerns they have. For example, the Minister of Health has a number of tools to address these cases of inappropriate payments to—but attack of doctors and physicians who are in the centre of doing a fantastic job, looking after the patients and doing many, many hours of work—there are ways, actually, I could suggest that that can be improved or amended: to use the current legislation that exists.

1620

In cases of outright fraud, for example, the minister can and has reported the matter to the commercial crime unit of the Ontario Provincial Police that can investigate it. These tools already exist on the books, and this government could use them. There is no need for schedule 15 of Bill 138.

When a legitimate dispute about interpretations of the billing codes arises, the Physician Payment Review Board can conduct a hearing; that too exists.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I really have the honour to stand and talk about this bill because of all the good points we are bringing to the table. One of the best points I can see is spending money in the Digital First initiative which allows us to move ahead with health care at a totally new and different level.

Last week I was at Credit Valley Hospital, testing myself on one of the robotic surgery equipment, the da Vinci Xi. I sat at the equipment and tried it myself. It is amazing how much we can do with technology in health care now. We can actually allow doctors to do a lot of procedures—maybe not as difficult as surgery, but lots of procedures can be done remotely. I really wouldn't be surprised if in a few years we will see surgery done remotely. The physician will be sitting at a console here, the equipment will be in Sudbury, and he will be performing surgery on a patient in Sudbury, across from the other side of the province.

This is taking our health care to a different level. I am really, really passionate about that. I gave a speech and said, "This is one of my dreams coming true, to see something like that happening." I quoted that a long time ago, in 1986-87. I was working on some initiatives similar

to this, but not close to this. This is a great initiative. I really, really advise our minister and our government to take it to that level.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I rise today to speak to this bill, which is called the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act. I'm just having a really difficult time, because to me, we have been back just two weeks in this House and we're back at it in terms of plowing through so many different legislations put into one. To be honest, I almost feel like we're doing such injustice to the people of Ontario. It should almost be illegal to do this.

How can you have a bill that, in one bill, includes cuts to health care and education, introduces the Liquor Control Board of Ontario Act, enables the minister to share personal private information from one's health record with third parties—all combined into one? Does this government even know the amount of power they're giving the ministry to do such a thing? Have we asked the people of Ontario if they want their health record to be shared, and to what extent it will be shared? It's very concerning, because this bill will allow for the general manager or the minister to do that. That should not be possible.

There are so many different loopholes that have been enshrined within this bill, that have been put together with many other good things in it. But it has a lot of different problematic sections that need to be pulled out from this bill.

The fact that we are having one omnibus bill like this should not be possible in this House. It's not fair to the people of Ontario. It's not fair to our taxpayers. That's not why they sent their representatives here. We should make sure that we protect their personal information. This government has a duty to do that, but it's not. It's passing this bill and doing something that should be unjust.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: It's always an honour to rise in this House. I'm very honoured, just as I was the first time, to rise today to speak to Bill 138. I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for his personal story and his insight into this very important legislation.

I want to talk about this update—and that's what this is, Madam Speaker: an update on our plan, a plan that was laid out by our Minister of Finance in the spring of 2019 and a plan that set out our path to balance. The other day, I got to speak about why that path to balance is so important, but I didn't really get into the numbers deeply. I'd like to do that a little bit here today.

I know that I've said in this House many times that dollars in, dollars out—these have to be managed equally and with much rigour and attention since they are, of course, taxpayer money from the hard-working people of this province. But I do want to say that our plan is working, and I'm really proud of that, because our interest payments, which we inherited at \$12.9 billion a year—and I've said, in many different iterations, that's almost \$400 a second or \$1.4 million an hour—that's not sustainable.

The interest payments on that debt have been reduced by \$400 million. That's significant, Madam Speaker, and I'll give you just one example. I think everyone in this House agrees that climate change is real and it's our generation's problem to fix. We have to take our environment seriously and take steps to combat the impacts of climate change. But 17 days of interest payments: That equals our entire spend on the environment. If you total how much we are spending across Canada, it's barely over a month of our interest payments in Ontario. That's something we have to change, and the good news is that our plan is working to fix that so we can invest in those core services and programs we rely on.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for his reply.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This time, I'm going to make it right by mentioning my colleague members from York South–Weston, Mississauga–Erin Mills, Scarborough Southwest and Willowdale for their comments and their feedback.

Again, I want to conclude this part of the debate—I want to emphasize how important this fall economic statement is for the future of this province. In this plan, we built on programming, services and funding for Ontarians across many areas.

I'm proud that we are accomplishing so much for small businesses, for families and for seniors—seniors who live in my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville. I am proud to be part of a government that has focused on what is important to Ontarians so that they are able to afford life here in this great province, so that the communities they live in are healthier and safer, so that we can escape the fiscal mess and ensure a promising future for our children. I look forward to supporting and promoting the fall economic statement as we move forward.

I'm proud of the great work that our government is doing to make the lives of Ontarians better. I'm proud of our minister and the parliamentary assistant, who have been doing an amazing job preparing this piece of legislation, making sure that this is the future of Ontario—a prosperous future.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's Thursday; it's Thursday.

I rise today on behalf of the good people of Davenport to discuss Bill 138, a bill that implements the measures outlined in the fall economic statement and makes changes to over 30 pieces of legislation. Thirty, Madam Speaker—three zero.

1630

While this bill makes these changes, at its core it is ultimately a government supply bill—a supply bill which is significantly lacking on the supply side, I might add.

The fall economic statement that we heard recently confirmed what many Ontarians had feared: that this Conservative government was sticking with the deeply unpopular cuts that they made in their first budget. I want to remind everyone what some of those cuts looked like:

\$700 million cut from training, colleges and universities, with a threat to withhold as much as 60% of what's left. I know that I'm not the only MPP here who has heard from college and university students—in tears because they can no longer afford to finish their degrees, thanks to this government's callous cuts.

The Liberals allowed tuition fees to rise steadily to become among the highest in Canada while funding for colleges and universities has dwindled and declined. Instead of correcting that, this government pushed post-secondary education further out of reach for ordinary Ontarians.

I also want to remind this House and everybody watching of the cuts to Indigenous affairs. Nearly half of that was cut in the budget of 2019. There were cuts to energy, northern development and mines of \$556 million; cuts to agriculture, food and rural affairs of \$225 million; and cuts to natural resources and forestry of \$162 million. Of course, I haven't even touched on the health care and education budgets, which have been squeezed to below inflation.

The fall economic statement that this bill implements does absolutely nothing to reverse those painful cuts. In fact, it goes even further by cutting another \$2.2 million more from Indigenous affairs, carrying on an absolutely startling and shameful series of cuts that is really hard to see as anything other than a direct attack on Indigenous people.

The ministry of justice will be slashed by another \$330 million, including in legal aid. Those cuts to legal aid are something that has caused, I have to say, significant concern in my riding, where access to justice can mean the difference between keeping your home, your job or your ability to stay here in Canada.

