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Jeudi
3 mars 2022

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 3 March 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 3 mars 2022

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning. We'll begin this morning with a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Let us pray.

Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 2, 2022, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion regarding amendments to the standing orders.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Now that that's cleared up, further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: The amendment to the amendment to whatever, and I am the person that's first on the docket to clear that up? But before I start talking about the motion and the various amendments to change the standing orders, I would like to talk about something just for a moment that happened to me yesterday in this place. I lost my wallet yesterday morning in the cafeteria, and before I knew that I had lost my wallet, Bruno sent me a note saying that someone had found my wallet. During question period, it came to me. So someone had found my wallet and, likely, someone had even looked at whose it was, and I still got it back. I would like to say whoever found my wallet and whoever was in the chain, it's an example that, despite our disagreements, this is a pretty fantastic place to work, and we are all working together for each other and for the people of Ontario—and for a Dutch person to not know their wallet was gone.

Now getting back to the standing orders. We are living in tumultuous times after two years of COVID. We are through with COVID, but COVID might not be through with us, and the ramifications of COVID certainly aren't through with us.

If you look at what's happening in the world—there is always conflict in the world, always, but the focus now is on Ukraine and what the people of Ukraine are doing on everyone's behalf to protect the ideals that we all hold dear. I think we are witnessing something that shows the power of democracy and shows what others have fought for in the past.

I'm not trying to belittle the standing order changes, because the standing orders are important, but compared to what's happening—that the seventh change to the rule book of the Legislature by this government seems to be a

priority, and so close to the election; there are rule changes to the rule book that don't even take effect until after the election. You'd think maybe there's some—aren't there enough problems in the province? It's a great place. The province of Ontario is a great place, but there are enough problems that we could deal with now that we don't have to worry about changing the rules for the next government. I don't understand that.

Furthermore, I've stood in this place for 10 years and a bit, and soon we are going into an election, but in those 10 years, I have not had one person come into my office and demand that the one thing that we need to attack right away is the standing orders—not one. And do they need to be updated? Yes, and over the course of years they're updated, but seven times and in one term?

I made the House aware of a lady in my riding who has ALS, and she couldn't get access to enough home care. She now, thankfully, does, but there are others who didn't get the same profile as she did who are facing that issue. And we all know what happens when you can't get access to home care. If you need home care, you qualify for home care and you don't get it, your condition worsens; the place where you want to stay, you can no longer stay there; and you end up as an ALC patient in hospital or in long-term care. And there are issues in long-term care. Coincidentally, the government House leader is also now the Minister of Long-Term Care. He's fully aware of these issues. Yet we seemed focused on changing the rule book. It just seems so out of touch.

Yesterday, once again, Speaker, Highway 11, the Trans-Canada Highway, was closed. Once again, people were stranded on that highway—one of them my daughter. Now, this isn't a once-in-a-10-year calamity occurrence. This is on a weekly basis, sometimes more than weekly. I'd like to make one thing clear, Speaker: This isn't really—and I've had a long talk with the contractors as well—a contractor issue, it's a contractual issue. It's the contract between the government and the contractor. Climatic conditions are changing, the number of vehicles on the road is changing. Everything is changing, and the government's not changing the contract.

Does the government respond? Oh, yes: The government responds by striking a committee—a task force, I believe—the Northern Transportation Task Force. Again, great people on that task force, great people on the committee—I fully respect that—but a lot of the issues we could be dealing with today—there are short-term, medium-term and long-term issues. A short-term issue: more funds for enforcement for MTO, more funds for enforcement for the police. Make sure all our drivers,

drivers that are licensed in Ontario, are properly trained, right? Those are short-term issues. Those are issues that we could be dealing with today.

0910

Now, we're not dealing with them today, because we don't set the government's agenda. Government has a right. The government won a majority government. We're not disputing that. I think the one thing that we all agree on is we believe in democracy, we believe in the vote and when a government has a majority government, they have a right to put forward their agenda. But that this government seems almost fixated on playing with the rules—and to his credit, the government House leader stated in his remarks that while it wasn't really broke, they're trying to improve it. It wasn't really broke. Fine, but there are many things in this province that are broke, that impact people directly, now, today.

The people who were stranded on Highway 11 last night, the people in the snowplows who almost risk their lives every day on those highways because there's not enough enforcement to slow the trucks down: Those are things that impact people now.

There are things that we could talk about under the old standing orders, if the government brought them forward. The last time the Minister of Transportation brought a transportation bill forward, I made these very same issues so she should put them in. I'd welcome supporting them as long as there wasn't some kind of poison pill in it. But again, now, the House seems seized with changing the rules, not only for this session—for what, eight weeks—but for the subsequent government.

I think I've made it fairly clear that we think there are better things to do than talk about standing orders. But having said that, we don't control the agenda of the government. They do, and that is their right and their prerogative.

I would like to talk about some of the changes to the standing orders, but more importantly, some of the amendments that we have proposed, because if we're going to talk about something, let's all try to make it better. There are a few things, I think, that the government has proposed that actually—well, I think we could be making better use of our time. We could be doing better things for the people of Ontario, and we will after the next election.

One of the things that the government has brought forward is that there should be more lead time—and I'm not going to get really into the details, just the overall gist of it. The government has indicated that there should be more lead time when private members' bills are introduced, so that when a bill is introduced, the members have more time on all sides to look at the bill, to do some of their own research so they have a better understanding of what they're actually debating in the House. That actually makes sense.

I remember 10 years ago, there was a better understanding of how that went. You had to have—I think it was more a custom than a rule, but we had House leader meetings where we discussed that a couple of weeks in advance, and if there was one member who hadn't

introduced the bill yet, I remember we would talk: “Okay, so, member X, is that coming soon?” We would try to give the members as much notice as possible. That's not a bad thing.

Now, there are some issues with the way they're doing it, but overall the idea is so that all members of the House have respect for each other by, when they introduce a bill, that everyone has time to look at it. You know what? That's an okay move.

The funny part is, and where our amendments go, is that we would like the same respect from the government. So the government introduces a bill, and that bill can technically become law within a week. Well, I fully understand that government members, and all members, would like to have the time to actually do the research; a good way of making laws is so everybody has access to the information. Why isn't that a good idea for government bills? I understand that the government should be doing their background on their own bills, because they see what the problems are, have their own ideas on how to address the problems, how to further their own agenda. And they likely spend months, perhaps years, looking at how to do this. And yet they announce, “Tuesday we're going to be discussing this, and you know what? Maybe next week it will be a law.” Well, that's not how this Legislature was meant to work.

Our amendment basically says: The same respect that you demand from private members for introducing their bills so that all members of the House, including government members of the House, have the time to actually digest that information, we are simply saying that that respect should be granted to all members of the House on all legislation, and particularly on government legislation, because government legislation, as it should be, is much broader. And yet that's not how it works. Despite after seven tries, it's not enshrined in these standing orders either.

You're putting strict guidelines on the time that all members have to look at private members' legislation, but no such guidelines on a minimum time that all members should have a chance to look at government legislation. Perhaps it's just an oversight—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: No.

Mr. John Vanthof: My House leader disagrees with me—but perhaps they're so wrapped up and they think they have all the answers that the Legislature is merely an encumbrance to them, in a majority government. It's merely an encumbrance, merely a political game. But that's not what it should be.

They understand for private members' bills—for private members' bills, each member has the opportunity to bring something forward that's very important to their community or to something that's very important. And we've seen some great private members' legislation—private members' legislation that eventually becomes government legislation. You know that very well, Speaker, regarding the tolls in your area on the highways. You brought forward legislation repeatedly, and the government finally woke up. That's how it's supposed to work. It's important.

So why don't you treat your own legislation with the same respect? Perhaps the people on this side actually would—"Okay, how about we change this? How about we change that?" You won the election, you have the prerogative, but you know what? We could maybe make some changes. But to do that, you actually have to have some time to read the legislation and do your own research, and you often don't afford that opportunity to anyone on the opposition side. And that is not serving not only democracy, but it's not serving Ontarians.

I would like to say that I have pretty good relations, I think, with almost everyone in this House, and I try. And all the ministers I talk to—

Mr. John Fraser: Almost everyone.

Mr. John Vanthof: I said almost everyone. I'm not perfect either. But we try to work together. And we oppose each other on many issues—no problem. We have opposing views, opposing philosophies. But why doesn't the government—like in the standing orders, you know that private members' bills and private members need more time and more respect so that we have the time to look at this. Why don't you afford that same respect to everyone on government bills? That's what our amendments are trying to do, so everyone has the time.

0920

The issue is not about getting the bill through as fast as possible. The issue is about getting it through right. And you know what? Nobody, no one is right all the time. And no one is wrong all the time. I can totally disagree with someone, but, you know what, even a broken clock is right twice a day. But the idea is to get everything through as quick as possible, and if something goes wrong: "Well, you missed that opportunity."

You're missing the whole point of what this place is about. We all know how important this place is, otherwise we wouldn't all work so hard to get here and stay here. We believe that there is a big role for representing our people, representing our views and having opposing views. It's always an honour to stand in this place.

My time is almost up. If we're going to change the standing orders, and we are—they are—then please, give members the same respect for your government legislation that you're asking for private members' legislation. Give all members the same respect and the same time to look at that, to look at government legislation between first and second reading. Do that. Show that you really believe in what this place stands for and what democracy stands for, because there are people in this world who are fighting for it right now, not just talking about it.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to rise and speak about this this morning. I concur with my friend from Timiskaming. There are a lot of people out there who are putting it on the line for what we're able to do here right now.

The standing orders don't really mean too much to people outside this place. It's how we decide collectively—hopefully collectively—how we work

together, how much time we give each other to consider things. It's not a perfect world. And I agree with the member for Timiskaming in terms of making sure that we have time to know what's coming forward, so we can contribute whatever we're supposed to contribute for consideration by the whole House and decide on whether the things that we think on this side are relevant. That's fine. That's the way it works.

There are good things in this standing order change. There are some things that concern me, that I have some questions about. I like the committee changes, but when we talk about what—we're going to do them after this Parliament, which makes sense. So why would we not be debating these things in the next Parliament?

Right now, there are a lot of things that are important. I would rather be here this morning debating Bill 88. I think that's more important. It's obviously important to a lot of people outside of this building, who aren't really worried about the standing orders. As I said, there are things that I support in this motion. I think the changes to committee are good. I think being able to look at estimates at each committee is a good thing. It's a good change. I understand the direction of the government House leader. I just think there are more important things that we could be doing right now.

There are a lot of changes in here, and it took a bit of time to sort it all out. We don't have the research staff that the other parties have here, but we managed to go through it.

But as I said, we're debating this here this morning, we're debating it this afternoon, and I'd really rather be here debating Bill 88, schedule 5, removing the regulatory college of traditional Chinese medicine. Why aren't we talking about that? We created regulatory colleges, actually, to protect everybody. It's actually about patient safety. Removing that is a really serious thing, and I think that's something that should come in advance of this. I'll only say two more things. It went forward with no consultation, and it's going to affect people's ability to be reimbursed for that service. That's what we should be talking about this morning.

Back to what the member from Timiskaming said: It just would be better for all of us, no matter what side we sit on, to have enough time to consider things. We move from side to side here over time and generations. You sit on that side, then you sit on this side, then you sit on that side, then you sit on this side, if you're around long enough. Talk to my colleague from Oxford. He's seen a lot. My colleague from Renfrew has been here a long time. They're good people to talk to—people like Jim Bradley. So standing order changes, they mean something in here.

As I said, I look at some of the changes here and I'm really supportive of them. Some of the other stuff I'm still sorting out, to be honest with you, but I guess the biggest concern that I have is that we're going to spend time debating this that we could do in the next session, after the next election, when we should be debating other things that I think are really more important to people right now.

As I said, I respect the government's right to bring this forward, and I think there are changes in here that are

important that are good. I just think we could have done them later.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise in my place again and speak to the amendments to the standing order changes. I, of course, am listening very closely to what the members opposite are saying and have been reflecting on that. But I think what you hear constantly and what you're hearing from most of the opposition is that further delay: Delay is what's important. Anything that we can do to delay legislation, that we can delay the government from doing its work, that we can delay parliamentarians from having the ability to do their job is what they would like to do. I'll get into that a little bit later.

The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane said that we don't change standing orders very often in this place, and it should be done slowly, over time. Well, the last time there were substantive changes to standing orders in this place was over 30 years ago, and up until we started making changes, people with disabilities did not have the same rights as every other member in this place. Is that the type of change that the opposition suggests should take 30 years? I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that it's not.

Up until we started making changes to the standing orders, those colleagues who were using BlackBerrys or computers on both sides of this place, including table officers, didn't have the right to do that. We didn't recognize the fact that there was something called the Internet, that these debates should be streamed as well as televised. Is that the type of change that the opposition wanted to delay and stand up for? The fact that our committee rooms could not be televised or open to the public: Is that the type of change that they wanted to resist? The fact that we didn't have video conferencing available until this government came to office and ensured that video conferencing in our committee rooms could make our committees available to people no matter where they were in this province: Is that the type of change that the opposition wanted to delay? Is that what they're so upset about?

When you sit around and wait, when you consider the fact that the last time the standing orders were substantially changed in this place, the member for Scarborough–Rouge River wasn't even born: That's how long it has been since the standing orders in this place had been changed. If that's what the opposition thinks effectively represents the Parliament of Ontario, one of the largest Legislative Assemblies representing one of the largest populations in North America, a province that could be a G20 country all on its own—if that's what they're proud of, if that's what they want to stand up for, then it is no wonder that they haven't sat on this side of the House since before the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park was born.

0930

That's not the type of province that we want. I will let them explain to their constituents why they felt that those

are the type of standing orders that we should have in this place, because that's not what we're going to stand up for. So when the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane says that I said it wasn't broken, I said this place is an amazing place, it does great things, but, of course, we should always be trying to renew it, to make it better and to make it more representative.

Now, what of the standing orders that we have changed do the opposition want to get rid of? Is it the ability to debate and ask questions back and forth? Because I'm sure those who are watching in the galleries and those who are watching at home would think a Parliament should be able to debate, that that's the whole purpose of a Parliament is to debate. Well, not in this place before we started making standing order changes, because when a bill was introduced, there wasn't debate back and forth. There wasn't debate back and forth until we made that change and restored the ability to actually debate in this place, to ask questions in this place. Is that the type of change the opposition wanted to resist? I'll let them explain to the people why it was that they didn't want a chamber that actually debated. We made those changes.

Did they want to resist or go back to a system that didn't have equality on our committees? It's not the type of Parliament that I think a modern-day Parliament should be. There should be equality on committees. There should be the sharing of Chairs and Vice-Chairs. Is that the type of Parliament they want to stand up for? No, they didn't like those changes. They fought us against those changes. I talked about it the other day. They said that we were being too co-operative. The government was trying to be too co-operative. We're trying to give too much power to the opposition, and they fought us. They brought a motion in this House to stop us from being bipartisan, from working with them, Madam Speaker. That's the type of Parliament they wanted to stand up for.

Now, let's take a look at the amendments that they're asking for. I'll start with one of the first ones. The member for Timiskaming talked about private members' business and how it should be reflective of how government business is dealt with. I'll have to remind the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, of course, that private members' bills are not money bills. They don't impact how a government functions. They don't impact the resources that we give to people. They don't impact the money that we transfer to education. They don't impact the money that we transfer to mental health and addictions. They don't impact the money that is spent to support colleges and universities. That's not the focus of a PMB. It's not the focus of a PMB. Ultimately, PMBs are brought forward by members of this chamber on both sides of the House to impact something very important to them personally or into their communities.

What the opposition is suggesting, ironically, is that we should have no notice on PMBs, no notice whatsoever—the member shakes his head across the way. So what we have proposed in this is that we want to know what you're debating. Is it reasonable that we should know what it is that the members opposite want to debate before it makes

its way to this chamber? I would think yes, Madam Speaker. And if they disagree with me, they'll have the opportunity to get up in their place and explain why we shouldn't have that ability.

Let's look at some of the other changes that they're suggesting. Now, I will say this: They had the opportunity to make changes, to present amendments to the standing order changes on this package as well. Did they make an amendment to cancel the standing order changes? No. Did they make an amendment to the changes to the committees that we're proposing? No. Did they make changes to the proposals that we had brought forward with respect to the addition of an additional committee to focus on the environment, to focus on Indigenous affairs, to focus on mining and northern development? No, they didn't make changes to that, and I congratulate them for that, Madam Speaker.

But what did they bring forward? Let's talk about the changes that they did bring forward. The first one: The first amendment requires eight sessional days' notice for debate on substantive motions, including the budget motion, address and reply to the speech from the throne, and standing order amendments. You would think, "Well, that sounds reasonable," right? So what would that mean?

That would mean, Madam Speaker, that after Her Honour walks into this chamber after an election or after a prorogation, Her Honour would deliver a speech and then this place would adjourn, because under the amendment they're suggesting, for two weeks after a throne speech, this House could not sit. That's what they're suggesting. So after the election that they talk about that is so important—and it is so important, obviously—you would have a throne speech and then immediately you would adjourn for two weeks because they would not be prepared for two weeks to discuss anything that was in that throne speech. And that wouldn't just be for a throne speech after an election, it would be for a prorogation. What would be the purpose of that?

There is no other Parliament in the world that has this type of policy—in the world. We didn't just look at Westminster-style Parliaments. We looked at congressional-style Parliaments and, just for the fun of it, we even went into places where there were horrific dictatorships, and not even they had rules like this in their fake Parliaments, Mr. Speaker. The only ones that could come up with a policy like this was the NDP. That was their first amendment.

Then the next amendment, 63(d): allow members selecting a ministry's estimates to study to allocate time for its consideration, with a limit of 15 hours—and then they have another one: further limit the study of any single estimates for 12 hours.

Listen to this one—when you read it just as it is, as an amendment, you think, "Well, what does it mean? It sounds good." What we have done, the changes that we've made in these standing orders, Madam Speaker, are we eliminated a committee called the estimates committee, which was seized with reviewing the estimates of this Parliament twice a year. What we have said is, as opposed to doing that, we're going to add standing committees,

we're going to break them up more, and we are going to send all of the estimates to each of the committees. So the committee on finance would become a full policy committee. It would review estimates. The committees on social policy and justice policy would review estimates of their policy areas.

What we've said is that there shouldn't actually be a time limit for the investigating of estimates. How is it possible that an opposition wants to limit the amount of time that they spend reviewing what it is that the government is proposing to spend on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario? What kind of an opposition would bring a motion forward that would limit Parliament's ability, through its committees, through the estimates process, to review what we're spending and why we're spending it? It's absolutely unheard of.

Now, that was the case under the previous rules, which were changed in 1988, I believe it was, to create this estimates committee. That was the case then. We said that's not the way it should be. We said that Parliament is too important, the role of members is too important to limit it, so we eliminated the rule which would see estimates only have a time limit of debate before it's brought back to this House.

We said let the committees themselves make the decisions on what it is they want to study. If they want to study every single ministry, then that's what they should be authorized to do. If they want to spend 20 hours on a ministry, then that's what they should be authorized to do, not that the government should have a hammer which says that after 15 hours, it's done. That's not something we even proposed. They proposed it, Madam Speaker. This was a proposal of the NDP.

They also said they wanted government bills and hoist motions—they wanted to delay the review or even consideration of those for eight days after introduction by the government. Let's talk about that: eight sessional days—that's a two-week delay in reviewing by this House any piece of government legislation.

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Think about that again, Madam Speaker. Think about it in the context of a throne speech, and think about it in the context of prorogation. The election is done, you have an agenda you want done, you deliver a throne speech. The NDP are proposing then that the House adjourn for two weeks before we even consider a throne speech. Then the government comes back after the two-week mandatory suspension and we introduce a bill. And what do we do? We adjourn for another two weeks so that the NDP can digest that bill. After an election, this place would not get back to work for a month—a month—and every time a government wanted to bring a bill forward in this House, we would be seated for two weeks so that the opposition could review a bill, and not just a money bill or an occasional bill, whatever it is that—not that they could highlight one bill that they wanted to delay, but every bill would wait for two weeks. That's the amendment they brought forward, colleagues.

Again, I say to you, you have an opposition that wants to delay the start of the opening of the Legislature by a

month after an election, because they admittedly cannot prepare themselves to debate a throne speech after an election. They are unable to debate any bill for two weeks after it is introduced in this House. The consequences of what they're asking for would mean that if you are in charge of mental health, if you are in charge of transportation, if you are in charge of colleges and universities, if you want to build a road, if you have massive amounts of infrastructure that you want to do—whether it's broadband, building new hospitals—their amendments would delay that, not just once, not just twice, but every single time. And what are the consequences of that? Well, obviously, unimaginable consequences. What kind of a Legislature is incapable of dealing with bills brought before it? The member from the Liberal Party says, "Oh, we don't have the same research staff as the others do," as opposed to bringing an amendment forward that says "Give us some more money for research staff." Nothing. Do they want more money for research staff? No, it's just they need more time on everything. That's the amendment they brought forward.

Let's look at it. Amendment to delay: delay the opening of the House by a month so that they can prepare; delay every bill by two weeks so that they can prepare. They're against night sittings and are fighting back against the extension of earlier night sittings in this set of standing order changes that we have brought forward. They're against it. They don't want to work nights; they don't want to work after an election; they don't want to work every single day to make things better for the people of the province of Ontario. They didn't want to make changes to allow people with disabilities to properly participate in this place, because it's too quick. They didn't want to recognize that the Internet even worked, and this is after the Minister of Infrastructure is working so hard to bring high-speed Internet to every riding in this province, including theirs. But they don't even recognize that it actually exists. That is what they have brought forward, Madam Speaker.

And then there are other housekeeping things. Madam Speaker, you will know this: After an election, when PMB business starts or after prorogation and PMB business starts, if you're lucky, you have number 1, 2 or 1 through 10 and your bill is going to be debated quickly. What do we do? We rise in this place and we seek unanimous consent to delay the consideration of private members' business because it would be impossible for a newly elected member, or any member, to have prepared a bill during an election and have it prepared at the timeline that the current standing orders—that haven't been amended for 30 years, that the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane thinks are the greatest things in the world and that there's no problem. It would be impossible to do it. That's okay for the NDP, though. It's okay for the NDP. "Let's just get up and"—unanimous consent. "Let's not fix the problem. Let's just roll with it, and in time we'll get around to doing something, but the system works the way it is. It's fine, and let's not worry about it. Let's just do unanimous consent motions." This is what the NDP have brought forward.

In review, Madam Speaker, let's, again, take a look at it for what it is worth. The NDP—and I say the NDP specifically, because we heard the member of the Liberal Party suggesting that there are a lot of things in here that they like. The NDP had the option, before any of the independents, to lay on the table amendments to the standing orders. They had the option, they rose in their place and they provided amendments.

Put into context that every single speaker you hear from the NDP today will get up in their place and they will talk about how it's too quick and how we move too fast. Put into context, Madam Speaker, that what they're asking for is to paralyze this Parliament so it is incapable of doing its job. It's a recognition by the NDP that they are unlikely to ever form a government. If they can't form a government by getting the confidence of the people of the province of Ontario, then let's paralyze Parliament so that the democratically elected government won't have the ability to pass any legislation: If we can't get what we want through the ballot box, we'll get what we want by trying to amend standing orders in a fashion that would paralyze any government. That's what we have in this load of garbage that was brought forward.

Am I angry about it? You're darn right I'm angry about it, Madam Speaker. We have an opportunity in this place and a responsibility in this place to make Parliament work better. The members say, "We shouldn't be talking about standing orders." Well, when should we talk about standing orders? Some 30 years on, we still didn't have the ability or the courage to bring in standing order changes to this place, to make ourselves an adult Parliament. Should we wait 30 years, 35 years because it advantages nobody? Obviously not, Madam Speaker.

I will stand up every single time, and I'm very proud of the fact that this caucus has brought forward amendments to the standing orders because of what they see. It's about putting power back in the hands of members of Parliament—all members, on both sides of the House. That's what all of these standing order changes have done. Not just for us, but for future generations of people who will sit in this place. That's why, Madam Speaker, when amendments come forward from the NDP on every single standing order change that we have done—not one amendment has come forward to take away powers that we have given to members of Parliament.

The only amendments that they ever bring forward are amendments to delay, frustrate, obfuscate and delay Parliament from actually working. Because they know full well they'll never get the confidence of the people of the province of Ontario, and if they can delay government from moving in the best way for the people of Ontario—if they can't get it through the ballot box, they'll try to do it through standing orders, Madam Speaker, and we will always stand up against that type of proposed changes.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Clearly, we have touched a nerve with the government House leader.

I am pleased to rise to participate in the debate on the amendments to the amendments to the standing orders. I

listened to the comments from the government House leader, and he started off by saying, quite correctly, that PMBs are not money bills. PMBs are not reflective of the programs and services, the financial supports and other kinds of supports that the people in this province are relying on government to provide through legislation.

Government bills do have financial implications. They do involve the expenditure of public dollars. Arguably, therefore, there is an ever higher level of scrutiny required for the deliberation, analysis and debate on government bills, and the ability to collect feedback from the people we represent about the government bills that the government is bringing forward. Speaker, that is what our amendments propose.

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Our amendments propose that members in this place be given reasonable notice. The government determined that they need eight sessional days to be able to review a typically one-page PMB, and I appreciate that. I appreciate that they may need that amount of time to do the analysis that's necessary on a PMB. But by the same token, members on the official opposition, independents and even their backbench members also need time. You could argue that—is eight sessional days enough? I don't know. They need eight sessional days to review a one-page PMB. We have seen omnibus bills come forward in this place that are over 100 pages, sometimes 20 or 30 schedules. Yesterday, we were debating Bill 84, an omnibus bill with 11 schedules. That bill arrived on our desks on Tuesday afternoon—actually, it arrived only electronically to some of us; other members had to wait until the bill was actually printed the next day, at the same time that debate on that bill started. So this was a bill that was introduced on a Tuesday. It was brought forward for debate on a Wednesday—less than 24 hours' notice. I do not think that requesting that there be a reasonable amount of time between tabling of legislation and debating legislation is unreasonable, and I don't think the people of this province would see that as unreasonable either.

And we have seen what happens when you don't provide that amount of time that's necessary to actually read a bill, to consult with people who are affected by a bill and then to be able to debate a bill. We saw that with Bill 84, with the amendment to Indigenous services for children in care. We heard from Indigenous service providers that they only found out that the bill was making its way through the legislative process the very day that third reading debate started.

The bill that was supposed to be debated this morning—and people who looked at the orders of the day, who looked online to see what the Legislative Assembly was going to be discussing today, would have expected to see us here debating Bill 88, a bill that includes significant changes to the rights of gig workers in this province, and they may be surprised to be tuning in and learning that we're not debating that bill. But all members in this place have been deluged by emails raising concerns about schedule 5 of that bill, a schedule that is quite unlike the other schedules of that bill. It deals with traditional

Chinese medicine practitioners. But the concerns that are being raised in those emails are that that bill was introduced on Monday, and they only found out about it on Monday. So I don't know if maybe the government has decided to slow down the debate on that bill that was supposed to start today, three days later, because of the flood of emails that are coming in to say, "Whoa, how can the government possibly be debating a bill that's going to affect us as traditional Chinese medicine practitioners or acupuncturists, and not having given us any heads-up that the legislation was being debated?"

So it's not just the members in this place who need advanced notice of bills that are going to be debated; it's the people of the province. It's the people whose lives are being affected, whose livelihoods are being affected, whose well-being is being affected by the legislation that we are considering. I would encourage the government not just to think about the eight-sessional-day period between the introduction of a bill and the consideration of a bill; I would encourage this government to take 80 sessional days or to take some time in advance of bringing of a legislation forward to do the kind of consultation that is necessary.

We have heard so many examples over the last four years of bills that have been cobbled together on the back of a napkin, brought into this chamber for debate, and the people who are directly impacted by those bills have not had a chance to provide input to the government as to how the legislation will affect them.

Speaker, yesterday when we started debate on these standing orders, I talked about some of the fundamental principles of democracy. I agree with my colleague the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane, who concluded his remarks by saying democracy is not trivial. Democracy is something worth fighting for, and we are seeing people around the world who are fighting for it. We are seeing people in Russia who are protesting what their government is doing, at risk of imprisonment and who knows what else. They are protesting a totalitarian state that is engaged in violent aggression against a free and democratic and independent nation. That is inspiring to watch what is happening around the world, as citizens are taking it upon themselves to fight to protect their democracy.

We should be doing that in this chamber, Speaker. That is our job. We have the privilege of living in a free and democratic nation. It is a privilege that the majority of citizens, actually, around the world do not have. We should be looking at ensuring that the standing orders that govern how we conduct our democracy are as democratic as possible, are as inclusive as possible.

I hear the government House leader, who takes it upon himself that he is the arbiter of what democracy means in this chamber, that he's some kind of supreme being who takes it upon himself to decide what members need to be able to function effectively as representatives of the people who elected us in this place. That's not the way democracy should work. There should be a process of dialogue and debate and consultation across the aisles with all parties involved as to what are the changes that we want to see to

be able to conduct the business of the people of this province in the fairest, most inclusive, most equitable, most democratic way possible.

The member talked about accommodations for people with disabilities—long overdue, Speaker; absolutely something that we wholeheartedly embrace. We would like to see the government move forward on its obligation to make Ontario a fully accessible province by 2025. That is something that this government should be moving forward with. That is the kind of issue that we should be debating in this place instead of changes to the standing orders that the government House leader has decided that he is going to bring into the chamber.

The government House leader suggests that somehow these seven changes in four years is reasonable to engage scarce time on the public agenda, scarce time on the legislative agenda; that it's reasonable to seven times bring in changes to standing orders so that we can have this discussion and ignore the most pressing priorities of the people in this province.

I do want to remind members, I want to remind anyone who is watching the debate today that over a period of 26 years, from 1992 to 2018, over a period of a quarter of a century, there were five permanent changes to the standing orders. That does not reflect that people were feeling that standing orders were hindering the business of this House. It reflects respect. It reflects respect for the procedures that have been put in place over a century of democracy in Ontario.

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Yes, there are reasons to change. Yes, there are changes in technology that require an update to the broadcast policy, which is something that we wholeheartedly supported. We recognized that the previous broadcast policy had not been updated, and I think it was a period of something like 35 years. Yes, that's necessary. We approved that in a matter of—I don't know; I think it was about half an hour. The government House leader brought a motion forward. We said yes. We agreed to that motion: "Let's do it; let's put it in place."

But when the government House leader brings forward such a significant package of changes, it merits a response from the official opposition. It merits the engagement of members across this chamber, to have a say in how we do business. And we do not—again, I can't stress this enough, Speaker—we do not feel that we are serving the people of this province the way that they deserve to be served by the people they elect when we continue to allow the government to table a motion on a Monday, bring it forward for debate on a Tuesday. As soon as we get into night sittings, we would be able to reach the closure point with morning, afternoon and evening debate. The government can then pass a bill within days—

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Just to correct the opposition House leader that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The government House leader does not have the opportunity to correct another member.

I will continue with the member from London West

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The reality is that the government can introduce a bill on a Monday. That bill can be passed within four days, by the end of the week. That bill can be done. And we saw the government do it yesterday. I referred to a number of bills that the government introduced at their first opportunity. They moved a time allocation motion that bypassed the process of committee, that moved the bill right to third reading, that then truncated the time for third reading debate, and that bill was law.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: There was absolutely no such time allocation brought forward. It was actually the NDP that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The government House leader has been reminded that it is not a point of order to correct or interject in someone else's speech on a not valid point of order.

We will be continuing with debate, as all members recognize, and all members will have the opportunity to stand and have a conversation.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order, please. I'm standing. I don't need the heckling from any bench.

I will return to the member from London West

Ms. Peggy Sattler: There are several examples of bills that were time-allocated, missed the committee process and went straight to third reading for a truncated period of time. Bill 115 is one of the examples. Bill 195, the very controversial reopening Ontario act, was time-allocated at the very earliest opportunity, six and a half hours. It missed committee altogether and had only two hours on third reading debate before this government passed into law—passed into law—its extreme overreach of emergency measures, its ability to override the collective agreements of workers across this province and other measures that the people of this province, the workers of this province would have appreciated an opportunity to appear before a committee to express their perspective on what those emergency measures would mean.

But there are also other examples, as I shared yesterday. And, actually, we closed the first session of the 42nd Parliament back in June with another bill with exactly the same process: Bill 307, Protecting Elections and Defending Democracy Act—which is a rather ironic title, because that is the bill that used, for the first time in Ontario, the "notwithstanding" clause, which will be the legacy of this Attorney General. I don't know how he feels about that. It used the "notwithstanding" clause to change the Election Finances Act to silence the critics of this government as we go into an election. That bill was time-allocated at the six-and-a-half-hour mark, the very earliest opportunity that time allocation motions can be moved. It bypassed

committee. It had one hour of third reading debate—done, law.

That's the kind of change that this government House leader has introduced into this place. Honestly, Speaker, I don't see that as enhancing democracy. I don't think that the people of this province see that as enhancing democracy, and, in fact, I would say the exact opposite: That is restricting the ability of the people of this province to engage, to participate in civic and political affairs. It is limiting our ability as the voice of the people of this province to participate in political debate about the legislation that is being considered.

Speaker, I did want to conclude just by once again encouraging the government to provide the kind of time that is necessary for members to consider government bills that are being debated, to talk to the people we represent, to get their feedback so that we can come into this place and share what we have heard from the people we represent. I hope the government House leader will reconsider his approach—but, of course, he won't have an opportunity to do that, because pretty soon he will be out of that position.

But I can tell you, Speaker, this is not the way that an NDP government will engage with the public, will move legislation forward. We will do the consultation that is required in a—

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

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Parsa: It's always a privilege to rise in this House to speak on behalf of the great residents of Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Before I go any further, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the government House leader for all his hard work, especially during the last two years. Madam Speaker, I cannot tell you—there hasn't been a more inclusive, more forthcoming and accommodating House leader ever in the history of Parliament to make sure that the voices of every member in this Legislature are heard. I'm sure that my colleague across agrees, because I have seen this House leader find ways to accommodate private members' bills from not only on this side, but find ways for him to find time for members of the opposition to be able to have their private members' bills and other issues and motions brought forward even during a global pandemic. That says a lot about the leadership of a government House leader of a majority government. So thank you very much, government House leader.

Speaker, today I'll be speaking on the changes proposed to the standing orders. If the changes are implemented, further, it will enhance the debate, improve democratic oversight here in the Legislature and it will strengthen the institution of Parliament itself. The proposed changes will lead to more efficient oversight of government spending and lead to more robust and focused committee work as well and will better enable and enhance the participation of MPPs to participate in consideration and passing of private members' bills. These changes, similar to the ones that we implemented in 2019, 2020 and

the spring of 2021, which were introduced to modernize the proceedings, will once again improve the legislative process here at Queen's Park.

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We represent the people of Ontario, and to accurately serve the people we represent, we need to be willing and able to adapt to their changing needs as well. This means that sometimes we need to revise and adjust the ways that we do work around here. This requires legislative changes that set new standards for House proceedings and committee work.

For example, in 2019, we permitted the use of laptops, tablets and smart phones in the chamber. I can't believe that this was only done in 2019—I see my colleague nodding. When I got here in 2018 and I was told that we weren't allowed to use our electronics and laptops, and I looked at many members—rightfully so; we have an obligation. We have to be accountable to our constituents. When I was watching our members here who were doing it on the table or had to do it quietly, without others watching, this fixed that issue. It was an oversight that hadn't been addressed, as the government House leader alluded to in his speech.

When these issues weren't addressed they had to be, in order for us to be able to do things as we are supposed to do, according to the rules that are set here. As I said, the change allowed members to be able to stay informed with our constituents and with our staff while we're serving here in the Legislature.

We also allowed the electronic distribution of background materials to reports and sessional papers tabled in the Legislature. This not only reduces the amount of paper we use on a daily basis, it also makes it easier to transfer and read information while we are here in the chamber.

I'm sure every honourable member in this chamber will agree that we had to adapt to the needs of the people during the pandemic, and that included numerous changes here in the Legislature to protect the health and safety of our staff as well as the members. We had to make adjustments to our agenda and limit the amount of people we had physically here at Queen's Park. These changes are no different.

Speaker, standing order changes are tabled to make it easier for the day-to-day operations here in the House and to make it easier for Ontarians who are tuning in who are watching us.

In 2019, we also streamlined in-House proceedings by no longer requiring a minister to verbally refer a question to a colleague during question period. And we removed the requirement for written authorization for a parliamentary assistant to answer a question during question period when the minister was not present, which I really appreciate. Again, these changes were made to reduce time wasted in the House so we can focus on introducing and passing legislation that will make a difference in the lives of Ontarians.

Also, in 2019, we allowed debate for the same bill in the one-hour morning and afternoon sessions of the Legislature to ensure we are being prudent with our time.

In 2020, we passed additional standing order changes to build on our goal of making the Legislature more efficient for members and Ontarians who are watching and holding us to account. These revisions improved the flow of legislative business by eliminating delays caused by non-substantive reasoned amendments.

We have also allowed deferral of closure votes so that the schedule of the House can be more predictable and so members can have the opportunity to vote.

In the spring 2021 amendments, we eliminated deferral slips which caused all recorded divisions to be automatically deferred. We also authorized committees to recall themselves when the House stands adjourned—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I apologize to the member for the interruption, but it being 10:15, it is now time for members' statements.

Debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INVASION OF UKRAINE

Mr. Joel Harden: Earlier this week, a text message from a Russian soldier to his mother was intercepted. The soldier wrote, "We were told we would be greeted with open arms, but they call us fascists." His mother replied: "Are you still out for military drills?" And the son replied, "The only thing I want right now is to kill myself. Mom, I'm in Ukraine. This is a real war. I'm scared. We're firing at everyone, including civilians."

Speaker, this is the inhumanity of a war that is killing people as I say these words. This war, this invasion of Ukraine, was started by a maniac determined to fight to the last drop of somebody else's blood, including this soldier's blood. We've seen this kind of madness before, and we have the power in this world to say no to it. Here in Ontario, we are not powerless. We can take action.

I ask folks in Ottawa to join me this Sunday at 2 p.m. in front of the Russian embassy, peacefully assembling with the Ukrainian community to demand that Russia end its invasion of Ukraine. Your voice matters. Nineteen years ago people all over the world rose up to a looming invasion of Iraq. Canadians, tens of thousands of us, motivated our government not to send troops to that war, which we now know was based on false pretenses.

Join us this Sunday. Stand up, stand with the people of Ukraine, march and rally for peace.

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr. Billy Pang: Today, I'm happy to share about the 2022 lunar new year events that I hosted in February. This virtual celebration welcomed over 250 attendees from across Markham–Unionville and Ontario, including our Premier and many of our caucus colleagues. We celebrated with local performances from the community.

Madam Speaker, lunar new year brings friends and families together to welcome the new year and all the good

fortune it will bring. It brings together Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and many other communities to celebrate the first new moon of the lunar calendar.

My riding has the highest concentration of Chinese Canadians in Ontario. This event highlighted the contributions they make to our community. With such a diverse riding, the actions of this government to promote anti-racism have helped residents feel safer in this province. Markham–Unionville's lunar new year event was a celebration of the diversity of the culture of Ontario and why it is important to fight racism and hate in all forms.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Older adults need more than a plan; they need a vision. I learned that just the other day. I have a podcast that allows me to speak to people from my riding of Kitchener Centre called People in my Hood, A Philosophical Podcast. A few Fridays ago I was speaking to Marcia Smellie and John Lord, who said to me that as much as they see the investments and changes for older adults, not just in the riding of Kitchener Centre but across the province, what they feel is missing is a vision. What's missing from the work that's happening for older adults is an opportunity to ensure that they can thrive, ensure that they can make choices and be supported no matter what it is that they want to do.

That actually reminded me of my mommy. My mom graduated from York University after completing her first bachelor of arts at the tender age of 79—but I say 36 because I like Christmas dinner. When my mom graduated, I remember how excited she was to realize that there were people that would help her, as an older adult, achieve the educational successes that she had always dreamed of, but she had to wait for us to be out of the house in order to be able to access.

Older adults need to have spaces and places where they can do more, where they can access anything that they want, make their dreams come true and be treated with the love, care and compassion that they so deserve.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: The world, including Ontario, has been experiencing change like we haven't experienced in decades. According to a recent survey, "more than half of Canadians say they can't afford the cost of living." Affordability has become an issue for many families. Inflation rates went up 5% for the first time in 30 years. Just yesterday, the Bank of Canada raised its benchmark interest rate to 0.5% to help combat inflation.

The survey goes on to state that "Canadians' household budgets are becoming squeezed as the price of food, gasoline and energy rises."

Mr. Speaker, my constituency office in Markham–Thornhill often receives calls surrounding the affordability of living. Dreaming of a roof over their head has become challenging for many people, especially for the younger generation.

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However, our government has been taking action and using Ontario's financial firepower to support the people and businesses in the province. This includes increasing the minimum wage to \$15; eliminating licence plate sticker renewal fees and refunding millions of drivers for fees paid since March 2020; cutting the cost of taking transit with free rides to and from GO Transit; \$75 million in additional funding to support further electricity cost relief for eligible residential, farm and small businesses, along with numerous other initiatives.

Government spending increased by \$16.7 billion compared to last year. This represents the single largest year-over-year increase in program spending on record. These initiatives by our government have been welcome news to all residents of Ontario.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: There is an affordability crisis in Ontario. The cost of everything is through the roof, and it's still going up. But, even worse, there are individuals, businesses—heck, entire industries—who are taking advantage of consumers. We get tricked into buying things we don't need. We get shoddy service or products that we can't return. We're paying for things that have doubled and tripled inexplicably overnight. They're gouging us and reaping major rewards without penalty.

But we have nowhere to turn because there is no real consumer protection in Ontario. If you call the consumer hotline, like over 30,000 did, nothing happens. If you go to the ministry, they tell you to get a lawyer. The delegated authorities that exist are more interested in protecting those that they are meant to police.

The New Democrats of Ontario have a solution: Bill 77, the Ontario Consumer Watchdog Act, real consumer protection in the form of a consumer protection watchdog who will sniff out consumer abuse and will have the teeth to take real action. We will finally have what we deserve: someone watching our backs and punishing those who take advantage of us.

The Ontario Consumer Watchdog Act will be debated in the House next Tuesday, March 8. I'm calling on everyone in the House to support our bill so that Ontario consumers will finally get the respect and protection we deserve. It's long overdue. Let's get it done.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Serving as the MPP for Chatham-Kent-Leamington, now for over 10 and a half years, has had many rewarding moments, but perhaps none more rewarding as this. It all started back when I was in opposition. The need for a new children's treatment centre in my community was brought to my attention. Even though the purpose and usage of the centre in C-K had functioned for over 70 years, it became obvious that the current facility had outgrown its ability to properly serve the families and children in my community. The number

of children currently in need has climbed to over 3,500 per year, aged from birth to 21 years of age.

But who says perseverance doesn't pay off? I never gave up believing in, advocating for and pressing for much-needed government funding—and then it happened. The government approved partial funding for the estimated \$28-million new build complex. The 55,000-square-foot facility, when completed, will shorten wait-list times, improve overall accessibility and provide increased space for specialized therapy programs. The state-of-the-art facility will support families and children through an integrated model of centralized services. Recently, over \$840,000 was given this year to help meet the growing demand for these services in my community. The funding will go a long way in providing services from hearing and speech therapy to autism services, physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

In closing, I believe that every child deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential. Congratulations to the management team, staff and the children's treatment centre foundation for all you've done to help make dreams come true.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Today I rise to give a special shout-out to all the seniors in my riding of Scarborough-Rouge Park. I want to take this time to recognize how active seniors have been throughout the pandemic in looking after each other and keeping themselves involved in our communities.

I had an opportunity to meet with Seniors in Action, a seniors group organized by seniors, for seniors that creates new opportunities for them to stay active both physically and mentally. I had the opportunity to meet and talk with two members—Lydia Quesada and Alicia Siervo—two active members of Seniors in Action. They said, throughout the pandemic, these seniors have met regularly at 8 a.m. to go on a walk. Mr. Speaker, this is what inspires me.

I also had the opportunity to meet with seniors from the Frontline Community Centre, where they engage with each other virtually through innovative programs organized by the Frontline Community Centre.

I must also mention Mr. Ramalingam, a senior leader at the 1315 Neilson Road building, who has been a champion in helping seniors in his building by engaging with my office and other not-for-profit organizations to bring hot meals and groceries to all the seniors throughout these tough times. Also, a big shout-out to Mr. Sivaloganathan of Rouge Park Tamil seniors association for his leadership throughout the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I must say, engaging with seniors always makes my heart full.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Chris Glover: I'm excited to announce that on January 6, my daughter Ayisha gave birth to a beautiful baby boy named Shea.

Applause.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you. Yes. It's my first time being a grandfather.

Having a grandchild pushes our time horizon further into the future. First Nations communities teach us that the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world and healthy relationships seven generations into the future.

In thinking about future generations, I think about the housing crisis and the cost of education, but the biggest crisis of all is the climate crisis. I'm proud of the NDP's commitment to protecting our environment through a just transition to a green economy, by making new public sector buildings carbon neutral by 2030, by retrofitting existing buildings to the world's most ambitious retrofit program, by providing subsidies for electric vehicle charging stations and by creating a million green economy jobs through the new green deal.

Ontario has the capacity to transition to a green economy. Last December, I attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony for an electric ferry at Billy Bishop airport, a groundbreaking ceremony for a tall timber building on George Brown campus and the launch of a three-wheeled electric vehicle that is being built and designed in Ontario.

We need to nurture this green tech capacity to transition to a green economy. Our future generations are depending on us.

PERSIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Michael Parsa: Good morning to all of my colleagues. Speaker, last year I was honoured to introduce Bill 271 alongside my good friend and colleague the member for Carleton. Our bill would officially proclaim the month of March as Persian Heritage Month. Speaker, this bill received unanimous consent in the House, so I want to thank all my colleagues on both sides of the House for supporting this bill.

This is significant for the Persian community, because it officially celebrates our culture and heritage right here in our province. It was an honour to bring this bill forward to recognize the important contributions Persian Ontarians have made and continue to make in our province. The nearly 200,000 Persian Ontarians make it the largest concentration of Persian people in the entire community right here in our province. Since 1970, Persians have played an important role in shaping the economic, political, social and cultural landscape of our province.

Persian culture and history is among very few others around the world to have thousands of years of history and tradition. Persian people have been at the centre of countless empires, trade routes and cultures for centuries. Their resilience and unwavering commitment to helping others is what makes this community so special, Speaker. As we celebrate Persian Heritage Month, I want to encourage everyone here in the Legislature and those watching at home to learn and engage more with our culture and learn about the history.

I'd like to thank the entire Persian community for all they have done for the province and for the support that

they have provided us, particularly in the last two years. They have made this province a better place for all of us, and I am excited to watch this community grow and achieve great things.

Remarks in Farsi.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: In this very moment, the Ontario Medical Association estimates about 21 million backlogged health care services, including life-saving surgeries, doctors' visits and diagnostic tests. While almost a million people continue to live with pain and anxiety and uncertainty, this government is refusing to adequately fund hospitals and community clinics. Ontarians have been driven into fear: fear of not getting needed health care services on time, fear of hospitals and clinics not having the capacity and staffing levels to address the backlog, fear of not being able to protect the health and well-being of our loved ones, fear for their very own survival.

1030

Maria, a constituent in my riding of Davenport, shared her fears with me. She wrote to me that she is afraid because "our health care system has been underfunded for generations and it's about to break." Maria comes from a family of nurses, and she worries about the dangerous staffing levels and our health care system's lack of capacity to address even our immediate needs.

We have to do better. Catching up on the backlog is going to take years. The Financial Accountability Office estimates three and a half years to clear the surgery backlog and over three years to clear the diagnostic procedures backlog, and this is assuming that hospitals operate above pre-pandemic levels.

We need funding urgently. I'm calling on this government, please listen to the advice of the Financial Accountability Office and provide the \$1.3 billion needed to clear the backlogged patient services now, for Maria and so many others like her.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm very pleased to inform the House that page Julia Markson, from the riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, is one of today's page captains. We have with us today at Queen's Park her mother, Alicia Markson; her father, Joseph Markson; and her sister Amelia Markson.

We're also joined today by the family of today's other page captain, Daunte Hillen, from the riding of Hamilton Mountain: his mother, Heather Lambert-Hillen, and his sister Charlise Hillen.

Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We're delighted to have you here.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I know the member from Hamilton Mountain had a point of order.

Miss Monique Taylor: We have not been able to introduce guests in this House in so long, and I am really pleased to welcome Heather and Charlise here today, who

are, as you just said, Daunte's family. They are fantastic volunteers in the community doing amazing, wonderful things. Welcome to Queen's Park.

COVID-19 DEATHS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the Leader of the Opposition has a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I seek unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence for the 172 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 over the past week.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to have a moment's silence for the 172 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 over the past week. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Members may take their seats.

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. We know that the surgical and diagnostic backlog has skyrocketed in this province. People are waiting in pain, with growing worry and deteriorating quality of life. The Ontario Medical Association has said clearly that the backlog is about one million surgeries. The minister yesterday claimed it's only a matter of tens of thousands. One has to wonder if the minister's number includes people who can't even get a scheduled surgery as yet.

My question is: Can this Premier explain the massive discrepancy here, why his health minister and the OMA are apart by about 942,000 surgeries?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Yes, I can explain the discrepancy. The numbers noted by the OMA included procedures, doctors' visits, other issues—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No, they don't.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Yes, they do.

We have done an extensive review within the Ministry of Health and what we have determined is that the number of patients who are actively waiting for surgery right now is approximately 250,000. Before the pandemic it was 200,000. So the actual number of patients who are waiting for surgery right now, as a result of the pandemic only, is 50,000.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday she said 58,000, Speaker.

But look, the OMA was really clear: When you add in the procedures and screenings to the surgeries, it's 21 million. That's the backlog here in Ontario, as per the OMA's report.

The government was called out yesterday by the FAO because his office revealed that the government is massively underspending in health care. They have not spent—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government side, come to order.

Stop the clock. I need to be able to hear the Leader of the Opposition. I need to hear the ministers who respond.

Please start the clock. The Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They have not spent \$1.3 billion on the health of Ontarians that they had planned to, that they were supposed to—resources that could be and should be fixing that backlog. The FAO said they spent less than they planned on COVID-19 public health programs, physician payments and hospital capital projects, and hundreds of millions less on drug programs.

If they aren't investing the funds, it's clear Ontarians aren't getting the health care they need and want. With people worrying and waiting in pain, why isn't the government spending the money that they said they would to fix the backlogs and get patients the health care that they need and deserve in our province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Just a few comments on that: The number of 21 million mentioned by the leader of the official opposition doesn't even make sense. There are only 15 million people in the province of Ontario. Are we all waiting for surgery? I don't think so.