The backlog of cases at the Landlord and Tenant Board and other social justice tribunals is also putting my constituents and many, many more at risk. They want access to justice, not \$330 million in cuts.

As a supply bill, Bill 138 and the fall economic statement it implements could have taken steps to reverse the painful cuts that are really causing shock waves across the province, but they didn't take that chance. They didn't make that choice. We hear so often that the government members opposite are trying to change the channel. I think they recognize how deeply unpopular their actions have been across this province. We know they're trying to change the channel and change the tune, but they didn't take that opportunity in this budget.

This has been—I think it's fair to say, Madam Speaker—probably one of the most disastrous starts for any government, certainly in Ontario's history, and to see this opportunity to change the channel in a real way instead of just the PR, the press conferences, the flashy videos is really very unfortunate.

They are delaying some cuts, I think it's fair to say, that came from the budget, and that's true. But as the leader of the official opposition has said, delaying, backtracking or softening \$1.3 billion in cuts isn't new spending, and Ontarians are not going to be fooled.

As the education critic for the official opposition, it has really been an honour to work with parents, teachers, education workers and students alike to talk about our province's education system and how we can make it better. At the estimates committee, over about seven and a half hours, we worked to get answers from the Minister of Education about the government's cuts to education, and around the impact that that was having in our classrooms, that it's having currently, and how those cuts will play out over the next three years.

In the midst of this, the minister told us to wait and see what would be in the fall economic statement. I remember it well. He said, "Wait and see. Wait and see," as if there was something fantastic coming. We wondered: Were they going to change course on their plan to fire 10,000 teachers, or their plan to grow class sizes to as large as—and in some cases already—more than 40 students? Would they scrap the untested mandatory online learning scheme? Sadly, the answer was no.

In fact, these cuts to education, and class size increases, have already meant the elimination of teachers and classes all across this province. Madam Speaker, the worst is yet to come. That is really the sad truth.

Despite the spin of the government and the new minister to try to change the channel on this, the reality is that those policies remain in place. Those policies remain in place, and we are already feeling the impact of that in classrooms today. They had a chance to change that in the fall economic statement or in this bill, but they did not take it. That really speaks volumes.

We hear, over and over again, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education claim that they are investing an additional \$200 million in education. I've heard it so many times. But over half of that is just to delay the cuts to municipal child care. And it's also pumped up by what I've come to call the teacher elimination fund, which they call the attrition fund. Let's just call it what it is: It's a teacher elimination fund, a fund designed to reduce the teaching positions in Ontario by 10,000. We had estimated about 8,000 to 9,000, but the Financial Accountability Office actually confirmed that. They were the ones that came out with that number of 10,000, and I'm pretty sure that they're cautious in their estimates.

Let's be clear: These cuts should never have happened in the first place, but putting the money back because of the outcry from the public does not count as an investment in education, even if they were doing it. It won't replace the 10,000 caring adults who will be gone from our schools if the government continues on this path. It will not decrease our class sizes back to the average of 22.5, which is where they were previously—which, to be honest, in many cases, actually resulted in classes that were too large anyway.

There is a commitment in the bill and in the fall economic statement to invest in mental health supports in schools. Given the epidemic of youth suicide and the growing number of students struggling to manage mental health concerns, no one is going to argue that more supports in this area aren't warranted. But it is hard to give

credit to this government for this gesture when it comes on the heels of cuts they've already made to mental health services—I remind everyone watching that that includes a \$69-million cut to children and youth mental health in this province, which is shameful—or the fact that mental health workers in schools have already lost their jobs as a direct result of this government's cuts, including one board where all 24 were eliminated—all of them.

We also have to consider the simple fact that larger classes with fewer teachers will hurt some of our most vulnerable students—the students who are bullied.

You'll recall that this was Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in Ontario schools. We heard the minister, just yesterday, I believe, make a fine statement in support of that. I listened and I had, I think, a minute and 40 seconds—such is the joy of how this place works—to respond to that statement yesterday. I have to say, it was hard to keep it down to that because there is so much wrong with this government's approach to education and supporting students. To me, it comes across as unfortunate that the minister wouldn't really come clean about what's happening in our schools and how this government is shirking responsibility.

1640

Let's think, yes, about those vulnerable students: the student who is bullied, the student who needs extra support because of an exceptionality or a learning disability, the student who just needs a few extra minutes with a teacher, or an educational assistant who simply will not have the time in a classroom of more than 40 students.

When it comes to this supply bill, I can't take the minister or the ministers at their word that these investments are historic. It's the damage they are doing to our education system that is historic, Madam Speaker.

I want to touch on a few more specifics included in the bill. I want to start with schedule 23. I want to touch on this change, which is really buried in the bill, because it just drew my eye as a person who represents a Toronto riding. That schedule allows the government to change the name of the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. It seems like not a big deal, and it might look relatively innocuous, Madam Speaker, but thinking back to the fall economic statement, there was a clear commitment in that economic statement to selling naming rights to public infrastructure to fund the public sector.

I'm going to read it to you here. It says, "The government is also exploring new non-tax revenue-generating opportunities, such as advertising and naming rights for GO stations. These are revenues that can then support health care and education." Oh, my. Imagine that. I have to ask: In the context of this schedule, is this really how we intend to fund health care and education in this province? Are we really going to squeeze health and education to below inflation and then rely on naming rights?

When it comes to GO stations—I want to mention that in particular—our community in Davenport is actually waiting for the government to come forward with its plan for a promised GO station at Lansdowne. Are they going

have to wait until we find the right corporate sponsor, the right risky P3—that has worked so well when it comes to transit, hasn't it?—before we can actually build transit in our community?

I also want to touch, Madam Speaker, on schedule 30. In schedule 30 of this bill, there are a number of very worrying concerns regarding changes to personal health information, specifically the Personal Health Information Protection Act. This piece of legislation, for those watching, is central to the protection of the health information and data of Ontarians.

Health information is by nature extremely personal, and it ought to be handled with the utmost care. However, under this schedule of the bill we see several eye-catching provisions which have privacy experts already raising the red flag. Without stating any purpose as to why, the government will be allowing certain prescribed people to have access to de-identified patient information which can then be used to identify a person. On top of this, the new Ontario Health super-agency and the Ontario health teams will both have access to the collection, use and disclosure of health information.

The public information about Ontario Health and health teams is very limited, we all know. But the government now seems to feel it will be okay to allow people in these organizations to have access to our intimate personal information. In a time where information and data protection is on the radar of governments around the world, you have to ask: Why is our government proposing here to weaken health information protections? We need a clear explanation as to what this data is going to be used for and why its protections need to be loosened.

Data today is perhaps more valuable than it has ever been. We see corporations like Facebook have mastered reaping massive profits through the use of personal information. Private companies are becoming more and more versed in the ways that data can be used to market products, leading to a great deal of ethical concerns and invasions of privacy. We see it day after day: data breaches occurring at massive corporations, exposing users to great risk. These are often the result of poor data protection practices at companies, leading to easy access for those who want it. These breaches are often a result of those with nefarious purposes getting their hands on it, but the principle still applies: Looser privacy protections lead to greater risks for people.

Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner is, we know, acutely aware of these risks and just last week raised concerns about the potential for the commercialization of Ontarians' health data. Again, you have to wonder: What is this government planning to do with our personal health information?

One of the most disturbing parts of this whole process, this schedule within this bill, is that there was no consultation about these changes by the government—none. We as Ontarians expect that the government is going to listen to stakeholders and actually seek out expert opinion when making significant changes that could have extremely wide-ranging and unanticipated consequences.

My goodness, is this not our job? This is our job. This is their job as government. Perhaps the government was hoping that by adding these provisions into a 160-page omnibus bill, they would be brushed over as minor changes. But as my colleagues the member from Scarborough Southwest and the member from York South-Weston have just recently mentioned, we've seen this tactic again and again from this government—and from the previous Liberal government too, I might add. It's shameful. Burying these provisions in an omnibus bill, where we have no opportunity to really dig down into them, where the people most affected—it's really concerning, to say the least.

I have to say, given our concerns that we've raised and that Ontarians are raising with us around the risk of this personal data being commercialized, of people's privacy being eroded for the benefit of this government's friends in the private sector, I think we all need to be worried.

I'm going to close off here by mentioning one other thing which I thought was interesting here: the litter day schedule, schedule 32 of this omnibus bill, which enacts the Provincial Day of Action on Litter. I think we can all agree that litter—it's dirty, it's ugly and it's an issue that should be addressed and discouraged. My goodness, in my community, we have litter days all the time. We get out there; we pick up the litter. It's a small step. But I've got to say, Madam Speaker, in the fight to save our Earth from the climate crisis which we as a society are currently confronted with, the main problem here is that fighting litter seems to be the only step that this government is taking to fight climate change. It boggles the mind.

We are talking about a government that with one of its first pieces of legislation cancelled the White Pines Wind Project, and then followed that with a bill to cancel Ontario's cap-and-trade system. But that's not all: They've cancelled 750 other renewable energy contracts, which has now cost the province at least \$231 million—we know that—likely more. They got rid of the Office of the Environmental Commissioner. They cut energy efficiency projects. They were sued by Tesla—and lost—for ending electrical vehicle incentives, and on and on. While, again, I will say litter is bad—we all want less litter—picking up litter alone will not be enough to protect homes from flooding and forests from burning. It is shameful that this government tries to argue that this is in any way a strong environmental move. It is shameful. It's appalling. It would be hilarious if it wasn't so potentially disastrous.

I've got to say, a day of action on litter is going to be cold comfort for those in my community dealing with flooded basements and lost property thanks to flash floods.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'm happy to jump in on Bill 138, Plan to Build Ontario Together Act. For everyone out there listening, I just want to talk about why we are here. Why we're talking about this bill is because the previous administration not only left the province with the largest subnational debt in the world, but also with some daunting

challenges, including hallway health care, transit—anyone who lives in Toronto or in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore knows that our roads are so heavily congested and we need to get some investments into our roads—and that government services are old, inefficient and just outdated. So I'm happy to join in and comment on this.

For some time, the government has been trying to create a climate to support and attract business investment and job growth across this province. These are important things to do. We need to encourage people to bring their businesses back, as the last government chased everybody away; the members opposite would chase people away. We need businesses to invest. We need to create jobs. Our government has opened the doors and said, "Please, we are open for business and open for jobs."

One thing we're doing in the financial statement here is—we're going to talk about business tax reduction and what we are going to do for business owners. We all have small businesses in our communities. They are the lifeblood of our downtowns. They hire our young people, our retired people, their families. We are going to create a more competitive business environment by proposing to cut Ontario's small business tax by 8.7%. That allows these businesses to hire people. It allows them to invest in the infrastructure of their business. This is helping them employ more people. I think that's what we need. We need to get jobs moving.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: It's always an honour to stand in the House. Today, I'm sharing some thoughts on the government's Bill 138, Plan to Build Ontario Together Act.

A member from across the aisle mentioned how important this government considers seniors' health. Well, I wanted to say that, for the seniors in Toronto–St. Paul's, one of the things that has been sending them to doctors recently, more times than not, is the anxiety and the fear, the migraines and the stomach pain they've been having because they cannot pay their rent. They are seniors who are on fixed incomes. Because of the increases, with AGIs—above-the-guideline increases—because there's no rent control on new rentals, many seniors are feeling that they're going to be pushed out, if not made homeless, by this government.

So in terms of a fall economic statement that's supposed to make this bigger, better, brighter Ontario, we are leaving many seniors out. Many of those seniors reside in Toronto–St. Paul's. Many of those seniors have said to me—at my seniors' summit, for instance, just a couple of months ago—"Jill, I'm standing at Loblaws, I'm standing at No Frills, and I'm literally having to debate about whether I get milk, eggs, cheese, bread, because rent is coming up." That is a concern. That's a concern that I think every single person in this House should hold dear.

If I get a chance to stand again, I will say more. But I just want this government to remember that we are elected folks and the people of Ontario brought us here. Stop cutting them off at their knees.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I have the honour to stand to speak about Bill 138, Plan to Build Ontario Together Act. Actually, I would like to speak again to smaller points, not the big parts. I'm going to talk about listening to small communities who need small and medium-sized hospitals, outside the big cities. This government, for maybe the first time, is spending money and budgets for small and medium-sized hospitals.

We raised the budget for children with autism. For 15 years of the Liberal government mismanaging this file, we inherited, really, an issue. We know there is a big issue in this area, and we raised the funding from just shy of \$300 million to almost \$600 million—\$278 million, almost double the spending. We are trying very hard. We are listening to the parents of children with autism.

Our government is also spending about \$105 million to combat gang violence, trying to equip our first responders to be able to combat gang activities, which are actually causing communities to lose their safety and security, and people to start feeling afraid for their safety. Now we are giving money to make sure that our forces have the right equipment to combat that, and hopefully there will be more.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments? I recognize the member from—London–Fanshawe. Sorry.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. It is Thursday afternoon, and we've covered a lot today. We've covered three private members' bills, and now we're debating this interesting bill, of course—Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act.

It's a fancy title. However, the message that it's giving—it's not building Ontario together. The Ford Conservative government is not reversing the cuts—the callous cuts, quite frankly—to education.

Our critic for education did a great job in again summarizing what is really impacting our classrooms when it comes to what this government is delivering. It's firing 10,000 teachers. We know that's a real number, because the Financial Accountability Officer reported on it. That is very, very disturbing.

When we talk about our students, and increasing class sizes and having our vulnerable students be subjected to a lack of resources—there's potential of not having oversight with teachers watching for situations that can get out of hand.

I have a friend who has a grandson, and he is blind. The sad reality is, he is bullied at school. He is bullied at school. He doesn't understand that he is being bullied, because when you're blind, you don't realize the gestures and the tone of voice, so he has no idea. He needs to have the resources. There have been times when he has been bullied and there has been no one around to help him.