And yes, I did mention 58,000 yesterday and I'm mentioning 50,000 today because that's an updated number that I received this morning. That is an accurate number. We know that absolutely. We have put the money and the resources into bringing down that number so that the people who have been waiting for procedures and surgeries will be able to get that faster. We've put a half a billion dollars into making sure that more surgeries can be performed on weekends and during the evenings. That is going to get people the relief that they need.

As to the report that we're not spending enough, that is actually not accurate. We are spending the money. We have the money. Part of it is because some of the vaccine management and lab testing expenditures were reported under a different number. That is because we are having to move this around—

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

The final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what's absolutely ridiculous is that a Minister of Health in a province like Ontario refuses to acknowledge that for every surgery there are many procedures that go along with that, many screenings that have to take place. So the 21 million number that the OMA cites is accurate. This minister is inaccurate and the people deserve accuracy when it comes to their health care.

The FAO made it very clear: Wait times in this province are going up, not down. They are not making their targets at all. People aren't getting the health care they need. Knee surgery is double the wait versus the target. Hip replacements, double the wait. For MRIs, only 38% of people are getting MRIs in the targeted time.

It's clear that this government does not support good, public health care in this province. Why are they sitting on over a billion dollars of health care money instead of fixing the wait times, getting people into surgery, getting people's pain dealt with and making sure they get the health care they need?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government absolutely believes in a strong, public health care system. We've demonstrated that by increasing our investments in health from \$59 billion in 2020 before the pandemic to now almost \$64 billion. We have made investments of \$5 billion to create over 3,100 more public health care spaces in our hospitals. We've also invested a half a billion dollars in order to make sure that people get the care that they need.

1040

I would also like to indicate that hospitals have not only worked to provide capacity for emergency and urgent MRI and CT care, 97% of their urgent patients have been seen within clinically recommended times. We are also working on that 50,000 backlog that we have, in addition to the 200,000 that we had before the pandemic, and we've made the investments to prove it in our public health care system.

With respect to the report that the member has been referring to, that is a moment-in-time picture that's taken. What's going to actually indicate what is real is at the end of the fiscal year, and you can be sure that we will have spent the money on our public health care system by then.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. After everything that residents and businesses went through in Ottawa, after this Premier's huffing and puffing about holding back vehicle licences, handing back vehicles that his government was seizing from the occupiers—the Minister of Transportation, in fact, said that 39 vehicles were seized. Not even a month ago, on February 11, the Premier said—and I'm going to say this straight from the quote that he said in this House: "Let me be as clear as I can. There will be consequences for these actions and they will be severe." He said there would be a "maximum penalty of \$100,000 and up to a year imprisonment." But after a single week of those vehicles being impounded, after a single week, the Premier has given the keys to those occupiers back for their trucks.

How on earth could this Premier ever say that he took this occupation seriously when he's handing back the keys without a single penalty?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Let me be clear: We are not letting truck drivers involved in the occupation off the hook. I'm happy to clarify for the Leader of the Opposition, who simply just does not have the facts.

As with any major demonstration, the role of the police is to keep the peace and to protect the public. The Ministry of Transportation's first priority in this occupation was to get trucks cleared off the streets of Ottawa as quickly as possible. Law enforcement and police needed measures to help them clear the streets as quickly as possible. The emergency tools that we provided law enforcement with allowed the OPP on the ground to immediately suspend and tow vehicles. With a seven-day expiration period, the actions taken by the OPP to remove these vehicles could not be appealed and provided more certainty that would allow them to clear the occupation in short order.

Speaker, if we had gone further, these suspensions could have been bogged down by injunctions, hearings and delays in our courts. Any suspensions processed remain on the vehicle record and could affect their—

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

The supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier does not care about what happened in Ottawa or what happened to the citizens and businesses in that community. He waited for days and days and days before doing anything at all. We said pull the licences, pull the operating licences. We said seize the vehicles. We said take action. Do something.

Residents find out now that the \$100,000 penalties that this Premier was blustering about were all for show, as usual. The occupiers are literally driving away in the very trucks they used to occupy Ottawa. He's sending a pretty dangerous signal that the kind of lawlessness that took place will have no consequences.

My question is: What happened? What happened to the Premier's boasting about throwing the book at these occupiers?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: We're very pleased with the role that the province played in assisting law enforcement to bring the situation in Ottawa to an end. With the additional tools we provided to law enforcement, they were able to quickly suspend licence plates and CVORs of trucks blocking the streets of Ottawa and the roads in Ottawa. Through these measures, we suspended 24 Ontario licence plates and 13 Ontario CVORs. We even went further to ensure that we reported out-of-province vehicles so that they received sanctions in their home provinces and jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, we have been clear. We worked swiftly with law enforcement to provide them with the tools that they needed, and in using those tools they were able to clear the blockades in Ottawa and restore order in that city.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, by handing the keys back in but a week, this Premier is abandoning his responsibilities.

The occupiers who caused residents in Ottawa sleepless nights, who terrified seniors, who cost people jobs, who

cost people wages and who shuttered businesses, deserve to have some accountability. They don't even get a slap on the wrist, these occupiers, for what they caused in Ottawa. No penalties, no fines—certainly not the \$100,000 fines that this Premier huffed and puffed about. He's all bark and no bite when it comes to consequences for the occupiers. It is outrageous, Speaker.

I am going to ask the Premier again to explain to Ontarians, explain to Ottawans and explain to Canadians why he's holding no one accountable, why he's handing the keys back after three weeks of a national crisis that happened in our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply on behalf of the government, the Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: With the greatest of respect, Speaker, people are still in jail because of the illegal occupation, because of their leadership in that illegal occupation.

I think it's really important to remember what the Minister of Transportation said: Any suspensions processed remain on the vehicle record and could affect the renewal of licences in the future.

Look, at the end of the day, Ottawa was safely returned so that people could continue with their lives and their businesses. The occupation was removed safely. And why? Because we had an operational plan with a chief who was working with the RCMP, the OPP and, frankly, an awful lot of police officials from across Ontario and indeed Canada. They were working together and did the right thing.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is also for the Premier. People in Ottawa this morning woke up to realize that there was a controversy caused by Mr. Robert Swaita, someone whom this Premier appointed to the Ottawa Police Services Board. Mr. Swaita is a major PC Party donor. He has donated \$8,000 to the Ontario PC Party since 2015.

But media reports say Mr. Swaita joined the Ottawa convoy personally and attended the protests while he was sitting as a civilian, as an appointee by the Premier, on the Ottawa Police Services Board. I am going to assume he received briefings from police about sensitive information about the security operations.

Speaker, through you, can the Premier please confirm, did his appointee attend the occupation that was going on in our city while sitting on the Ottawa Police Services Board, and is that why he asked Mr. Swaita to resign?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: There are some unconfirmed reports about what the member referenced on who attended the first weekend.

I want to assure the member opposite that we have been working from the very beginning with the city of Ottawa. They have taken a new direction with their police services board. We are supportive of that new direction. As you

know, the three provincial board members have submitted their resignations and we have accepted their resignations. We will move forward working with the city of Ottawa to put provincial police services board members in place as quickly as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Joel Harden: Back to the Premier: I really hope it's the Premier because the people of our city in Ottawa really want an answer from him, and to not see him hiding behind his ministers.

The government had a chance to figure out Mr. Swaita's qualifications before they appointed him to the Ottawa Police Services Board. My colleagues, including the MPP for Davenport, asked to scrutinize Mr. Swaita before he was appointed; this government refused. They would not let Mr. Swaita appear. They would not let Mr. Swaita be questioned.

But now, media reports are circulating suggesting that Mr. Swaita took part in the Ottawa occupation and took part in the convoy. Is it a coincidence, Speaker, that this gentleman has now resigned, or did the Premier ask him to resign? Does the Premier know if Mr. Swaita shared sensitive information with organizers of a three-week occupation? Is the Premier concerned about that? Is the Premier prepared to have accountability over that? Will he speak to the residents of Ottawa today or will he continue to be silent?

1050

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As I said in my previous answer, we are supporting the city of Ottawa in their governance transition of the Ottawa Police Services Board. It's important that the people of Ottawa have confidence in their police governance, and this will bring a fresh perspective to the board as they address these recent events. As you know, police services boards are autonomous. They are working with the chief and the city of Ottawa. They oversee how policing is provided, but they are, to be clear, an autonomous board.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is to the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. The gig economy is here to stay, and every gig worker deserves to be treated fairly and compensated fairly. Today, one in five Canadians work in the gig economy, and this number is predicted to rise. With this in mind, these workers are counting on our government to show leadership and make every effort to protect and support our workers.

Speaker, through you to the minister, what is the ministry proposing to rebalance the scales and support these workers?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member from Carleton for her leadership and always standing up for workers in her community. No one working in Ontario should ever make less than minimum wage for an hour's work. No one working in Ontario should be dismissed without notice, explanation or recourse. No one should have to travel out of Canada to resolve a workplace

dispute or sign a contract they don't understand. This is why our government introduced core rights for gig workers. Our Working for Workers Act 2, if passed, would make Ontario the very first province in Canada to raise the floor for all of these workers. We want all workers to have the opportunity to earn a good living and have more workplace protections and more opportunities for even better jobs here in Ontario.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the minister for that encouraging response.

Mr. Speaker, the minister highlighted some of the uncertainty that gig workers face and I'm glad he did so, because it shows that this government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is listening to the people. Our government believes in working for all workers, including those who work in the gig economy. These workers are mothers, fathers and friends, and it is an injustice that they lack the necessary protections owed to them, so it's great to hear that gig workers will be granted rights and protections to rebalance the scales in their favour.

Mr. Speaker, I know these workers want to know more, so, through you, can the minister please provide clarity on how our government will achieve this?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thanks again to the member for this very important question.

Mr. Speaker, if passed, our Working for Workers Act 2 will be breaking new ground here in Canada. We'll be ensuring that gig workers earn at least the minimum wage. These workers deserve bigger paycheques. Our legislation will also make sure that they have basic rights like a pay stub.

Our policies are the beginning, not an end point. These core rights are a foundation in our mission to help all workers earn more and take care of their families so we can build stronger families here in Ontario. Our government believes that whether you work for a big company, a small business or a ride-share app, you shouldn't be left behind. As we build back a stronger Ontario under the leadership of Premier Ford, we're going to continue putting our workers first.

GAMING CONTROL

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Good morning, Minister.

Speaker, in a good year, we have about 10,000 people working in Ontario's gaming sector. Land-based casinos returned 55% of net gaming profits to the Ontario treasury. That's more than \$2 billion a year. The government has opened its doors to Internet gaming. A recent study shows that this would lead to fewer people working and a huge loss to the net revenue from gaming.

Speaker, what assurances can the government give the people of Ontario, especially those earning a living in our bricks-and-mortar casinos, that this won't be the case?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, thank you, through you, to the member opposite for your many years

of public service since your by-election win in 2013. Thank you for your service. He's done a great job representing his constituents, as we all do every day.

It's an important question, and I'm going to answer, in part, for the Attorney General, who's not here today, who's leading the charge on Internet gaming. That is a grey market that exists today in the province of Ontario. It is not regulated. We are the first province in Canada—in Canada—to regulate the grey market, the Internet gaming market. Extensive consultations occurred for over a couple of years with land-based gaming operators, with foreign operators, with First Nations—a broad consultation, including municipalities, including workers, including unions.

We're going to do everything to regulate this market so that we can create jobs, move our economy forward and support the hard-working people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: COVID has left half of the casino workers in Niagara Falls out of work. At Woodbine, there are still 500 casino workers on layoff. We have 1,000 unemployed in Windsor. Big promises were made to students at Humber College that the expansion at Woodbine would bring future employment. Internet gaming threatens those students and all of our unemployed casino workers.

Speaker, what is the government thinking? How can we allow Internet gaming if it means fewer jobs, less money to the provincial treasury and no hope for those still on layoff from the COVID cuts?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Again, thank you for the question. This government, for the last two years, has worked around the clock to make Ontario safe. In fact, through the leadership of this Premier, the leadership of this Minister of Health—we inherited a health system that was broken, that needed to be fixed, and through their leadership, we're rebuilding Ontario, we're rebuilding the health of this province.

Coming out of this pandemic, we're going to be stronger. And let me tell you this: There are going to be jobs created right across this whole province, including the land-based gaming operations, including the Internet gaming operations. In fact, when you look around the world where iGaming has been regulated, it's created more jobs, it's created more tax revenues, and it's been good for the economy so that people can put food on their table. So thank you again for that question.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Speaker, through you to the Premier: Earlier this week, you eliminated the vaccination passes that would finally allow people to experience some freedoms that they enjoyed pre-COVID. They could now show their support of small businesses and restaurant owners once again. But now I'm hearing reports that the provincial government is introducing a digital ID. It will contain personal and family contact information, access to

financial and numerous government services, and access to medical records, including immunizations.

Premier, we both understand the need to speed up efficiencies in the government. With technology becoming more accessible, I do have some concerns. Medical records are personal and confidential. Respectfully, Premier, they are no one's business. In the past, people had to show personal COVID vaccination status to go anywhere and to do anything such as to board planes, trains, or even automobiles or even go to sporting events.

But my question to you, Premier, is, with this digital ID that your government is working on, will it be used against someone if they are asked to show their COVID vaccination status? Again, I repeat: One's vaccination status is no one's business. It's personal.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Associate Minister of Digital Government.

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We are saying yes to improving customer service for the people of Ontario by modernizing the way people can access services online. I'm so proud of this Premier, who truly believes in customer service and is doing everything possible to make sure that we as a government provide the best customer service possible to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we are saying yes to the people of Ontario by creating easier access to online services at their fingertips. Ontario's Digital ID program will make it easier for people and businesses to securely prove their ID online, reduce the risk of ID theft, protect people's data and expand access across government services.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary.
1100

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm not so sure I heard the answer with regard to vaccine passes and having to show that.

But again, back to the Premier: Many are questioning the real reasons why you and other Premiers chose to eliminate the vaccine passes. What is the main driving force that resulted in the cancellation of vax passes? Lower COVID cases? Fewer hospitalizations? High percentages of currently vaccinated people? On the surface, all are probably true.

But now we've learned that the Prime Minister was secretly introducing a federally mandated vaccination pass for all Canadians, which means Dr. Trudeau could put his limits on out-of-country travel access of Canadians who have not chosen to be vaccinated. Once again, Premier, this is an affront to our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms—that is, until the Prime Minister decides to rewrite it.

My question to you, Premier, is, will you explain your reasoning for cancelling the provincially mandated vaccine passes and the emergency orders for Ontario now? And will you be supporting a federally mandated vaccination pass?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind the members to please make their comments through the Chair, not across the floor of the House.

The Associate Minister of Digital Government.

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: I want to be very crystal clear about it: There is no health data or vaccination information being part of the digital ID. I just want to make it very clear to the member opposite. We are saying yes, absolutely, to convenience and choice. As the Minister of Finance has said many, many times, digital first does not mean digital only. Ontario's Digital ID program will be optional. The government is not eliminating or phasing out any physical forms of ID, such as driver's licences and health cards.

As I have said, Mr. Speaker, protecting Ontarians' privacy is an essential part of our better customer service initiative. The Information and Privacy Commissioner has been engaged since day one, and we will continue to consult as Ontario's Digital ID program works to move forward.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. We are experiencing a historic labour shortage, and unfulfilled jobs are costing Ontario billions in lost productivity. Our government, under the leadership of our Premier and the minister, has already worked to remove unfair and discriminatory barriers against foreign-trained professionals so that they can fill in-demand jobs in the province.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister please share with this House how his ministry is continuing to cut red tape and working to make it easier for skilled professionals across Canada to work in our province?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the member from Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his tireless service for over a decade. Thank you so much.

Mr. Speaker, our government is building a stronger Ontario. To do so, it has never been more important to attract the skilled workers to do the jobs, and in-demand jobs. Between July and September 2021, there were over 330,000 vacant jobs in Ontario, which means hundreds of thousands of paycheques waiting to be collected. This is why, if passed, our Working for Workers Act 2 will cut red tape and make it easier for skilled professionals from across the country to work in Ontario. Our legislation will allow workers to get their credentials processed in less than 30 business days and make it easier for engineers, auto mechanics, plumbers and many more to come to Ontario and fill in-demand jobs and drive economic growth.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: I want to thank the parliamentary assistant, the member for Mississauga–Malton, and the minister for the great work they're doing on behalf of workers here in Ontario.

Data suggests that the need to replace retiring workers in the skilled trades is imminent and real. In 2016, nearly one in three journeypersons in Ontario was 55 years or older. We need more skilled tradespeople to come here.

These jobs are in-demand and highly paid, and these workers will contribute to and participate in our government's plan to make Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Speaker, through you, can the minister please tell us how our government is working to make it easier for skilled trade workers and apprentices to work and train in Ontario?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to the member again for the great question, and thank you for his mentorship and support in the last four years. I can't thank you enough.

As our Premier always says, our economy is on fire. Ontario is leading Canada's economic growth, and all these workers will play a crucial role in our government's plan to build more roads, bridges, highways, homes. We are maximizing our participation in the federal Red Seal Program so that there is a common standard for apprenticeship training and certification. Ontario will be recognizing all Red Seal trades. And we are going further: Our new agency, Skilled Trades Ontario, is harmonizing training standards for dozens of trades so that apprentices who started training elsewhere can continue their training here.

Mr. Speaker, all of our actions are focused on only one mission: to open our doors to so many people so they can call Ontario their home and we can prosper together.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Access to broadband is crucial for all Ontarians, and especially for rural Ontarians, for their families, for their businesses. We all know that. As a result, the Ford government made huge announcements: Everybody was going to be connected by 2025.

We were surprised by the Financial Accountability Officer's report that your government budgeted \$400 million—\$406 million, I believe—in the last budget, but actually, to date, you've spent \$1.2 million of that.

How are you going to get it done by 2025 when basically it's all talk and no investment?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member for the question. Through the Premier's leadership, we've invested \$4 billion to make sure that every single home in the province of Ontario is connected by the end of 2025. We've invested in 17 projects through ICON. We've partnered with the federal government for 58 projects across the province of Ontario, which include northern communities and First Nation communities.

Mr. Speaker, our focus right now is the reverse auction. It is under way, and it will connect the remaining 325,000 residents who are waiting to get connected.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: There is a big difference between actually investing and announcing investing, and there's a

pattern here. In 2019-20, you budgeted \$31 million and spent zero, zilch. In 2020-21, \$45.7 million was budgeted, and you spent or invested 1.37% of that.

What's even more frightening is that, as they come to this deadline, they're going to make spending decisions with the big players and leave the little players, the small Internet providers who actually are capable of providing the service through rural Ontario—you're going to leave them out and do the big Infrastructure Ontario reverse bid, and that is going to leave a lot of people out.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much for the supplementary. We are very anxiously anticipating the results of the reverse auction. It is going very well.

But if I recall correctly, the member opposite didn't support the Building Broadband Faster Act. So I want to ask the member opposite, what are you doing to help your constituents get connected across the province of Ontario?

Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to present further measures so that we can construct high-speed Internet infrastructure as quickly and efficiently as possible throughout the province of Ontario. I'll ask the member opposite, what are you going to do to help?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor of the House.

The next question.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is to the Premier. In 2006, the Liberal government of the day made traditional Chinese medicine a regulated health profession in Ontario. Until then, anyone in Ontario could hang up a shingle and say they were a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine. Creating the college was in the public interest. We did it to protect patients. That's why we have regulated health colleges. It's their primary purpose: patient safety, the public good.

For 16 years, the college has protected patients in Ontario. Your government wants to change all that. In Bill 88, you snuck in a section that eliminates the college and, most importantly, protection for patients.

Speaker, through you, will the minister commit today to protecting patients by removing schedule 5 from Bill 88 and commit to keeping the college of traditional Chinese medicine here in Ontario?

1110

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government is committed to protecting the safety of Ontario patients. We also are committed to getting more people working by reducing regulatory barriers, to allow more individuals to get back into the business of practising traditional Chinese medicine.

The proposed legislation would repeal the Traditional Chinese Medicine Act, 2006, and amend the Health and Supportive Care Providers Oversight Authority Act, 2021. As a result, the oversight of traditional Chinese medicine

practitioners and acupuncturists will transition from the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists to the Health and Supportive Care Providers Oversight Authority, which is the same oversight authority that is overseeing personal support workers. This is a strong organization which will provide the necessary protection for the people of Ontario while still allowing more practitioners to become involved in the practice, which is what the people of Ontario want.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Respectfully back to the minister: Traditional Chinese medicine practitioners are not tattoo artists and they are not PSWs. They apply medicine and treatment.

This change was done without any consultation—none whatsoever—literally out of the blue and buried in a bill. So far, we've heard no rationale from this government as to how this is going to make anybody safer or how it is going to affect people's access to care when their benefits plans don't pay for it anymore. How is this good for anyone in Ontario when any one of us can hang up a shingle and say we're a practitioner? Who told the government this was a good idea? Who whispered in the Premier's ear? There is no reasonable, rational reason to eliminate this college—none whatsoever. You're going backward, not forward.

Speaker, through you to the Premier, I'll ask once again: Will the Premier commit to removing schedule 5 from Bill 88 and keep the traditional Chinese medicine college here in Ontario and keep protecting patients?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government has always been dedicated to protecting the health and well-being of the people of Ontario. This is no different. This authority, the Health and Supportive Care Providers Oversight Authority, is already overseeing personal support workers who also provide health care to the people of Ontario. Traditional Chinese medical practitioners will be under the same authority. They will be provided with that safety. As well, acupuncturists will be protected by local personal health units, so there will be that authority.

It will also allow for more people who have faced significant barriers to being admitted by the college to be able to practise traditional Chinese medicine. That is what the people of Ontario want. We are dedicated to protecting their safety and making sure more people can have access to the care that they need and deserve.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. When the COVID-19 pandemic started, our government was quick to help pivot our businesses to produce the critical PPE needed to keep our health care workers and businesses safe. I recall, for example, joining the minister at the Vodkow distillery, just outside of Ottawa, who were pivoting to create hand sanitizer for my local hospital in Ottawa West—Nepean.

We saw businesses of all types step up to help get the province through the pandemic. Can the minister please tell us what has been done since to support businesses in establishing domestic supply chains?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We were so proud to see thousands of businesses pivot their operations to help fight the pandemic. They really showed what Premier Ford calls the Ontario spirit. We knew they needed our financial support and that's why we announced the \$50-million Ontario Together Fund, which helped support these businesses to retool and make that critical PPE. Virox Technologies, in Oakville, was the very first recipient. They invested \$1.7 million to manufacture disinfectant wipes, and the province invested \$850,000.

Sterling, in Concord, invested \$2 million, one of the first to make face shields in Ontario. The province invested \$1 million in these critical products that simply were not being made here in Ontario.

These are just two of the thousands of Ontario business success stories, showing that Ontario is getting stronger.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Through you, Speaker, thank you to the minister for that response. Clearly, the Ontario Together Fund was instrumental in establishing domestic supply chains here in Ontario, and many businesses will have benefited from the funding provided through the Ontario Together Fund.

We were very disappointed on this side of the aisle to see that the members opposite chose not to support these critical investments in Ontario businesses. Unlike the opposition and Liberals, our government will continue supporting businesses by making the right investments to ensure Ontario remains the economic engine of Canada.

Can the minister please provide some further examples of companies that Ontario has supported?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: As the pandemic continued throughout 2021, we provided an additional \$50 million to the Ontario Together Fund, and Ontario manufacturers continued to step up.

Abatement Technologies in Fort Erie invested over \$18 million to build a new facility to manufacture their infection control filtration systems. The province invested \$2.5 million in this company so that hospitals and long-term-care facilities had this life-saving equipment.

Greenfield Global in Johnstown, Canada's largest producer of ethanol, invested \$75 million to produce high-purity alcohol to make hand sanitizer. The government invested \$2.5 million to support local manufacturing, create good-paying jobs and ensure that we had the vital PPE literally at our fingertips.

These are two more of the Ontario business success stories, showing that Ontario is getting stronger.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Chris Glover: To the Premier: The Conservative government likes to claim that all of Ontario's problems are because of the Liberals, and we in the NDP agree that after 15 years in power, the Liberals left us with hallway

medicine in our hospitals, with a \$15.9-billion maintenance backlog in our schools and a massive housing crisis. But this Premier's developer-friendly policies have done nothing to address the housing crisis, which is making it nearly impossible for the average person to even rent in Ontario, let alone to afford to buy a home.

Rents in Toronto rose 14.5% last year to an average of \$2,315 a month. The government removed rent controls from new buildings and, as a result, tenants in my riding are now facing rent increases of \$500 a month. In my riding, average rent in Harbour Plaza increased by 37.7% last year, and 36.1% at the Playground Condos at Garrison Point. These condos are all exempt from rent controls because of this government's actions.

Why is affording a place to live so difficult in this government's Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: When we took government in 2018, we inherited a huge housing crisis in this province, enabled by the Liberal government and the NDP before, who supported them all the way through. Young families, seniors and hard-working Ontarians are desperate for housing that meets their needs.

Our government's priorities put affordable housing ownership in the reach of Ontario families and provide more people with the opportunities they need to live closer to where they work. That's why, in 2019, we introduced More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan to make housing more affordable by increasing the supply of a full range of housing options.

Our action plan puts Ontario first. We cut red tape and are helping build the right types of homes in the right places, making housing more affordable and building them faster. More Homes, More Choice includes a broad range of measures to address the speed of development approvals, the mix of housing types, the cost of development, the supply of rental and ownership housing, and other innovative ideas to increase housing supply.