That really disturbs me, and that's why we need to make sure that the class sizes are appropriate, and the education workers and the teachers who guide our students and develop our students are there to protect them and teach them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Davenport for her two-minute reply.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I wanted to thank the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, the member from Toronto–St. Paul’s, the member from Mississauga–Erin Mills and the member from London–Fanshawe for your comments.

I’m going to return to something that the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore said. She was speaking about how we hear this government often saying they’re open for business. I would say that what this bill tells us is that, no, under this government, Ontario is open for exploitation of our private medical information, exploitation of our public assets. And why? Why? To help those who are going to benefit on the big business side, the people who have the right connections to this government—open for exploitation.

The environment being deregulated under the guise of removing red tape; the elimination of the Environmental Commissioner—I’ll tell you, it’s true that the NDP government created the Environmental Commissioner position and the Environmental Bill of Rights, and it held on through many governments, governments of all stripes, because it’s important. It’s solid. We need it.

Madam Speaker, I just want to close by saying that people in my community of Davenport are not asking the provincial government to encourage them to pick up trash or sell their medical data or their assets or gut their classrooms. They want the government to come forward with a real plan to fight the climate emergency. They want a government that’s going to invest in our schools and in our health care. They want a government that’s going to allow for real investments in the programs and services they depend on—particularly the most vulnerable in our communities.

1700

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

Mr. Parm Gill: It’s always a pleasure and an honour to stand in this House and represent my constituents in the great riding of Milton, and especially to speak to Bill 138, the fall economic statement. I want to thank the Minister of Finance and all of my colleagues for the tremendous work they’ve been doing for the last, roughly, year and a half, since June 2018, to address some of the commitments we made—reasons why Ontarians elected a strong government and gave us the mandate to clean up the financial mess that the province was left in by the previous Liberal government. We’ve been doing that on a regular basis through a number of different pieces of legislation. I’d like to speak to the fall economic statement and highlight some of the initiatives that we’re introducing to put more money in the pockets of Ontarians and help them make ends meet.

Madam Speaker, as pointed out earlier, our government is beating the target for 2019-20 by \$1.3 billion, by reducing the projected deficit from \$10.3 billion to \$9 billion, which I think, of course, is great news. We know that we also inherited a \$350-billion debt, approximately, from the previous government, for which we’re paying

billions and billions of dollars in interest payments alone. It works out to about \$13 billion a year, over \$1 billion a month. A lot of services that we could be providing—imagine if we didn’t have to pay over \$1 billion in interest payments alone just to service our debt.

We’re also investing an additional \$1.3 billion in critical services in this fiscal update. Over the last year, this represents a total spending increase of \$1.9 billion in health care and approximately \$1.2 billion in education. I would say those are probably two of the most important items that Ontarians are concerned about, and we’re addressing those.

Of course, things like addressing the housing crisis, with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—and I’m honoured to be the parliamentary assistant to the minister. It has been a tremendous honour and an experience for me to learn from him and to also hear from Ontarians right across this province.

I would like to point out, Madam Speaker, that I will be splitting my time with the member for Durham, if that’s all right.

Some of the things we’ve done to address the housing crisis are making it easier to build more homes—we need more supply; it’s no secret that there’s a shortage, not just of housing that individuals and families want to buy, but also that they want to rent—and also find ways to allow the builders and the municipalities to create the environment where they have the ability to reduce the burden, the red tape in the process and the years and years it can sometimes take to get an application through. I know that a lot of Ontarians, a lot of municipalities appreciate that. We’ve been hearing a lot of great, positive news surrounding that.

Child care access and relief from expenses, also known as the CARE tax credit, starting in the 2019 tax year—these are all important initiatives. There’s another one—that 300,000 Ontario families can save an average of \$1,250 per year in tax relief, letting parents choose the best child care option for their children, for their families, giving them more choice. This is all in addition to our government’s \$1-billion commitment to create up to 30,000 new child care spaces.

The Low-Income Individuals and Families Tax Credit, also known as LIFT: A single full-time minimum wage worker with no other income could receive a maximum amount of \$850 in tax relief.

Other initiatives: incentives such as a tuition reduction of 10% across all eligible post-secondary programs in the 2019-20 academic year, and frozen tuition fees for the 2020-21 year. Students will see an average tuition reduction of \$340 for those attending college and \$660 for those enrolled in an undergraduate program.

We’re saving an average family \$275 a year on items like fuel and other basic necessities by cancelling the previous government’s cap-and-trade carbon tax. I’m sure we all remember that this was a huge issue in the last provincial election which our party ran on, and we were given a clear mandate on which we got right to work. One of the initial pieces of legislation we had introduced at the time was to address this particular carbon tax.

We're also helping 100,000 low-income seniors in the province by providing them with access to a publicly funded dental care program, Madam Speaker.

We're ensuring that university and college graduates have the skills to compete and succeed in today's competitive labour market by linking 60% of operating funding for post-secondary institutions to performance outcomes by the 2024-25 academic year, to especially help young people who are going to college and universities. It's always very disappointing when you see individuals graduate with different degrees or a diploma who are unable to find employment in their particular field. We want to make sure that we're addressing that and that the education institutions are also held accountable for ensuring that the programs that they're offering are those where our young people are going to be successful after obtaining an education in a particular field. To prepare students for a successful career, the government is renewing its focus on science, technology, engineering, and math fields as well as the skilled trades. Ontario's STEM education strategy will enable the province to become a global leader in STEM learning.

A skilled labour force is the core of the province's economy, but many small and rural communities are struggling to attract the people they need. To encourage immigration to these locations, the government will work with these communities to assess interest in the proposed Ontario regional immigration pilot. To make it easier for businesses to attract top talent and skilled workers from around the world, the government is simplifying and clarifying the requirements of the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program.

Reduce the small business corporate tax rate to 3.2% from 3.5%: Madam Speaker, this would provide tax relief of up to \$1,500 annually to over 275,000 businesses in our province, from family-owned shops to innovative start-ups. It is no secret—we all know—that small businesses are the backbone of our economy, not just here in the great province of Ontario but right across our great nation. These are some of the individuals that take risks, who take equity out of their homes, and they're willing to put that on the line to help create opportunities to create small businesses in communities right across this province. We've got to make sure that we not only appreciate that, but we also provide them the assistance that they require so they can continue to create opportunities and support local organizations.

1710

Ontario small businesses would save \$2.3 billion in 2020 through some of the initiatives we've taken, as I've pointed out, by cancelling the cap-and-trade carbon tax, keeping the minimum wage at \$14 an hour, supporting the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board premium reduction and delivering Ontario corporate income tax relief. I can go on and on, but I know I'm halfway through the time allotted to me, so I'll pass the remainder to my colleague from Durham.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member for Durham.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I want to thank everyone who is here in this chamber on Thursday at the end of the day, when you could be elsewhere. I know everyone has got events in their communities to get back to.

Just to speak about Bill 138, which is the bill that came out of our government's fall economic statement and is entitled An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes, I'm going to highlight in my time here a few specific schedules of the bill. Forgive me, I'm a lawyer, so I'm actually going to get into the bill and talk specifically about some of the schedules and what they're doing—what we're here to debate.

Overall, Bill 138 focuses on key public policy goals that are very important to the people of my riding—the riding of Durham—to the Durham region at large and, really, to all of the province of Ontario. Those priorities include: making life more affordable; preparing people for the jobs of today and tomorrow, not the jobs of 10 years ago; creating a more competitive business environment; connecting people to places; building healthier and safer communities; and making government smarter. You'll hear me talk a lot in my remarks here this evening about making government smarter.

First off, before I jump into that topic, I'm going to address that objective of making Ontario more competitive and creating a more competitive business environment here. It was certainly something we heard, knocking on doors a year and a half ago. One of the biggest criticisms of the previous government was that they just did not take a competitiveness lens to so many of their important decisions. It was obvious over time. It's why we lost hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs. It's why places like GM in our area of Durham really struggled over the last number of years to be competitive in a global economy.

We have to recognize that we're competing for jobs with other jurisdictions within Canada and outside of Canada. We're competing for jobs with other provinces like Quebec. We're also competing for jobs with some of the northern states that are just to the south of us, like New York and Michigan. Michigan has a thriving auto sector, or historically did, and has had some of the same challenges we've had in Oshawa in the last number of years. I was actually a hockey player growing up and got a scholarship to play hockey away in Detroit, which is another auto town. A number of the struggles that city has gone through in the wake of the auto sector slowing down—Oshawa has seen some of those similar struggles over the last number of years.

We've seen a change in government policy to the south of us to try to make their government more competitive and create the conditions for success for manufacturing and for their auto sector once again. We need to be taking that approach as we develop our policies here in Ontario and here at Queen's Park.

One of the policies that is specifically mentioned in this bill that is aimed at making us more competitive in Ontario is schedule 38. Schedule 38 is an amendment to the Taxation Act, specifically the Taxation Act, 2007.

Through this schedule, we're proposing to reduce the small business corporate income tax from 3.5% to 3.2%. If this bill passes, that will come in January 1, 2020. That's as part of our promise to cut the small business tax rate overall by 8.7%. That was a commitment we made to the people of Ontario, which we're proposing through this bill to follow through on. This would bring up to \$1,500 of annual tax relief for a very large number of businesses across Ontario; in fact, over 275,000 small businesses.

I feel like I say this so much that I should be tired of it now, but I'll never get tired of standing up for our small businesses: Small businesses are truly the lifeblood of our economy. They are responsible for the income in so many households across the Durham region and across the Durham riding. I'm really pleased we have some tangible measures in this bill to make life a little easier for those businesses that are really our job creators in Durham. I think of family businesses that are the heart of our economy in Durham, like Algoma Orchards or Treetop Eco-Adventure Park. I'll have to invite the Speaker on another day to join me at Treetop Eco-Adventure Park because I know she used to represent that part of Oshawa, and now I represent it. Also, businesses like the Enniskillen General Store, which started as a small business in Enniskillen in my riding: They have expanded to three locations in just my riding and are now opening a location in the member for Oshawa's riding. It's real people that we're supporting by making life easier for these small businesses.

I think we sometimes forget, when we talk about small businesses, that we're also talking about the agriculture sector in our province. It's largely made up of small businesses. Certainly, in my riding, most of the farming businesses would fall in that category of being small businesses. I know farmers have been very happy to know—and this was mentioned in the broader fall economic statement, not specifically in this bill itself—that we're addressing trade disruptions that hurt Ontario farmers, especially those in the pork, beef, and grains and oilseeds sectors. Ontario's recent trade mission to South Korea and Japan—this was just last month—actually aimed to connect our farmers with key importers and buyers.

Ontario has also sought the support of the federal government in securing new export markets for the meat sector through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. You would have seen specific mention of that in the fall economic statement. Our government has committed to investing up to \$6.45 million over three years and will be leveraging the partnership and support of the federal government to create new trade opportunities for our farmers. This is really critical support for our farmers, particularly at a time when there's this international uncertainty and it seems like, at the stroke of a pen, a different country can create real problems for thousands of our small businesses in Durham region. So I'm proud that the beef, pork and grain farmers in my riding have these supports in place to sell their goods to alternative markets abroad.

In my time left, I'm going to highlight two schedules of this bill that are aimed at making government smarter. We

live in a day and age when we're surrounded by smart technology, whether it's your smart phone, your smart fridge—I don't have a smart fridge, although I aspire to have one one day, maybe—your smart TV, pick your device. I think a lot of people expect us, in government, to be a bit smarter in how we serve the people. I talked a lot about, when I was running for office, bringing a customer service approach to government. Businesses talk about their customer service, and they're constantly innovating in that space, and I think we need to do the same thing as government.

Specifically, there are a couple of schedules, but in schedule 18, I believe it is, are amendments to the Highway Traffic Act so that we can bring some things like driver's licences into that electronic space, where we're doing everything else. We're buying our coffee through our phones, but we still carry around these hard-copy documents to prove who we are. People are really excited about this initiative, and so I'm pleased that we're setting that out in this bill, but also including in these provisions protections because when we're moving in to that online space that's changing—we hear all the time about data theft that's happening all over the world—there have to be proper precautions in place when we move forward with these customer service initiatives.

Speaker, I want to thank you for listening to me on this Thursday afternoon. I've enjoyed speaking with everyone here.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: Once again, it gives me pleasure to rise in the House and speak to government Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act. I wanted to return to the notion of making Ontario better together. I think if we want to make government smarter, we really need to hone in once again on the purpose and the necessity of consultation, travelling bills around, getting the opinions of those who are often not heard.

I had a chance to meet with students from my riding, George Brown early childhood education students—a fun and ambitious bunch of young women. Some of their concerns are that they're worried. They're worried about being able to pay their debt off post-graduation. They're worried that ECE as a career choice is often a gendered profession. They're worried around pay equity in that field as young students joining the workforce, and they're asking this government to consider stopping the cuts to education. They're asking this government to not ruin their futures by taking away their six months of interest-free debt repayment. They're asking this government not to slash funding to universities and colleges by hundred of millions of dollars because at the end of the day, if we want to make the government smart, if we want to build an Ontario where everyone can own a small business, we need to ensure that they're able to go to school or join mentorships, join any other sort of educational—

Interjection: Apprenticeships.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Exactly. That's it. That's the word. Thank you—apprenticeships, so that they can—

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

Further questions and comments?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I just want to take an opportunity to congratulate the member for Durham on a great speech and to really put into focus the government's priorities in the fall economic statement.

When we look at our core principles of what is guiding our government, it's an extra \$1.2-billion investment into education, so our students have the best publicly funded education possible. When we look at health care—\$1.9 billion more into health care spending.