In December, we asked the Housing Affordability Task Force to look at and explore measures to address housing—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Chris Glover: I don't know what province the member opposite is living in, but if he thinks he's been making housing more affordable in Ontario, he is not trying to rent something, he's not trying to buy a home in Ontario. Your housing plan bulldozes over communities, wet lands and heritage properties, but does not address the financialization of the housing market or money laundering, and it has not reduced the cost of housing.

1120

Last year, under your watch, home prices in Toronto increased 16% to \$1.7 million, and by the end of the year, an average condo will be over \$750,000 in Toronto. People are leaving the province because of the cost of housing. Business owners in my riding tell me that

housing costs are now Ontario's biggest competitive disadvantage.

You've had four years to make housing affordable. Rent is out of reach and the dream of buying a home has been crushed. Will you admit that your "affordable" housing strategy has been an abject failure and that it's time to change course? Or are you saying to the people of Ontario that the only way they are going to get the homes they can afford is if they vote you out in the next election?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

To respond, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the opposition for the question. I just find it very ironic that the inaction of the Liberals and NDP for 15 years put us in this spot. We're digging out of this spot. Rental housing and affordable home ownership are even further out of reach for hard-working Ontarians because of 15 years of doing absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker, our government's housing supply action plan is working to increase supply and make it easier for Ontarians to find the right home for them. In 2020, the year after the housing supply action plan was implemented, Ontario had over 81,000 housing starts, the highest level in a decade, and over 11,000 rental starts, the highest level since 1992. These are the trends that continued last year. Ontario had over 100,000 housing starts, the highest level in 30 years, since 1987, and more than 13,000 rental starts, the highest level since 1991. We're—

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

The next question.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Recently, the Financial Accountability Office released a report confirming that after almost four years in office, this government "isn't going to be reducing electricity bills"—another broken promise from this government's 2018 election campaign promises.

Not only did the FAO state that electricity rates aren't going down, but, in fact, under this government, average residential electricity rates have increased by 4.3%. It is a shame, Mr. Speaker, to see Ontarians pushed further into energy poverty at a time when the economy has suffered through lockdowns and thousands have lost their jobs.

Why has this government broken its promise to voters to lower electricity rates?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks very much to the member opposite for that very important question. And I want to thank the Financial Accountability Officer for the report that he tabled last week.

We all remember, Speaker, the way that electricity rates were soaring under the previous McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government, sometimes at double-digit percentages year over year. What the Financial Accountability Officer stated in his report last week is that our government is on

the right track to flattening those soaring rates here in Ontario. As a matter of fact, under the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan, over the next decade, those electricity rates were anticipated to rise 6% to 7% each and every year.

Mr. Speaker, what the FAO confirmed last week is that our plan is working. Our plan is the best. We're flattening the rate of increase at much lower than the rate of inflation across Ontario. We are keeping the price of electricity certain.

We're lowering the price at the pumps as well, Mr. Speaker. Our Premier got rid of the cap-and-trade, dropping gas prices by 4.3 cents a litre. The Liberals step in federally and raise the price by even more.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Speaker, the largest factor driving electricity rates up in this province is the unsustainable costs of wind turbines. They produce little electricity for an exorbitant cost.

The Premier said, when he was running for leader of the party and campaigning for Premier, that he opposed wind turbine projects, but under this government, they are building the largest wind turbine project in Ontario's history, in the riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Somehow, this government finds the power to shut down local businesses for two years with mandates, but can't find the power or the will to cancel wind turbine projects that are increasing electricity costs and are a rip-off to taxpayers and ratepayers.

Can the government explain why it is allowing the largest wind turbine project in Ontario's history to be built under its watch?

Hon. Todd Smith: Speaker, I know that the member opposite will remember this, because she was a member of this caucus when she voted in favour of lowering electricity rates in the province of Ontario by cancelling 790 unnecessary over-market solar and wind energy projects, which saved electricity customers almost \$800 million on their electricity rates.

We've taken great steps to stop those projects in their tracks, because all they were going to do was continue to drive up the price of electricity. What we have done through the Ontario electricity rate savings program and the comprehensive electricity plan is to move those prices. We've moved those over-market costs that were put in place by the previous government to give industry a break, to give farmers a break, to give businesses and homeowners a break of 15% to 17% each and every year on their electricity bill.

We're finding ways to save money. We know that the Liberals and the NDP would only cause those prices to skyrocket.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Financial Accountability Office released their latest report on this government's spending, and their findings were, unsurprisingly, disheartening. They were

supposed to spend \$600 million on the Ontario Autism Program, but they only spent \$334 million. This is disgraceful.

Many constituents have contacted my office trying to get the support and the funding they needed for their children. I have written many letters on their behalf, trying to find some kind of relief for them, and nothing. This government has done nothing.

My constituents have had to jump through hoops just to get even half of the funding their children need to access programming, yet this government only spent 56% of the allocated budget. Can the Premier explain why he and his government continue to underfund the Ontario Autism Program?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite. This is obviously a very important issue for our government, and it's exactly why our government doubled the amount going to the Ontario autism plan when we began the necessary innovation to bring a world-class program for children with autism and their families.

As of last week, \$95.5 million has flowed to 8,682 families through childhood budgets; \$380 million has flowed to 34,099 families through interim one-time funding. That's real support to children with autism and their families.

I will remind this House that approximately 40,000 children are receiving supports today. That is almost five times as many children and families receiving support than with the previous government. We are making good progress on our target to enrol more children and families into the core clinical services. We are reaching the milestones that we set out in other facets of the program, like the Entry to School Program and the independent intake organization. We are projecting increased spending in the last quarter of 2021-22—

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

Supplementary.

Miss Monique Taylor: Enough is enough. I have stood in this House far too many times—actually, far too many years. Too many years I have been standing in this House to try to get the government to hold themselves accountable for their failures regarding the autism funding and supports for Ontarians. Countless children are sitting—and I believe it's over 50,000 children are waiting for real services, not the piecemeal services that your one-time funding gives them. They are waiting for those services, to access the Ontario Autism Program—which, quite frankly, doesn't really exist. Parents and loved ones are struggling to pay for services that their kids need.

We need to see more investments in the autism program from this government so that families can have access to quality needs-based care. The FAO report has demonstrated that this government just doesn't care to fund the Ontario Autism Program or other critical services, for that matter.

Will the Premier commit today to spending the rest of the allocated budget, increasing the Ontario Autism Program and getting that money out the door to families and kids who need it? Will they commit to that today?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

1130

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Once again, I think it is important to deal with facts. We are confident that we will spend the full \$600 million. That is what we are projecting to have in increased spending in the last quarter of 2021-22 on the Ontario Autism Program.

For the facts, we have approximately 40,000 children enrolled in this program. We have doubled the amount of funding to \$600 million. We have five times as many children receiving supports as under the previous government.

Let me give you some numbers: children and youth enrolled in behaviour plans, 3,665 children; payments issued for interim one-time funding, 32,056 payments; families enrolled in the launch of core clinical services, 650; families who accessed foundational family services, 12,914; children enrolled in the caregiver-mediated early years program, 1,126; in the Entry to School Program, 912.

This is ongoing. This is our commitment. We are listening to the recommendations from the advisory panel and the implementation working group, and we are continuing on our—

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

The next question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. Good morning, Premier. In 2018, the Ontario Liberal government was on track with investments to the Scarborough hospitals after an expert panel review, including committing to the expansion of emergency room departments to three times their current size, which would include Centenary and Birchmount sites; supporting the Bridletowne Community Hub as a modern, community-based dialysis facility in Scarborough; as well as funding \$5 million for stage 1 master planning for new hospital facilities.

In our 2018 budget, the Liberals committed to \$1.1 billion for SHN. Speaker, why is this Premier sitting on this funding four years later? Why has it taken four years for you to commit to Scarborough?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government has made significant investments to support the health care needs of the people of Scarborough. In 2021-22, we increased their base budget by 2.5%, giving them an additional \$12 million. We also provided \$9.46 million for an additional

20 acute medical surgical beds for the Scarborough Health Network. And as part of our government's historic \$1.8-billion investment in hospitals, we invested \$3.64 million for 20 transitional care beds for the Scarborough Health Network. Year over year, we continued to invest in Scarborough through our Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund, with a \$5.9-million investment in 2019-20; \$4.6 million in 2021; and a \$4.7-million investment in 2021-22.

Our government is committed to ensuring that the people of Scarborough have the health care that they need and deserve.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Back to the Premier: As you know, capital is a specific ask, and I understand that it does take time. But we all want to be treated equally in this province, and that includes the services that we receive in our health care. Why is Scarborough last, when Scarborough has some of the oldest hospitals in the province, including operating rooms that are still being used that were built in the 1950s?

Last November, the Scarborough Health Network submitted a plan to invest \$1.9 billion in Birchmount and Centenary hospitals that would result in a 30% increase in bed capacity in Scarborough. Yesterday, the Ontario Liberal Party committed to SHN and the people of Scarborough that we will say yes to investing in Scarborough and our hospitals, and we are asking the Premier also to join us and to say yes today and show the people of Scarborough a little bit of love. Commit, Premier, to the \$1.9 billion that SHN has asked you for since last November. Would you commit today?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Speaker, I've already indicated the significant investments that our government has made in the Scarborough Health Network over the years since 2018. I have great respect for the member opposite and I know she's a great advocate for Scarborough, but look at the facts. The former Liberal government promised an expansion to the Scarborough hospital for over 10 years. They left the project lingering in planning for years. Operating rooms were the oldest in the province, with little to no investment. They're half the size they should be. Medical equipment lines the hallway because it doesn't fit inside.

Our government has invested an additional \$12 million in 2021-22 for Scarborough Health Network's base budget. We've also added beds. Now, take a look. The former Liberal government and the current Liberals talk a good game, but have delivered nothing. We have made the investments that the people of Scarborough need, and we'll continue to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period.

The member for Orléans has informed me he has a point of order.

Mr. Stephen Blais: On a point of order, I seek unanimous consent to remove schedule 4 from Bill 84 to ensure that the government obeys its own law relating to the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader on the same point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, the opposition will have the opportunity to actually stand in their place momentarily and vote against that motion if they should see fit. We have heard from both opposition parties that they do not value the tax cuts that are in this document. We've heard from both opposition parties that there are many schedules that they do not like. We've heard, of course, from the leader of the Green Party, the only one who has decided that he will be voting against it. But again, Mr. Speaker, on this one, as opposed to a unanimous consent motion, the member will, in a moment, have the opportunity, along with all of the opposition, to stand in their place and vote against this bill, vote against the tax cuts, the money we're putting back in people's pockets, if they should so choose.

Hon. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Energy. Is this the same point of order?

Hon. Todd Smith: No, it's a different one.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have to deal with this first.

The member for Orléans is seeking unanimous consent of the House to remove schedule 4 from Bill 84. Agreed? I heard a no.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Now the Minister of Energy has a point of order he'd like to raise.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. I would just like to correct my record in response to the question from the member from Cambridge. I said we're lowering gas prices by 4.3 cents a litre. What I meant to say is that we lowered gas prices by 4.3 cents a litre. I know she'll remember that, because she voted in favour of that when she was a member of this caucus.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members are entitled to correct their own record by using points of order.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 101(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Oosterhoff assumes ballot item number 34, and Mr. Bouma assumes ballot item number 48.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough-Kawartha may have a point of order.

Mr. Dave Smith: He wasn't here in the House yesterday so I couldn't do it yesterday, so today I'd like to wish a belated happy birthday to the member from Pickering.

DEFERRED VOTES

FEWER FEES, BETTER SERVICES ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022

POUR DE MEILLEURS SERVICES ET MOINS DE FRAIS

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

Bill 84, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 84, Loi visant à édicter deux lois et à modifier diverses autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the motion for third reading of Bill 84, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various other Acts.

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

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

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

On February 28, 2022, Mrs. Tangri moved third reading of Bill 84, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various other Acts. On March 2, 2022, Mr. Calandra moved that the question be now put.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gill, Parm	Piccini, David
Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Roberts, Jeremy
Barrett, Toby	Hogarth, Christine	Romano, Ross
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jones, Sylvia	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Kanapathi, Logan	Sandhu, Amarjot
Calandra, Paul	Ke, Vincent	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kusendova, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Smith, Todd
Crawford, Stephen	McDonell, Jim	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Elliott, Christine	Nicholls, Rick	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fedeli, Victor	Oosterhoff, Sam	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ford, Doug	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy
Fullerton, Merrilee	Parsa, Michael	Walker, Bill
Ghamari, Goldie	Pettapiece, Randy	Yakabuski, John

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy	Rakocevic, Tom
Blais, Stephen	Hunter, Mitzie	Sattler, Peggy
Collard, Lucille	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Schreiner, Mike
Fraser, John	Lindo, Laura Mae	Taylor, Monique
French, Jennifer K.	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Glover, Chris	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 54; the nays are 17.

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

Next we have a vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 84, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various other Acts.

On February 28, Mrs. Tangri moved third reading of Bill 84, An Act to enact two Acts and amend various other Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

RACIAL EQUITY IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 SUR L'ÉGALITÉ RACIALE DANS LE SYSTÈME D'ÉDUCATION

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 67, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to racial equity / Projet de loi 67, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'égalité raciale.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1153.

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

This is a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 67, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to racial equity.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Glover, Chris	Piccini, David
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Rakocevic, Tom
Babikian, Aris	Harden, Joel	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Roberts, Jeremy
Barrett, Toby	Hatfield, Percy	Romano, Ross
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Hogarth, Christine	Sabawy, Sheref
Bisson, Gilles	Hunter, Mitzie	Sandhu, Amarjot
Blais, Stephen	Jones, Sylvia	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bouma, Will	Kanapathi, Logan	Sattler, Peggy
Calandra, Paul	Ke, Vincent	Schreiner, Mike
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kusendova, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Lindo, Laura Mae	Smith, Todd
Collard, Lucille	Mantha, Michael	Stiles, Marit
Crawford, Stephen	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McDonell, Jim	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	McKenna, Jane	Taylor, Monique
Elliott, Christine	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fedeli, Victor	Mulrone, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fraser, John	Nicholls, Rick	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
French, Jennifer K.	Oosterhoff, Sam	Vanthof, John
Fullerton, Merrilee	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Parsa, Michael	Walker, Bill
Gill, Pam	Pettapiece, Randy	Yakabuski, John

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Karahalios, Belinda C.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 72; the nays are 1.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 101(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House, unless—the member for Kitchener Centre?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Social policy, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'd like to register my intent to vote against Bill 84.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Just in support of the leader of the Green Party, I think he would seek unanimous consent to have his vote on Bill 84 registered as a no.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow the member for Guelph's vote on Bill 84 to be registered as a nay, or no. Agreed? I heard a no.

There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

2704395 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2022

Ms. Berns-McGown moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr66, An Act to revive 2704395 Ontario Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 89, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

MOTIONS

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 86

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, pursuant to standing order 77(a), the order for second reading of Bill 86, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend various Acts to combat Islamophobia and hatred, be discharged and the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that, pursuant to standing order 77(a), the order for second reading of Bill 86, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend various Acts to combat Islamophobia and hatred, be discharged and the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. 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 will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Five members standing in their place, this vote will be deferred until—no, call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1303 to 1308.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that the Speaker has made a mistake. It should be a 30-minute bell, not a five-minute bell, so we're going to continue to let the clock run for another 25 minutes and the vote will take place in 25 minutes. Thank you.

The division bells rang from 1308 to 1333.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Hardeman, Ernie	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Harris, Mike	Roberts, Jeremy
Bailey, Robert	Kanapathi, Logan	Romano, Ross
Barrett, Toby	Ke, Vincent	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Kusendova, Natalia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Lecce, Stephen	Scott, Laurie
Calandra, Paul	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Cho, Stan	McKenna, Jane	Surma, Kinga
Coe, Lorne	Mulroney, Caroline	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Parsa, Michael	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Pettapiece, Randy	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Piccini, David	

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

Nays

Collard, Lucille	Karahalios, Belinda C.
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The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 44; the nays are 2.

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

Motion agreed to.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. I checked with the table and they cannot recall off the top of their heads a historical precedent for a private member's bill to be discharged from an order for second reading and referred to a committee without the consent of the private member. This not only denies that private member the ability to bring forward the Our London Family Act on March 10, as is indicated in the order of precedence on the ballot draw; it also goes against the wishes of the London Muslim community, of the Muslim community across the province and of the National Council of Canadian Muslims, who wanted to see that bill debated in this chamber and passed with unanimous consent on March 10.

I want to say to the government House leader: He has discharged this bill to committee; we will be watching, the Muslim community will be watching to make sure that that bill is called by committee and passed into law before this House rises.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Does the government House leader wish to speak to the point of order that's been raised?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Yes, on the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. To be very clear, what this motion does today is, in fact, move this bill directly to committee. I will remind the opposition House leader that yesterday in debating in this House they suggested that there was not enough opportunity for bills to be debated at committee. So what we have done is move this bill directly to committee because it is a very extensive bill with a lot of provisions. To have the respect that this bill deserves, we've moved it directly.

It does not eliminate the second reading. It does not eliminate third reading. It still allows the member to have debate in this House when that bill comes back before this House. It is moving it directly to committee, allowing second reading, allowing third reading, and respects what the opposition was talking about yesterday in every single speech they gave in front of this chamber.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it on the same point of order?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: On the same point of order.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you for the recognition, Speaker. I have to rise in support of the official opposition member. I've been in this Legislature now over eight years. I have never seen this type of—really, it feels like a bullying of the bill. Not even the members who have put forward the bill have had an opportunity to add voice to the decision to discharge a private member's bill, one that is so sensitive to the people of London, the Afzaal family, who have lost loved ones.

Interjection: Is that a point of order or a speech?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Yes, this is a point of order because it is about the procedures of this House. The government members have said that they want to fast-track this bill because of the urgency of the issue—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member for Scarborough–Guildwood to take her seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order. There was a point of order raised. I've heard two other submissions with respect to the point of order, but I find that the point of order is not a valid point. There is nothing out of order with what just happened.

Motions?

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 88

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, pursuant to standing order 77(a), the order for second reading of Bill 88, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various statutes, be discharged and the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that, pursuant to standing order 77(a), the order for second reading of Bill 88, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various statutes, be discharged and the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1341 to 1411.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gill, Parm	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Roberts, Jeremy
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Romano, Ross
Barrett, Toby	Kanapathi, Logan	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Ke, Vincent	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Kusendova, Natalia	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Martin, Robin	Smith, Todd
Cho, Stan	McDonell, Jim	Surma, Kinga
Coe, Lorne	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Crawford, Stephen	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Oosterhoff, Sam	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Wai, Daisy
Fedeli, Victor	Parsa, Michael	Walker, Bill
Fullerton, Merrilee	Pettapiece, Randy	
Ghamari, Goldie	Piccini, David	

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

Nays

Baber, Roman	Hunter, Mitzie	Simard, Amanda
Collard, Lucille	Karahalios, Belinda C.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 46; the nays are 5.

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

Motion agreed to.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I just want to point out that the government, once again, did not provide any advanced notice of their intentions to discharge this bill today. In fact, people who looked at the orders of the day on the Legislative Assembly—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. This is not a valid point of order.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Ottawa–Vanier.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Mr. Speaker, I just want to raise the fact that earlier this week the House leader introduced changes to the standing orders, saying that modernizing, updating and improving the function of this House is to the benefit of the members. I'll submit that this motion—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to take her seat. There's nothing out of order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the government House leader to come to order. Order.

We're still on motions.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

On the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Mr. McDonell replaces Mr. Yurek; and

On the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Harris replaces Mr. Yurek.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

On the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Mr. McDonell replaces Mr. Yurek; and

On the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Harris replaces Mr. Yurek.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that, in addition to their regularly scheduled meeting times, the following committees be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair for

the duration of the 42nd Parliament: The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Standing Committee on General Government, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that, in addition to their regularly scheduled meeting times, the following committees be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Dispense? I heard a no—for the duration of the 42nd Parliament: the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Standing Committee on General Government, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I wanted to respond to the government House leader's motion. One of the changes that he had previously brought into the standing orders created a process for a standing committee to meet, and that was with a certain number of members sending a letter to the Chair in order to create a meeting when the Legislature was not sitting. We do not support the ability of a Chair of a standing committee to unilaterally determine meetings of the committee without the involvement of at least a majority of the members of the committee.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I'm—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Because the government House leader moved the motion, he's not eligible to participate in the debate at this opportunity.

Shall I read it again? Mr. Calandra has moved that, in addition to their regularly scheduled meeting times, the following committees be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair for the duration of the 42nd Parliament: the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Standing Committee on General Government, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1419 to 1449.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Gill, Parm	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Roberts, Jeremy
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Romano, Ross
Barrett, Toby	Kanapathi, Logan	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Ke, Vincent	Sandhu, Amarjot
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova, Natalia	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lecce, Stephen	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	McKenna, Jane	Smith, Todd
Crawford, Stephen	Mulroney, Caroline	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	Pang, Billy	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fedeli, Victor	Parsa, Michael	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Pettapiece, Randy	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Piccini, David	Walker, Bill

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Sattler, Peggy
Berns-McGown, Rima	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Hatfield, Percy	Rakocevic, Tom	Vanthof, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 45; the nays are 9.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 32(b), the time allotted for the afternoon routine has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 3, 2022, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion regarding amendments to the standing orders.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: To resume debate from this morning, I was discussing the proposed changes to the standing orders. As I mentioned, each of us was elected here to represent the people of Ontario, so it's imperative that every member is able to voice their opinion, and that the opinions of their constituents are represented. This is exactly what the new standing orders changes will build on, Speaker. We want to maximize the finite amount of time that we have here in the Legislature every day. These new changes will allow for a more focused, targeted and relevant review of proposed government spending.

First and foremost, this legislation will adjust the estimates process. We have reverted to the system used before in Ontario regarding the introduction of estimates, which will now be referred to the policy field committee for the relevant ministry or office.

We have also made changes to allow the committee to schedule and allocate time the same way it would for a bill. This will improve government analysis to ensure it meets our standards.

We have moved the consideration of estimates from a single estimates committee to various policy field committees, where members of each committee would make selections in rotations. The whole committee would have to adopt a motion designating the amount of time for each selection and the scheduling, which means that a government bill would supersede and postpone the consideration of estimates.

In addition to the general government, social policy and justice policy committees, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs would become a policy field committee.

We're also proposing the creation of a new Standing Committee on the Interior.

The general government committee would be renamed the procedure and House affairs committee. The new procedure and House affairs committee will be chaired by an official opposition member and will be responsible for the oversight and rehabilitation of the Legislature.

Speaker, these changes allow for a more focused, targeted and relevant review of proposed government spending. By referring estimates of ministries to their respective policy field committees, we can improve oversight by expanding the time available for the study of estimates and allowing MPPs to focus on particular policy fields during their review.

The standing orders changes will prioritize the consideration of government bills to take priority on estimates. This will ensure that estimates can receive a more thorough review and make sure that government legislation is not delayed.

The standing order amendments will also make minor changes to PR bill procedures. After the first reading, all PR bills are required to remain on the order paper for four weeks before they can be called for second reading. Any member of this Legislative Assembly committee or five members not of the committee may file a request with the Clerk of the House that the PR bill be referred to committee, which will then trigger a referral. However, this request must be filed with the Clerk of the House and will be reported to the House by the Speaker and a referral to the Legislative Assembly committee. If a PR bill is referred to the committee, it will be studied as it is presently. When a PR bill is reported back to the House, the orders for second and third reading may be called by the government House leader and the questions will be put immediately without debate.

This change allows for the elimination of the regulations and private bills committee and creates a more streamlined process for what is effectively an administrative and non-contentious process for 90% of PR bills. It has become standard practice for all PR bills to be passed after an extremely brief six-minute committee study and then with expedited unanimous consent in the chamber. We're simply formalizing this practice and making it less

time-consuming and burdensome for the public, staff and, of course, MPPs as well. This change allows committee resources to be refocused and reallocated, allowing non-contentious bills to be passed more efficiently. It will reduce the wait time for members of the public who need them passed while still allowing proper legislation to continue.

Speaker, we're also proposing amendments for private members' bills. For this amendment, a member must designate which item they wish to debate two weeks prior to their ballot date. If they fail to do so, their first bill is automatically designated. If the member has not introduced a bill, the first motion they have tabled will be designated. Now the deadline for trading ballot items with another member will be the same as the deadline for introducing and designating an item, replacing the prior Thursday requirement.

At the start of the new Parliament or a session, PMBs begin on the 12th sessional day. These changes allow all parties to have reasonable notice prior to their upcoming PMBs, giving members the opportunity to review ahead of the debate. Providing parties with reasonable notice of PMBs will also position them for discussion at caucus, and adjusting the standing orders at this time means the changes will be in place and remain functional at the start of each new session or new Parliament.

We have also changed the ballot-trade procedure, which cannot be made after the two-week deadline. This will now be the same as the deadline for introducing and designating an item, instead of the prior Thursday.

Regarding the spring meeting period, the Legislature currently lasts until the first Thursday in June. However, the revision we are making will allow Parliament to be dissolved at least four weeks earlier in an election year, so as we approach the end of a meeting period, the standing orders relating to night sittings and opposition days will function as originally intended, allowing the government to complete its legislative agenda. These new changes will maintain all 18 night sittings instead of the five we currently have access to, which is the way the schedule is currently written.

Regarding committee changes where there are three recognized parties, all committees will have a First Vice-Chair and a Second Vice-Chair. Where a Chair is allocated to the government, the First Vice-Chair will be the official opposition's and the Second Vice-Chair will be from the third party, and when a Chair is allocated to the official opposition, the First Vice-Chair will be from the government and the Second Vice-Chair will be from the opposition party. This change adopts the model used in Ottawa and reinforces the goal of non-partisan committee leadership.

1500

These standing order changes also address a few miscellaneous items here in the Legislature. First and foremost, we are proposing changes that allow the government House leader to recall the House at 9 a.m. the following Monday. This ensures we can fulfill our elected agenda and obligations and stay on track for the designated sitting period.

We have also modified the parameters for when a member speaks for less than 10 minutes. Under the proposed standing order changes, if a member does not meet the 10-minute threshold, they will be entitled to a five-minute Q&A session. This will allow for increased debate and will guarantee its effectiveness in achieving its main goal, and corrects an unintended interpretation of the change to Q&As.

We are extending quorum bells to 10 minutes instead of five, providing members who have offices outside Queen's Park to be able to arrive in a timely manner when they are needed.

All of these changes are proposed to improve the functionality of our Legislative Assembly. These amendments add to the changes we made in 2019, 2020 and 2021, furthering our goal of improving the day-to-day proceedings of the House while increasing efficiency. Our government remains focused on facilitating the productive and flexible proceedings of the Assembly. These changes will strengthen the institution of Parliament.

Once again, I recall the changes that had to be made very quickly as a result of this pandemic and how we had to adapt as members. There were changes that were made where voting requirements here changed and all of us had to adapt to the changes as a result.

Many of the standing order changes that have already been put in place have changed the way we conduct business here for the better. One of the areas that I mentioned this morning early on was the area where we are now able to use electronic devices—in 2022. I couldn't believe that we weren't able to before, even in 2021 or 2020 or 2019.

I heard some of my colleagues talk about why these standing order changes are being proposed. They're being proposed because we need to always look for ways to improve what we do, 100%, every time. It should always be reviewed. When I heard the government House leader talk about the fact that we haven't had a substantial change to our standing orders in over 30 years, as a member who hasn't been here very long—this is my first term serving here—that was puzzling as to why none of the members had raised that concern. Why are we not looking at ways to improve the way we do business here?

Accessibility: That was one point that the government House leader alluded to in his speech this morning—that that was overlooked. Perhaps at the time when standing orders were being discussed, it wasn't a big deal, but there are issues that are a big deal today, where we cannot punt it down the road and we cannot say that it's not a priority, because it is a priority. The function of this Parliament is important to us as members, but it's important to every single Ontarian and every single constituent who sends us here. We need to make sure that we are always looking at ways to improve the functionality of this Parliament. Improving the system and the procedures here is incredibly important.

One of my colleagues, whom I have a great deal of respect for, talked about the fact that there is other stuff going on. We can do more than one thing at a time. A

discussion was made by one of my colleagues about infrastructure needs. Well, the champion Minister of Infrastructure is doing heavy lifting in the province of Ontario, with critical infrastructure projects all over the province, because the previous government didn't.

We have the ability to be able to do more than one thing. We have the ability to be able to make sure that we're building more schools, after the previous government closed 600 schools. I see the wonderful Minister of Education sitting here, and I thank him for the great work that he has done in that portfolio, especially during a very difficult time during the pandemic. While the previous government spent a lot of time closing schools, this minister was busy building more schools, was busy making sure students, staff, teachers and everyone is protected and safe during a pandemic.

When you look at the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, Madam Speaker, I can't say enough about her making life easier for every single person and family in the province of Ontario through red tape bill after red tape bill. Thank you very much, Minister Tangri, for the great work that you have done in your red tape bills.

Madam Speaker, I know I don't have a lot of time. I want to thank you for the opportunity. These standing orders will make our Parliament function better. I'm proud of the fact that the government House leader, with our government, and, for the most part, the opposition as well have worked together really well over the last two years to be able to serve Ontarians. I look forward to building on it.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, I hope you don't consider this a prop. This is the standing orders. For the people at home, the standing orders of this Legislature are like our internal Bible, if you will, but instead of the Ten Commandments we have something like 150. These are our rules and our regulations, and those we must follow to the letter of the law lest we be deemed out of order, or use language unbecoming of an elected member of Ontario's provincial Parliament, or we try to do something that isn't allowed.

I think I've heard this is the seventh change in the standing orders that this government has introduced. It seems to have been a priority. Not that periodic updates aren't welcome; that's not what I'm talking about today. I think we can all agree that some of the rules and regulations in our standing orders have become outdated as technology has changed.

I know others have talked about this, but laptops and cellphones have become commonplace. If you look around the room, you can at any time of the day observe many of us tapping away, sending a message or reading one that has come in, and we're now allowed to read into the record mail, messages or even an entire speech from our laptops and our cellphones. It wasn't that long ago that this was against the rules and the regulations. I can recall several times when I was in the Speaker's chair—I see the

Minister of Education here this afternoon, and I can recall interrupting him once or twice and reminding him that he wasn't allowed to be reading off of his laptop while he was making his speech. That was just a couple of years ago.

The rules that governed us at that time, obviously, didn't allow that. They do now, after a previous update to the standing orders, which we all agreed was long overdue. Or the way we used to defer a vote in this House: The Speaker had to be handed a slip of paper, a deferral slip. We don't have to do that anymore after previous changes to the rules. As I say, Speaker, many updates and many changes have been accepted as obvious improvements to make the way we do things around here move along much more smoothly.

I would expect that most of our viewing audience, those watching at home, have switched channels by now. This is not as good as a soap opera. This is not exciting stuff. Nothing dramatic is going on here this afternoon. Maybe those who have trouble sleeping who have tuned in, maybe we've done them a service talking about rules and regulations and changes to the standing orders.

1510

There's a term that can be used for such updates to the standing orders, and that's "inside baseball." It's a term that has been commonly used for, I don't know, 70 years or so—inside baseball. Of course, it has nothing to do with the Blue Jays or the Tigers, nothing to do with intentional walks, bunts, sacrifice flies, steals or throwing at the hitter—no. "Inside baseball" is a term commonly used to refer to the minutiae and detailed inner workings of a system that are only interesting to, or appreciated by, experts, insiders and aficionados. In other words, nuances contained with these updates are not understood or appreciated by most outsiders.

Yet outside of our bubble here in the Legislature, most people couldn't give a care about what we're doing on standing orders. That's not to say that they're not important to us; they are. They are really important to us, and we can understand if people watching these proceedings at home are wondering why this seems to be a priority for us when, all around us, there are so many other events taking place that we're not spending our time trying to fix; for example, a huge jump in the price of gasoline; a huge increase in the cost of fresh fruit, vegetables—in fact, all groceries—a big jump in the cost of living and the price we pay to get a mortgage; the increase in the costs of hydro—hydro we need, especially in the winter months, the coldest days of the winter.

Speaker, we look around the world at the inexplicable war of aggression that Russia is waging on its neighbour Ukraine. The government of the day, especially a majority government, sets the priorities for debates in this House. This afternoon, the government's priority in this debate are the updates to the standing orders. That's the priority. The Conservative government has said to the people of Ontario, "Today, our biggest priority is changing the rules and procedures, the standing orders, of the Ontario Legislature." Now, that's their choice. They're a majority government; they can do what they want. They can set their priorities, and they have done so.

As I said, I'm not saying these updates are unnecessary or even for the most part unwelcome, but when it comes to priorities, I think we could be using the time on other issues more relevant to the vast majority of the people of Ontario. The COVID crisis seems to be easing, but we've been fooled on that front before. Thousands of business owners are still clinging by their fingernails trying to keep their doors open.

In Ottawa and Windsor, we've seen illegal protests and occupations that cost business owners, international companies and taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. We could be debating how much the province could or should be contributing to those municipalities to help offset the cost of the extra policing to deal with those illegal occupations.

In Windsor's case, I know the city is on the hook for more than \$1 million just to pay for the Jersey barriers, those big concrete blocks that are used to block and redirect traffic flow. These barriers were required to block the transport trucks from barricading traffic to and from the Ambassador Bridge. Of course, this also meant our citizens couldn't easily cross the road to access their neighbourhood grocery stores or their doctor's office or get their pets to the local veterinarian. The Jersey barriers were blocking the intersections so the trucks couldn't come back and barricade the bridge again. The busiest border crossing in Canada, hundreds of millions of dollars of trade interrupted between Ontario and Michigan because of an illegal protest and the barricade by the trucking industry—not the trucking industry; some people driving big trucks that had blocked the road. It caused great consternation in Ottawa. As we know, it went on for weeks and weeks and weeks. It also caused great disruption in my community of Windsor.

But in order to maintain order, the city had to pay more than \$1 million for added safety measures such as Jersey barriers; let alone the extra costs through overtime and all the police who had to come in and help us out.

Speaker, there are so many other issues, but, like I say, we live inside a bubble here at Queen's Park. There's a much wider world out there. In fact, just a few minutes ago, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, the member from Beaches-East York and I were having a discussion. We were talking about friends who we have in common or have known, and we were talking about a small world—a small world, indeed, sometimes, when there are certain degrees of separation between friends and people we know about.

It is a small world, in many cases, but there's also a much wider universe, Speaker. For example, I'm always amazed to hear these numbers, but when you think about our universe, the diameter of the Milky Way, the galaxy of stars that includes our solar system, is somewhere between 100,000 and 120,000 light years, or more than 500 billion billion miles. This galaxy includes between 100 billion and 400 billion stars, and there are at least 100 billion more galaxies, each with perhaps billions of stars out beyond our local group. About 30,000 light years out from the centre of the Milky Way is our sun, a relatively insignificant star with its nine tiny planets.

We get wrapped up in a bubble here, in our legislative bubble, and we come up with our priorities. Some people say that we're not living in the real world, we're not dealing with real world issues—issues that are affecting most of the people in Ontario—and today, perhaps, those people are correct. Inside-baseball changes to the standing orders are important to us, the 124 of us, and the table officers who have to deal with legislative debates and the rules and the regulations that guide us, that set the example on how we are to debate the issues of the day. We deal with those in priority, and the priority this afternoon at this time is talking about the standing orders that we're all governed by.

But beyond these four walls, not so much. People don't really care about the changes to the standing orders. They don't care about the rules and the regulations, and they don't really care how much time we're devoting to talking about them, except that the time that we deal with our standing orders—our precious moments, precious hours—we're not dealing with the issues that affect most people in Ontario, and those issues, as I've said, are pocketbook issues. It could be raising rents, raising mortgage rates, raising the cost of groceries, raising the cost of gasoline. My God, if you haven't been to a gas station in the last couple of days, you don't know what's ahead of you the next time you go.

But there is a time and a place for debate, for the changes in the standing orders. I'm not saying this is not the time. I mean, this is the place that we have to deal with the changes to the standing orders, but not necessarily the time, it can be argued, when there are so many other things going on around us in our world, our small world, and our great province. Speaker, as you know, the province of Ontario is twice the size of California, it's bigger than Texas. Northern Ontario: 94% of the land mass and only 6% of the population. Ontario is a pretty big place, and the people in the north and in rural Ontario have issues that we could be talking about today, but instead, we are debating rule changes to the standing orders.

1520

Now, some of the changes in this update don't even take effect until—there's an election coming up, as you know, Speaker: May, June. By the time the House resumes, it's probably in September until the next House is formed, the government is chosen, the Speaker is chosen, people get sworn in, they come in here. That's when some of these changes that we're talking about today take effect. It's not going to do anything to what we're doing today, next week or next month. Some of these changes don't take effect until the next government.

I realize we have to set the table, we have to have things in place to improve the way we do our business when the next government takes over. I get that. I get back to: Is this really the time, when we could be dealing with more pressing issues, for us to be debating changes to our standing orders?

I just took a sip of water, Speaker, as you've noticed, when in fact, there are people in the First Nations communities in Ontario who couldn't do that because their

drinking water is polluted. They have to boil their water, and it's been like that for generations. People in parts of our province, our First Nations people, have to boil their drinking water before they can have a drink. We take for granted where we are, here in this bubble, that we can just pick up a glass of water and talk about changes to the standing orders instead of talking about the efforts, the money that would be needed to improve the lifestyles of all of us here in Ontario.

I can't blame anybody in the north who might have been going through the channels, switching channels today and came across this argument and would wonder why we're talking about changes to the standing orders when they have so many pressing problems that we're not talking about today and that, in fact, we don't talk very much about at all down here in Ontario's provincial Parliament. So many people have fixed costs, and they're going up: their rent, their mortgage, their food, their gasoline, their cost of living.

There are changes in the bill worthy of support, and I mention the one section on private members' bills, the PMBs. My friend from Sarnia-Lambton, Mr. Bailey, is the king of the PMBs. I think he has nine. It's very hard for any member to get one. I've been lucky, Speaker. I've had four PMBs passed; two that I shared with others. One was on Hazel McCallion Day, February 14, Hazel's birthday. That was a few years ago. As you know, the Conservative government is going to name the new Hurontario rapid transit line after Hazel, the former mayor of Mississauga. I was one of the three members who brought in the Hazel McCallion bill.

The former Speaker of the House, Dave Levac, from Brantford, wanted a Lawren Harris Day bill. Lawren Harris was one of the members of the Group of Seven. Some of us got together and brought in the Lawren Harris bill. The people in Brantford at some point are hoping to have a Lawren Harris festival in the fall, maybe in October, where they can get a community celebration going—a community in the arts—and magnify the celebration of the arts under the Lawren Harris Day bill.

I also brought in a bill on the Day of Mourning. Previously, way back in the NDP government when they brought in a Day of Mourning act, it was that they would lower their flag on a government building at the Ministry of Labour and the WSIB, and that was pretty well it. My bill made it that anyone in the MUSH sector, the municipalities, universities, colleges, schools, municipal buildings, fire halls, police stations—if you get money from the government, on the Day of Mourning in April, you would lower your flag as a sign of respect as the labour movement in Ontario celebrated the living and honoured the dead and hoped that everyone that went to work came home safely.

I've been fortunate with PMBs. My poet laureate bill, of course, is one of my favourites: the poet laureate bill in Ontario—

Applause.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you—in honour of Gord Downie from The Tragically Hip, where we have, for the

first time in Ontario's history, a poet laureate, as they have in Canada and several other provinces. Our poet laureate, Randell Adjei from Scarborough, has been busy celebrating the arts, celebrating poetry, educating young students about poetry. I am so pleased that that has taken place and that Gord Downie's name will always be remembered out there, for all the—he was a poet. He had a book of poetry.

Speaker, I'll just wrap up by saying that changes to the regulations that govern us are important, but the timing of this bill, not so much.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Point of order, Speaker.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: This is no surprise to anyone. I don't want anybody to panic, particularly Kevin Modeste, who is in the back room right now, but I want to take the time to wish him happy birthday.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I thank the member. While that is not a valid point of order, we are glad to wish him a happy birthday.

Further debate?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I rise in the House today on behalf of all those who have not been able to rise in the Ontario Legislature to do their job as a sitting member of provincial Parliament. The official opposition has put forward changes to the standing orders that would limit people who have accessibility issues to represent their constituents, no matter what side of the House they are sitting on.

The official opposition will not say this, but what they don't understand is that not everyone who has been an MPP or those who will be future MPPs have the ability to rise in the Legislature the way I'm standing here today. You see, Madam Speaker, accessibility is not just building better elevators, ramps, wider doors, grab bars or other needed changes to the built environment. Accessibility is also about making sure that elected officials here in the Ontario Legislature do not need to ask permission to do their jobs.

Madam Speaker, as the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, I want to let you know that under the leadership of Premier Ford and our entire government, we have made huge strides in making Ontario a more accessible province. Now the opposition is proposing that we turn back the clock here in this House. The opposition wants to bring back a discriminatory practice for people who have a disability. The opposition doesn't want our government or any future government to be able to fully participate in democracy. They want to limit the ability for an MPP who may have a disability or accessibility challenges to do their job. Some people may say that this is not a big deal, but let me inform you, Madam Speaker, and everyone here in this seat of democracy in the province of Ontario, that forcing people to seek permission to do their job is indeed an

attack on people who have disabilities and accessibility challenges.

1530

Before our government, someone who had a disability or accessibility issues needed to have unanimous consent from the Legislature to be able to vote. They needed to have the Speaker delay votes in the Legislature and to receive ongoing unanimous consent. The Speaker would have to acknowledge the member. The Speaker would have to make special considerations for someone in a wheelchair, for example, who was not able to rise for her or his vote to be counted. This government changed that. As Ontario moves toward making our great province more accessible, I can tell you with all my heart that this is the right thing to do. No one should be discriminated against to do their job anywhere in the province. And people who have disabilities or accessibility issues should be allowed to do their job, even here in the seat of democracy for the province of Ontario.

I do not need to talk to anyone in this Legislature about how democracy is under siege in eastern Europe. I do not need to talk to anyone in this House about how we need to respect democracy. And as someone who immigrated to this great country, who calls this great province his home, we must do everything that we can to make sure that we promote democracy in this chamber and to protect democracy everywhere possible.

Madam Speaker, today is World Hearing Day. People may need a hearing aid or listening device to be able to do their job or live their lives. If someone has a hearing aid, they do not need unanimous consent from the Legislature to vote, debate or participate in the democratic customs and traditions of the Legislature. Being able to participate in the democratic traditions of our democracy is a right that every citizen is given. Just because someone has a disability or accessibility challenge shouldn't mean they cannot participate in our democracy.

Madam Speaker, our government is working hard to make Ontario more accessible. Just yesterday, I announced funding for the EnAbling Change program. This program is designed to make Ontario a stronger, more accessible and inclusive province. We are investing up to \$1.3 million to support 14 projects across the province. Some of the funding includes a virtual reality platform to help demystify disability.

Last Friday, I had the great fortune of travelling to Peterborough to make an announcement with MPP Dave Smith. MPP Smith and I announced, at the Council of Persons with Disabilities, funding to create the virtual reality platforms. The Council for Persons with Disabilities is receiving up to \$26,340 for its Time in My Shoes program.

This experiential program allows participants to experience mobility challenges, vision loss, hearing loss and invisible disabilities, and is designed to broaden understanding of accessibility and related barriers and promote better accessibility for customers and employees in businesses and services.

Through the EnAbling Change program funding, a virtual reality platform will be developed to deliver the

existing program. And as my good friend John McNutt, the executive director of the Council for Persons with Disabilities, said to me, “Thanks to the EnAbling Change program,” the Time in My Shoes program will “reach a wider audience with the use of technological advancements.” It will aid “us in focusing on demystifying disability and paving the path for a more inclusive and accessible community.”

This is 21st-century technology that our government is funding to support people with disabilities. So I ask you, Madam Speaker, why does the opposition want to turn back the clock on all the advancements our government is making on accessibility, not only across the province but here in the Ontario Legislature?

The EnAbling Change program will also provide funding for employers in the electricity and trucking sectors to help make jobs in these sectors more accessible to people with disabilities; learning models to improve employment opportunities for post-secondary students with disabilities; and resources to help coaches safely and effectively coach blind hockey.

The EnAbling Change program is one more action the Ontario government is taking, along with its Advancing Accessibility in Ontario framework, to help more people participate in community activities, job opportunities and to promote a culture of inclusion. These are real examples of how this government is making significant progress on making Ontario more accessible, and that is why I rise here today, Madam Speaker, for those who are not able, and may not be able to in the future. No sitting member of this or any other elected body across our land should face discrimination when they are trying to do their job.

1540

Let’s look at another example. A member with a speaking disability who requires an electronic assistive device to communicate will not need the unanimous consent of this House to participate in debate. A member in a wheelchair who cannot stand in their place to vote would not need unanimous consent of this House to cast a vote. A member who requires a personal assistant in the chamber to support their medical needs would be able to receive this support without needing to ask 123 members, their colleagues.

When Ontario is funding 21st-century technology to end barriers for those with a disability, the opposition wants to keep those barriers in place. Barriers must come down, especially here in the seat of democracy. Our sitting members must be able to participate in the democratic process without barriers of any kind.

Madam Speaker, there is something else I would like to address that will help to make Ontario and our democracy more accessible. That is our government’s proposed change that, when a quorum is not present the bells shall ring for 10 minutes instead of five. Members with accessibility challenges need time to be able to travel to the chamber. Five minutes is not enough; 10 minutes seems about right for now. Why this change? We will be able to monitor to see if 10 minutes is the right amount of time for our MPPs, especially those who have accessibility

challenges or may have a disability. Also, some members’ offices are located outside of the Legislature. This change will ensure that they are able to express their democratic right and vote even during winters.

Something else to consider: In Ottawa, if a quorum isn’t present, they allow for a 15-minute bell; we currently give only five minutes. Some members have mobility issues, and the five-minute bell is simply not long enough. This is a crucial change to make government more accessible and will ensure that members are able to get to the Legislature safely and securely.

We are making government more accessible and safer for everyone. Let us work together to update our rules for members with disabilities. Let us work together to allow members in 2022 to participate in the democratic process. Let us not turn the clock back and put up barriers to those who serve in this seat of democracy. Let’s tear down walls. Let’s end barriers. Let’s make Ontario more accessible.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I beg to inform the House that, in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to proclaim the Provincial Day of Service / Loi proclamant la Journée provinciale du service.

An Act to enact two Acts and amend various other Acts / Loi visant à édicter deux lois et à modifier diverses autres lois.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: I’m proud to be here today to speak to the standing order amendments. There are quite a number of amendments to the procedures that we use to debate bills and laws in this House. They range from changing the parliamentary calendar; changing Monday morning sittings; changing quorum, as the member opposite spoke about, extending the amount of time that is required for us to get to the House if a quorum bell is called; changing the process on how we introduce bills; changing the number of committees, what these committees are called and their purpose; changing the estimates process, which I’m going to talk a little bit about; changing private members’ bills and that process and how much notice we need to give in order for us to debate a bill in the Legislature here; changing committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs; ballot date swaps—it’s quite significant.

The essence of it is that this is not the first time that this government has changed the standing order changes. This is the seventh time this government has changed the

standing order changes in three and three quarter years. The overall theme or purpose, it seems, of changing the standing order processes is to increase your ability to fast-track legislation through this Legislature and to remove the tools that opposition MPPs—the folks who represent up to 60% of people in Ontario—have to review legislation, introduce amendments, introduce our own private members' bills that have been carefully considered and to debate these important pieces of legislation in this House. It's concerning, but it's not the first time that we've seen it.

I do want to talk a little bit about one of the most concerning changes that I see in the changes to the standing orders, and that is the changes to the estimates process. The reason why I'm most concerned about the estimates process is that the estimates process is really important, and the reason why it's so important is because it allows all MPPs and the public to really dig in and look at how much money you're allocating to different government departments and agencies and to specific line items, and to question ministers directly about why they're choosing to spend that money or why they haven't chosen to spend the money that they promised in the budget, and to really drill in to what is happening with government, because the budgetary process, as we know, is the most important piece of legislation you pass every year and the estimates process brings a level of accountability to that process. So it's concerning to see here that you're looking at changing it.

I want to summarize a little bit the changes that you're proposing. You're looking at getting rid of the Standing Committee on Estimates completely and you're looking at having complete control—the government would have complete control over how much time is allocated for opposition parties to directly question ministers on how they're allocating budget money, whether they're spending it or not, and what they're spending it on. That seems pretty significant to me, because it means there's less oversight on how you're spending money, and that means there's less accountability. As a government that has accountability and honest government as part of your philosophy as a party, it's pretty concerning when we see you introducing legislation and motions that suggest anything but. So I'm pretty concerned about that.

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Why I'm also concerned about it is because we have the Financial Accountability Office in Ontario that can dig deep and really look at how you're spending that money. Often, the Financial Accountability Office times its announcements in line with estimates, so we can use the information they're gathering to question ministers directly. What we see with the Financial Accountability Officer and their report is that this government is actually spending less on key line items than it said it would in the budget. That's also especially concerning because a lot of the money that the provincial government is getting right now is coming from the federal government. They're giving it to you to spend on Ontarians, and it seems like you're holding a lot of it back instead of spending it on where it needs to go.

I just want to identify some of these things. In the health sector, the government is underspending at a time when we have the worst health crisis that we've had in Ontario in 100 years. The government is underspending on the children's and social services sectors, they're underspending on the autism program, and this government is underspending on the Ontario Works program. What I would like, and I think Ontarians would like, would be ample opportunity to directly grill ministers on why this is happening. It looks like you're looking at restricting that process, so that's pretty concerning.

The other issue that I think is important to note is that we should be debating other bills today, but we're not, and the reason is that this government has made the decision to send these bills to committee instead of debating them here in the Legislature so that the people who we represent feel that their voices are heard. It's in line with the standing order changes that you're proposing in the sense that you're reducing the amount of consultation and debate that happens to get your way, when we should be debating these pieces of legislation to create the best laws possible. That's the whole point. That's why we're here.

There are two issues that happened today that I'm pretty concerned about. The one is Bill 88 and the decision to shut down debate and send that to committee early. The reason why I'm concerned about Bill 88 is that it's a bill that's a really big deal. There are a few reasons why it's a big deal. First of all, this government is introducing changes to how gig workers are classified. This government likes to say that what they're intending on doing is establishing a \$15 minimum wage floor for app-based workers. I just want to emphasize how significant this is. Up to 7% to 10% of the workforce today in Ontario could be classified as gig workers. That's a huge number. That's about 800,000 people. This is a significant schedule that's affecting a whole lot of people, and we should be debating that today, but we're not.

Why it's important is because this government likes to say that they're looking at increasing the wages for app-based workers, gig workers, but when you delve into it, it's not so clear. The reason why it's not so clear is because the \$15 minimum wage floor only applies when workers are actually working, running from the restaurant to the home to deliver the food. But that actually doesn't count all the time that they are actually working. It just counts a piece of time that they're working. That is pretty concerning, because it would be something equivalent to only paying a customer service person when they're processing the payment as they're working at McDonald's and not the time that they're waiting for a customer. There are a lot of people who have concerns about that, and we have received many emails from people today and over the last few days since this bill was introduced expressing concern and wanting these issues debated on the floor here.