But one of the things that I'm most excited about in FES, along with so many other things that we've been able to include in this piece of legislation and something that the member for Durham really spoke very eloquently on was small business, both the success strategy that we're going to be implementing and a small business tax cut that we are going to be coming through with. It's going to be recognizing the hard work of small businesses across this province.

Small businesses are the backbone of our economies, not just Ontario's but all of Canada's. If you walk down any main street, you will see the hard work that small business owners put towards building a better Ontario, building a stronger economy or a more robust economy and the opportunities they provide for hard-working families across this province, and it's about time that a government appreciated all the hard work that small business owners undertake on a daily basis. They wear so many different hats. They run their own HR departments. They run their own marketing. They run their own advertising. It's unbelievable, and it's about time that we really respect and honour the work they're doing and really go out of our way to see them succeed and build a better Ontario.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to speak about this bill today in the Legislature. Bill 138 flows from the statement that was made by the Minister of Finance, oh, not too long ago, A Plan to Build Ontario Together. I think his remarks were indicative of the reality of this bill. I'll just touch on a few of the things that he raised.

He noted that the government was going to make hydro rates more affordable. I'll remind you, Speaker, that this government had promised to reduce hydro costs by 12% during the election. They didn't say it would be over a 20-year time span; they didn't say it would be over a 40-year time span. They said they would be bringing in a 12% reduction. The reality, as you are well aware, Speaker, is that rates have gone up by 2% and will continue to go up. This province is borrowing \$2.5 billion a year to keep rates down instead of actually dealing with the privatization that's driving the increased rates, dealing with the fact that we are paying on our bills profits probably in the range of about \$1 billion a year to these private companies. If you want to deal with high hydro rates, you need to go to the

root. This government is not doing it; it's not doing it in this bill.

There is so much in the statement that was made, but I just want to note—and this is one of the best: “Our government also recognizes the important contribution” of Ontario's francophone community. That's why they cancelled the French-language commissioner, and that's why the other day they voted against our opposition day motion to restore services and to change and modernize services for francophones. That's why the head of the association of francophones of Ontario was blocked from the budget lock-up. The respect is quite astounding. They cancelled the French-language university and only moved back to support it when it was clear the federal government was going to steal the march against them on it.

This is a very empty bill, Speaker.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: It's a pleasure to rise to talk about Bill 138, the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act. When you talk about building communities or building neighbourhoods or building the country, building the province, we have to do it together. I always believe in any parties or any politics without the partitions. We got elected to improve the quality of life of Ontarians.

I got elected in my riding. In my previous life as a councillor, I talked about fiscal responsibility and fiscal prudence. As a former budget chair for the city of Markham—vice-chair and chair for seven years—I always talk about respecting the taxpayers' dollar, being conscious of the taxpayers' dollar. This Plan to Build Ontario Together is really respecting the taxpayers' dollar, Madam Speaker.

I have three children. You know one of my sons. You met him. He's studying at UOIT and he talks highly about you. To take the GO bus from Markham to Oshawa every day, he spent over \$300 a month. He doesn't have any—zero income. Only for taking the transportation, that's the cost. I call it highway robbery. The children and youth can't afford to go on our public transportation.

The people owning the house in the big city can't even afford to pay their—forget about buying the house and paying the property tax to sustain the property.

You talk about the small business. My colleague talked about small business. Having their industrial/commercial tax is a burden—

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

I return to the member from Durham for her wrap-up.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I want to thank the member for Toronto—St. Paul's, the member for Brampton South, the member for Toronto—Danforth and, of course, the wonderful member for Markham—Thornhill for joining in this debate.

I'd say, overall, one of the things that I'm really pleased with by this bill—some people would categorize it as lacking substance. I mean, it's one of the thicker bills we've debated here, so if there's anything that's substance, that would tell you there's substance in here.

1730

Overall, it doesn't take much imagination to raise taxes. We all know we have a fiscal mess, frankly, to deal with from the previous government. I think both sides of the House agree on that, I hope. And, really, it doesn't take much imagination to raise taxes, whenever the government needs revenue. We all agree: We want to be able to increase investments in health care; we want to be able to increase investments in education and social services. We need to increase investments in cleaning up our environment; we have to. So how do we prepare for that? One answer is to just snap your fingers and raise taxes, and another is to think creatively, to look for new sources of potential revenue. So there are other things in this bill, like advertising and naming rights for GO stations, a creative way to raise revenue for government. These are ideas that become revenue streams that flow back into our health care system and education budgets to fund the essential services we all rely on.

I'd like to conclude my remarks this afternoon with just one final thought, and that is: We were elected with a mandate to restore fiscal responsibility to our finances, and this bill is doing exactly that.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: It is an enormous honour to stand this afternoon and be able to address the House on this really important bill. I want to focus on the question of: What does it really mean to build Ontario together? If you were serious about that, if the government were serious about that, what would that mean and what would that look like?

I want to address some questions that are completely absent from this bill and suggest that maybe the government would like to take another look at it and reconsider what "building together" means and what things aren't there that they might consider adding.

To begin with, if in Ontario in 2019 we're really going to build Ontario together, it seems to me that we would want to include Indigenous people in that building in a meaningful way. And Indigenous people, whether First Nations or Métis or Inuit people in Canada, have been absolutely clear that that can't happen without meaningful reconciliation. As my colleague the member for Kiiwetinoong has said over and over again, it means a meaningful understanding of what it means to take the treaties seriously, and what it means to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ensure that those rights are embedded into Ontario and into the way that it does business. So I think that that's something that's really lacking here and something that the government might want to consider seriously putting in.

A Cree friend of mine gifted me with a really beautiful word that is a Cree word, that is *mino-bima-ta-sawin*, which means "the good life." What does it mean when you begin with the idea that people are not taxpayers or ratepayers first and foremost? First and foremost, they are human beings to which we, as governments, owe the good

life. And what does it mean to give people a good life and to build the structures that allow them to live that good life? Many, many people, Speaker, are struggling.

I am the critic for poverty and homelessness, and since taking on this critic portfolio I have heard from many people across Ontario in my riding, but from all of your ridings as well, who have reached out to me to let me know of the many, many, many ways in which they are struggling, and struggling deeply. I think it's really important that the government listen and think thoughtfully about these questions because nobody elected the government to tear apart Ontario's social safety net.

I was in Nathan Phillips Square when the Raptors won and that incredibly loud and heartfelt "boo" rose up, and I ask the government to reflect deeply on what that boo meant. It wasn't something that happened because people had been drinking too much beer. There was no room to get beer, or to go and do something when your bladder got full. It came from their souls, and it came because people are hurting. For months and months, they've been hearing the government talking about governing in the name of the people, not acting as though they were governing in the name of the people. So I implore you to take seriously the kinds of things that they have told me and that I am passing along to you today.

Because tomorrow is National Housing Day, let's start with housing.

As you know, a great many people are struggling to find affordable housing in cities like Toronto but also, of course, across the province. There is also a housing crisis in many First Nations communities. So if we're going to start building Ontario together, then building safe, dignified housing on First Nations would be a very good place to start.