It also draws to mind the need to push for better legislation that actually lifts the floor for our lowest-paid workers and make sure they have a decent wage, a living wage and that they've got the kind of protections that they need.

I am very impressed by my colleague the MPP for London West's bill who has introduced the protect gig workers bill. The protect gig workers bill would make Ontario the first province to legislate the gold standard, the ABC test for worker classification, which puts the onus on the employer—these are the Ubers of the world who are making a ton of money and aren't based in Ontario—to prove that a worker is not an employee.

What that would mean is that more workers, those 800,000 workers who are classified as gig workers, would no longer be independent contractors left to their own devices to find money if they get sick, to pay themselves and pay their rent if they somehow get injured on the job, to find the equivalent of employment insurance if they find that they're fired for no good reason. It would give these people a basic working floor, some basic employment standards that permanent employees and permanent part-time employees have. I think that is a pretty reasonable thing to ask for people that are earning minimum wage or less to have access to minimum wage, vacation days, statutory holiday pay, employment insurance premiums, Canada Pension Plan contributions. That seems like a pretty reasonable thing to ask for. This government is not there yet. I would like to be spending more time debating that today.

Also, with Bill 88, which this government has decided to send to committee, is schedule 4, the Occupational Health and Safety Act. That also interested me too and it interests the residents of University–Rosedale as well. The reason is this: In the bill, it proposes requiring some businesses to have naloxone kits available in good condition in the case of a worker or maybe a customer having an opioid overdose. Now, that is a good thing. We have naloxone kits in our office. There are many businesses in University–Rosedale who also have naloxone kits. It is a good thing. The reason why it is a good thing is because too many people are dying of opioid overdoses in Ontario—2,500 people, according to the government's own release, died from an opioid addiction or an opioid-related overdose between March 2020 and January 2021.

So, that is a good thing. But here's the problem: It just focuses on one piece of the opioid addiction issue instead of looking at it from a really holistic perspective. Let's say a worker in Kensington—because Kensington has an opioid addiction crisis and Kensington is in my riding—as happens all the time, finds someone in the washroom who is having an opioid overdose, goes in with a naloxone kit, which they have, revives them, which is good, and calls the paramedics. They then go to the hospital. Then what happens? Well, this is the problem. Hospitals by and large do not have the acute care facilities, the addiction recovery programs that they need to help this person.

Unfortunately, another issue is that once this person is released, maybe from hospital, there is really nowhere for them to go, especially if they're struggling with a homelessness issue or an ongoing addiction issue. There are not enough beds available to help people who have and who are struggling with addiction. There just isn't. Not only that, there is not enough supportive housing available to

people who want to recover and have a supportive housing facility with wraparound supports, including social workers and so on, to get these people back on their feet and living good lives.

I am angered, quite frankly, with the Ontario government's decision to only fund supportive housing in the city of Toronto to the tune of \$3 million a year. Three million dollars a year is going to the affordable housing program that the city is running. The city is putting in \$800 million a year and the feds are putting in \$300 million a year or thereabouts, but the province is putting in \$3 million a year. So when we have saved these people, after having an overdose, there's just very little support available to actually help these people and help them recover and house them. I wish that we were spending more time debating that piece of legislation today.

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I have two letters from community groups in my riding and I'd like to address them now. One is from the Kensington Market BIA and the reason I bring this up is because they're on the front lines when it comes to the opioid addiction crisis. They get it. They understand that naloxone kits in and of themselves are not going to solve our opioid addiction crisis. What they are calling for is a holistic, comprehensive, well-funded approach that includes prevention, harm reduction, treatment, rehabilitation and enforcement so that we can deal with this opioid addiction crisis in an effective way.

I also want to draw attention to St. Stephen's. The reason I bring up St. Stephen's is because St. Stephen's is a fantastic social service organization in my riding that has a safe consumption site. This is the place where people can go if they want to use where they know there are going to be nurses there available to help them if they overdose and to make sure that they have clean needles so they don't unnecessarily expose themselves to disease or an issue that they don't want to get.

The St. Stephen's safe consumption site was rejected for funding by this Ontario government, even though the community—from the Kensington Market BIA to the local school that was sick of seeing needles on their playground to the local residents' association—were all unanimous in their support for a safe consumption site in Kensington, which would really deal with this opioid addiction crisis locally. The Ontario government made a decision to not fund that safe consumption site.

I know the associate minister is here. I urge the associate minister and this government to fund that safe consumption site so we can keep people alive in my riding. I really urge you to do that. I wish we were spending more time debating that today.

I also want to draw attention to another issue related to affordable housing because I do believe it's related to the opioid crisis as well. That is the fact that the member for Willowdale continues to refuse to permit the construction of 59 modular affordable-housing homes in the riding of Willowdale so that we can help people in need get housed. They've been permitted in my riding; they've been permitted in the Beaches; they've been permitted in other

areas in Toronto to house people in need. But this Conservative MPP is refusing to approve them in his riding, and his riding alone. I urge this associate minister to reconsider that decision.

Another thing that I wish that we were debating more when it comes to Bill 88 is schedule 5. This is one that came out with lightning speed. It's the decision to repeal the regulation around traditional Chinese medicine. I'm sure you're getting emails about this too. We've received hundreds today. The reason why this is concerning is because there are many people in my riding—and I'm sure yours—who are understandably very concerned about a decision to basically not regulate the traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture system in Ontario.

I'll just give you an example of one of the many letters that I've received. This is from Enza Ierullo, from the AIM Academy; Kathy Feng, who is a registered traditional Chinese medicine practitioner; some students in my riding; as well as Temma Gentles. They're very concerned that Bill 88 is just going through at lightning speed through the Legislature when there has been no consultation, there is a complete lack of transparency about this bill. They're very concerned that deregulating acupuncture will lead to the removal of standards of practice, it will allow insurance companies the opportunity to deny the coverage of acupuncture. They are understandably very concerned. I wish we were spending more time debating that today, instead of standing orders changes. I wish we were.

Another issue that these folks are raising is that they understand there's a genuine issue in only allowing some of these exams to be in English. But what they are arguing is that we do what BC does and just allow for the exams to be provided in Chinese and English but not deregulate the entire sector. I wish we were spending more time debating that today.

In my final minute, I do want to draw attention to what happened earlier with the House leader, because I think it's another example of the government manipulating the rules, changing the rules of what's happening here in the Legislature to suit them, and that is the decision to not allow the Our London Family Act to be debated in this Legislature, which was the request of the MPPs who introduced this bill. It was also a request that came from the Muslim community in London as well. The reason why this is so important is because this is an example of hate. This bill outlines very sensible, wise changes for how we can tackle Islamophobia in Ontario, and I wish we had more time to debate that today.

In summary, I urge this government to oppose the standing order changes—I know we will be opposing them—because they create the rules in here that benefit the government and concentrate power in the government's hands, and it does a disservice to democracy.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I recognize the government House leader on a notice of motion.

Hon. Paul Calandra: In my continuing service of democracy, I'm rising on standing order 59.

The order of business for next week: On Monday, March 7, we will have the consideration of opposition day number 2.

On Tuesday, March 8, in the morning, we will have government motion number 12. There will be a tribute before question period to Mr. Walter Elliot. In routine proceedings on that day, we'll have a ministerial statement from Minister McKenna on International Women's Day; in the afternoon, government notice of motion number 12; and in the evening, PMB ballot item number 28.

On Wednesday, we'll continue on with government motion number 12. In the afternoon, we will be debating a bill to be introduced, and in the evening, ballot item number 29, standing in the name of Mr. Blais.

On Thursday, in the morning, we will be debating a second bill to be introduced. In the afternoon, the same bill and in the evening, PMB ballot item number 30.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

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

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: It's truly a pleasure for me to rise today in the Legislature to speak about the series of standing order amendments that we brought forward to further modernize and improve all aspects of the functioning of this Legislature.

My colleague the Minister of Legislative Affairs and Minister of Long-Term Care has been working very hard to update and modernize how we conduct business in this Legislature. As he mentioned in this House before, this has been the result of a long four-year process to benefit all members of the Legislature.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, being here and listening to my colleagues across the way speaking about the importance of debating issues, the whole purpose behind this legislation is to ensure that we have the ability to function more efficiently and effectively, and it's important that we utilize the time that we have here to ensure that we are doing business for the province and ensuring that we're looking after the people of the province.

I've often quoted when I look at the processes that we follow—we seem to repeat the same things over and over again, somehow thinking that we're going to get a different result as a result of what we're doing. As you know, Mr. Speaker, that's the definition of insanity. You have to change. You have to modernize. You have to look at alternatives. You have to transition. That's what this is all about: It's about transitioning, because we know repeating the same things over and over again is not going to improve or change anything. So this is something that we should be supporting.

And I have to say, just to respond to the member opposite from University–Rosedale, the naloxone kits and wanting to discuss that: The naloxone kits are part of a strategy. The Roadmap to Wellness is not a document that speaks about a specific time. It looks at the lifespan of

individuals to provide supports and services at each phase of the individual's life. It looks to try to develop a system where we can have a continuum of care even if we can't deliver the services in the same place—and of course, the importance of culturally sensitive services.

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These are all the things in that continuum of care. These are all the things that you need to have in an integrated, client-centred, holistic system to help individuals. That's what we have done. That is what has been funded and that's what we are implementing.

Again, we can talk about this and talk about the past, and what we have had to deal with and what we've inherited. Let's not forget 15 years of absolutely no change in terms of helping people with mental health and addictions issues. To be putting a system in place, to be making an investment of \$525 million in annualized funding is not a small feat. There's a great deal of work to be done, but we've started that process. That's what it's all about: The modernization, the transition and the creation of an environment for people to actually get the support they need when and where they need it.

The naloxone kits are just another piece of that bigger puzzle. It's another piece of that continuum of care that we're trying to create, for the very reasons that you're saying. We're providing individuals with the opportunity to save lives at a nightclub, at a bar, at a place of work. Because we know, if you look at the statistics, how many people that you wouldn't otherwise think have an addiction issue actually have an addiction issue. These aren't people who, like some may say, are homeless. These are people who are holding down jobs in industry who are self-medicating, who are putting themselves in harm's way. We need to do more. That's what that was all about. We have to continue doing things like that.

Constituents in all of our ridings expect their provincial representatives to work as efficiently as possible. Our final package of standing orders was another way to show that members of this House take their job seriously and are looking out for their constituents. Since the moment we were first sworn in almost four years ago, our government has remained laser-focused on ensuring the swift, flexible and efficient function of this House. We have been so focused on that because it's what every constituent in this province expects from us. Our government has made a series of amendments to the standing orders over the past few years to help enhance debate, improve democratic oversight and ensure that the conduct in this House is efficient, that it's strengthened as a result of the changes that are being made.

The Minister of Legislative Affairs and Long-Term Care has been working day in and day out, alongside members of all parties, to finally allow for the efficient oversight of government spending, robust and focused committee work and enhanced provisions for members to participate in the consideration and passing of private members' bills.

In 2010, I had the privilege of working with the then government and with the opposition, and perhaps you

were here. It was for the passage of Italian Heritage Month. That legislation took forever. For someone on the outside, even being a lawyer, watching the gut-wrenching management—I don't want to say waste of time, but it appeared like that, as a citizen on the outside watching what was happening in the Legislature. This was for Italian Heritage Month. It should have been something that should have just flown through. But because of all the machinations, all the scheduling, the committees and everything else that had to be done, it took over a year. Something that was so simple.

When we get into more complex issues, obviously the time should be dedicated to doing things like that. But for simple things, it's a complete and total waste of time. Again, this is the reason why we need to modernize the system. Repeating things over and over again thinking that the result is going to be different, is going to give the impression to the people watching us that this is insanity in action, because nothing ever happens. Again, we can't let things work at a snail's pace when we're here to make a difference in the lives of the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, prior to coming here I worked on the front lines with many individuals that were struggling with mental health and addictions issues. Of course, I got to see people that were using substances, that really had gotten off the rails in terms of where their lives were and where they wanted to go.

I came to government because I would spend many days frustrated that the previous Liberal government was doing nothing—absolutely nothing—to do a job to give these people the opportunity to get control of their lives again. Without those tools and resources, the service providers are just as frustrated, because that's the role that I had back then, and I didn't know what to do and how I could get the attention of government.

Our government, unlike the last government, has been working hard to fix all these issues that affect the people and organizations in all sectors, in all regions of this province, to make a difference in people's lives. I can't begin to tell you the stories of the meetings that I used to have right here in this building with MPPs from all parties, ministers of the day and even Premiers, and how many times I heard, "You're passionate. You've got a great idea, but you don't understand."

Well, of course I don't understand. Just looking at being in here and trying to understand the process—this is the reason why we need to streamline the processes. We need to change. We need to modernize. We need to make it more accessible so that we can actually do something for the people instead of talking about doing something for the people. And there is a big difference; there's a huge difference. What we have done through the changes that have been made so far and what we're proposing to do is to be able to be more efficient, to be able to deliver to the people of this province the services that they rightfully deserve and should have.

In my sector, the work that I do dealing with mental health and addictions, it's extremely important, because the one difference between my work and much of the other

work is that people die if we delay. People die if we don't have the opportunities put in place to help them and get better and to provide them those supports and services.

I can remember coming to Queen's Park, begging for help, begging for support, and in this sector, it just never seemed to come. It brought me to the point where I decided I had to come here to hopefully try to make change. It's one of the reasons why I am here and why I support the work that's being done by the minister. We need to make these changes more effectively. We have to make sure that they are there so that those efficiencies are in the system for everyone. It's hard to come here and see delays in the things that we do and why it takes so long to do things.

Before coming here, I was a lawyer. They used to pay us to find solutions. They didn't pay us to delay outcomes. We weren't paid by the number of files we had; we were paid by the number of files we closed. So for me, when we have that opportunity to do something, it's important to get it done quickly. It's important to show that you're passionate about what the issues are, that you are engaged and that you're finding the solutions that are going to make a real difference in people's lives.

You come in. You see the different things that are happening. I hear the opposition speaking about being opposed to the standing orders, suggesting that we're doing something that's somehow going to remove or change how democracy is being debated or how we're going about doing things. I see this as exactly the opposite. We're affecting the lives of real people. We're doing something to make sure that they are able to get results, as opposed to discussion and discussion and delay and delay.

Through my career, I've observed harms related to drugs and their control over people. I've met them. I've worked with them. I've seen lived experience in the lives of these individuals and been around them, seeing them being convicted, seeing them coming out of prison, seeing them, basically, trying to get their lives back together. The work that we're doing here I consider to be extremely important, especially the work that I do with mental health and addictions, trying to build that continuum of care.

1620

The member opposite talked about the importance of supportive housing. We invested in programs in corrections facilities for the purposes of giving those individuals real support. It's called "corrections." Well, what do we do to correct some of those behaviours? We invested money into those types of programs. We invested money into programs that allowed them to have housing on an interim basis when they came out of prison. We looked at those different aspects which, again, is extremely important. These are all things that we have to continue doing.

I totally agree that if we don't look at the social determinants of health, mental health and addictions are going to continue to be issues. Investments have to be made in supportive housing. We've done that. We've specifically invested money in Indigenous communities to build an inventory for them of supportive housing because, again, we know that that needs to be done. We've looked specifically at providing supports and services to the Black

community when it came to addictions. Again, why? To provide them with the opportunity to have culturally sensitive services to make a real difference in their lives. These are all things that we have to do and these are all innovations.

The reason that I keep on referring to all these different changes is that I see the work that we're discussing here today as being something that will help me. It will provide us with the ability to be able to do more for the people in the province of Ontario.

When we look at the work that we're doing here and we think about the people that we're trying to help—again, I have a very specific focus and view. When I think about their mental health, I think about the kids. I think about the fact that we need to do more for them given the fact that they have been through a very difficult time, many of them wearing masks, many of them having to miss the classroom, and all the issues that arise with that when it comes to social—their behaviours, to the things that they've missed, the things we've taken for granted. These are all things that impact on them.

We talk about seniors and what they've gone through and the situations that they have. The work that we do when it comes to mental health and addictions, for me, is to look for ways to deliver those services as quickly as possible, to find ways through the work that we're doing here to help these individuals.

Again, the work that we do, if we help one person, we're helping an entire family. We're not just helping that individual, because, again, when it comes to mental health and addictions, all of us, I'm sure, know someone who has an issue, whether it's anxiety, depression, and even an addiction. These individuals are entitled to and should have the help they need. The only way they're going to get it, in many ways, is by us acting quickly to do our jobs and to ensure that the information, the legislation is out there and the funding gets there to help the individuals get on with their lives. That's what is most important, because when we see our youth, when we're providing them with the supports they need, they become resilient. Their education will lead to prevention. That means less problems later on in life trying to find services and supports for them.

Again, when we talk about this issue of mental health and addictions—and I have to take a moment to talk about the fact that when I was working in the sector, we used to refer to the people that were in the programs as TIPs. We used to call them "truly important people." We often talk about VIPs and the special privileges they get as a result of being known as having the title of being VIPs, but when you stop and think about it, the people I used to work with who were clients looking for help, we referred to them as TIPs, because what they were doing was making the choice. They wanted to make a difference; they wanted to change their lives. What that meant was they would struggle and change their lives, get away from their addiction and they would do something to get control again of themselves. That, for me, is something that I really have a lot of respect for and it's one of the reasons, again, that I

stand here today, that I'm in this place, this Legislature, to want to make a difference for individuals like that, because they truly deserve people advocating on their behalf and making changes that are going to be good for them.

The people who I used to help on the front lines would always want help; they would ask for help. I think we can say, and all of you will agree, that no one wants to be an addict. No one wants to have a mental health issue and have it go unresolved. These people that I worked with and the people that are looking for help, they want to have a better life. It's us who have to do something to make sure that, in fact, we're making the change, that we're doing things that are positive for them.

The reality is that too many people and families across Ontario continue to be affected by mental health and addictions issues. We're trying to do something about it. We're making investments to make a change, to try to give people that opportunity to regain control of their lives, to be able to enjoy their lives to the full extent possible without the need of self medication or without the need of having to suffer because of an anxiety or depression issue.

The people of this province, I believe, made it very clear to all of us they want to see action from their elected officials. They don't want to hear us spend countless hours explaining how complicated the process is or how difficult it is to get something done, because at the end of the day, if you went to a lawyer and suggested or had the lawyer tell you, "It's complicated," the first thing you would say is, "Okay, what's this going to cost me?" You're automatically going to figure there is something else going on here.

Well, the reality is, we are here to do a job. We are here to ensure that the people get the benefit of our collective minds, of our ability to make a difference and provide them with the resources and the strengths that they need. That's what this is all about. It's about getting that process in place.

By modernizing and updating the way the Legislative Assembly of Ontario functions, we can finally help the millions of Ontarians who rely on us in every aspect of their lives, every single day. They could be the millions of Ontarians who are struggling with a mental health or addiction issue. That, for me, obviously, is a huge concern. They could be the many seniors in my riding and I'm sure in your ridings as well. They could be our loved ones. Let's not forget that the things we do in here today are also going to impact on our immediate families, our friends. Every Ontarian deserves the support they expect and deserve, and our work to update the standing orders plays a critical role in how all of us get the job done.

The package of standing orders that we brought forward would finally bring the necessary modernization and update to the business of this House that is so desperately needed. It means not only added oversight to everything we do, it also means we can finally get things done effectively and efficiently for the people of this province who rely on us to get things done each and every day.

I think we can all agree to this: We're all here to do a job, and we must get that job done efficiently. In my

ministry, delay causes injury, it causes harm, and in some cases it causes death. I don't want to be responsible for that. I want to ensure that we do everything possible to save as many people as possible. Thank you.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's certainly an honour to rise in the House and speak to the motion before the House.

Before I speak directly to the proposed standing order changes, I do want to start by acknowledging that this March represents the very first ever Endometriosis Awareness Month here in Ontario. This month is officially recognized because of a bill that was passed in this chamber by my colleague the member for Davenport, and I was absolutely honoured to have the opportunity to co-sponsor that bill. This work was a direct result of the leadership of people across this province who live with endometriosis and the community advocacy groups that are fighting to raise awareness of this complex disease that affects one in 10 people who menstruate in Canada.

Speaker, endometriosis causes extreme pelvic pain, nausea and can lead to infertility. Unfortunately, it often goes undiagnosed because of stigma and shame about periods and reproductive health, leaving those who experience to suffer in silence. It's a condition where the tissue that normally lines the inside of your uterus, the endometrium, grows outside of your uterus. Endometriosis most commonly involves the ovaries, the fallopian tubes and the tissue lining your pelvic area, but it's also been found in every single organ in the human body.

As a sufferer of this disease myself, I can tell you firsthand how debilitating it's been. I lived with painful periods for years because I thought it was normal. It wasn't until 2019, when I was having an unrelated procedure done, that I was diagnosed entirely by accident. They found endometrial tissue on the outside of my uterus, encasing both of my ovaries and in the uterine wall as well.

An incredibly un-fun thing that I've learned about this disease is that it can also cause something called tethering. That's where the organs in your body—your ovaries, for example—can become attached to other organs because of the scar tissue that the endometriosis causes. I would ask any non-menstruating member of this House to think about what it might feel like to walk around with several of your organs glued together and think about how much that might affect your quality of life.

1630

We need to raise awareness over what healthy periods are, because when you think that this kind of pain is normal, you can't get diagnosed. And if you can't get diagnosed, Speaker, you can't get treated.

But what's worse is that even if you have enough awareness about this disease to self-advocate and seek out a diagnosis, the next hurdle that you face is a health system that is so ill-equipped and underfunded to deal with reproductive health that it's like climbing a mountain to get the care that you need. The wait-list for specialists can be six months to a year long just for an initial consultation.

Then you wait for diagnostics—for an MRI, for an ultrasound, for blood work. Then you might try a pharmaceutical treatment to start off. But hold on to your hats, friends, because of course we all know that pharmacare is not publicly funded in the province of Ontario. If you don't have private drug coverage, if you're not fortunate enough to have a drug plan that includes that coverage, your medication could cost you hundreds of dollars a month.

Then, if it's determined that you do need surgery, which is the only way to fully treat endometriosis—which is to surgically remove it—again, good luck. You could be waiting up to two years because of long-standing backlogs and underfunding and the de-prioritization that generally exists for OR time for ob-gyn surgeries. Then add to that the compounding effect of surgical cancellations in our health care system that have just absolutely—our health system has just buckled under the weight of COVID-19. You're doing all of that waiting while you live your day-to-day life in chronic pain.

I suspect, Speaker, that if this were a condition that affected cisgender men, it would be one of the best-funded surgical specialties in our health care system, considering how common this disease is, affecting one in 10 people. Again, that's just speculation.

But Speaker, we don't just need awareness; we need concrete investments in reproductive health. When I spoke last with my own surgeon, he mentioned the need to establish a dedicated centre of excellence for endometriosis, something that would enable dedicated OR time, which is desperately needed. But instead of investments, what we've seen from this government, according to a new report from the Financial Accountability Office, is that this Conservative government has actually withheld \$5.5 billion in promised spending, which has shortchanged not only our health care system but other sectors as well.

I think it's relevant to note, while we stand here today to discuss the proposed changes to the standing orders, that the member for Davenport and I had to actually table this bill to create Endometriosis Awareness Month twice in order to get it passed. Last year, the Legislature was prorogued by this government, and all of the business before this House was completely wiped out. Any bill that was partially progressing to become law had to go back to square one: Do not pass go, do not collect \$200; go directly to re-tabling for first reading. Like the Endometriosis Awareness Month bill, several important bills were wiped out in that move as well.

Speaker, I recently had to re-table, as another example, the St. James Town Act. This is another example of a bill that's being sent through the legislative merry-go-round because of this government's decision to prorogue. That bill was a direct response to safety issues in high-rise buildings that were raised in 2018 after a devastating fire in my riding. For four years, the tenants of 650 Parliament Street had been waiting for justice and for this government to take the safety concerns of tenants seriously. Tenants in my riding are regularly living in poorly maintained buildings because landlords are intentionally letting their buildings fall into significant disrepair so that they can

pass on excessive, above-guideline rent increases, based on capital repair projects, directly to their tenants year after year after year.

My constituents in St. James Town want to see this bill passed into law. It's a bill that has been named in their honour. When writing to my office, one constituent named Kay shared with me her concerns about how her neighbours have been left behind not only by their landlord, but by this government who refuses to do anything to meaningfully improve their safety.

Kay said, "We everyday people are expected to have several months' salary tucked away for an emergency and are treated like we're irresponsible if we can't just shell out thousands when the problems of life occur. Landlords, meanwhile, set nothing aside for a rainy day and make their failures into our problems. When small things break down, we're left without elevators, or laundry machines, or hot water, for days on end, without compensation of any kind. When something bigger breaks and something goes horribly wrong, we're forced to fend for ourselves. No matter what happens, tenants lose, and the landlords always come out as winners. If we stay, we're hit with an AGI and forced to pay higher rents for no increase in service. If we leave, another tenant moves in at a higher rate because rent control ends when our lease does.

"Tenants deserve an Ontario government that cares about our families, not about lining the pockets of landlords and luxury condo developers. We deserve safe, well-maintained homes with access to all of the services that we are paying for. We deserve real rent control, including vacancy control, so that we can leave a poorly managed building or move to a new neighbourhood without getting hit with thousands of dollars in rent increases. We deserve better access to affordable housing, no matter where we want to live. We deserve protection from" renovictions "and disasters caused by negligence. Unfortunately, decades of Liberal and Conservative governments have left us with a broken system that fails tenants and leads directly to disasters like what happened at 650 Parliament. It's time for something better."