It's important to understand here—and I think this is something that consistently gets missed—that housing is unaffordable for many reasons that go well beyond the traditional economics 101 supply-and-demand, housing-bubble questions. If that were the only problem, the government's "increase the supply" response might well work, but the issue goes so far beyond that. In fact, the whole problem has changed. The paradigm has shifted, so the way that we see it has to also shift.

The financialization and commodification of housing that has occurred since the 2008 financial crisis is something that we've never seen before, and all these years later, it is happening on a scale that is actually pushing people out of housing. There are new builds that are remaining empty because there are folks who are investing in those buildings who don't benefit by having them full, who benefit by having them empty so that they can be flipped multiple times.

This is a global issue—it's not only happening in Canada—but if we don't take note of what it means in our problem-solving, we have a kind of monster that is continuing to grow and that we're not solving.

Tenants are being pushed out of housing, as we've been hearing many times today. Renovictions are happening all over the place across cities in Ontario.

On top of that, we heard about something really frightening, because the government changed the rules around rent increases so that new builds can have rent increases and there's no rent control on them. We heard today about a building, maybe the first in Ontario, that has had tenants for a year and that literally had a 25% rent increase—25%. That is just not something that most folks can afford, especially not if it's going to continue, and it's creating a colossal issue.

In order for people not to get renovicted, in order for above-guideline increases to not force people to use absurd amounts of their income to pay for their housing, they need help. People who need this help can't always afford to hire a lawyer, so legal aid becomes extremely important. But the government cut legal aid severely, which means that people are not able to get the help they need. What legal aid folks have been telling me that is not only is their ability to do casework compromised, but so is their ability to do the systemic work of finding out where the consistent issues are and where to fix them.

So, people are being pushed out of housing and finding it difficult, if not impossible, to find new housing. That means that we have a crisis in homelessness that is going to continue to rise precipitously and that is unprecedented—unprecedented—in this province.

Shelters across the province are so much more than full. They are way, way over capacity.

1740

In the most recent cold snap, just last week, I heard from a worker at the drop-in about numbers that were way above what is considered to be “capacity.” What he said to me is, “I won't turn anybody away because it's really cold outside and they would die and there's nowhere for them to go, but it isn't safe.” Eight people died in Toronto alone in the past month, and it's only November. In Toronto alone, we have shelters, respite centres and drop-ins. They are all in overcapacity, and all of them are acting as de facto shelters because people literally have nowhere to go.

The estimates show that the government has cut funding for homelessness programs precisely when we are facing this unprecedented crisis. It apparently has deep-sixed the goal of ending homelessness by 2025, and the problem is getting worse. Let me just go through some of what the estimate are showing us:

- that the ending homelessness program lost 25% of both its operational and capital funding;

- that the housing and homelessness program was cut completely;

- that payments to city service managers, which they use to help house people, were cut by 7%, or \$24.4 million; and

- that funding for the homelessness prevention program was frozen, and the government has said it will maintain the freeze until 2021-22.

It seems to me that when homelessness is increasing as precipitously as it is, these measures are unforgivable, and they don't point to building Ontario together.

Visible homelessness doubled in Toronto between 2013 and 2018. In five years, it doubled. Visible homelessness, of course, is the number of people on the streets or in shelters, and is only the tip of the iceberg. Most homelessness is hidden: people who are very precariously housed; they can't afford the housing they're in; they're couch-surfing; they're afraid to go to shelters so they're not showing up in them. That often includes women, but we are seeing entire families showing up homeless, and this is an incredibly worrying trend that I beg the government to take note of and to change the paradigm of the way it's seeing this problem.

Health experts have told me that they're extremely concerned because the government has said that on top of the cuts to OW and ODSP—and when you tell people that you're going to give a 3% raise to these desperately needed social programs and you only give them 1.5%, that does amount to a cut. With the obliteration of the Basic Income Pilot program, which was showing promise but has been obliterated—on top of that, the government has talked about redefining ODSP. What health experts have said to me is that they are absolutely terrified of that eventuality. Let me tell you why. It's because the number of people, if that redefinition goes ahead, who will not be eligible for ODSP skyrockets, and so all of a sudden you have people who can't go out and get a job, who are forced to live on OW because the new rules don't allow them to have ODSP. OW is literally half of what ODSP is.

Although the government said it would grandfather folks who are on ODSP, what these health experts have said is that when you look carefully, that grandfathering is only until the next review. So even the folks who are on ODSP are not actually grandfathered, because that grandfathering only lasts for another few months. When that happens, they said, we are going to see homelessness skyrocket again for people who have disabilities, both mental and physical, and this is going to be yet a further nightmare.

Mental health concerns: Because poverty is a systemic issue in which all of these pieces interconnect, you can't treat them in silos; you really do need to understand how they all connect. There are long waits for mental health treatment. There is precious little trauma-informed counselling. We've been hearing how victims of sexual assault who did not do something about that sexual assault in the first six months after it happened are not eligible for the trauma counselling they need. This can have absolutely devastating results for a person's life. There is a severe lack of supportive housing, which means that people just can't get the help they need when they need it.

What does it mean? It means that people are going to end up self-medicating. When you're experiencing trauma and you can't get the help you need, you are going to self-medicate.

Homelessness itself is incredibly traumatizing. I've spoken to many people who have said that it was the experience of homelessness that then drove them to mental health issues, that then drove them to take some form of drug and led them to addictions.

We have an opioid crisis that the government won't call a crisis but that is an absolute crisis. One of the folks at the drop-in I went to last week told me that no fewer than four of his clients were people who had had middle-class lives and had had some form of injury and surgery that then required opioids, and one thing led to another and they ended up deeply addicted, lost everything and are now homeless.

I beg you to understand that the paradigm of all of these—the way that you view these things needs to shift to take into account the reality of people's lives.

The cuts to the numbers of overdose prevention sites exacerbates the problem. The lack of a safe supply of drugs exacerbates the problem. The failure to take seriously what is happening exacerbates the problem.

People die. The concept of social murder has been around for a very long time, since the mid-19th century. The idea behind this academic concept is that when people who have economic, social and political power do nothing to help people who are mired in dire circumstances and those people die, their death was a form of murder—not one individual taking out a gun and shooting somebody, but a form of murder like neglect.

I beg the government to take a deeper look at these issues and think about how you go about ameliorating these problems in a more, dare I say, compassionate way.

I want to talk about intersectionality here. I don't have a lot of time, but I want everybody in this House and I want the government to think carefully about the barriers faced by racialized people. I can't show it to you, but there's a really excellent guide that will help you understand the paradigm that I'm begging you to see. It's a series of fact sheets by an organization called Colour of Poverty. They will take you carefully through the way that racialized people experience poverty disproportionately to non-racialized people—and that's because, even for people who have university degrees, it's harder for them to get good jobs. They tend to be more food-insecure. We just saw a study come out that was done by FoodShare and the University of Toronto that showed that Black families are twice as likely as white families to experience food insecurity, and that is because of these kinds of systemic racism barriers that are there.

People who don't have what they need end up in prisons, and they end up in hospitals, and they end up not contributing to the economy in the ways that they could. That is why poverty costs us. It costs us, right now, between \$27 billion and \$33 billion a year. That is expensive. It strikes me that if we're not putting in place the supports people so desperately need, we end up paying hugely. The government is saving pennies, but it's going to end up paying in pounds. Our hospitals are crammed, in part because there isn't the supportive housing, so when people end up in hospital, they can't be kicked out. These problems exacerbate in the ways that the government is trying to solve, but, in my view, not in a holistic enough way.

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I think, in closing, I would ask the government to please reconsider. Go and look at the Colour of Poverty statistics.

Think about these questions in a more systemic way. Think about what it would mean if the government were to reverse the cuts to programs for vulnerable youth, to arts programs, to OW and ODSP, to basic income, overdose prevention sites, legal aid, mental health supports—fixing social housing; properly funding the Anti-Racism Directorate so it can do its job; counting homelessness so we actually know how bad the issue is; and finally, and perhaps foundationally, putting money towards reconciliation and not taking it away.

I ask you to think about this carefully. I ask you to reconsider. That's what it would mean to build Ontario, truly, together.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you to the member from Beaches–East York for her remarks today. The member has mentioned many topics in her remarks, but there are a few that I wanted to focus on in my two minutes.

The member has stated that we have not called the opioid situation in Ontario a crisis, and I'd like to debunk that. Our Minister of Health and her PA and many other members of this House have addressed this issue, including the Attorney General, and called the opioid situation in Ontario and across Canada a crisis. In fact, we have a bill in front of this House right now, Bill 116, which is addressing this issue. We are taking action, and we are holding opioid manufacturers accountable for this issue.

Furthermore, we are also building a mental health centre of excellence, to collect data and build capacity in our mental health system. For the first time in Ontario, historically, we have an associate minister responsible for mental health and addictions. So, we are taking the mental health situation in Ontario seriously.

Madam Speaker, the situation that we're in today did not happen overnight. In Ontario right now, we have a debt of \$12.9 billion. How many houses could we build for \$12.9 billion? How many hospital beds could we fund? How many consumption and treatment sites could we fund with just the interest that we're paying in Ontario every single year?

We have been in government for a year and a half, and we are working very hard to build Ontario back on track, but these things take time. We are taking this very seriously, and we do want to work together to build Ontario. That is why I'm so proud to be a member of this government and support the fall economic statement.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I rise in this House with such honour to speak on behalf of my riding of Scarborough Southwest.

The member from Beaches–East York, my next-door neighbour, so beautifully put what building Ontario would really look like if we were to address all the issues, and maybe pointed out some paths in terms of how we can move forward with actually building Ontario and helping the people of this province.

My riding has communities that are living in poverty, especially children living in poverty—and what it means

to wake up in the morning and go to school without breakfast, to not have the nutrition that you need so that you can be mentally awake and aware and physically able to continue your day. We're talking about children. That's the type of communities that we have, and I'm sure, on the government side, we have communities like that as well.

We're talking about transit; we're talking about food security; we're talking about housing. If you really are here to pass a bill that's going to help the people of this province, you would care about providing housing, you would care about ending the lineups in our hospitals. The members on the government side talked about how this bill would help in terms of ending hallway medicine. No, it would not. It would not do anything at all in terms of helping hallway medicine. In fact, what we're seeing right now—the amount of hours people wait for a family doctor is outrageous. When you go to the emergency room, that's your whole night. For someone who is working non-stop, working 18 hours a day, they can't do that. This bill would not address any of these issues. Rather, calling it that is—

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: The member from Beaches–East York and the member from Scarborough Southwest touched upon many difficulties and concerns that our residents are facing. These difficulties and social ills that we are facing today—they did not happen overnight. They didn't happen last month or a year ago. These are the results of 10 years of mismanagement by the former government, the Liberal government.

We, as a new government, don't have a magic wand to dissolve or solve or address all these issues, because we have to be cognizant that we have a deficit we need to address. Before eliminating that deficit, we cannot address so many of these issues and difficulties. But I believe that Bill 138 is a good step forward to start building toward the future Ontario—the Ontario where all of us wish to live and raise our families.

I remember 40 years ago, when I came to Ontario, everyone that I met on the street was from a different province in Canada. Today, our own residents are moving to other provinces so that they can find a job. Ontario became a have-not province.

We need to be patient. For short-term pain, we will have long-term gain. We need to work together. We need to tighten up our belts so that we can address those ills that were mentioned in this House today.

I think that Bill 138 is a step forward. We are spending more money on health care and education than previously, so we are cognizant of—

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: It is an honour for me to rise and comment on Bill 138.

My colleagues from Beaches–East York, Scarborough Southwest, Toronto–Danforth and Toronto–St. Paul's have talked about the important aspect of government: Government is not to harm people; government is to represent the people and serve the people. Some of you

have called this bill “smart”—making government smart. Tell me, how are you going to make government smart when you are making people homeless, when you are legislating laws that allow any new building to raise rent up to anything they want? That is unfortunate here. It will not address the issues important to this province. As a matter of fact, it would harm the people of this province.

You see, this bill is also an omnibus bill. It has other bills, other issues—there are so many bills here. Talk about schedule 15, for example, and also schedule 30, our data: Look at it; it's very important—online security and privacy protections. But this bill won't do that. It will also not respect doctors, because one bureaucrat or civil servant can order doctors to pay anything.

It is also mistakenly wrong with regard to data protection. The storage and access to public health records must be addressed. All privacy concerns—

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

I return to the member for Beaches–East York for her wrap-up.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: The riding of the dogs. Thank you so much, Speaker.

I want to thank the members from Mississauga Centre, Scarborough Southwest, Scarborough–Agincourt and York South–Weston for their contributions and comments today.

To the member from Mississauga Centre: I hear her, but I also think it's really important for the government to bear in mind that if it's taking the opioid crisis seriously, it needs to listen to the people who are on the front lines, who are calling for a safe supply, who are calling—begging—for more overdose prevention sites. So, please listen to people. Listen to the people who are doing the hard work of overturning those overdoses. You can't get people into jobs or get them into treatment if they're dead. So, please listen to those folks.

The other point I want to make is that policies which leave out people in need are actually bad economics. I understand there's a deficit that needs to be fixed, but you don't do it by creating worse poverty problems that end up costing the province in hospitals and jails and lost productivity etc. That's not how this works. The only way you do it is by investing early and quickly. That's what good economics would be. So, I beg the government again to take the long view, and not the short view of trying to just cut pennies and pinch pennies and say that that's the way to balancing the deficit.

Finally, the one last thing I would say is that, in a world in which people are struggling, it's really difficult to tell them that you're doing right by them when so many people in the government are part of an expanded cabinet—

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, November 25, 2019, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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