Kay's story is devastating. But it's an example of another bill that has failed to go through this House because this government doesn't want to prioritize it—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. Sorry to interrupt the member. I've been listening intently and I do request that the member connect her remarks clearly for me to the debate today, which is the amendment on the amendment to the standing orders changes. I've permitted the last few members a significant amount of latitude, but I'm going to remind everyone, this afternoon, what is on the order paper. Thank you.

I return to the member from Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Speaker.

Well, on that note, I have to say it has been a bit of a wild ride in the House today, to say the least, and I'm sure all members are aware of that. Earlier today, the government House leader moved several motions to directly dispense a private member's bill and a government bill to committee, with no second reading debate. And the

rationale? Well, the government House leader seems to think that there's not enough time, I guess, to get to the important work of this House, and wants to fast-track bills. As we look at the amendment to the amendment of the motion before us, I think that we can make the direct correlation to the fast-tracking of bills through this House.

So while the government House leader does seem to think there's not enough time to get through the important work of this House, I'd like to pose to the government House leader, why can't we get to the work of fast-tracking important bills like the St. James Town Act? Let's get that bill passed here and now today. He's all here for ramming through bills as quickly as possible, so all aboard the legislative express train, if you will.

Speaker, there are so many bills that are sitting in committee right now that should be prioritized through this House for express consideration. I would suggest that the Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act is one that the government members supported and is currently sitting on the docket of the Standing Committee on Social Policy. This is a critical bill that will establish an advisory committee within the Ministry of Health to improve access to life-saving gender-affirming care in the province of Ontario.

I would like to ask the government House leader if I can actually have his assurances today, in this House, that this bill will actually see the light of day at committee and actually return for third reading before this House recesses for the upcoming election. Because if that bill doesn't go through committee and doesn't come back to this House for third reading before the election, again, it's back to square one for that bill, procedurally speaking. It means do not pass go; do not collect \$200; go immediately to first reading in a new Parliament after June.

Years of work will be undone while trans, intersex, two-spirit and non-binary people languish on wait-lists as long as five years for the life-saving care that they need. If the government House leader truly believes, as he says, that he's trying to expedite the most important bills being considered before this House, I would suggest that saving the lives of trans people in our community is probably one of the very first places to start.

But I'm not actually sure that this government House leader is interested in fast-tracking critically important bills through this House, like the St. James Town Act or the gender-affirming health care act. But perhaps it's this government House leader's strategy to shut down debate on bills that they are, quite frankly, being publicly beat up on, so that they can rip the Band-Aid off, get these bills passed through this House as quickly as possible with as minimal damage that they will have to deal with from the public.

1640

One of the bills today that the government House leader dispensed straight to committee with absolutely no debate at second reading was related to gig workers. There are some important schedules in this bill that I think deserve the light of day in this chamber. They deserve to be addressed by the legislative process of the House, not just rubber-stamped direct to committee.

We're talking here about a bill being put forward by a government that's trying to pat itself on the back and call itself pro-worker. But when we look at the record of this government, what do we see? We see a government that cut a planned minimum wage increase for the \$15-an-hour minimum wage, one of their first moves in office in 2018. We saw them cap the wages of workers like nurses and teachers to 1% under Bill 124 while inflation skyrocketed, forcing those workers to take a pay cut in relation to the cost of living. Then, they denied workers PPE throughout the pandemic and they even fought in court to not have to provide workers with N95 masks.

They took away paid sick days and refused to instate them during the worst days of the pandemic, during the Omicron variant. And they even took women health care workers to court to deny them equal pay for equal work. Then they took money from WSIB funds, which should be supporting injured workers, and handed it over to corporations instead. How on earth this government has the gall to call themselves pro-worker is beyond me.

What does this pro-worker bill actually do? While the Conservatives are out there trying to sell this as a \$15 minimum wage for gig workers, we know that that's not the case. Putting aside the fact that the minimum wage should be at least \$17 an hour right now, and that a \$15 minimum wage for every worker should have come to fruition in 2018, if it hadn't been for the Conservative government cutting it, gig workers are only eligible to have their hours counted under this bill when on assignment in the apps, which means they could be going unpaid for the time they are signed in and waiting for assignment, waiting for the rider to start their trip or for a food delivery order to be prepared by a restaurant. In reality, this is going to create a sub-standard class of workers that doesn't take into account the costs those workers shell out for vehicle maintenance, gas, insurance and more.

In fact, Josh Mandryk, a labour lawyer with expertise in the ABC test used by some jurisdictions to determine whether a worker is misclassified as a contractor, assesses that the minimum wage provisions in this bill could potentially reduce the earning capacity of drivers to as low as \$9 an hour.

Speaker, this is exactly why we need the gig workers' bill of rights, which was proposed by my colleague the member for London West. If the government House leader wants to talk about fast-tracking bills and making procedural changes to this House that impact private members' bills, for example, like the gig workers' bill of rights, we need to talk about getting that bill fast-tracked and passed into law as quickly as possible.

When we look at what else went down in the House today, we saw that the same bill also contains a provision or a schedule that would repeal the college responsible for regulating traditional Chinese medicine. Frankly, I'm a little bit confused about what a schedule intended to dissolve a regulatory body for acupuncture, as one example, has to do with gig workers, but here we are.

I can't honestly say that I have a full understanding of this move. I do, however, have a lot of questions. I had hoped to pose those questions to the government members

to provide clarity during the second reading debate that will no longer be happening as a direct result of the procedural moves made by the government House leader earlier today.

My inbox has been flooded with questions and concerns over this schedule. Folks are asking for clarity because, by all accounts, this bill will remove the safeguards, standards of practice and professional competencies required by practising college members. Does this mean that the government thinks we don't need professional standards for a health practice like acupuncture that includes needles being inserted below the dermis and mucous membranes of people's bodies? There are very serious—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. Again, I'm sorry to interrupt the member, but very clearly, this debate is for a bill that is not before the House. I cannot continue the latitude extension. I need the member and all members to please ensure that they are debating what is before the House, which is the amendment to the amendment to the motion. It can be found on the order paper, I believe on page 17. But we cannot debate a bill that is not before the House.

Please continue.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Speaker.

Well, with regard to the standing order changes that have been proposed, the next piece, then, that I would like to speak to is related to the parts of this motion that deal with private members' bills and the subsequent amendments that the NDP have proposed, which I was about three paragraphs from getting to, Speaker.

This is the seventh permanent change to the standing orders that this government has led since the Conservative government took office in 2018, compared to five permanent amendments to the rules by successive governments during the period spanning 1992 to 2018. Overall, the standing order changes proposed by this government have been focused on increasing the government's ability to fast-track legislation and remove the few tools opposition MPPs had to buy time to properly review omnibus legislation tabled with little or no notice—omnibus legislation not dissimilar to the one that was pushed out of this House earlier today related to the oversight of Chinese medicine and also gig workers' rights.

Specifically, these changes will now prioritize the tabling of government bills before proceeding to the introduction of new private members' bills during the order of proceedings. Speaker, with respect, I would argue that I think it's quite a rude move to suggest to members in this House who work diligently to research legislation in response to emerging issues in their community, to work with stakeholders to ensure that this legislation is well-designed, well-written and meets the needs of their communities, to draft it and bring it into this House and table it, and then be told, "No, no, sit and wait your turn. The government bills are far more important." I certainly respect that the government has a right to move forward with its agenda in this House, but to suggest that private members' bills are somehow less important and have to wait to be introduced during proceedings is, I think, a little bit unfair to the private members of this House.

Next, the government is also proposing to delay the start of private members' bills to 12 sessional days after a throne speech. Okay, so what does that mean? Well, it means that after elections and prorogations, the government can significantly reduce the number of private members' bills that this House is allowed to consider. If this rule had been in place when the government prorogued this House in October just this past year, the first private member's bill that this House would have been able to consider wouldn't have happened until November 2. And in a case when a throne speech took place on a Thursday prior to a constituency week, it could be a full month before a private member's bill was considered by this House.

I understand that there are issues within those first ballot days about having enough time to table notice, as an example, but then let's talk about that. But this government is simultaneously making it possible for them to pass their bills—the government bills—as quickly as humanly possible, in as little as days, without giving us any notice to opposition members, but private members' bills are going to be held to a second double standard. So, the government can effectively table a bill with no notice to members, dispense it straight to committee without second reading—as they did today—and then pass it in mere days.

Speaker, I know that my NDP colleagues have proposed some really important amendments to address this. If the government House leader wants to apply these timelines to private members' bills, then why shouldn't those same timeline requirements for notice be applied directly to government bills? By the House leader's own logic, to not follow—I just don't get it. I just don't get why there is one set of rules for government bills and a second set of rules around notice for private members' bills.

Speaker, these standing order changes will have a significant impact on the operation of this House in the coming years. I would like to respectfully offer to the government members: You will not be in government forever and you will have to live under these rules as opposition members. I would kindly suggest to each of you, as you craft these changes, that you are going to have to live under these new rules as opposition members, and I think, quite frankly, you're not going to like it once you're back on this side of the House on June 3.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: It's always an honour to rise here on behalf of the people of Mississauga–Lakeshore. This afternoon I will be speaking about the government House leader's motion on changes to the standing orders and on the amendments proposed by the member from London West.

To begin, Speaker, Parliament met today in person in Ukraine under very difficult conditions. I just want to say that my thoughts and prayers are with the people of Ukraine today.

1650

Speaker, I want to thank the government House leader and his team for all their hard work on this motion, but

also throughout this pandemic, which has enhanced debate, improving democratic oversight and strengthened the Parliament of Ontario. The changes that he has proposed here will mean more effective oversight on government spending, more focused committee work and an enhanced ability for MPPs to participate in considering and passing private members' bills, just like the two that I have passed so far.

I'll begin with a quick review of some of the items in the government House leader's motion. I'll begin with the changes to the Standing Committee on Estimates, where I've served as a member since 2020.

The changes to standing order 111 would allow for the estimates to be referred to the appropriate policy field committee for the ministry or office. Just very briefly, policy field committees would include general government, social policy, justice policy, and finance and economic affairs. A new policy field committee would be established. The Standing Committee on General Government would be renamed the committee for heritage, infrastructure and cultural policy, and the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly would be renamed the committee on procedure and House affairs. This would spread our review of estimates between six committees instead of one, allowing for more focused reviews. It would revert to the process used before 1989 in Ontario and which continues to be used in Ottawa. I don't know if you remember the commercial for Lincoln vehicles where he says, "Sometimes, you have to go backwards to go forwards."

The changes to standing order 63(d) would allow these committees to schedule time to study the estimates in the same way that we would for bills. This maintains opposition control over which ministries are selected, but gives the committee as a whole control over the length of consideration. If the members of the committee decide that more than 15 hours are needed to have an appropriate level of oversight, then they would be able to make that decision.

The amendment from the member from London West would restore that 15-hour limit. Speaker, I can't support that change because some bills do need more than 15 hours of debate, and I think we should all have that opportunity to debate that bill longer if it needs it.

Secondly, with respect to private members' business, the government House leader's motion would amend standing order 101(a) to provide that private members' public business would begin on the 12th day at the start of a new session. As you know, Speaker, currently, private members' bills begin immediately and must be delayed by unanimous consent. This change would allow all parties to have reasonable notice of private members' bills to be debated so they may be considered at caucus and so they can research and prepare for the debate.

As we know, at the start of every new Parliament or session, the first several PMB debate slots can never be used. There is simply not enough time for a member to give notice before their time for debate. This proposed change would simply add to the standing orders what

already occurs in practice, which is deferral of the start of private members' public business by unanimous consent. It would adjust the standing orders so that they are functional at the start of each new session or new Parliament.

The member for London West proposes an amendment to reduce that time to four days. Speaker, I know from my own experience, four days is not enough time. I had an issue when I was first elected here in 2018: I did not have enough time to prepare for my bill that I was going to propose. Again, I can't support that change.

The government House leader's motion would also amend standing order 101(c) to require at least eight days' notice of a trade in the order of precedence for private members' public business. The opposition amendment would also reduce this just to four days, and sometimes you need more than just four days to trade. I can't support this amendment for the same reason.

Finally, the government House leader's motion would amend standing order 101(e) to clarify that, "In the event that a member fails to designate business for consideration by this deadline, the first eligible public bill to appear on the Orders and Notices paper standing in that member's name shall be designated for consideration. Should that member have no public bill standing in their name then the first eligible motion to appear on the Orders and Notices paper standing in that member's name shall be designated for consideration. Should that member have no business standing in their name on the Orders and Notices paper by the deadline, the member shall lose their place in order of precedence and the House shall not conduct a private members' public business proceeding on that date." This is reasonable to me, Speaker.

In fact, my first private member's bill was not ready in time for my first ballot date, so there was no private members' bills on that day—and that was difficult, being a first-term elected MPP. To be honest, I didn't know what was going on at that time because I wasn't aware of that issue that occurred to me. The opposition amendment would delete this language, which just clarifies standing order 101(e). Again, I'm not inclined to support the opposition's amendment here.

Lastly, I would like to address standing orders 3 and 73. The government House leader's motion would not amend these orders, but the member from London West proposed to require eight days of notice for motions of second reading of government bills and motions. The government House leader spoke about the reasons that this is not acceptable this morning, and I don't want to repeat his point, except to say that there's a big difference between government bills and private members' business.

Each session, hundreds of private members' bills and motions are introduced. It is not unreasonable to ask for eight days' notice before the debate at second reading. By comparison, Speaker, there are relatively few government bills and they're referred to committees after second reading for public hearings and clause-by-clause review. The required eight-day delay in standing order 73 would make it more difficult for the government to act quickly to pass legislation that may be urgently needed during a

pandemic or another national and international crisis like the one that we've had over the last two years, the pandemic. Accordingly, I cannot support the opposition's proposed amendments to standing orders 3 and 73.

I've looked at some of the changes that we have done—after 30 years—in this House. I worked at the Ford Motor Co. for 31 years, and if we didn't move forward, we'd still have carburetor engines. We'd be using lead gas. I don't know if a lot of people remember the lead gas we used to use in our vehicles—

Ms. Suze Morrison: Don't hate on the carburetor.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I love the carburetor. I love the four-barrel carburetor myself.

But now we're moving forward. We're going over to EV vehicles. As you know, I worked at Ford Motor Co., and technology and moving forward is very important.

1700

These standing orders—we have to look at technology too. Nowadays, we use laptops in the House and smart phones. At one time it was always paper that we used in the House. So we have to look at technology moving forward and getting more efficient and doing our jobs much better; otherwise, we'd still be building the Pinto at the Ford Motor Co.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Don't hate on the Pinto.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: That was Lee Iacocca's idea, the Pinto, yes. I remember those days.

Mr. John Vanthof: I got my licence in a Pinto.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I got mine in a Camaro Z28, the typical car for back then.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order. Through the Chair.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Sorry, Speaker. And you know, the change in the standing orders that we did in 2019 here in the House with the royal anthem, when we would do the monthly anthem in here—for me, I'd only heard it a few times, so hearing it here in the House brings a lot of pride of being a Canadian, listening to the anthem in here.

PMBs in the House: During the pandemic, we increased the PMBs to four private members' bills each week on Monday at 9 a.m. until June 2021 to catch up on the delay because of the COVID-19 pandemic. So these changes have been good for our Parliament here, so we could have more private members' bills, which all of us really care about deeply because they come from what we want to hear, what we want to present here in the House for the people of our ridings. I think it's very important that we were able to change the standing orders in the fall of 2020 to do that.

The ability of the government House leader to give notice that the House will meet at 1 o'clock instead of 3 o'clock on a Wednesday: That gave us more debate time in the House for our government bills. Sometimes we do need more debate for some of these bills that we want to pass in the House. So these are great changes that we have done over the three and a half years that we have been here.

Can you believe that for 30 years we haven't changed anything in the House? Like I was saying, we'd still be

building the Pinto at the Ford plant, but now we're moving forward. These are things that we have to do to move forward. I'm looking at my colleague the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. Right now she was using her phone here in the House. These are things that we have the ability to do, and thank you to the changes in our standing orders. I see the member from Brampton there too. He's got his phone right there and he's looking at it too. He's got two in his hands.

These are very important things that we've been able to do over the years that we've been in power, so I want to thank the minister for these changes in the House.

This act will even recognize the important events in our ridings, and it will give more voice to the issues we have in our ridings, like the building of our Trillium Health Partners, the largest hospital in Canadian history, being built in my riding of Mississauga–Lakeshore: 24 stories, 22 operation rooms and the largest emergency centre in Canadian history. These are proud things to talk about.

And our long-term-care facility with 632 beds and the first-ever hospice in Mississauga—these are great things that are happening in the riding that we can get to talk about. The BRT going down Lakeshore, the LRT going up Hurontario and our new affordable homes that are being built for people with disabilities—and I had the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility there about a month ago to visit it. I think he enjoyed that day that he was in my riding. I was making him run all over the riding to see all the great things that are happening there—as well as the future building of the first ever YMCA abilities centre in the riding of Mississauga–Lakeshore. We do not have an abilities centre in our riding, and we are working to build this, and this will go across—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. I recognize the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. In all due fairness, I heard you on three separate occasions bringing our member back to the bill. Can we bring—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I apologize to the member, but he can ask me or say something from his own seat.

I recognize the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. In all due fairness, I heard you say, on three separate occasions with our speaker that we had prior, to come back to the bill, although she thought she was at the bill. But this member has completely strayed away from the bill. I would like to have him come back to the amendment to the amendment of the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member's valid point of order. I agree and I would invite the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore to come back to the matter that we're debating. I return to the member.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to thank the Speaker for that. To get me back on the track of the bill that we're talking about here today, the amendment to the amendment: We eliminated the deferral slip. These are things

that, why did we even have to do them for years? Finally, we have a minister who understands how Parliament works to improve how we can present much better in the House. I think all of these amendments are great in the bill that we are proposing here today.

Providing time for reply to an opposition day motion for independent members: This is something that was presented in 2019 for the changes. These are great changes that we're doing here in the House, and we're going to continue doing it. Like I said, 30 years ago, and nothing had been done in this House. So I think it's long overdue.

And I know that the technology that we are moving forward in and we're using in this House, I've been using it myself here and I find it better than using paper. Today I've been using paper. Unfortunately, I went back to paper. But I think using technology in the chamber will make it more efficient for all of us in Queen's Park here.

I'm just looking over some of my papers here about the PMBs as well that we—if we weren't allowed to move forward today, we'd still be using the eight-track player that we did use. I don't know if you remember the eight-track player. I don't know if most of you do. But, you know, technology today has been great in this House. I want to thank everyone for using technology and moving forward with technology. I cannot support the opposition's proposed amendments to this bill in standing orders 3 and 73, because they do not move forward with the times and I think we have to move forward with the times.

I want to thank everyone for listening to me here today.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: As always, it's an honour to rise and speak on behalf of the residents of my lifelong home of Humber River–Black Creek. Today we're discussing standing order changes. I would be remiss to say that, especially as a new member of this chamber, there are certainly a lot of rules, and there are people who work behind the scenes who make the rules a lot more understandable. One of the people on our side is a great guy named Kevin Modeste. I know that we've mentioned that it is his birthday today, but I also want to wish him a very happy birthday.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's his birthday today?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Yes, it is. I also want to say that he makes our job a lot easier. He's literally sharper than a katana. We're lucky to have him.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Hear, hear.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: To Kevin.

Apparently, in the last 25 years before this government took office there have been fewer standing order changes than we've seen now; there have been about seven. And I know that members of the government want to say things like the word “modernizing;” that they're doing this over and over to make it more modern, right? But I've sat here and I've analyzed the government. I've analyzed it and think of it, sometimes, if you imagine the government like a person, like an entity, what is the personality of that individual?

Interjection: Noble.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Sure; I don't know about that one.

But I can say this: When I analyze what this government is about, it's about power. It's about consolidation of power. When you make changes to the standing orders, you're making changes to the rules of the game, how debate is carried out, how things happen here, how laws proceed. And when you have a majority government who can literally win everything, they have the power to change the actual rules.

1710

Are they doing it to modernize or are they doing it to consolidate more power for themselves? They constantly time-allocate and reduce the amount of debate on bills. You go to committee—and it's an honour to serve in committee because I really feel that being at committee is a place where you at least have the potential for collaboration. I can think of many instances in committee—take new home warranty reform, for instance. We had the privilege to be able to travel and listen to stakeholders in many different places, and they said one thing and they almost all said it resoundingly in the same voice, with the exception of, I think, the home builders, who said something a little different. Ultimately, what the government did was something completely opposite.

And so we talk about committees. They're mentioned. They were mentioned today. There were changes being made on how they meet, when they can meet and everything else. But when I look at what the government does when it comes to committees, they seem to do whatever it is that they want.

Private members' bills: When we took office, all of us, there were complaints, and I know the complaints were coming on the government side and I know that changes to the standing orders will affect private members' bills as well. The change in this instance is to say, “Let's give eight days of notice before a PMB is tabled.” That's fine. I think people all want transparency. They say so, right? They want to know what's coming. But a PMB—and I'll point out that especially initially in the first couple of years of being here, we were not going through them quickly and barely any of them came back for third reading and being passed into law. The fact that we're seeing more of it I think is good. But why aren't they taking the concepts around that and applying it to government bills?

When you look at a PMB—and I know there was a bill debated the other day and they were saying it was only 15 pages long. But when you look at actual legislation that comes here, when you look at the omnibuses that are tabled, they're stacks of papers, changes that are far-reaching, changing many different things. So if we're discussing the standing orders, why not bring the same level of transparency, why not give a heads-up?

I bring it back to say that if the government really wanted to do anything other than consolidate its own powers, they would be considering other changes to the standing orders. The NDP have an amendment to deal with that, to take their own principles of that eight days of notice and apply something like to their own government

bills so that opposition members, the public and everybody would be given at least a week's notice. Is that enough? Who knows? But it's better than what you have today, which is that the government will come in and drop literally a ton of changes and then what they'll do is you'll have 24 hours to go through it and rebut that. I don't think they're doing a service to the public by conducting themselves in this way.

We've had seven standing order changes, and yet what they're doing each time is trying to restrain the ability of those who critique them and criticize them, certainly in this House. In fact, they went so far when it came to that, and I think we all remember, just like the government members do, that we were here in the middle of the night because the government did not want critique. Again, this is a government that's interested in and obsessed with control and power.

They said, "We will not allow third-party advertising," something they've used extensively to benefit themselves. Why did this happen? Because, sure enough, at the beginning of the pandemic—and we were facing and still are facing an unprecedented challenge, something that none of us ever would have expected—there was a rally-behind-the-leader effect. So initially, they were enjoying popularity as everybody said, "Look, there's no room for criticism. We're going to continue. We need to work together as one voice." But as people began to analyze the decisions that were being made by this government and other governments, they began to notice mistakes, holes, problems, and their popularity began to dive lower, lower, lower and eventually reached the levels that the government before them did. It was at that time that they decided, "We've got too many enemies."

Why do I bring this up? Because when every member gets up and talks about standing orders, they try to impute their own motives to be pure, that everything that they're doing here is to improve what's happening in the House. They certainly do; they continuously pat themselves on the back about what they do, and that's fine. That's what I expect they'll do. But when I look from this side, and I watch, and especially as a new member, I have a different diagnosis of it.

Estimates: Here's another change that's being discussed in these standing order changes, where they want to reduce the amount of time and again have more control so that once again they are able to decide how much time is allocated to discuss what they're actually spending on. That's certainly important, because the budget really determines the direction, certainly, of every ministry and what they're focusing on.

The fact that we've been here seven times—and it's interesting, because essentially, any one of those bills could have addressed the issues that keep coming up. So if they want to have standing order changes, they continue to have these epiphanies around it, saying, "Maybe we could do"—and maybe in their words, they'll say that they're doing better, but I don't think so. I think they keep noticing things they missed, ways that they can continue to consolidate and control.

One of the changes here around PMBs would have meant that after their prorogation—a move I believe they did because, certainly, they didn't want to come back here and muddy the waters for the federal election. What happened as a result of that prorogation is, all the stuff we were debating, all of the bills, the important matters that were before the House, were lost. Even their own government members' private members' bills were simply erased because of that move.

You continue to see evidence of a government that's interested in one thing, which is control and power. And again, as a new member, it's funny to have watched that same personality change over the course. I remember, when we all first took office and took our seats here in this wonderful place of history, the personality of that government in those initial steps. Everything that was said was a standing ovation, desks being pounded, people getting up, patting each other on the back. I think the word "all-star" was used about a hundred times in a week. And things began to change, we saw.

Of course, we all went into the pandemic, and it definitely changed things. We heard—I think we all did, and no different than how we all learn about what the government is doing policy-wise—through the news. We also hear about what happens behind closed doors: a person in charge, apparently, who was threatening and yelling at people. We saw a government that really did everything—because it's not just about control, of controlling what happens here in the House and control in many other ways. They controlled and restrained their members to the point that I think they've lost—not 10% of the bench, but quite a number of their own members came out and said that they were unhappy and painted a very different picture of what was happening behind the scenes. It's always interesting to hear them speak and shed a light on what's happening.

So from this perspective, it's rich to hear that. You want to talk about us. They'll bring it up. A member of the government will get up and they'll talk about everything that you're doing. There are a couple of members in this government who are absolutely brilliant at taking something that's good and making it look bad and taking something that's bad and making it look good. I mean, literally, they do it in a way that—I'm certainly smiling behind the mask a lot of the time when they're doing that. But the thing is, are they really acting in good faith?

We have a bill to end Islamophobia. A member here of the official opposition, an NDP member, tables the bill, and the government gets up and says, without even telling the member, "This is what we're going to do." Why would they do that? Do you think, even to give the simplest respect, to tell the member what they're doing? Absolutely not. I could tell you, members of this government, especially in the front benches here, would not appreciate that one bit, if what was done to them was what's done to us.

I know the members who were here in the previous government used to rail and complain about things. They used to talk about omnibuses. I have to say that not

everything that they table here is the worst, not everything is terrible. But one of the most insidious things that they do—it's the inside baseball. It's, for instance, the omnibus bill. I hear that they used to rail about this before, because the Liberals would do this: You take a bill, you load the bill with a whole bunch of stuff that maybe is okay, and then you put in things strategically for the purpose of poisoning it. Then what you end up having is a bill that may even have a completely different title, but then there's something buried in it that is simply unacceptable—maybe not to the people they want to make happy, but it's something that they put in.

1720

Then, one of the standing orders changes—one of the ones that I've actually found interesting—was the ability for us to question each other. After we speak for 20 minutes, then we get to question each other. I'm going to say that not everything they do is terrible. I've enjoyed it. I was able to use that to continuously bring up the issue of insurance. The fact that this government is governing in the midst of an affordability crisis and insurance rates, whether it's auto, whether—especially commercial and condo are through the roof, and there is no discussion, nothing, no bills being tabled to really address or deal with that. I had the ability to question speaker after speaker, when they would bring forth legislation and discuss that, giving their best answer. I appreciated the opportunity. Then they would give us questions like, "Hey, in this bill"—generally, they pick up a piece of paper and read out a note that says, "Do you like, on subsection 5(3.2), this specific thing?" and then try to get us to admit or not admit to that.

I want to say it's all inside baseball. Really, does it matter? I sat here before I was ever elected. Once, I came to visit. It was at the time when the Liberals took away public hydro. They basically continued the work of the Conservatives in terms of privatizing. This was especially insidious because it was done right after they had taken office; right after the election, they did that. There was a government member, a minister, who got up—and I have to say this was interesting. He took the Hansard out and he read what the Liberals had said when they, in fact, were privatizing hydro many, many, many years ago. So it was a very powerful critique. But at the end of the day, it's all inside baseball, right? It was stuff in Hansard.

I think we do a lot of things here where the government is trying to say, "Look, this is what you've said; this is what was done" and everything else, but I think what matters is what the public feels is being done in this chamber. Do they feel the government is acting within the best interests of people? If the government is not, if the government is taking control, doing everything they can, even though they have a majority government and they have the ability to win every single vote—if they are not able to make their own party members happy, their own members in the government, so that we hear about their discomfort and their unhappiness in the news, see members get thrown out, see members leave, it paints a picture of what's happening inside there.

When they actually go out there and they bring forward change after change to the standing orders, but then they leave other things out—again, why not make known what their plan is? Why not provide information around what these big government bills are about? Why not let people know about what that is? If you're going to do it with private members' bills, why not do it with these big-ticket items that change far-reaching laws? Why not give a heads-up? But of course they're not going to do that, because what they want to do, at all costs, is stop dissent, stop those criticizing them. They've done it with bills, to not allow outsiders, people who are not part of here or part of an established party, to be able to even critique their government. I think that speaks volumes. But they do it with changes in this place, too.

We only have a couple of months before the plug is pulled on this government, and we are debating standing orders changes. We've come back. I'm not hearing anything about real fixing of long-term care. I know they want to add mostly a bunch of private beds, but I'm not hearing about new public beds being added in a very, very substantive way, which is what we need to fix the system. We still don't have paid sick days—that's not being debated—or the backlog.

I think what the government is probably going to do for the next two months is find ways to come up with good headlines, gimmicks and other things that people could point out and say, "Well, why are you doing it at the very end of your mandate? Why couldn't you have simply done this?" Any of the things that this government tables in the time moving forward are things they probably could have tabled months, certainly years ago. I hope they remember that, because if they sat here with a long road, where they wanted to say, "You know what? We're going to keep coming back here and we're going to let out a couple of goodies for the public, just because we have an election on the horizon," remember, these are things they could have done before.

Certainly, I expect they're going to find ways to game the system, create bills to find a way to undermine everybody else in the House and to continue to strengthen their own position in any way they can. But those who are watching—and we hear it, and I hear it all the time—are looking at the totality of this government.

And I'm going to say this: I've had the privilege to meet many of them, talk to them, individual members in the halls, meet them in committees. This, certainly, is a government that is less than the sum of its parts, because many of the members here, you meet them, you talk to them in a committee and you know they want to do something else. But this government, this government of control, won't let them have freedom of thought or be able to do what they think is best for their communities. They're told to keep in line, and that's what they do.

And so that's why we are here over and over, seven times, more than what we've seen in the last 25 years, with changes to the rules of how this House is governed, how the opposition is able to effectively do the business of keeping the government on their toes and demanding

perfection of them. And of course, we're going to demand perfection of them, because what you're going to do is aim for the best for the public, aim for the best for Ontario. It's funny sometimes, and I know I've had the chats—you see, they hate the critique. They hate it. They absolutely hate it. I don't understand. They're certainly not perfect. Nobody's perfect.

Amendments: Time after time, the amendments that we've tabled—again, things that they certainly could agree to, but for some reason, they simply don't. And do you know why? Because they don't want the opposition to have a win on anything. We could put forward things that they personally could agree to, but at the end of the day, a decision is always made for cynical reasons and a way to continue to consolidate the power that they have.

And so, in the limited time that this government has left, I hope that they are going to try and endeavour to show a better personality to the public, because what they are doing is showing that they're interested in one thing only, just like the government behind them: collecting power and control, helping a few while the many are unhappy, and just repeating it over and over and over again.

Ontarians deserve better. They don't have two months to undo a lot of what they've done, but I hope in the two months they have ahead of them, they are going to do a few things better. I hear it every day from my constituents that they've had a lost opportunity for real change, but change will be coming, and it will be coming very soon.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I'm very honoured to stand today to speak about the amendments to the amendment. When I start speaking, when I start thinking about, "What should I say about this? What should I talk about?", I just hear the words come from the Speaker's mouth in the beginning: "Is it the pleasure of the House to do this and this?" And that's, actually, a strong message, a huge power to that Legislature.

This is putting a responsibility on us to ensure that this Legislative Assembly is working effectively and doing its job. And those members here are the ones responsible for doing those changes, to make sure that they can do their job effectively and that this Legislature is doing what it needs to do. There's not only this side. Both sides and every member of Parliament should have to have the same interest in making sure that we are doing what we need to do.

Today, the world is different. It's not like yesterday. It's not like five years ago. Things are changing fast, and faster than before. Even during COVID, we started seeing this happening even faster than before, and we need to keep up with that. We need to make the best of that, to enhance the jobs we're doing in this Legislature. Every day, not only the lifestyle, the amount of information—every moment, things are changing, and the productivity of this Legislature has to keep up with that. We have to enhance this Legislature doing its business.

1730

I would like to pose a question to the members opposite: If you own a business, if you are a business owner, and

there is a chance that you can change some of the procedures to raise the productivity of your business, wouldn't you do that?

Madam Speaker, our business here is to help the people, make decisions which will help improve their lives, their safety, their environment, their work and life conditions; plan ahead for the future needs of our community growth. Those changes we put forward are not only needed to improve the work flow of this Legislature, but it's also done to enable us to move discussions faster between both sides, not touching debate or fairness, just some procedures, improvements, restrictions and limitations. Give the members here the ability to do their job, to speak up.

Madam Speaker, it is strange to see the members in the opposition pushing to cancel those changes. My understanding and my assumption is that we are all on the same page; we all want to do our best, both sides, for the good of the residents of this great province of Ontario. So I would really appreciate it if they come up with more enhancements, better ideas or changes which can even do better than what we suggested. But just to cancel what we are trying to do, to stall this government doing the job that is needed—I think this is not right. When we try to do so, we should see both sides are trying to help to get that done.

Madam Speaker, every procedure in any industry or vertical takes a cycle of development, enhancing, deploying new ideas, learning from other jurisdictions, Legislatures like here, even the competitors. So I want to speak about some of the enhancements which we added.

The ability to ask questions to the member doing a speech: When we get back to some of the speaking slots about any bill, we prepare our speech one day ahead or even the day in the morning. When we sit here and other members start speaking, we discover that some of the stuff we already talked about, with small, slight differences, has already been put through. I would like to take the opportunity to add on that, to enrich that, get my point through and use my time to tackle other points. So having the ability to ask a question, or ask the member who just presented a question, adds value to the discussion.

Madam Speaker, another point I would like to speak about, and I embrace, is an amendment we added: having PAs able to represent their ministers to answer questions, for example. We know ministers are carrying a big load in their ministries on top of their duties here in the House. In many cases, their schedule will be restricting even opposition from getting their job done, getting answers from those ministers. Having the ability to ask questions and the PAs answer that question is giving the answer for the opposition the minute they ask the question. Those PAs are receiving the same updates from their ministries. It's a very much-needed amendment to help ministers do their duties while this House can also do their job.

As a PA for the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, I am honoured and proud to represent our minister, my ministry, when needed, but it also allows me the exposure and the personal skill development inspiring. I would like to thank the government House leader and the government for bringing such enhancements to this legislation.

The third point I would like to talk about is the implementation of allowing the use of electronics. All of us now use our smartphones, use our tablets, use our notebooks to get updates, to update our speeches, to be able to get the latest and greatest information and edit our speeches on the fly. It makes sense, Madam Speaker, that I can use my smartphone or edit my speech on the fly if I need to. Again, depending on the discussions going on, I fine-tune my speech to get it to the right level.

The change done to the private members' bills procedure is one I'm personally thankful for because it allowed me to put through Bill 106, Egyptian Heritage Month Act, something I am so proud of as the first Canadian of Egyptian origin elected parliamentarian in Ontario history, and maybe Canadian history as well. It is an honour to officially add in the Egyptian piece of mosaic to the rich Canadian mosaic—and Bill 42, another private member's bill, which is the Ontario Religious Freedom Day Act.

That brings me to speak about some of the bills which we managed to fast-track and have extra sittings to get through because of the changes we did: Bill 27, Working for Workers Act, which enabled and empowered the immigrant workforce to be able to kick-start their future in Canada. This is something that, for 23 or 24 years—since I came to Canada, when I faced that the first time, I dreamed of being able to tackle it. This government had the strength to attack this point and do the changes needed to allow our immigrants who are coming to Canada to be able to kick-start their career. My riding is 55% not born in Canada, meaning immigrants. When I say that, I would like to say that these people and the coming people will be able to make use of that in the future, to be able to start their life with the wealth of experience they're bringing to Canada, being able to implement it as fast.

Madam Speaker, COVID-19 showed us many things: some good things, some that need more work, more progress. Decades of neglect of our health system, decades of neglect of our long-term care—I would like to commend this government for the major work we did on both files. We budgeted money for Queensway Health Centre in Mississauga and a major project in the Mississauga Hospital that will build the biggest hospital in Canada and in Canadian history to serve the people of Mississauga. We approved 1,880 long-term-care beds in Mississauga, with 1,251 new beds and 629 upgrades of existing beds. Also, we just approved 128 beds for the Coptic community in long-term care, the first Arabic-speaking long-term care in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, when we try to change the procedures so that we can do more things for the people, bringing more decisions, bringing more bills, it's actually needed. And especially during the COVID time, that was very clear, that we needed to do something. For 30 years, no procedures got updated. I think it is time to do so.

Madam Speaker, after I won my seat in June 2018, I was speaking to one of our Ontario long-time politicians, a Liberal. After he congratulated me, he said, "I want to give you some advice," and I said, "Sure." He said, "Try to make use of every second you spend under this

respected Legislature's roof, because after you finish your duties here, you will discover that there are many things you wanted to do—and could have done—and at that moment, you will feel that there were many chances you could have used those precious seconds in the leg better—more efficient. It is an honour to be here, but it's a responsibility on your shoulders you should carry."

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That's why, Madam Speaker, I support this amendment the government did. We needed to be able to put more debate as needed. We need to be able to add sittings to achieve what we need to achieve. We need to be able to move things so we can do more, because we still have a lot more we need to do, and yes, Madam Speaker, we want to have the chance to do it.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Before I begin my comments on the bill before us, I just want to acknowledge—it seems surreal this week to be talking about matters other than what's happening in Ukraine. This is a global conflict. It's got repercussions. For many of us, it just seems like a repeat of history. I just want to say, it's been seven days since this invasion began, and it's already a humanitarian disaster. There are a million refugees—in the last seven days, a million people have become refugees and are escaping the war, the invasion of Ukraine. I think it's absolutely important for us to respect the courage of the people of Ukraine for fighting this invasion. We need to do everything we can to support them and to make sure that those million refugees are able to return home as quickly as possible, and in the meantime, we need to make sure that those refugees can find refuge here in Canada and provide support to those people. So I just wanted to start with that.

I'll get to this bill. It's the change to the standing orders. For a lot of people, this is inside baseball. These are the rules that govern this House, and most people don't know about the rules. I knew very little about the rules before I was elected here. But it is really important because these are the rules that govern our democracy here in the Legislature, and they determine how much opportunity our community members have to have a say in the legislation that is going to affect their lives. So we absolutely need to make sure that these respect the democratic process.

This is the seventh time that this government has changed these standing orders since they were elected in 2018. By comparison, between 1992 and 2018, there were five changes to the standing orders. So the rules of this House between 1992 and 2018 were changed five times, and in the last four years, they've been changed seven times. Every change has, I would argue, made our House a little bit less democratic. There's a little bit less opportunity for community members to have a say in their legislation. Now it's possible for the government to drop a piece of legislation here, get it to second reading, get it to committee or even bypass the committee, and get it to third reading and be passed within a matter of days.

The other thing that I would say about the legislation that's happening in this House is every bill is an omnibus

bill, so you don't get an opportunity to actually debate each section of the bill. Sometimes I've seen bills with 30 schedules. There's a bill that's before the House now—Bill 84. Let me just find it here. This bill is entitled An Act to enact two Acts and amend various other Acts, and schedule 3 is about the Child, Youth and Family Services Act. We were debating this yesterday. It's among a whole lot of other things: Highway 407, changes to the Highway Traffic Act, changes to Laurentian University—all these different schedules are part of the same bill. But this one, the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, actually has to do with Indigenous child services. When we consider the history of this country that is being revealed—there were 169 potential children's graves found at a residential school in Alberta last week—if we're going to talk about anything to do with Indigenous children, we have to show the utmost respect. We have to be consulting with the Indigenous communities of this province at every step along the way. The Indigenous community members had some say; we've been told that they had some say in the development of this. But they didn't know it was before the House. They didn't know that it was already being debated, that it was at third reading and has already been voted on.

When we talk about the standing orders of this House, when you can rush something through this quickly, then it can be incredibly disrespectful to the people who we should be showing the greatest respect to. So to make any change like this—first of all, to put an omnibus bill like this together and to put something as sensitive as the care of Indigenous children in the middle of an omnibus is incredibly disrespectful to the Indigenous communities of this province. To not provide them with the opportunity to fully speak to this, to take it to committee so that they can comment on it, because even if the government—and I want to believe the government wants to do the best job possible with this, but you're not going to get it right the first time. That's why we send things to committee. There are changes in the standing orders to our committee structure. That's why we send it to committee. So we need to send it to committee. Community members can come to committee and they can speak to the bill, and then we can get their changes. We can hear what they have to say and we can make amendments to that bill so that we can get this right.

I would hate to think that there are mistakes in here, because lives are at stake. God, repeating the history of this province with regard to Indigenous children—anything along that should be treated with much greater respect than has happened under the current standing orders of this government. Any amendment to these standing orders has to make our processes here far more respectful.

I will say, when I got elected here four years ago, I didn't know what to expect, really. I had served as a trustee. I have always been interested in politics. I helped with the NDP. I grew up in Oshawa. I actually helped in Ed Broadbent's election campaigns as far back as the 1970s. When I got here, I was wondering what was going to happen.

I had conversations. Gilles Bisson is one of three members of this Legislature—

Interjection.

Mr. Chris Glover: Oh. The member from Timmins—thank you, Madam Speaker—is one of three members of this Legislature who has been here since the 1990s, one of the longest-standing members. He was talking about the standing orders and the way that this Legislature operated back in the day. He said that one of the things—and this was under Bill Davis, particularly when there was a minority government. He said that the way it would work is the House leaders would get together. The government leader would say, “Look, we need four bills to get passed by Christmas.” And the opposition leaders would say, “We've got this bill. We want to get this through. Make these amendments to this bill, take this bill out to the community. Travel it around the province to get feedback, because we don't think you have that one right.” And they said, “We'll probably vote against this bill, but we'll let it get through,” because at that time, the opposition parties had the power to filibuster. That power to filibuster meant that they could hold up the work of this Legislature if the government was doing something that they were egregiously opposed to.

With the loss of that power to filibuster, now everything that happens under the current standing orders, and with the amended standing orders that are coming up, they can time-allocate, so they can designate a fixed amount of time for each piece of legislation. There will be a certain amount of debate here, but it means that they can rush through things more and more quickly.

That is really unfortunate, because even when the government has the best of intentions, they don't know all of the implications of the legislation that they're passing. And that's why we need committee processes. That's why we need to travel bills and that's why we need to have pieces of legislation that—especially when you're talking about a sensitive topic like the care of Indigenous children, you put that in a separate bill so it can get the attention and respect that it deserves.

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The other thing that I would say that I've learned in this Legislature with regard to the standing orders and the way it operates is that it's not very democratic. We have 124 members in this Legislature, and yet the power in this Legislature is concentrated almost exclusively in the Premier's office. The other 124 of us—the Premier has the power to bring people in and kick people out of the cabinet. If you want a front-row seat on the government side, the Premier has the power to do that—to bring you in or kick you out—so you have to follow what the government is doing. And we've seen that.

There have been some really egregious pieces of legislation brought forward by this government. Three times this government has asked its members to vote to use the “notwithstanding” clause of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This suspends all of the fundamental charter rights of the people of Ontario—three times. The first one was Bill 30, which had to do with the city of Toronto

elections. The government initially said, “We’re going to change the city of Toronto elections. We know it’s the middle of the campaign period, but we’re going to change the rules of the election, and from 47 seats reduce it to 25 seats, in the middle of the election period.” So they passed Bill 5 to do that. Bill 5 was challenged in court and it was found that—the initial judgment was that Bill 5 breached the charter rights of the people of the province of Ontario because it did not respect the democratic rights of the people to free and fair elections. So the government brought in legislation, Bill 30, and on September 10, 2018, every government member in the House voted on this to use the “notwithstanding” clause to override what the government was doing—to override the rights of the people of the province of Ontario in order to change the rules of the Toronto municipal election in the middle of the election period.

When we’re talking about standing orders, when we’re talking about democracy and the fundamental democracy of this province which is in the rules of this House, it’s absolutely important that we make it as democratic as possible, and when you use the “notwithstanding” clause, then you’re undermining democracy, and the standing orders are one aspect of that democracy.

When I see what’s happened here, when I see the power that’s concentrated in the Premier’s office, I do not feel that this is a democratic institution, or at least not in the sense that it should. Sure, we have the right to elect people every four years to the government—but it’s also a majority government. The Conservatives in the last election got 40% of the vote but they got a majority of the seats, and with that majority of seats, they got 100% of the power in this House. That 100% of the power has allowed them to change the standing orders seven times to concentrate more and more power in the government side, and that is really unfortunate.

When we’re talking about this, when we’re talking about the concentration of the power in the Premier’s office, it undermines and overrides the power of the other 124 of us who were elected in the Legislature to serve our communities and to bring their voices forward.

I will say, this first-past-the-post election system is not very democratic. We need to move to a proportional representation system. We need to set up a committee of the people of this province and investigate a proportional representation system to replace this majority first-past-the-post system, because when you get 40% of the vote, you should not have 100% of the power.

Let’s see, the other things that I wanted to talk about: In opposition, we have been able to accomplish some things. And we haven’t been able to accomplish it through the standing orders in here to a great degree. Sure, we’ve got question period and we can ask questions and we can call the government out. Even this morning in question period, I was asking—it’s kind of fun in question period, I’ve got to say, at times. This morning, I was asking about affordable housing, about their affordable housing strategy, because that has been an abject failure in this province. I mean, housing prices in Ontario, in Toronto, have gone up

15% just in the last year, and people are priced out of housing. So when we’re talking about standing orders in question period, and being able to call the government to account and call the government out, then we need to—I see people are watching: “Are you going to come back to the standing orders?” Because I do have to speak about the standing orders. What I’m talking about: The standing orders are the fundamental aspect of our democracy. They are the rules of this Legislature; they are the rules by which this Legislature is governed. But it also should be reflective of democratic principles that are reflected in all of the work of this Legislature. So that’s why I’m speaking to elections, speaking about question period.

I will say, in question period—I was mentioning that I talked about affordable housing. One of the things that was kind of fun this morning is that I said, “Housing prices have gone up 15%. People are actually leaving the province because of the cost of housing. It’s now become a competitive disadvantage.” And the response was, you know, that the government is quite proud of their affordable housing strategy. So that’s the kind of banter that you can have back and forth during question period in this Legislature.

I will say, in spite of the seven changes to the standing orders and the restrictions on our democracy and the use of the “notwithstanding” clause, in the opposition, we have been able to accomplish quite a bit during this term in office. I would speak to a few of the things.

One of them is that this government introduced legislation in this House to cut the funding for our schools. They’ve talked about it from the perspective of actually increasing funding, but funding for education has not kept up with inflation. And they were going to mandate four online courses for all secondary schools, so for all secondary students. This was an absolute disaster.

With the standing orders, with the democratic system that we have, what we were able to do in opposition was to mobilize communities to fight against those cuts to our education system and fight against the mandate for four online courses. That’s where we can still operate in opposition. But as far as the committee work and the House work here goes, we bring in our private members’ bills and our private members’ motions, and very, very, very rarely does the government ever entertain them, do they actually send them to committee, or if they send them to committee, do they bring them back and make them actually laws. So there isn’t that much work that we can do here.

And when we speak in committee—I’ve been part of committees and we in the NDP have brought forward dozens of amendments to legislation. There was one piece of legislation that was talking about expanding broadband—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer French): Sorry to interrupt the member, but seeing—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer French): I beg your pardon. I misread a cue. I’m just watching the clock. Please continue. Sorry.

Mr. Chris Glover: Yes, I don’t have too much more time.

So I would say that in committee, we bring forward dozens of amendments to pieces. This one piece of legislation was about expanding broadband. I remember the member from Oshawa brought forward an amendment several times in the Legislature that just said, “for rural, remote and northern communities,” because that’s what the government had said the intention of that legislation was. The member from Oshawa said that this statement should be built into the legislation at several points throughout. Each time she brought forward that amendment, the government voted it down. This was a friendly amendment. This was just to improve and clarify the intent of the legislation that the government had actually brought forward, but it was voted down.

When you’re talking about the democratic process, respecting the other side—you know, on some of our desks it says, “Listen to the other side.” It says that in Latin. So we must, must listen to the other side. I would encourage the government to listen to the other side, to actually pay attention to us when you change the standing orders.

The NDP has brought forward several amendments to these changes to the standing orders, and yet—based on past experience, it seems that the government is not going

to pass any of the amendments. The government brought in changes to these standing orders without any consultation with the opposition. So you should actually be listening to us and consulting with us, because these are the rules not just for the government, and as the member from Humber River–Black Creek said, to consolidate power within the government side. The purpose of these rules of the House is actually to make this place function as a greater democracy. And so if you’re making amendments, if you’re making changes to the standing orders without consulting with the other side, if you’re going to vote down every amendment that we have suggested in your changes to the standing orders, then you’re undermining the democratic processes here within the Legislature.

So I would strongly encourage you to listen to the other side. I think if you do, then we could actually help you from making some huge mistakes, like you did when you voted three times to use the “notwithstanding” clause to override the charter rights of the people of this province.

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

Debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

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Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associé des Transports (RGT)
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiles et du Multiculturalisme
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Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
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Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
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Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
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Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Hon. / L'hon. Jane (PC)	Burlington	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Nicholls, Rick (IND)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (IND)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Associate Minister of Digital Government / Ministre associé délégué de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines, des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
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Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurattan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Vacant	Ajax / Ajax	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Vacant	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Randy Pettapiece
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Goldie Ghamari, Randy Hillier
Christina Maria Mitas, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ian Arthur
Ian Arthur, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
Ernie Hardeman, Mitzie Hunter
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
Jeremy Roberts, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Michael Bushara

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey
Will Bouma, Guy Bourgouin
Chris Glover, Mike Harris
Logan Kanapathi, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Gilles Bisson, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Billy Pang
Amanda Simard, Marit Stiles
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
Lucille Collard, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Jim McDonell, Suze Morrison
Randy Pettapiece, Gurratan Singh
Donna Skelly, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Présidente: Laurie Scott
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Rima Berns-McGown, France Gélinas
Goldie Ghamari, Mike Harris
Faisal Hassan, Jim McDonell
Sam Oosterhoff, Laurie Scott
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Hogarth
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
Christine Hogarth, Michael Mantha
Taras Natyshak, Michael Parsa
Amarjot Sandhu
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Aris Babikian
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Aris Babikian, Lorne Coe
John Fraser, Vincent Ke
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Bhutila Karpoche, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin, Jim McDonell
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Vanessa Kattar

**Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight /
Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations
d'urgence**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Tom Rakocevic
Donna Skelly, Sara Singh
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell