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Lundi
27 novembre 2017

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
Greffier : Todd Decker

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 27 November 2017 / Lundi 27 novembre 2017

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Sylvia Jones	6609
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6609
Mr. Arthur Potts	6609
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff	6609
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6609
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6609
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6609
Mme Nathalie Des Rosiers.....	6609
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	6609
Mr. John Fraser	6609
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6609
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6609
Ms. Sophie Kiwala.....	6609
Mr. Steve Clark	6610
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	6610
Royal engagement	
Hon. Eleanor McMahon.....	6610

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Government fiscal policies

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	6610
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	6610

Government fiscal policies

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	6611
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	6611

Hydro rates

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6612
Hon. Glenn Thibeault.....	6612

Energy policies

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6613
Hon. Glenn Thibeault.....	6613

Child care

Ms. Sylvia Jones	6614
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6614

Workplace safety

Ms. Cindy Forster	6614
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	6614

Hospice and palliative care

Mrs. Cristina Martins	6615
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6615

Hospice and palliative care

Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	6616
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6616

Birth certificates

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6616
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	6616

Climate change

Ms. Daiene Vernile	6617
Hon. Chris Ballard	6617

Éducation en français / French-language education

Mme Gila Martow.....	6618
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	6618

Hospital services

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6618
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6619

Inclusive education / Éducation inclusive

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	6619
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	6619

Housing policy

Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	6620
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6620

Correction of record

Hon. Mitzie Hunter	6620
--------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Paul Miller.....	6620
Mr. Arthur Potts	6620
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	6620

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Local business

Mr. Norm Miller.....	6620
----------------------	------

Poverty

Mr. Paul Miller.....	6621
----------------------	------

Diabetes

Mrs. Amrit Mangat.....	6621
------------------------	------

Roy Halladay

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	6621
----------------------------	------

Pillar Community Innovation Awards

Ms. Peggy Sattler	6621
-------------------------	------

Public transit

Mrs. Cristina Martins	6622
-----------------------------	------

Shelley Barfoot-O'Neill

Mr. Bill Walker	6622
-----------------------	------

Toronto Argonauts

Mr. Mike Colle.....	6623
---------------------	------

Christmas event in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Mr. Monte McNaughton	6623

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

Compassionate Care Act, 2017, Bill 182, Mr. Oosterhoff / Loi de 2017 sur les soins de compassion, projet de loi 182, M. Oosterhoff	
First reading agreed to.....	6623
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff	6623

MOTIONS

Committee membership	
Hon. Liz Sandals	6623

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Property taxation	
Mr. Randy Hillier	6624
Autism treatment	
Mr. Paul Miller.....	6624
Bruce Power	
Ms. Sophie Kiwala.....	6624
Anti-smoking initiatives for youth	
Mrs. Gila Martow.....	6625
Soins de longue durée	
Mme France Gélinas	6625
Energy policies	
Mr. Bill Walker	6625
Education funding	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6626
Energy conservation	
Mr. Ted McMeekin.....	6626
Long-term care	
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	6626
Gasoline prices	
Mme France Gélinas	6626
GO Transit	
Ms. Sophie Kiwala.....	6626
Alzheimer’s disease	
Mr. Bill Walker	6627

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2017, Bill 177, Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2017 pour un Ontario plus fort et plus juste (mesures budgétaires), projet de loi 177, M. Sousa	
Mr. Randy Hillier.....	6627
Miss Monique Taylor.....	6629
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	6630

Mrs. Gila Martow	6630
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6630
Mr. Randy Hillier	6631
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	6631

Visitor

Mr. Norm Miller.....	6631
----------------------	------

**Safer Ontario Act, 2017, Bill 175, Mme Lalonde /
Loi de 2017 pour plus de sécurité en Ontario,
projet de loi 175, Mme Lalonde**

Mr. Taras Natyshak	6631
--------------------------	------

Consideration of Bill 174

Mr. Taras Natyshak	6636
Motion agreed to	6636

**Safer Ontario Act, 2017, Bill 175, Mme Lalonde /
Loi de 2017 pour plus de sécurité en Ontario,
projet de loi 175, Mme Lalonde**

Mr. Taras Natyshak	6636
Ms. Soo Wong.....	6639
Mr. Monte McNaughton	6639
Ms. Peggy Sattler	6639
Hon. Kathryn McGarry	6639
Mr. Taras Natyshak	6640
Ms. Soo Wong.....	6640

Royal assent / Sanction royale

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day).....	6641
--	------

**Safer Ontario Act, 2017, Bill 175, Mme Lalonde /
Loi de 2017 pour plus de sécurité en Ontario,
projet de loi 175, Mme Lalonde**

Ms. Soo Wong.....	6641
Mr. Randy Hillier	6643
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6643
Hon. Bill Mauro	6644
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	6644
Ms. Soo Wong.....	6644
Mr. Toby Barrett	6645
Mr. Gilles Bisson	6647
Ms. Soo Wong.....	6647
Mr. Bill Walker	6648
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6648
Mr. Toby Barrett	6648
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	6649
Ms. Soo Wong.....	6651
Mrs. Gila Martow	6651
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6652
Hon. Helena Jaczek	6652
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	6652
Hon. Chris Ballard	6653
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	6653
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6654
Hon. Laura Albanese.....	6655
Mr. Toby Barrett	6655
Mr. Gilles Bisson	6656

Ms. Soo Wong.....6656
Mr. Randy Hillier6656
Hon. Laura Albanese.....6656
Mr. Randy Pettapiece6657
Mr. Gilles Bisson6659

Hon. Kathryn McGarry6659
Mr. Norm Miller.....6660
Mr. Paul Miller.....6660
Mr. Randy Pettapiece6660
Second reading debate deemed adjourned6661

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 November 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 novembre 2017

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming, on behalf of my leader, Patrick Brown, the family of page captain Abby Goneau. Her mom, Kathy, is here; her dad, Andre, is here; her sister, Olivia, is here; and her grandma, Verna is here.

As well, watching Abby are students from Huron Park Public School. Welcome, and thank you for visiting Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, you don't have to be a Western alumnus like me to feel purple and proud today of the Western Mustangs for bringing home the Vanier Cup. I hope that all MPPs will join me in congratulating coach Greg Marshall and the entire Western Mustangs team for a great end to a fabulous season.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I too have a sports introduction I would like to make. Although they are not here, I want to recognize head coach Marc Trestman; quarterback Ricky Ray, who became the first quarterback in Canadian football to win four Grey Cups; receiver DeVier Posey, who caught 175 yards on seven receptions and was the game's MVP; and especially I want to thank Cassius Vaughn, who returned a 110-yard fumble for a touch-down, bringing us to tie the game; and then kicker Lirim Hajrullahu, with the winning three points to win the game—Argos Grey Cup victors. Argos!

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A happy mood.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I would like everyone in the Legislature today to join me in welcoming Mahoganie Hines, a palliative care consultant from Niagara who is here in the Legislature; Pamela Blackwood, executive director of McNally House Hospice, from my riding; Rick Firth, president and CEO of Hospice Palliative Care Ontario; Jennifer Mossop, from Hospice Palliative Care Ontario; Amanda Black, also from the McNally hospice; and Arthur Loik, also from McNally House Hospice. I hope everyone in the Legislature will join me at the Death Café later today.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a delight today to recognize our page captain, Andrew Stevenson. His family is here: Jennifer Atkinson, and his younger brother, Zachary Stevenson.

I also want to introduce some very special guests: Joshua M. Ferguson, still looking for their birth certifi-

cate; Joshua's husband, Florian Halbedl; Joshua's lawyer, Mika Imai, and legal assistant Andrea Vitopoulos. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are truly blessed to have students from OUSA, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, joining us today. I'd like to welcome Stephanie Bellotto, Ryan Deshpande, Aidan Hibma, Roch Goulet, Victoria Lewarne, Tobi Solebo, Andrew Clubine, Mark Gurrisi, Colin Aitchison and Sophie Helpard. I know they are meeting with many, many members, and I thank you for that.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to introduce some board members from the Ontario Book Publishers Organization and the Open Book Foundation: Jeff Miller, the president and publisher of Irwin Law, and Karen Brochu, national accounts manager at House of Anansi Press and Groundwood Books. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: J'aimerais accueillir le président de l'Université d'Ottawa, Jacques Frémont, et Kathryn Moore. Cet après-midi, this afternoon, there's a reception that I invite all my colleagues to attend, in room 230.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome friends from LIUNA on their lobby day: regional manager and president of OPDC, Joe Mancinelli, Jack Oliveira, Jim MacKinnon, Victoria Mancinelli, Anthony Primerano, Jason Ottey, Jason McMichael and Bill Barbosa. I'd like to invite everyone to join them today for their reception in room 228 at 5 p.m.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to introduce Rick Firth, from Hospice Palliative Care Ontario, who is here today. I'd also like to introduce to you the elephant. Members can come to room 230 right after question period and have their picture taken with the elephant in the room.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to introduce a number of other students who have joined us today from OUSA. I'd like to welcome Nadia Bathish, who is here from Brock; Chandra Narra, who is here from Trent-Durham; Kanwar Brar, who is here from Laurier; Tommi-Lee Gauthier, who is here from Laurentian; Antonio Brievea, who is here from Waterloo; and Palmer Lockridge, who is here from Queen's. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Congratulations to Western for winning the Vanier Cup. I know members are going to want to know that the score was 39-17. It was our seventh Vanier Cup, but the first in 23 years, topping off a 12-0 season for the Western Mustangs.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to welcome, from OUSA, Tommi-Lee Gauthier from Laurentian, Antonio Brievea from Waterloo, and Palmer Lockridge, the VP for

university affairs for the alma mater society at Queen's University in Kingston. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Steve Clark: I just can't stop but take this opportunity also, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, to congratulate the mighty Double Blue, the Toronto Argonauts, on winning the Grey Cup. I know that at the start of the season they didn't give Ontarians a people's guarantee, but I know that they're sure happy that they won the Grey Cup today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Very good signal.

I'd like to bring to the attention of the House special guests that we have in the Speaker's gallery. This group is here this week to meet and study best practices with their Ontario legislative counterparts. I know it's of no surprise to the members here in this House, and to all members, that the staff of our Legislative Assembly are highly skilled professionals and that their collective expertise is in high demand from Parliaments around the world. So please welcome with me this delegation of senior staff from the National Assembly of Kenya. Welcome.

1040

ROYAL ENGAGEMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a point of order.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure all members of the House will join me in congratulating His Royal Highness Prince Harry and Ms. Meghan Markle who this morning, out of Kensington Palace, announced their engagement—a joyous bit of news for all Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Life is unaffordable in Ontario. Families are working harder, paying more and getting less than in any other province in the country. That's why the government needs to do more to alleviate the tax burden on the middle class.

This weekend, the Ontario PC Party and our leader, Patrick Brown, laid out our plan: the People's Guarantee. One part of that guarantee was a 22.5% cut to income taxes for the middle class—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. So that all members realize, I have not changed the direction that I'm trying to bring our House to. Today is no different. If I'm getting the signals that that is going to change, I will start with warnings very quickly, just to set the tone.

Please carry on.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Mr. Speaker, an Ontario PC government would bring real change for middle-class families. Why won't this Liberal government?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it's a real honour to be able to stand before you and the rest of this House to acknowledge the tremendous work that Ontarians have done to bring our economy to where it is today, and recognizing that it has only been possible because of the stimulus and the balanced approach that we've taken to ensure that we recover from this global economic downturn that has been sustained for a long period of time—and, yet, Ontario leads Canada, it leads the G7, and for that matter, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to create more jobs than ever before.

The member opposite, the critic, and the Leader of the Opposition have long advocated for balanced budgets, and Mr. Speaker, the largest deficit in Canadian history was voted on by the Leader of the Opposition—\$16 billion. That is their plan. They're taking the province into deficit going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll send a copy of the plan over to you and you can have a real look at it.

Ontario used to be a province where if you worked hard, spent wisely and saved diligently, a family could get ahead. They could build a better future for their children. But that's not the case in Ontario any longer, Speaker. Families are struggling and some are falling behind. They need help. That's why we know Ontario families need lower taxes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Stop the clock. We're in warnings.

Carry on.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —22.5% lower income taxes for middle-class families, Speaker, would make a significant difference in the lives of those trying to get ahead. But we can't trust the Liberals to make life more affordable. Why should anyone in Ontario trust them?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, this government, under the leadership of Premier Kathleen Wynne, has instituted progressive measures while at the same time managing our expenses. We are providing free tuition for students, free pharmacare for everyone under the age of 25 and 100,000 more child care spaces.

The member opposite is advocating for cuts—cuts to education and cuts to health care, Mr. Speaker; that is their plan. We on this side of the House will take a balanced approach to ensure that we can afford the things that matter to Ontarians, while that side is cutting revenues and cutting across the board the very services that matter to us. We on this side of the House will always look after the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: That is a complete fabrication, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Withdraw.

For 14 years, we have seen Liberal insiders get rich at the expense of the people of Ontario. While the government lined the pockets of high-priced executives, middle-class families struggled. It's not their imagination. Middle-class wages have stagnated for 14 years while Liberal taxes and fees continued to rise. Thanks to this government, middle-class Ontario is poorer than the average Canadian.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have to ask: When did the Liberals decide they were the government for the insiders and no longer for the people?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Page 76 of their plan made it very clear, Mr. Speaker: Over \$12 billion is what's being cut across the board from the people of Ontario. So the question becomes, what are you going to cut?

Furthermore, they're making decisions only on election cycles. They don't want to go long-term or look beyond. We've got to have a long-term vision on things that matter—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You may choose your last comment that could get you the warning. When I stand, you stop.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We've created over 800,000 net new jobs, primarily in the private sector. The economy is growing. I recognize that many across the province don't feel the same benefit as others with our prosperity. We need to do better, and I said so in the fall economic statement. I hope the member opposite will approve and support the fall economic statement. That's a real plan for the real people of this province to make sure they get real prosperity going forward.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You can take the risk, if you'd like to keep talking.

New question.

GOVERNMENT FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Finance. First they disparage the Auditor General, then they disparage the Financial Accountability Officer, and now they disparage Kevin Page, the former budget officer.

In the 1990s, Ontario's average income was 10% above the national average. But in 2012, income in Ontario fell below the national average for the first time ever. In fact, between 2005 and 2015, Ontario families saw the slowest rate of income growth of any province in Canada. Once the envy of the country, middle-class Ontarians now struggle. They work harder, pay more and get less under this Liberal government.

Why has the Liberal government spent 14 years allowing middle-class families to struggle to keep their heads above water?

Hon. Charles Sousa: That is rich coming from that side of the House. We're providing for an increase in the minimum wage that they are now denying the people of Ontario. Stand up and fight for the people of Ontario. We have a 5.9% unemployment rate, the lowest it has been, and it has been below the national average for 31 months.

We will continually support everyone in this province for the sake of the families of this province. They're putting at risk their livelihood. They are instituting a much more expensive carbon tax to the people of Ontario. We recognize that that will put us in harm's way. We need to be competitive for businesses and competitive for the people of Ontario, where everyone should share in that growth. That is why we are increasing minimum wage to \$15, and they are not.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: This government brought in some of the largest tax increases in Ontario's history. Between the health tax, the HST and other fees, the Liberals have made life unaffordable.

Every day, families email and call our offices. They share their stories and tell us they just don't have any money left. That is why we can't trust this Liberal government. That is why a PC government will reduce income taxes for the middle class, that's why a PC government will increase the Ontario Sales Tax Credit, and that's why an Ontario PC government will make life more affordable for Ontario families. That's what is fair. Why won't the Liberals make life affordable for Ontario families?

1050

Hon. Charles Sousa: We know their plan in the past and we hear it now going forward. It's not much of a plan because what they're going to do in order to achieve deficits, no less—they're promoting deficit spending going forward. We are going to balance this year, next year and the year after that. In order for them to achieve even a little bit of that deficit that they're proposing, they're going to go back to firing nurses, closing hospitals, reducing funding for health care—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have been disciplined and determined in our plan to recover and to plan to come to balance, and it's being achieved. The members opposite are going to put our economy in harm's way by taking the excessive actions that they're proposing, which will in essence put us at a disadvantage over other jurisdictions around the world.

We will continue to be free traders and continue to support Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: This is about trust. This is about looking out for families across Ontario. This is about making life more affordable. That is why we need to lower taxes in Ontario after years of Liberals raiding middle-class families to pay their Liberal insiders. If you want to know what the Liberals will do,

just look at what they've done for the last 14 years. The Ontario PCs will make life more affordable. Why do the Liberals continue to make it harder for Ontario families to succeed?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It is all about trust, and I can tell you this: We can trust this government to continue to fight for the people of Ontario while the opposition, you can trust them to cut the very measures that matter to Ontarians.

I can tell you this: When we provided free pharmacare for everyone under the age of 25, they voted against that. They'll take that away. When we were talking about providing free tuition for students so they can get a better start in life, they voted against that as well. That's what you can trust from that side of the House.

We can also trust that when the Leader of the Opposition was in power federally, he voted in the largest deficit in our history. And the largest debt increase in Canadian history came from the Leader of the Opposition. The critic now stands here and suggests that somehow cutting revenues as well as—Mr. Speaker, cutting revenues and going into deficit spending is not what's in the best interest of the people of Ontario.

We need to provide programs and services that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. For over a century Ontario's public hydro system made our province an economic powerhouse that provided good jobs and prosperity for Ontario families and businesses. But after decades of Conservative and Liberal privatization, Ontarians are now struggling to pay hydro bills that are skyrocketing. People literally have to choose between keeping the lights on and putting food on the table. In Ontario in 2017, this is just unacceptable.

Why did this Liberal government pick up and run with the disastrous privatization policies of their Conservative predecessors and cause hydro bills for Ontario families and businesses to soar even further?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased to rise and talk about Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, which is seeing a 25% reduction that's happening right across the province in every single household. When it comes to Hydro One, R1 and R2 customers will be seeing even further decreases. They're seeing anywhere between 40% and 50% in reductions in their electricity bills. That's because on this side of the House we acted. We recognized that too many folks that were living in northern and rural parts of our province were paying proportionally more than others in other parts of the province. So we worked with Hydro One, we worked with poverty groups, we worked with

rural associations, and we changed the RRRP to actually bring forward a further decrease to where they can now see their bills dropping between 40% and 50% per month. We've brought that forward, and the First Nation delivery tax credit. That is changing the lives of many of those people right around the province, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They acted, all right: Hydro rates have gone up 300% under this Liberal government; and in fact, they went up 50% just under this particular Premier. Apparently, the Conservatives think this shows good hydro policy because they plan to continue the disastrous Liberal hydro plan if they win next year.

When the Premier sold off Hydro One, she told Ontarians that it was a good thing, that it would actually mean lower rates for families and businesses. But earlier this year, a privatized Hydro One demanded a 20% distribution rate increase on people's hydro bills.

Can the Acting Premier tell us how increasing hydro bills for Ontario families who are already struggling to keep up is a good thing, Speaker?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The good thing was our plan to reduce Hydro One customers' bills between 40% and 50%, Mr. Speaker, which that member and that party voted against.

When looking at the decision that's before the OEB right now, we've said all along—and part of the fair hydro plan is that we're keeping the costs to the rate of inflation—so, again, making the numbers up. The costs will be held to the rate of inflation.

Also, depending on Hydro One's draft rate order, it's estimated that the bill impact for 2017 would be an increase of 0.1%, and for 2018, 0.2%. But that also comes on top of the 40% to 50% reduction that we brought forward to the people of Ontario through the fair hydro plan, changing the RRRP, increasing the OESP, increasing the First Nations delivery—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I don't think anybody believes that a 300% increase and a 40% to 50% decrease are leaving people better off. It's still a 250% increase.

The privatized Hydro One is putting private profits ahead of public interests. Earlier this year, Hydro One signed a deal to buy Avista—we all remember that—an American energy company, for more than \$6 billion. The OEB told Hydro One that they're spending their money poorly. The OEB said that profits should go into improving the grid and reducing bills for families and businesses. Instead, Hydro One plans to spend \$6 billion on an Avista investment which will do nothing other than line the pockets of private investors.

Can the Acting Premier tell us how lining the pockets of private investors and shareholders will keep Ontario families and businesses from paying skyrocketing hydro bills?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, Mr. Speaker, we've seen bills of Hydro One R1 and R2 customers

drop between 40% and 50%. That is significantly lower than where they were last year.

We're getting accolades from poverty groups, from organizations that have seen the changes with the fair hydro plan that we implemented—not with any help from the opposition, of course, because neither of them wanted to help low-income individuals. They never even talked about it in their plan.

First Nations: They have seen their delivery credit disappear, changing the lives of many of our First Nations people who live on reserves. We're getting thanks from First Nations organizations.

When it comes to the acquisition of Avista, there will be absolutely no rate impacts affecting the people of Ontario.

And as I said before, we're seeing a reduction of between 40% and 50%.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. Last week, we learned that Hydro One wants to spend millions to install prepay hydro meters so it can bypass Ontario's rules against winter hydro disconnections. With the prepay meters, Hydro One won't have to disconnect anyone; the power will get cut off automatically if the customer doesn't feed the meter.

Why is the Acting Premier cracking down on families who are already struggling to keep up with their sky-high hydro bills? Why are they bringing prepay meters to the province of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: As Hydro One said last week, as I said last week, Mr. Speaker, there are no prepaid meters being brought forward by anybody. There is an opportunity for Hydro One to explore an idea for folks to opt in if they choose, but again, the NDP sees that as something that is coming forward. There is nothing coming forward with prepaid meters.

1100

Of course, this is still being reviewed by the OEB. That's the quasi-judicial economic regulator for the province that always puts first the interests of the ratepayers. So, that still even has to be reviewed by the OEB.

There are two paragraphs in a 2,000-plus-page document that is talking about the Hydro One application, and at the end of the day, if this was to be approved, it's an opt-in program. It isn't something that everyone will actually have.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Prepay meters do not belong in Ontario, period. They do not belong in our electricity system, and this government needs to put a stop to it.

I don't care whether it's two paragraphs in some application or whether it's on the front page of their policy platform for the next election. It should not be happening in this province. It hurts families, and it will be extremely expensive for folks.

According to the Auditor General, Hydro One customers already overpaid for the overpriced, botched rollout of the smart meter program. Now we learn that the privatized Hydro One—which apparently this government doesn't control, even though they said they would—wants its customers to pay yet again now for new prepay meters.

Will this Acting Premier explain why a privatized Hydro One is planning to force people to install prepay meters so they can once again disconnect families who are struggling to pay their bills in the winter months?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: There is a law now that this House passed that actually bans winter disconnections—so, again, making it up as she goes along.

But also, let's look at those Hydro One prepaid meters. It's an opt-in program, if it's approved by the OEB. It's an opt-in. No family will actually get this put on them. It's an opt-in program for people who think this might actually help them.

But when it comes to choice, it's that party that voted against reducing hydro rates between 40% and 50%, helping families in northern and rural parts of the province. It's that party that voted against the increase in the Ontario Electricity Support Program, helping low-income individuals. It's that party that voted against First Nations and their delivery credit, that actually has changed the lives of thousands—over 20,000 First Nations people on-reserve.

We'll keep acting—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If a poor family, a low-income family, has a choice between a \$300 reconnection fee and a pay-in-advance meter, what do you think they're going to do? It's no choice whatsoever—no choice whatsoever.

This Liberal government sold off its majority ownership of Hydro One, Ontario's oldest and most important public asset, without consulting the people of Ontario, without a mandate. It was a massive betrayal of Ontario families, and they're only just beginning to pay for it. It has already demanded higher transmission rates and distribution rates, and it has just applied again to increase the rates paid by remote First Nations. It wants to force families and businesses to install prepay meters to get around the ban on winter disconnections.

How can they model their hydro policies after Conservatives did the same? In fact, how can Conservatives still, in their policies, model their new election platform on what the Liberals are doing, which is failing so badly?

Can the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We're happy to see the Conservatives recognize finally that the 25% reduction is the best way that you can help people in this province lower their electricity bills. Also, Hydro One customers and six other jurisdictions—six other LDCs—are seeing their rates lowered by 40% to 50%.

It's this government that invested in making sure that we spent \$70 billion rebuilding a system. It's this government that made sure that we eliminated coal from our electricity supply. When you do that, when you eliminate coal—by 23%, air pollution deaths have been reduced in southern Ontario, and hospitalizations by 41%. That's thanks to the investments of this government—no less, Mr. Speaker—and both opposition parties voted against that.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: After 14 years, families work harder, pay more and get less—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Who is this for?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Deputy Premier.

One example is the hard-working parents struggling to find and pay for child care. Let's say they have a household income of \$55,000, and they have two children, three and five. Patrick Brown and the Ontario PCs think families deserve help to cover their child care costs, and that's why we would create a new Ontario child care refund. Our plan means that family would be eligible for over \$10,000 in child care costs. Families need child care spaces that they can afford, and our People's Guarantee does just that.

Why have the Liberals allowed child care costs to become the most expensive in the country?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The party opposite has demonstrated their ability to promise anything to get elected and then, as soon as they get elected, change their mind. These are the same old Tories. They will cut services families depend on.

I'm not making this up. If you turn—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If that continues—a reminder, because there are a couple of members—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville: If this is a test of my resolve, you're going to lose.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, if you turn to page 76 in the magazine that was released this weekend, you will see, in as small a font as possible, \$12 billion in cuts. Make no mistake about it, Speaker: The very services that families are counting on are threatened with cuts. We've seen it before. It's a fine tradition in that party—\$12 billion in cuts. We want you to come clean and say where—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I will take no lessons from this government on how to spend money. You want good government? Then start acting like it. Where in your platform did you say that you were going to sell off Hydro One?

Ontario families are working harder than ever to build a better future for their children, yet they don't feel like

they're getting ahead. In Ontario, child care has become increasingly unaffordable and out of reach for families. Ontario has the highest child care costs in the country. This means that, even if parents are able to find a child care space, they may not be able to afford it. That's your Liberal legacy: Life has become so unaffordable.

Why has this Liberal government allowed child care costs to become the most expensive in Canada?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let's be clear: This magazine contains a number of initiatives that are designed to be popular. I get that. But the big hole is, where is the money coming from? It's hidden on the bottom of page 76. I'll happily send page 76 over to the member opposite, in case she hasn't had a chance to read right through to the very end of the platform—

Interjection.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Oh. Well, then, look, maybe read it and you'll see, on page 76, way down at the bottom, \$12 billion in mystery cuts. Where are those cuts coming from? Is it coming from closing hospitals? Is it coming from cutting home care? Is it coming from closing schools? Is it coming from ending free tuition? Is it coming from ending pharmacare? Where are you going to find \$12 billion?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

New question.

1110

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Acting Premier. Every Ontarian working should be safe on the job, but here in Ontario today, health care workers are being put in harm's way day in and day out. Violence against health care workers is pervasive and it's getting worse as hospital overcrowding and underfunding continues as part of the Liberals' cuts. Nurses, personal support workers and front-line staff are experiencing physical trauma, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and assault. In fact, we've seen nurses come forward who have suffered fractured legs and arms, human bites and even stab wounds.

It's simply unacceptable and it has to stop. So why is this Liberal government doing nothing to end this epidemic in the workplace of violence and not keeping our incredibly dedicated health care workers safe?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the honourable member for that very important question. I'm glad she has asked that question, because it's something we are doing something about and it's something that we understand has become an issue in our health care facilities.

What we have done is we've invited all parties to a leadership table that has been in existence now for going on two years. They did a year's worth of work, focusing directly on the hospital sector. This was organized labour. This was management. This was a nurses' union.

This was the Ministry of Labour. The Minister of Health was very active on the committee.

We came forward with the first phase of that. It's directly aimed at hospitals. As we move into phase 2, we're going to look at places where personal support workers would work. We're going to look at places like family health teams and those types of things. It is an issue. We need to deal with it. People in Ontario need to know they work in safe workplaces. We're acting on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: This has been going on for years, and health care workers need action, not talk.

For far too long, violence has been normalized and swept under the rug inside our hospitals and our long-term-care homes, and this government's cuts and layoffs are only making the problem worse. When there aren't enough staff to provide the care to high-risk patients, workers are always put in danger. They do their best to provide great care without the protection and support that they need.

All too often, those nurses and personal support workers suffer physical, verbal and sexual assaults, and sometimes they're never able to return to work again. What will this government do to start funding proper staffing levels in hospitals and in long-term-care homes to stop the epidemic of violence that's hurting our health care workers?

Hon. Kevin Flynn: The workplace violence prevention leadership table has worked really well, and I believe it's offensive to the members of that committee, who have been working on it for between a year and two years now—these are people from organized labour. These are the nurses themselves. These are the patient advocates. These are the people who are front line. These are the people who realize that there's an issue there and are working very, very hard to solve those issues.

We at the Ministry of Labour are going to get into each and every one of those hospitals. We're going to explain what needs to be done. We're going to make sure that people understand that violence in the health care sector is not an option and will not be tolerated. There's zero tolerance. We are going to make sure that the people who are patients, doctors, nurses, employers understand that if you work in health care in Ontario, nobody gets hurt in that situation.

HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question this morning is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We know that our government has been committed to ensuring that Ontarians have access to high quality, compassionate palliative and end-of-life care in their home, or as close to home as possible. We also know that everyone in Ontario deserves to age with dignity. This has been a priority for residents of my riding of Davenport.

Our government began investing in hospice and palliative care in 2005, when \$115.5 million was invested in the End-of-Life Care Strategy. Since then, we have

been making massive strides, and we know there is still more to come. Our government is investing a total of \$155 million in hospice and palliative care over the next three years, with last year's 2016 budget announcing a commitment of \$75 million in additional funding over the next three years.

Can the minister please share with us what these investments mean for the future of hospice and palliative care here in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Davenport for giving me an opportunity to discuss the important investments we're making in hospice and palliative care. Let me take the opportunity as well to welcome those joining us today from Hospice Palliative Care Ontario and thank them for their tireless efforts to ensure that every person and family in this province can quickly and easily access the finest standard of hospice and palliative care when required.

I'd also like to recognize my parliamentary assistant, MPP Fraser, the MPP for Ottawa South, who has been at the core of creating an Ontario-wide strategy for both palliative care and end-of-life care. There has been no greater advocate for palliative care in this Legislature than my parliamentary assistant, the MPP for Ottawa South. He has travelled across the province to hear from patient groups, caregivers, diverse communities and health care providers, and the result has been our strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Minister, for sharing that with us. Also, thank you to the member for Ottawa South for his advocacy and great work on this particular file.

Last month, our government announced a new program to support the creation of new and expanded hospices across Ontario. Through this program, eligible hospices can apply for significant capital funding to help with the construction or renovation costs of more than 190 beds that will serve more than 2,000 additional clients and their families each year.

Residential hospices are so important as they provide expert care in a home-like environment, giving families and friends the space and care they need to be with their loved ones at one of the most vulnerable times in their lives.

Access to hospice and palliative care is so important to my constituents and so important to communities across Ontario. Can the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care please inform this House of the other initiatives that will improve hospice and palliative care in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we are currently funding more than 30 hospices across the province and we've made a commitment to fund 20 more. We're funding their operating costs; we're funding capital costs as well with the new program announced this year. We're working with Hospice Palliative Care Ontario to expand access to training and important information about palliative care to caregivers who are caring for their loved ones at the end of their lives.

We've increased funding for visiting hospice volunteer services across the province this year by more than \$1 million. We launched the Ontario Palliative Care Network, together with our partners at Cancer Care Ontario, Health Quality Ontario and the local LHINs. This network is now in the final stages of completing a three-year action plan to ensure that access to high-quality palliative care is equitable across this province.

We have a robust strategy, informed by Ontarians, stakeholders, advocates and, most importantly, by families, caregivers and loved ones who are most affected.

HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In 2014, Ontario's Auditor General highlighted the dismal state of palliative care services in Ontario, which has resulted in inequitable access to palliative care, inefficient use of funding and a patchwork of varying services and standards across the province.

Health Quality Ontario has estimated that only about 30% of patients get the palliative care they should. This need will only grow due to a rapidly growing demand in the aging population. Now we've learned through internal documents obtained through a freedom-of-information request that the government will fall 35% short of its own goal of expanding hospice access.

Speaker, can the minister explain why his ministry will not be providing the recommended amount of palliative care beds?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I've just spoken about the investments that we've made. We were the first government to begin funding hospices in this province. I think it's a 78-page People magazine that the opposition has created; I find it curious that there is not a single mention—not even one time is the word “palliative” mentioned in that 78-page document.

But I'm so excited about what just came out in the Globe and Mail. The headline: “Patrick Brown's Fiscally Risky, Economically Dubious Plan for Ontario.” The Globe and Mail goes on to say, “Give Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown full marks for salesmanship with his ‘People's Guarantee’ election manifesto....”

“The problem with the ‘People's Guarantee’ is that it's a bit too clever, fiscally risky and economically incoherent.”

Interjections.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: What we do know is that after 14 years of this Liberal government, we have a rationed health care system, we have decreased hospital services, we have increased staff layoffs and we have demoralized health care professionals. This province needs change and the People's Guarantee will bring change in the province.

Back to the minister: Research shows that access to a palliative care approach is better not only for patients but for families. It reduces stress, improves quality of life and patient satisfaction, and places less burden on caregivers.

Due to this government's waste and mismanagement, patients across the province are not receiving the proper care they need and often go without palliative care. Ontario needs 1,300 hospice and palliative care beds but as of now, only 341 of these beds are available in this province.

I spoke to a palliative care physician this weekend. London is falling apart with access to palliative care, and this government is ignoring the situation.

If this government continues to make promises of expanding access to care, it's time for them to follow through on their promises. Will the minister explain to this House why they are falling short—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, maybe there's a volume 2 of their People magazine. In 78 pages, there is not a single word of reference to palliative care. We should have had this conversation last week, and I would have alerted the member opposite to the importance of actually developing a strategy on this.

The PCs have no plan for Ontario, but what they do have—and now it's in black and white; they can't walk this back—is a document that tries to hide \$12 billion in cuts. It's there for everybody to see on page 76, where they talk about value-for-money audits. It's in brackets, indicating a cut, a \$12-billion cut over the next mandate, which is what's proposed. It's even worse than what was proposed by Mike Harris when he was in power, Mr. Speaker.

So we know exactly what their plans are: Promise the world, make a glossy document and cut, cut, cut.

BIRTH CERTIFICATES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Acting Premier. Six months ago, this government refused to issue Joshua M. Ferguson a birth certificate reflecting their correct sex designation.

In Ontario, non-binary folk still cannot amend their birth certificate to anything other than male or female categories. While jurisdictions like Newfoundland and Northwest Territories have already acted, in Ontario, a human rights complaint has been filed against this Liberal government.

It has been six years since Toby's Law passed. Why is this government dragging its feet? How long, Mr. Speaker, does it take to change a form?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for this question and for her tremendous work on this file.

Our government does value acceptance, respect and diversity. We're committed to ensuring that all Ontarians

are treated ethically and equitably, including the trans and non-binary community.

Similar to the driver's licence and health care policies we've already implemented, we are developing that gender-neutral option for Ontario's birth certificate. We've taken significant steps to develop that certificate for Ontarians, and my plan is to deliver that no later than the spring of 2018.

We're working with other levels of government, particularly the federal government, to make sure we get this important identity document right.

I'll be pleased to provide more details in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again, back to the minister: It has been six years and, as the minister said, we already have the "X" option for drivers' licences and health cards, so what's the problem? Why is the option not available for birth certificates? A birth certificate is a foundational document without which Joshua is unable to get a passport with a correct sex designation. This limits their ability to travel and to exercise basic human rights.

The government already admitted that there are negative consequences for those who don't have identification congruent with their gender identity.

I ask the minister to look at Joshua Ferguson, who is here in the gallery today, and commit to issuing a birth certificate with their correct sex designation right now.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I too want to acknowledge Joshua Ferguson and guests here today to address this important issue.

We know the federal government has indicated it is moving forward to remove sex designations from passports. For the time being, they have an interim measure, I understand, that will be added to the passport to direct the reader of the passport to ignore the indicated sex on the certificate and read it as an "X." Now that that has occurred, Ontario will continue its work on developing a system for the issuance of non-binary birth certificates.

We've consulted significantly on this issue in the community with thousands of respondents, and we want to get this right.

We also introduced a new policy to help trans and non-binary persons live according to their gender identity. These rules will help guide ministries in how they collect, retain and use information. I was very pleased to receive a letter from our human rights commissioner commending the support and leadership of this government on this very policy.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Speaker, we know that climate change is a real and imminent threat. In fact, it's possibly the greatest global challenge that we face today. The world has seen an increase in weather-related events in the past decade, and scientists are

attributing this in part to climate change caused by human activity.

A recent study shows that more than half of Americans believe that climate change contributed to the severity of the recent hurricanes in Florida and in Texas. Ontarians are worried, too, including people in my riding of Kitchener Centre. In fact, about one third of Ontarians anticipate significant consequences in the next two decades due to climate change, and virtually all Ontarians are expecting a food price increase.

Could the minister please explain to this House what actions we are taking to deal with climate change in Ontario?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the hard-working member from Kitchener Centre for that important question.

Speaker, our government is well aware that climate change is a growing threat to the livelihoods and well-being of people across the world, including here in Ontario. Ontarians know we are not immune to climate change, and they are concerned, and they want a plan that takes meaningful action.

To help Ontarians adapt to climate change, we're creating a new organization to give municipalities, indigenous communities and businesses the most up-to-date climate data. This data will help Ontarians make decisions informed by a better understanding of the risks imposed by climate change.

Working with climate change adaptation experts, we're also going to undertake a province-wide risk assessment to better understand vulnerabilities and prioritize our actions.

Speaker, our government is taking strong action to help Ontarians adapt to climate change.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to thank the minister for his dedication and for his answer.

Another stat for you: 70% of Ontarians expect that our province is going to experience more forest fires, severe storms and hot summers, and that we're going to see a loss of habitat and the extinction of plants and animals in the coming decades. We know that Ontario will be facing challenges as we continue to adapt to climate change.

Speaker, this government is prepared to address those challenges head-on with a plan that is smart, responsible and affordable. Because of bold and innovative action that we have taken, Ontario is now recognized as a global leader in the fight against climate change.

Could the minister please describe how this government has a plan to tackle climate change while creating fairness and opportunity in this province?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you again to the member from Kitchener Centre.

Speaker, our government is helping Ontarians fight climate change in their everyday lives through millions of dollars of investments in green solutions. Patrick Brown and the PCs have said that they would scrap our climate change action plan and cut these investments.

1130

Speaker, just this morning I was at Sick Children's Hospital, announcing an important investment to help our hospitals fight—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: What about water wells?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Why, thank you. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex is warned. Finish, please.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Speaker.

Let me continue. I was at SickKids hospital, announcing an important investment to help our hospitals fight climate change while increasing patient comfort. These are exactly the kinds of investments in Ontario's future that the party opposite is threatening to cut. Our plan is more than putting a price on carbon. It's about investing in Ontario's future.

Mr. Speaker, Patrick Brown wants you to pay more for everything so that he can pretend to care about climate change.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

M^{me} Gila Martow: À la ministre de l'Éducation : monsieur le Président, en tant que représentante francophone du caucus du Parti progressiste-conservateur, j'ai été approchée à plusieurs reprises par des parents frustrés par le manque de programmes d'immersion française dans leur région.

Le coupable semble être un manque d'enseignants francophones qualifiés.

Récemment, un comité de conseil scolaire a recommandé de mettre fin au programme d'immersion française au conseil scolaire du district catholique de Halton. La réponse de cette ministre a été de demander un délai pour enfin développer un programme de formation des enseignants en français. Pourquoi la ministre n'a-t-elle pas reconnu la crise imminente et pourquoi n'a-t-elle pas agi plus tôt?

L'hon. Deborah Matthews: La ministre de l'Éducation.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Merci. I want to thank the member opposite for this question, because it gives me an opportunity to talk about all of the work that we're doing to support French-language education in this province.

There's no question that the demand for French as a second language has increased by 76%, I believe. That's a recognition that having a second language is an advantage. Parents and students are choosing more options in French as a second language.

It's the recognition that the supply of French-language educators is outstripping the demand, and that is the reason why we have a plan in place, that has been developed with the input of French-language stakeholders, to increase that supply of French-language educators.

We're doing things that are quite creative and innovative, like working together with the Ministry of

Citizenship and Immigration to recruit those people who have education training and French language, and to support—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

M^{me} Gila Martow: Encore une fois à la ministre : nos programmes populaires d'immersion française sont essentiels à la continuité de l'utilisation du français en Ontario, une culture que ce gouvernement prétend soutenir.

Monsieur le Président, nous savons depuis des années qu'il n'y a pas assez d'enseignants en français pour adéquatement maintenir nos programmes d'immersion française. En fait, le 20 octobre 2016, j'ai parlé dans cette législature des listes d'attente pour les cours d'immersion française dans la région de Peel.

Pourquoi a-t-il fallu une crise—ou peut-être que c'était une élection imminente—pour que cette ministre agisse enfin?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has it wrong. Yes, she recognizes that there is an increase in the demand for French-language education, which necessitates an increase in French-language teachers. That is exactly what our plan that we have in place is doing.

We are recruiting more French-language teachers, and we're doing that in a targeted way. We're working with the teachers' colleges, in Ottawa and in other locations, to do just that.

We believe that every student in this province deserves the best education possible. We've seen an increase in our graduation rates by 17% since 2003. We are going to continue to invest in education, unlike the party opposite that just put out a plan this weekend that had no reference to a plan for education other than a \$12-billion cut, which will impact—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: —our school boards and our education system in this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When I say “thank you,” that means you sit.

New question.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. There is an overcrowding and hallway medicine crisis in Ontario's hospitals thanks to the Conservatives, who closed 28 hospitals, fired 6,000 nurses and closed over 7,000 hospital beds, and the Liberals who have cut or frozen hospital budgets for years.

A young man from Ottawa knows this only too well. On Friday, while the Ottawa Hospital was over capacity at 108% occupancy, he was waiting in the overcrowded ER in pain with a back injury. He asked for help. He said he needed to lie down because the pain was so bad. That's when he was told to lie on the dirty floor in the emergency waiting room.

Can the Acting Premier explain why the Ottawa Hospital was so overcrowded that a young man in pain was told to lie on the floor, instead of on a stretcher, while waiting for medical care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We understand that across this province, for a variety of reasons, there are hospitals that are facing challenges. Regardless of that, they are providing the best possible, the absolute highest-quality, care.

I commend the Ottawa Hospital, the Civic site, for the work that they're doing now with the individual to get to the bottom of precisely what happened during that incident. I know that the leader of the third party understands that there's often a complexity surrounding specific incidents and occurrences, but the Ottawa Hospital is looking into it and doing that as appropriate, as they should with the individual.

But, Mr. Speaker, what we've done in the past weeks is we've created and added the equivalent of six new community hospitals across this province: 1,200 new acute care beds, 500-plus transitional beds and 200 beds of affordable housing for seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Front-line staff are caring, dedicated individuals who are doing the best they can under the immense pressure that decades of cuts from both Conservatives and Liberals have made to our hospitals.

A nurse who witnessed the incident said this: "I have been on the other side and I understand the frustrations of the staff attempting to give quality care with limited resources after staff and bed cuts. I know how deflated they feel when they're unable to do so."

The Liberal government has allocated 45 temporary beds to the Ottawa Hospital, and only half the amount of money that it actually takes to run those 45 beds. This will not solve the overcrowding crisis. When will the Liberal government take this crisis, which has been years in the making, seriously, and make drastic improvements to our hospitals to make sure nothing like this ever happens again to a single patient?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We are making substantial investments, as I mentioned: More than 1,200 acute care beds across this province, the equivalent of six community hospitals.

But since the leader of the third party introduced her question with a comment about the PCs' record, I feel it incumbent upon me to also remind Ontarians that they themselves—the NDP, when they were in government—closed 9,600 acute care beds, including 13% of all the mental health beds and, I believe, 24% of the acute beds in hospitals.

Then, remarkably, their minister-in-waiting, their minister of cuts, announced an additional half-billion dollars in cuts should they have formed government in 2014, cuts that would have come to health care and education.

Interjection: Like the PC platform.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Yes, it's very similar to the PC platform, the cuts of \$12 billion. I don't know if there's a race going on or not, but it's worrisome.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

ÉDUCATION INCLUSIVE

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: My question is for the Minister of Education, the Honourable Mitzi Hunter. As part of our deep support of pluralism and diversity, we believe that all students are enriched by learning about the history, culture and contributions and perspectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Canada. Nous devons honorer et célébrer leur patrimoine, leur langue et leur héritage.

In May 2016, the Premier affirmed our government's commitment to reconciliation with indigenous peoples and put forward a series of actions in the Journey Together. One of the commitments we made as part of the response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action was to discourage the use of team names, logos and mascots considered offensive. I understand that the Ministry of Education has taken steps to fulfill this call.

1140

To the minister: What are we in fact doing to make schools safe, inclusive and accepting for all?

Hon. Mitzi Hunter: I want to say thank you to the member from Etobicoke North for this great question. It's a very timely question.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to supporting all Ontario school boards in their efforts towards reconciliation and rebuilding of relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous people through trust, understanding and mutual respect.

We know that perpetuating stereotypes, biases or false generalizations about indigenous peoples, cultures and traditions can have a negative impact on individuals, staff and communities, as well as the school climate itself. That's why in January we released a memo asking boards to do a review of existing team mascots and logos, and to work closely with their indigenous education board leads, indigenous education advisory councils, students and indigenous community partners to respectfully consider any concerns about school team names, logos and mascots, and to work with those communities to look into these issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I recognize the member from Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I think it's important, of course, that our government is taking action to make sure our schools are welcoming environments for all students.

Our government is committed, Speaker, as you'll know, to working together with indigenous partners, and building trusting, respectful and mutually beneficial relationships within schools, and making our schools safe, inclusive and accepting for all people, whether indigenous or non-indigenous.

Speaker, as we move forward, I think it's important to ensure that our education system is inclusive and respectful. I know there are a number of initiatives coming forward bringing this to fruition.

Est-ce que la ministre peut élaborer sur le travail et les mesures que notre gouvernement fait?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you again to the member from Etobicoke North.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to all the partners for their work to help create a more inclusive environment for all students.

Last week we sent a follow-up communication to boards, requesting that they consider the issue of students wearing indigenous-themed sports clothing and costumes to school. We have asked boards to take steps to promote a safe, inclusive and accepting school climate, including with respect to safe school policies and practices such as school dress codes and bullying prevention plans. Together we can ensure that our schools are safe, inclusive and welcoming environments for all students.

We also recently released our province's first-ever education equity action plan to provide more resources to boards to identify and eliminate discriminatory practices, stereotypes and biases, so that all students, regardless of background, are supported.

Our government remains committed to supporting safe, welcoming, respectful and inclusive learning environments for all students.

HOUSING POLICY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Deputy Premier. We've been warning this government that living in Ontario is becoming more and more unaffordable.

This morning, the Ontario food bank association released their annual Hunger Report. Half a million people needed a food bank last year just to make ends meet and put food on the table—an increase of more than 150,000 people in the last year alone. Daily Bread Food Bank's users are spending 70% of their income on housing because of the lack of supply of rentals, yet this government's policies have resulted in thousands of rental units being cancelled.

Deputy Premier, when you look at the impact on these families, do you still think your housing policies are fair?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know the minister responsible for poverty reduction will want to speak to this, but I need to make it clear that in the new platform, the magazine that has been released by that party, I'm looking and I'm not seeing anything that would respond to the very concern that you have raised—in fact, quite the contrary, because your plan contains \$12 billion of cuts.

We remember the last time that your party was in government. Social assistance rates were slashed and then they were frozen. Minimum wage was frozen.

You've got \$12 billion to make up, and you haven't even begun to address the issues related to poverty. So I'm looking forward to volume 2. I'm sure it's going to be in that one.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I would like to correct my record. In answering the member opposite's question, I said that the demand for French language has increased by 76%. Mr. Speaker, it has increased by 74% since 2003.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Paul Miller: It's my pleasure to introduce two guests from the Ontario Association of Food Banks: Ashley Quan and Claire Ward-Beveridge.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to take a moment to recognize Labourers' International Union of North America. They're here today on a lobby day, and they're having a reception later on. They were very kind to help us get our East York Canada Day parade off the ground this year. Thank you so much to LiUNA.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have an introduction: in the Speaker's gallery, from 1985 to 1990, from Frontenac-Addington, Larry South. Larry, welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LOCAL BUSINESS

Mr. Norm Miller: 'Tis the season to shop local. I rise today to let my colleagues in the Legislature and my constituents know that I'm launching a shop local campaign. Starting this week, my constituents will see newspaper ads and social media posts and hear radio ads reminding them of the importance of shopping local this holiday season. Shopping local not only supports our local businesses but their employees and our whole community.

I did a business survey this summer and found that many businesses in Parry Sound-Muskoka are struggling to compete against online shopping while burdened with increased hydro costs and other government policies. I will continue to stand up for local businesses and local jobs by pushing the government to make it easier to run a business in Ontario.

Just this weekend, our leader, Patrick Brown, announced policies to help small businesses—policies like a 28.5% tax cut for small business owners and competitive and stable electricity prices. Unfortunately, we'll have to wait until after the election to introduce such measures.

In the meantime, I hope the people of Parry Sound-Muskoka will come together to support our local busi-

nesses and jobs. Our local businesses do a lot to support our communities across Parry Sound–Muskoka, so let's do what we can to support these businesses and their employees.

Give a gift to your community this Christmas: Shop local, buy local.

POVERTY

Mr. Paul Miller: This has been a busy month for poverty reduction advocates. On November 2, we received A Roadmap for Change, the report from the government's working group. Last week, Ontario Campaign 2000 released their report card on child and family poverty. And today, there are representatives here from the Ontario food banks, which just released the 2017 Hunger Report. Among the more than 1,200 food banks this organization represents is Hamilton Food Share in my riding of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, which does great work.

The numbers demonstrate how essential food banks are across Ontario. According to the Hunger Report, nearly 500,000 Ontarians visited food banks this year; of those, 166,000 were children. The reality is that hunger brutally affects many Ontarians, especially our province's most vulnerable.

The reports I mentioned offer unique insight into Ontario poverty and all make similar recommendations. Providing affordable housing and adequate social assistance always top the list. I urge this government to take these reports seriously. We need this poverty problem solved right now.

It's also important to bring up Bill 6. This bill would create an evidence-based research commission to make recommendations on what social assistance rates should be in each region. What is important about this bill is that it ensures that social assistance rates will adjust according to needs and that Ontario's poorest will always have enough. All it would take is for our government to stop stalling this bill before committee and we could have a guarantee that this commission would be in place by the end of this year.

There is much more our government needs to do to address poverty, and the reports I mentioned give us clear guidance on how to do that. Mr. Speaker, let's get moving.

DIABETES

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I am pleased to rise in the House as I believe raising awareness about diabetes is extremely important. That is why I brought a private member's bill to declare November as Diabetes Awareness Month back in 2008 and again in 2011, which received support from all parties.

Diabetes is a chronic and progressive disease that impacts the lives of 4.6 million Ontarians. There are two types of diabetes. Type 1 diabetes generally develops in

childhood or adolescence. Type 2 diabetes more often develops in adults.

According to Diabetes Canada, today there are 11 million Canadians living with diabetes or pre-diabetes. Diabetes rates are about 30% higher among South Asian, aboriginal, Hispanic, Asian and African Canadians.

In September 2011, our government opened a centre for complex diabetes at the Brampton Civic Hospital, which provides one-stop access to highly specialized care for people with complex or advanced forms of diabetes.

Awareness about diabetes can lead to early intervention, and that can save lives as well as scarce health care dollars.

ROY HALLADAY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to offer a personal tribute to one of the great baseball players of our time and a true gentleman, Roy "Doc" Halladay. As we know, Roy died early this month in an airplane accident. His life was cut tragically short at the age of 40, yet Roy leaves a rich legacy that we can all be proud of.

As a pro baseball player, he was truly one of the greats. By the end of his career, Roy had pitched a total of 67 complete games, 13 more than any other pitcher. In 14 of those games, he remarkably threw less than 100 pitches. Add to that two Cy Young Awards.

Of course, Roy was also a beloved member of the Toronto Blue Jays ball club. He played with the Jays for a total of 12 seasons in his 16-year-long career. The fans absolutely adored Doc Halladay, and it's no wonder why. Apart from being a world-class athlete, Roy also had a huge heart. He gave generously of his time and resources to help children in need. His humble attitude and care for the less fortunate made him a role model for all of us.

I had the privilege of meeting Roy this past June at his induction into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame in St. Marys. About his induction, Roy had this to say: "It was a privilege to live and play in Canada for as long as I did. The people here were kind, supportive, respectful and always seemed to welcome me home even when I came to visit and sat in the wrong dugout. To be inducted into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame is just another example of exceptional treatment I have received from Canada."

Roy will always be remembered as an amazingly talented ball player and a real class act. We're grateful for his legacy, which I hope will offer some comfort to his family during this difficult time.

PILLAR COMMUNITY INNOVATION AWARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Last week, I joined almost 1,000 Londoners at the Pillar Community Innovation Awards to celebrate the people and organizations that promote belonging and community well-being by bringing heart and solutions to complex problems.

I want to thank Pillar Nonprofit Network and lead sponsor Libro Credit Union for taking the initiative 11

years ago and growing what has become one of London's premier award nights.

Most of all, I want to congratulate this year's award recipients:

—+Positive Voice at Nokee Kwe, which empowers urban indigenous women through the development and sharing of positive narratives and stories;

—Justin Tiseo, a John Paul II Catholic Secondary School student who organized the first Onerun in 2010, a student-led cancer fundraiser that has become a city-wide, week-long initiative and has raised over \$900,000 for cancer programs to date;

—Community Engaged Learning at Western University, which provides students with hands-on experiences that connect classroom learning to social needs, bringing learning to life, helping students find their passion and strengthening civic engagement;

—Baby's Book Bag, a partnership between the London Child and Youth Network, the Kiwanis Club of Forest City-London and London Public Library that bonds families around the love of books; and, finally,

—Childreach's Wild Child, a free outdoor program that improves children's social, emotional and physical well-being and builds resilience through risky play.

I salute each of these amazing award winners, as well as all the finalists, for the profound difference and lasting social impact they are making in our community.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Cristina Martins: The TTC has offered a two-hour transfer feature on the 512 St. Clair Avenue West streetcar service for the last 10 years, only ending this past September. The feature was designed to increase traffic in the local stores affected by the initial construction of the transit dedicated right-of-way on St. Clair Avenue and a drastic reduction in on-street parking. The on-and-off privileges that a two-hour time-based transfer provided became an integral part of the area's economic vitality, and increased visits to the stores and services located along the St. Clair Avenue transit corridor.

1310

My constituents who are members of the Regal Heights Village BIA, the Regal Heights Residents' Association, Corso Italia BIA and St. Clair Gardens BIA can all attest to the economic benefits for the community and the city when people can shop on the way home along the transit corridor. The ability to use the on-and-off privileges reduces motor vehicle usage and that in turn reduces the congestion on the city streets.

In the last decade, the city of Toronto made many changes to its planning process and transit development to make this city more livable and walkable. Currently, users of Presto cards can't use the two-hour transfer system in the city of Toronto, despite this system being used in other jurisdictions. Tomorrow, the Toronto Transit Commission will have an opportunity to consider implementing two-hour time-based transfers for the

transit users who have purchased a Presto card. I support my constituents' request that the TTC consider the two-hour time-based transfer, and I encourage other members of this House who are affected by this to lend their voices and ensure the continued growth of our communities along St. Clair West and all transit corridors in the city of Toronto.

SHELLEY BARFOOT-O'NEILL

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to rise today and congratulate a constituent of mine, Shelley Barfoot-O'Neill, whose significant contributions to agriculture have earned her the 2017 BMO Women of Excellence in Agriculture Award. Presented annually at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair by the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario—FWIO—the award recognizes women with lifelong support of agriculture in their communities and who continue to make a difference today.

Shelley comes from a long lineage of 4-H enthusiasts. On both the Barfoot and O'Neill sides of the family, including her parents, Ken and Barbara Barfoot—Mrs. Barfoot was my grade 5 teacher—there were true agriculture champions for many generations. Naturally, Shelley, who herself is a self-professed “bona fide 4-H lifer,” couldn't wait to become old enough to continue this proud family tradition.

As a member of 4-H, Shelley was fuelled by a desire to always do more and leapt at every opportunity available to her, attending countless camps and conferences and three exchanges, to Niagara, Alberta and Saskatchewan, where she gained strong leadership and life skills, and self-confidence. She was in as many livestock and homemaking clubs as possible, and remarkably, never missed a show. She said representing Grey was an honour to her and she was proud to do so at the Classic and Silver Dollar many times, serving as the Grey county 4-H ambassador and president of the Grey county 4-H members' association.

A true 4-H member, Shelley, together with her husband Brian, who she met through 4-H, today leads the Warton fitting, dairy, and sheep clubs. Previously, she led the Nashville North and Clavering life skills clubs, served as the chaperone for EastGen since it was Silver Dollar, dairy and registrations chair for Grey-Bruce 4-H show, committee member for the Royal Junior Sheep Show, and All-Ontario junior sheep show. As well, she assisted with the Grey county team at the Classic for many years. Additionally, Shelley was also president of Grey County 4-H Leaders Association and countless other activities.

As most of her life revolves around 4-H, is it any wonder Shelley also recently took on the part-time role of livestock coordinator with 4-H Ontario? This, Speaker, is in addition to her work at the Real Estate Institute of Canada.

“Even if it is a little hectic at the moment,” Shelley explains, “I love it. Brian and I own a couple of Holsteins

and love to show, so if there's a show you'll probably find us either at ringside or in the barns, depending on our work schedules."

Shelley is an outstanding role model and I hope her work ethic and achievements will inspire others to lead with her commitment and passion for agriculture and 4-H.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That wasn't read fast enough.

Laughter.

TORONTO ARGONAUTS

Mr. Mike Colle: What a game. I don't know if you saw that incredible Grey Cup yesterday. Go, Argos! What a game. I want to congratulate this amazing team which showed the best of Canadian football. The city of Ottawa was an incredible host. I want to congratulate the chairman of Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, Larry Tanenbaum, and also Jim Popp, the general manager of the Argos, and Marc Trestman, the coach of the Argos.

And what about that 100-yard reception by DeVier Posey? Wow—a 100-yard record. Then, to top that off, Cassius Vaughn: a 109-yard interception and return for a touchdown. What an incredible game. And then the half-time show: At half-time Shania Twain came in on a dogsled. That was amazing Canadian football, a Canadian show, the 105th Grey Cup.

Forget the NFL; forget all this American stuff. The CFL showed that we have one of the best games there is, and the Toronto Argos, who won this Grey Cup, should be congratulated. For Ricky Ray, this is his fourth Grey Cup ring. What an amazing quarterback who led the team.

Anyway, congratulations to all the incredible members of that team, and may they win again next year. Go, Argos!

CHRISTMAS EVENT IN LAMBTON-KENT-MIDDLESEX

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's beginning to feel a lot like Christmas in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Last weekend, Wallaceburg witnessed the real Christmas spirit when dozens of children received exactly what they asked for from Santa thanks to local volunteers and sponsors.

At a Christmas party at the Knights of Pythias hall, 40 children visited Santa and told him what they wanted for Christmas this year. The surprise was that Santa's elves were taking notes and relaying their lists to volunteers who were standing by at stores, one as far away as Windsor. These volunteers then rushed to track down and gift wrap dolls, Xboxes, toy trucks—absolutely everything the kids asked for. I understand there was even a real, live pony on standby in case a child asked for a pony.

After the children visited Santa, parents received a note that a gift bag was waiting at the local Canadian

Tire. When families arrived at the store, they were astonished to find the wishes of each child had been fulfilled. This was an incredible act of generosity that was a year in the planning, but the impact of this extraordinary kindness will certainly be felt for far longer.

I want to sincerely thank all the organizers, volunteers and sponsors who made this wonderful event possible and who undertook a massive effort simply to make Christmas feel special. You've reminded us all of what the season is really all about. Merry Christmas.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

COMPASSIONATE CARE ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017

SUR LES SOINS DE COMPASSION

Mr. Oosterhoff moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 182, An Act providing for the development of a provincial framework on hospice palliative care / Projet de loi 182, Loi prévoyant l'élaboration d'un cadre provincial des soins palliatifs.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: This bill enacts the Compassionate Care Act, 2017. This act will require the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to develop a provincial framework designed to support improved access to hospice palliative care. The minister must table a report setting out the provincial framework in the Legislative Assembly within one year after the bill comes into force. Within five years after the report is tabled, the minister must prepare and table a report on the state of hospice palliative care in Ontario. Each report must be published on a government of Ontario website.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is an important piece of legislation that will provide choice in end-of-life care.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Liz Sandals: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding changes to the memberships of standing committees.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed. Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I move that the following change be made to the membership of the following committee: that on the Standing Committee on General Government, Mr. Sam Oosterhoff replaces Mrs. Julia Munro.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Carried.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice to split Bill 177 into 22 separate bills.

1320

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

PETITIONS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas municipal taxes are paid with income and income indicates our ability to pay tax. Property tax that is assessing our municipal tax on the current value of our property/home is a false premise as it does not indicate our ability to pay tax and results in:

“—both over- and under-taxing;

“—is a regressive tax that takes a proportionately larger amount from people on lower income;

“—prevents older people from aging in their own home;

“—destroys pensions, jobs and shrinks the economy;

“Changing the municipal tax assessment base from property/home value to household income would:

“—shrink government and save the municipalities of Ontario \$250 million yearly;

“—equalize the tax rate and burden for all municipal residents;

“—narrow the income gap;

“—provide a defined benefit pension plan that is more financially beneficial and secure than CPP;

“—allow more seniors to financially age in their own home;

“—create jobs and grow the economy;

“—make housing more affordable;

“We, the undersigned past and present members of provincial Parliament, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To eliminate municipal property tax and to assess the tax on our household income.”

Speaker, I have a number of these petitions. I’ll send them over with the page. They are, indeed, all signed by past members of the provincial Parliament.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Paul Miller: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only recog-

nized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

“Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately 16,158; and

“Whereas estimates from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services for 2015-2016 indicate that only five more children are receiving IBI this year compared to last year and, shockingly, the number of children receiving ABA has dropped by almost 1,000 in the past two years—despite the fact that the wait-list is growing; and

“Whereas it is well known that early detection and early intervention is crucially important for children with ASD to learn to their fullest potential, and these programs set the stage for growth and development throughout children’s lives; and

“Whereas some families are being forced to re-mortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy; and

“Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario immediately end the chronic wait-lists for IBI/ABA services for kids with autism spectrum disorder.”

I agree with this and will sign my name to it, and Isabelle will deliver it.

BRUCE POWER

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bruce Power provides 30% of Ontario’s electricity production at 30% below the average cost to generate residential power;

“Whereas extending the operational life of the Bruce Power energy units will ensure families and businesses have long-term, low-cost stability and clean air to breathe;

“Whereas the Life-Extension Program (LEP) will secure an estimated 22,000 jobs and an additional 3,000 to 5,000 jobs annually throughout the investment program, injecting billions into Ontario’s economy;

“Whereas BWXT contributes approximately 1,000 high-skilled, high-paying jobs to residents of Cambridge, Peterborough, Toronto, Arnprior and Dundas and their surrounding areas;

“Whereas BWXT generates over \$90 million in payroll and procures over \$100 million in Ontario goods and services annually across its five major operating locations in Ontario;

“Whereas BWXT contributes back over \$50,000 annually to worthy charitable organizations and celebrates a strong engineering co-op program to support the mentorship and development of local engineering students;

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

“To support the vital role that nuclear power plays in delivering clean, affordable electricity while contributing to a prosperous, well-employed regional economy and across the province.”

I sign this petition and give it to page Andrew.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas:

“—In the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth;

“—The tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on-screen;

“—A scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking;

“—More than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least 30,000 lives and half a billion health care dollars;

“—The Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada;

“—79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A (increased from 73% in 2011);

“—The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act via cabinet;

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

“—To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

“—That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare a response.”

I'm signing my name and giving it to the page.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier Émile Prudhomme de Val-Thérèse dans mon comté.

« Attendu que les personnes âgées frêles qui ont besoin de soins de longue durée dans des foyers du Réseau local d'intégration des services de santé du Nord-Est ... ont été contraintes de quitter l'hôpital pour attendre le placement ou de rester et de payer des frais hospitaliers d'environ 1 000 \$ par jour; et

« Attendu que les personnes âgées frêles qui ont besoin de soins de longue durée à Sudbury et à Sault-

Sainte-Marie ont été poussées à déménager dans des foyers qui ne sont pas de leur choix ou à des lits “provisoires” dans des établissements qui ne respectent pas les normes prescrites par la loi ...

« Attendu que la pratique consistant à maintenir les patients dans des lits “provisoires” est contraire à la politique du ministère de la Santé » qui identifie les lits “provisoires” comme étant destinés à assurer un écoulement continu afin qu'ils soient constamment libérés;

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative, dans un premier temps, de :

S'assurer que les fonctionnaires du système de santé utilisent des lits “provisoires” comme “conformes” à la politique; et

S'assurer que les patients ne subissent pas de pression sur les taux hospitaliers et de garder les promesses faites à des centaines de résidents et résidentes de maisons de soins de longue durée qui ont accepté de se déplacer temporairement avec la promesse qu'ils seraient replacés aussitôt qu'un lit dans une maison de leur choix est devenu disponible.

J'appuie cette pétition, et je vais la signer. Je demande à Alisha de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario families and businesses have seen their hydro costs more than triple under the current government since 2003;

“Whereas the government's unaffordable Green Energy Act, the \$2 billion wasted on the smart meter program and the \$1.1 billion wasted on the cancelled gas plants will translate into a further 42% increase in hydro bills over five years;

“Whereas the Auditor General revealed that the government has collected approximately \$50 billion over the last decade through a global adjustment tax on hydro bills largely used to subsidize exorbitant green energy contracts;

“Whereas the government has allowed peak hydro rates to increase by 15% on May 1;

“Whereas the government's elimination of the clean energy benefit will mean an average increase in hydro bills of \$137 per year;

“Whereas the government's planned sale of a majority share of Hydro One will mean higher hydro bills;

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

“To call on the government to protect families and businesses from further increases by applying all proceeds from the sale of Hydro One to the \$27-billion electricity debt and imposing a moratorium on any new industrial wind and solar projects.”

I fully support it, affix my name and send it with page Andrew.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to thank the Durham local of ETFO for collecting signatures on a petition to fix the funding formula. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas violence has been on the rise in publicly funded schools;

"Whereas mental health service needs have increased in publicly funded schools;

"Whereas identified students are no longer receiving the specialized support they require to succeed in publicly funded schools;

"Whereas Kevlar and classroom evacuations are considered solutions for unsafe situations in publicly funded schools;

"Whereas funding has dropped \$1.7 billion since 1997 (adjusted for enrolment changes and inflation) for publicly funded schools;

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

"Adjust the public education funding formula to

"(a) provide a safe learning environment for students, volunteers and staff; and

"(b) provide meaningful supports to address the needs of all Ontario students."

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Sean to take to the table.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Ted McMeekin: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it has been widely demonstrated that properly restored or rehabilitated old wooden windows and doors fitted with storms where needed are as energy efficient as new replacement products, and take up a fraction of the carbon footprint of the new products;

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

"We would like the wording 'restoration of existing doors and windows added to any grant, tax incentive or funding projects initiated to aid in both energy conservation and heritage conservation. It is the request of the undersigned that any funding made available for replacement of doors and windows also be made available for the restoration of existing doors and windows.'"

I'll give this to Olivia for submission, Mr. Speaker.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

"Whereas the government first promised a legislated care standard for residents in the province's long-term-care homes in 2003 but are yet to make good on their promise;

"Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) empowers the provincial government to create a minimum standard;

"Whereas a study done in 2001 by the US Centres for Medicare and Medicaid Services cited 4.1 working hours per resident day as a minimum target, which was later confirmed in a 2004 observational study and in a reanalysis by Abt Associates in 2011, and reinforced by the 2008 Independent Review of Staffing and Care Standards for Long-Term Care Homes report by Shirlee Sharkey, who recommended a four-hour minimum target;

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

"To legislate a care standard of a minimum four hours per resident each day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix."

I agree with this and will pass it on to page Aditya.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mona LeBreton from Val Caron in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

"Gas prices

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

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

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

"Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

"Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

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

“Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge.”

I sign this petition and give it to page Abby.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

“Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

“Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

“Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

“Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

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

“To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research.”

I fully support, affix my name and send with it page Javeriar.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONGER, FAIRER ONTARIO ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2017
LOI DE 2017
POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS FORT
ET PLUS JUSTE
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 23, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 177, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I will try to use more parliamentary language today in my debate on Bill 177—although, if I stray away from there, I will and do apologize if I stray away from that.

Last week, as you may remember, we had an omnibus bill in front of the House, Bill 174, that conflated a whole series of unrelated subjects into one bill. Everything from cannabis to school buses to vapes to distracted driving was thrown into that, a potpourri of the legislation which really—I think the only way to describe it—is authoritarian in the way that this government is viewing its mandate and its responsibility to the people of Ontario.

But falling right on the heels of that omnibus bill and the time allocations that came with it, we now have Bill 177 in front of the House. Like we did with Bill 174, we have implored the government to split this bill up. This one has 46 different schedules in the bill, and a great many of them—the majority of them—are unrelated at all. We have asked that this bill be split into 22 separate bills for this government to have debate on, have discussions and also to have the vote, but to inform people just what it is that they are doing.

I would like to ask this question before I go further: Is there anybody on the government side who has actually read Bill 177? If you have read Bill 177, please raise your hand, because how do you debate with someone on a bill if they don’t have any knowledge of the bill? You can’t have any knowledge if you haven’t read it. Not one person has raised their hand on the Liberal side to indicate that they’ve read Bill 177. That actually doesn’t surprise me. I’m sure it doesn’t surprise anybody that this Liberal government doesn’t feel that there is a need to have informed debate. They don’t need to have knowledge on what they are going to vote for; all they have to do is take direction from their superior.

That is not the way a representative democracy was constructed. It wasn’t constructed for that purpose. We all understand that. We are all elected individually in our ridings to represent our constituents, and here we have the vast majority—everyone in the House today on the Liberal side—who have indicated that they are not knowledgeable about this bill when it comes to debate.

1340

We also understand that the government is going to move another closure motion on Bill 177. We are approaching six and a half hours of debate and they have indicated that, once again, they are going to subvert the very process, abuse the very institution, and bring in closure on a bill that’s 170 pages in length—they just brought it in a week ago—with 46 different schedules. I think the people on the opposite side need to stand up and tell their constituents and tell the people of Ontario why they believe it is unnecessary to be knowledgeable before

they vote, that they can make a determination, they can make a decision, without examining any evidence or reading any legislation.

For too long in Ontario, we've had a government whose chief aim has been to keep themselves in power, and who have made every public policy decision subordinate to that objective. Everything is subordinate to that objective. The general well-being of the people has been put in the back seat by this administration and its pandering to its wealthy friends and its patrons. This government has never missed an opportunity to remind us of their moral superiority with their virtue signalling. But with so many Ontarians wishing to exercise their right to participate in the governance of their province through mechanisms such as our standing committees, this administration has time and time again used subversive omnibus legislation and procedural chicanery to block the access of people to the policy process.

We saw that again with Bill 174. Twenty-eight people are going to be permitted to speak to Bill 174 at the committee process. They only permitted two days from the passage of the closure motion to the cut-off time for submissions to have a delegation. In two days we received over 40 submissions to meet with the standing committee, but we have to limit it to 28. Speaker, we're going to see the same thing happen later today with a closure motion on Bill 177.

Sir John A. Macdonald once opined that Parliament is a grand inquest, with the right to inquire into anything and everything; however, this administration's rectitude and its casual dismissal of public debate and opinion has resulted in this often precipitous decision to make decisions without any accountability. How can we have this grand inquest to inquire into anything when we have a government and its members who refuse to even read or understand what it is that we're debating in this House? How can we have that inquiry when there is an absence of knowledge? How can we truly be respectful to people when we slam shut debate on important public policy decisions and then limit how many people can appear before the committee to give us various perspectives?

Speaker, I'm at a loss for words on how to properly describe—I don't think we can properly describe the actions of this government in parliamentary language. I know it's not possible to be parliamentary in our language but accurately describe what this government is doing to this province and to the people of this province.

You know, Speaker, Bill 177 has a significant number of elements in it that ought to be discussed in debate to inform the people of this province what this government is attempting to do.

We see in the Provincial Offences Act—maybe I'll give you this as an example. Two years ago, this government attempted to change the Provincial Offences Act and move it to an administrative monetary penalty system. There was such a huge public outcry over that that the government pulled in their horns and said, "No, we're not going to do that." But every bill that has come before the House since has incorporated administrative

monetary penalties. This bill is no different, but it goes beyond that.

Let me just read one section of schedule 35. No longer will the court have to be satisfied that there is a law that was broken in determining guilt. That's—let's see if I get the right number here—subsection 9(6): "Proof of municipal bylaw not required." It goes on to say, "If the offence is in respect of an offence under a bylaw of a municipality, proof of the bylaw that creates the offence is not required to enter a conviction and impose a set fine under this section."

Isn't that astonishing, that somebody can be alleged to have broken a bylaw but the municipality does not have to prove or satisfy to the court that they actually have a bylaw? Amazing, absolutely amazing, that that little tidbit has slipped in there.

This Bill 177 is full of these egregious tidbits, Speaker, but of course, as we indicated earlier, nobody on the other side has taken any interest in the bill—couldn't even be bothered to pick up the bill and to read what it is that they're approving.

Bills 177 and 174 are not the first in this long line of authoritarian abuse and subversion of the parliamentary process here by this government. Bill 13, the Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act, was time-allocated; Bill 37, the Protecting Students Act, was time-allocated; Bill 41, the Patients First Act; Bill 68, the Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Legislation Act; Bill 70, Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act—don't you like that title? Building Ontario up for everyone while they attack the very foundation of democracy in this province.

Speaker, there were more bills introduced by this government in this session that were time-allocated and prevented from having thorough examination than bills that they allowed to go through the debate process. That's egregious and unprecedented, that a government would time-allocate more bills than bills that they allowed to be debated. I know there may be some members on the opposite side getting uncomfortable with the facts, and they should be uncomfortable. I think they should be ashamed that they have permitted and allowed their government to act in such an unwarranted fashion, such an egregious fashion to the people of Ontario.

1350

Mr. Yvan Baker: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Etobicoke Centre on a point of order.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Speaker, we are debating Bill 177. I believe the member opposite is not debating the bill currently under discussion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It is a bill to implement budgetary measures, and we normally and typically allow considerable latitude in those debates. I believe the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is within the confines of what is acceptable for this debate.

The member has the floor.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you for that reasonable latitude.

But if you want to talk about the bill—for the member who thinks this might be out of order—take a look at schedule 2 and tell me why it is that building inspectors now will not require a warrant to go into a private dwelling, even if there isn't a building permit issued. Previously, building inspectors were prevented from going into private dwellings unless a building permit had been issued. They've taken away that safeguard with Bill 177.

I will say to the member opposite that this government is out of order. This government is out of control, not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would just ask the member to make his comments through the Chair. Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you very much. Chair, I would like to put that question through you to the member: Is this government not out of order and out of control with such an abuse of process that they've done with all these bills?

I can go on. How about Bill 89, the Supporting Children, Youth and Families Act; Bill 92, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Amendment Act; Bill 114, the Anti-Racism Act; or Bill 124, the Rental Fairness Act? They are all bills introduced this session, and debate was closed, committee hearings were limited and royal assent granted.

That, Speaker, is a total, unequivocal abuse of the parliamentary system. We all understand that there are times when circumstances require an expedient debate, but it is not all times; it is not every time—certainly not.

Thomas Jefferson and many other great thinkers, when establishing representative democracy, understood that for this system to work, we needed an educated populace, and I think that goes without saying. But I don't think that Thomas Jefferson, Egerton Ryerson or anybody else ever contemplated the day when we would have an uneducated government ruling the province, where members absolutely refused to take their responsibilities seriously and read something before they voted on it.

That is a transformational shift in our culture, where members of this House don't believe it's necessary to have knowledge before they make determinations.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Speaker, I refer to standing order 23(h) and (i). It clearly says that members may not make allegations against another member or impute false or unavowed motives to another member. I believe the member opposite is doing just that.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Could we stop the clock?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member, in his concluding two minutes, to refer to the bill. Obviously, his comments are touching a nerve on the other side, and perhaps we need to think about that in terms of ensuring that the debate is civil.

I would ask the member to continue.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I would hope I would never impute false motives. That's one of

the reasons why I asked first if anybody would raise their hand if they read the bill, and they indicated that they hadn't.

Speaker, in my final minute of the bill: Last week, I had to withdraw a term—that this government was acting in a criminal fashion. I didn't withdraw, and I was named for that, and I will not use that term today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry. You can't do something indirectly that you can't do directly. I'm going to ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw, and I apologize.

As I said, Speaker, when you actually examine what this government is doing, it is impossible to use parliamentary language to detail the egregious and unprecedented behaviour, this authoritarian behaviour by this government. We could be full of withdrawals.

This government ought to withdraw their bill in this fashion. They should table it—it's 22. They should withdraw their abusive attack on this Parliament. That would be in order. That would be acceptable. That would be great.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: The member opposite is imputing motive, and it's contrary to standing orders 23(h) and (i).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I don't see that he's imputing motive. I understand that his comments have caused some distress on the other side.

Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's always an interesting time when the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington has the floor. It's always very entertaining to be in the House to listen to his words.

I found it even more interesting when the majority of his 20 minutes talked about the fact that the government members hadn't read this bill—and how could you just want to pass through things and debate things that have never been read, when last week we spent an entire weekend in the Legislature debating Bill 178 that both parties wanted? Well, the Liberals built the back-to-work legislation, and the Progressive Conservatives were on their feet, cheering with pompoms, to support that legislation, to pass it through, sight unseen, not even caring what that legislation had to say. They wanted to ram it through here. Now we have the same party talking about people not reading legislation, not seeing it. So it's either going to happen that you're going to read legislation all the time or you're not going to participate in political shenanigans.

Quite frankly, they couldn't wait to be Conservatives again and to legislate workers back to work, against their Charter of Rights—which is exactly what happened. The Conservatives have been talking about how labour-friendly they are—until they had back-to-work legislation in front of them. Then, they wanted to see that legislation passed unread.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm not going to dignify what I just heard from the opposite site, from the PC caucus. I thought that was really disappointing, Speaker. What makes it disappointing is not only all the false allegations that the member made, but what disappointed me, as well, was that the member has stood up in this Legislature, and his colleagues have stood up, and they've asked that we break this bill apart. That in itself, to me, is disappointing because what it basically means is, they'd like to slow down the good results that this bill would deliver for people. They'd like to protract this process and not have this legislation pass. That, to me, is a statement that they do not support the components of this bill. They know full well that by delaying it, it would take a long, long time for it to get passed. Whether it be the people of Grassy Narrows or our seniors or our businesses or—our communities across this province cannot wait for the PCs to figure out that this is good legislation and that it would help the people of this province.

Secondly, Speaker, the member had a lot of time and he's just finished talking about how there's not enough time to debate this bill. The members opposite keep talking about how there's not enough time to debate this bill and we should break it up so we can debate each component separately. But in the time he was given, he didn't debate the bill at all.

1400

I was generous in not standing up on a point of order earlier. I had to keep standing up and reminding the member that he wasn't speaking to the bill. He took the entire 20 minutes he had—he could have talked, spoken to the issues that matter to the people of Ontario and how they relate to this bill. Instead, he chose to talk about process. He started to talk about other legislation. He started to talk about his desire that the government do something else on another bill. Not only is he not addressing the issues that matter to the people of Ontario, but he has the gall to tell us that we need more time to debate this legislation and when he's got the time, he chooses to talk about something else.

We're making a difference for the people of Ontario. We're making a difference for seniors, for small businesses, for young people. We're investing in the future of this province. It's time that he got on board and helped us build Ontario up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: It must be that there's an election coming or something, because people are getting very heated and very tense here in the Legislature. We're discussing Bill 177, that the government calls the Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act. Well, as we saw with the Fair Hydro Act, that many people in the media call the "unfair hydro act," what we're seeing is a sort of potpourri—as the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington said—of all kinds of different things that barely relate to each other and oftentimes don't relate to each other. Last week it was cannabis, driving by school buses when the arm was out and distracted driving all mixed together.

The member from Etobicoke Centre, I believe, says that we should focus on debating each of these issues. The point is that we're having a bit of a discussion today, not just about the issues at hand and not just about the change in the regulations, but we're discussing just the process. I think that's what the member on the PC team is talking about, that he's very unhappy with the process.

I had somebody who complained on social media last week. I was at an event with Mayor John Tory and some other politicians. It was the opening of a new office. They said, "Well, why are politicians wasting our tax dollars going to these kinds of functions?" I explained, "I'm not going to debate the issue with you. All I'm going to say to you is I respect your opinion. If you're not happy with the process, get engaged and change it from within."

I think that's why we're here. We're here because we are engaged and we want to change this process. That's why I really respect my colleague for stating that. He's not shy even in our caucus meetings to tell us when he is not happy with the process. We have a lot to learn from him. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I was looking forward to participating in the debate on this bill until I learned that the government was going to be moving closure at six and a half hours. It is a real concern when you have an omnibus bill like this—168 pages, 46 schedules—about how we are going to ever be able to provide the proper level of scrutiny and due diligence that complex legislation like this requires.

I want to just bring to members' attention some of the things that can get lost when you have such complex legislation and no time to really delve into each of those schedules. Schedule 15 is really based on a private member's bill that I had tabled back in March, Bill 113. My private member's bill was designed to address the unfairness, the discrimination against adult children with disabilities whose parents are unmarried versus those who are married. We know that there is an inconsistency between the federal Divorce Act, governing the breakup of marriage, and the provincial Family Law Act.

My bill aligned the wording of the provincial legislation with the federal legislation to eliminate that discrimination. Unfortunately, what we see in schedule 15, the changes that were introduced by the Liberal government, continues discrimination. It removes the wording from the federal bill about other causes as being a reason to require a parent to continue support. And when you eliminate that wording, "other causes," you open this legislation up to, once again, more charter challenges about continuing discrimination against families in common-law relationships who want to end their child support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments.

The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington can now reply.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thanks to the members from Hamilton Mountain, Thornhill, London West and Etobicoke.

I want to zero in in my comments to the parliamentary secretary for the Minister of Finance, the member from Etobicoke. His comments were instructive. He dismissed due process. He just casually dismissed that due process is important. We ought to remind the member—as he was going through the standing orders which instruct due process, he was trying to find a way to limit my arguments. He wants to use due process to limit people's engagement. That's what this Liberal government is doing. They are using due process, time allocation, to limit people's participation in their representative democracy. Speaker, it's a bloody shame how this government is treating the people of Ontario. It's bloody unacceptable the way they're treating people.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I apologize. I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or his designate specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Chris Ballard: No further debate, Mr. Speaker.
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

VISITOR

Mr. Norm Miller: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you for allowing me the point of order. I just want to welcome to the Legislature Jean-Marc Lalonde, former member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and the coach of the Legiskaters for many years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Welcome back.

SAFER ONTARIO ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017

POUR PLUS DE SÉCURITÉ EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 16, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to implement measures with respect to policing, coroners and forensic laboratories and to enact, amend or repeal certain other statutes and revoke a regulation / *Projet de loi 175, Loi mettant en oeuvre des mesures concernant les services policiers, les coroners et les laboratoires médico-légaux et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant certaines autres lois et abrogeant un règlement.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in this House and it's a pleasure as well to speak on this bill as our party's critic for corrections and community safety. The bill is Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act. It is a massive bill. It's 407 pages long. Here it is right here. It's complex. It has an enormous amount of regulatory reform, and it was literally 25 years in the making. The Police Services Act hasn't been looked at or opened up for the last 25 years. Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act, is a result of two years of combined review of the 25-year-old Police Services Act and a year-long review of police oversight conducted by former Justice Tulloch. It brings in line police governance with changes to police powers of stop and search, which are called street checks or carding, and other legislation as well.

1410

A 25-year-old act has some inconsistencies with the everyday realities that we face in our policing and security and safety in our communities. Undoubtedly, the nature of crime has changed and evolved, and the nature of criminality and those who perpetrate crimes have evolved. The nature in which we in our various communities police the laws that enable the Police Services Act and those whom we that charge with that duty—that has evolved as well. So it is just and right for us to review the mechanisms that allow for our communities to be safe, to be governed under the rules of law of this House and others, and to ensure that we are doing everything that we can to have the resources and the balance that's required to do this important function as well as protecting our communities, protecting civilians and, at the same time, protecting civil rights and the rights of individuals under the charter and under our human rights codes.

With that said, I don't want to underestimate at all the importance and the need to review this specific act and those that are encompassed in it. Again—407 pages long. It has, I believe—let me flip it over—eight schedules that refine or reform various acts: the Police Services Act, 2017, the Policing Oversight Act, the Ontario Policing Discipline Tribunal Act and the Ontario Special Investigations Unit Act. Schedule 5 is consequential amendments. Schedule 6 is the Coroners Act. Schedule 7 is the Missing Persons Act, 2017. Schedule 8 is the Forensic Laboratories Act.

There is much in here that I think we would be well served in reviewing and implementing, specifically the Missing Persons Act, where there is a massive gap in our ability as a province to enable our law enforcement agents to do the work that they need to do when they're in a situation with a missing person that has not triggered some of the normal flags and operational actions—what am I trying to say here? There are certain circumstances when people go missing that trigger actions on behalf of our policing and our police force. There are also some certain circumstances where people go missing and there are no actions taken. The bill, in the Missing Persons Act,

attempts to address that gap. That is a good thing. It's something that my colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has spoken about. She asked for stand-alone legislation from this government—something that the families of missing persons have asked for and something that I believe this House should do.

I will point to a story that my colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has relayed to this House on that subject and talked about many times. It involves a young man named Daniel Trask, who went missing as a backwoods camper. He went missing in 2011 in Temagami. His mother, Maureen Trask, was left without the ability to find answers initially because, where there was no clear indication of criminal activity, as with Daniel's case, the Privacy Act prevents investigators from accessing information that may help locate missing persons. That means banking records and it means cell-phone records and others that normally would be triggered if there was a reasonable expectation that there was a crime involved.

Maureen reached out to various elected officials and those in law enforcement to advocate and start advocating for legislation that exists similarly in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan that would allow the police to investigate not only her son's disappearance but the hundreds of unsolved missing persons cases in Ontario. By working with the privacy commissioner, she believed that the government could maintain the balance needed between investigative information and personal privacy.

We support that. We think that is something that can enable our law enforcement officers and give them the tools to be able to support families when they're unfortunately thrown into these circumstances. Unfortunately, Daniel Trask was found, but only years later, I believe four years later, by a group of volunteers. Although that did give closure to his family and specifically to his mother, it didn't do anything to resolve the gap that we see today and it didn't dissuade her drive to correct this wrong. That is built into this legislation and it's a good thing.

What Ms. Trask also understands is that type of legislation shouldn't be a partisan piece of legislation. It shouldn't be brought into this House as a bill that divides us. It should be something that comes in that brings us together, something that, I think, if it were to be debated on its own merit, would see us bring better ideas out and forward as it relates to missing persons legislation. I think it would also see swift passage because we know there's a gap that exists.

However, what the government has done is, with this one really good piece of legislation, they've put it into this massive omnibus Bill 175. It makes up a portion of an enormously complex bill that does so much more harm to police and to the governance of policing and to the stability of policing in our province that we are fundamentally opposed to. Specifically, as a New Democrat and as New Democrats, I would think it would come as no surprise to those in the House to hear that we support our public sector workers and we support the work that they do and we believe that realm should be—

Interjection: Sacred.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Not only sacred but it should maintain and remain in the public realm. I can't think of any other more important aspect of public service than policing, than law enforcement. Those we trust and charge with the duty—this is a duty that they take on, a duty to the province, a duty to the crown, similar to the notion of us being in here as elected officials. They take on that duty to enforce the laws for the betterment and the safeguard of our communities.

That means we also have an obligation as elected officials and as the government to ensure they are given the tools and the support that they need to provide that job and to also compensate them fairly in recognition of the nature of the work that they do, the precarious nature. By precarious, I mean that we put them into harm's way; we ask them to do things that we cannot do ourselves; we ask them to see things that we dare not see with our own eyes and to hear things that, frankly, we couldn't hear ourselves, and to take on that burden on behalf of our communities with honour and with duty. And they do it each and every day. There are countless tales of heroics in our various police services, of going above and beyond the call of duty. Those are the days when we stand together as elected officials and recognize and champion the great work they do.

There has to be a reciprocal response when it comes time to remunerate and compensate our folks in law enforcement. We can't just say thanks for being our heroes each and every day in our communities, but when it comes time to negotiate fairly and collectively, as they do as various associations, say, "Well, we like you when you show up to our 911 calls and we like you when you catch the bad guys, but when it comes time to ensure that you have a good standard of living and you're paid adequately, we're going to start the chopping process and we're going to look at each and every way that we can squeeze every dollar out of your operations." In that sentence, Speaker, lies the problem with Bill 175.

1420

This Bill 175, make no mistake about it, opens the door to widespread privatization of policing services. I'll say it again: It opens the door to widespread, across-the-board privatization of policing services. The folks who you see in communities in the blue-and-whites, black-and-blues—or whatever colour their squad cars are these days—very well could end up being replaced by private security companies. All operations of policing in the province are now open and susceptible to that very reality.

There's no way to argue against that. There's no way to see it otherwise, because it's right in the bill. I'm going to read the act, but before I do, I will say that I heard, quite clearly, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—I wish I'd pulled it from Hansard, because she said that in no way does this bill open up the doors to privatization, when in fact it is right here in the bill, Speaker. It's amazing.

The specific provision—I've got to read it to you, the language surrounding the provisions of policing services

to the government to contract out entire policing functions on a province-wide basis with no considerations to local needs, local collective agreements as per the Police Services Act, 2017, section 12. In addition, the government may pass regulations that allow police services boards to take policing responsibilities out of the hands of sworn officers and other professional personnel to open them up to private bidders; this is in the Police Services Act, sections 13 and 14. There are no limits to this regulatory power.

That's the other thing about this bill, Speaker: As with many other bills that we see in this House, they aren't as clear as you would expect them to be in the title. You think, "Safer Ontario Act? Well, let's see how safe the Safer Ontario Act is going to be," but so much is left up to regulation that we truly don't know what the entire and final outcome of the provisions would be.

When I talk about privatization, Speaker, don't take it from me in terms of what the direction of this government is when it comes to the Police Services Act and the specific provision around privatization. Take it from this newswire: "Bill 175, Safer Ontario Act, 2017—GardaWorld Welcomes the Intention of the Government of Ontario." GardaWorld is the world's largest privately owned security and cash services provider. They have 62,000 professionals who serve throughout North America.

Miss Monique Taylor: They're excited, are they?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Are they excited? They are elated about this bill. I'll quote the article:

"This bill was long awaited by stakeholders in the security sector. GardaWorld welcomes the intention of the government of Ontario regarding this act, and more precisely, its objective to 'set clear parameters that outline police responsibilities and identify where the use of non-police personnel may be appropriate.'"

There it is, in black and white. GardaWorld is on board with the government. They can't wait to see how they can play a role in policing. Shake your heads, make weird faces at me; it doesn't matter. The bill opens the door to police services being privatized in our community.

If you're reading it any different, then you're not reading the bill correctly, and if you don't have a problem with it, then you probably shouldn't be in the role that you're in today, because opening the doors to privatization of police services in our communities means opening the doors to a lack of accountability. It means opening the doors to a lack of transparency and professionalism. It means weeding out the professionals we have in our province who provide good service every day in our communities—professional service—and you're going to hire rent-a-cops to patrol our communities. That's abhorrent, and it's a disgrace. Again, it's indicative of a government that has lost its way, lost its path and is looking to squeeze out any dollar that they can to cover for their fiscal mismanagement.

New Democrats won't have any of it at all. We will stand with our police force to ensure that it's never privatized and that they perform the functions that they

are bound to do and have the duty to do. That's where we are at on this. You're not going to get our support in diluting policing services. What does that mean? That means now that you have got a bidder who comes in at the lowest bid, who has the lowest tender, and now they get to perform police services.

You have, I am sure, well-intentioned people who are working for Garda security, but they're making \$15 an hour or they're making \$20 an hour. It's tough out there in Ontario to make ends meet on \$20 an hour, with the cost of hydro and the cost of everyday living going up. You're susceptible to other aspects, and it doesn't breed confidence. A good-paying job and the quality of the job you perform are directly related. The compensation that you receive and the benefits and protections that you have in that job allow you not to think where you're going to make your next paycheque and how you're going to make ends meet. It allows you to focus on the job at hand and the task at hand.

Not only do we believe that privatization will affect the quality of services on the ground in our communities, but we fundamentally oppose for-profit policing in our communities. That's the need to make a profit, the need to squeeze profit out of the job that you're doing. Well, how do you do that? How do you do that in policing? You cut your labour, you cut your hours of service, you cut the coverage and you cut the benefits. There is not much to cut when you're in policing.

When you pick up the phone and dial 911, you're not worried about the cost that is being incurred by that police service to get to your emergency. You're not worried about that and you hope that the police service isn't either—and they aren't. Our police services, our municipal services, our provincial services and our federal services respond with the duty to care in their mind, not with fiscal constraints possibly in mind. The closest person to the incident is being dispatched to get to your emergency. Do you want to have someone on the other end of that line questioning whether this is going to be financially viable and something that they can make money on?

Look at the bill. It extends and expands the ability of the government to expand private coverage to entire policing functions—the entirety of policing. There are no specificities built into the bill. It's wide open. I don't know how much clearer we could be. Every aspect of policing is now open to being privatized.

It will be interesting to see how the Conservatives vote on this, because they are your privatization champions. They have a long history and a proud history of privatizing services in the province. They think services should be privatized and be in the private sector, and let supply and demand and the market conditions determine whether you get a good service or not. Those are their beliefs. I understand that. It's fundamental to their ideology. You know where they are coming from.

The government, the Liberals—you never know where they are coming from. This is the thing. Do you actually believe in a good, healthy public service, or do you

believe that it's open for tender and that the lowest bid should win on every aspect? We believe that that is fundamentally against the principles not only of good community safety but also fundamentally against labour law as well. If folks don't know, which they should, our essential services, and again specifically our policing forces, are deemed essential services and therefore are exempt from the Employment Standards Act. What that means is that they only have their collective agreement to go by to receive or to have redress to any of their issues. Their recourse is, again, built into that agreement between their employer and their various associations, and whenever there's an issue with the employer, they go to the collective agreement. But this bill starts to wipe out some of those provisions and those protections. Specifically, under the Safer Ontario Act, many of the provisions that are built into collective agreements between our police and the various jurisdictions that employ them are eliminated, leaving police eventually as some of the most vulnerable employees in the province.

1430

Over the last month, the government made a strong commitment to workers in the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, but in terms of collective bargaining rights for police, it's effectively eroded.

The Safer Ontario Act allows—get this: So you're in the line of duty, and you are injured. It allows injured officers to be terminated en masse or arbitrarily assigned to civilian duties without regard to the collective bargaining rights of the officer or the civilians impacted.

Today, when a chief wants to discipline an officer for conduct that violates public expectations, the chief must give the officer disclosure and a fair hearing. The Safer Ontario Act, however, would allow chiefs of police to impose arbitrary discipline on an officer, with the only recourse being a tribunal system whose rules are tilted in favour of an employer.

What this means effectively is, if you are injured or—let me read the new section, actually, so you get a clearer perspective on the law, because we're all policy wonks in here.

The former section 47 is replaced by the new section 115, and it's under "Accommodation of disability needs." As I was saying, if you are injured in the line of duty, you would fall under this provision.

The old section said that if an employee of a municipal police force becomes mentally or physically disabled and is incapable of performing the essential duties of the position, the board shall accommodate his or her needs in accordance with the Human Rights Code. That's the old section.

The new section says, "The police service board or the commissioner shall accommodate the needs of a member of a police service who becomes incapable of performing or fulfilling the essential duties or requirements of his or her position as a result of a disability in accordance with the Human Rights Code...."

"If a police officer receives or is offered accommodation in accordance with the Human Rights Code but

continues to be incapable of performing or fulfilling the essential duties ... of his or her position as a result of a disability, the police service board ... may, in accordance with this section,

"(a) revoke or suspend the officer's appointment as a police officer and assign him or her to a civilian" duty, or they have the ability, if such a position is refused, of terminating the employment of the officer completely.

Before, they had to accommodate. Now they can arbitrarily—this is essentially what it means—fire you. That's it. It's pretty clear. Not only in the case of injury but in case of impairment and the inability to perform one's job—this doesn't only fall under the category of injury. Again, because it's not specifically prescribed, this could potentially be in the case of pregnancy. This has been highlighted by the Police Association of Ontario and the OPPA. Because the bill is so vague but actually also, at the same time, clear in its prescription of being able to fire people arbitrarily, we don't know and we can't say with a degree of certainty that isn't the case if a female police officer were to become pregnant and therefore unable at some point in her course of duty to be able to perform her job, that this new section under 115 comes into effect and, lo and behold, "Goodbye. You're fired."

That is, I would think, in direct violation and contravention of the Human Rights Code of Ontario, and I would think you've got some charter challenges coming into play there. Whoever wrote this thing should have done a little bit more work and probably a lot more consultation, because that jumps out at you like a wildfire. How on earth, in this province of Ontario, could we come anywhere near enabling—and arbitrarily enabling—management to be able to fire someone, effectively for being pregnant, or even if they had an injury?

Speaker, one of the proudest moments that I had in this House was watching us come together to support presumptive legislation on PTSD for our first responders. The government did the right thing, finally. And I say "finally"—emphasis on "finally"—because our member from Parkdale–High Park brought forward the bill seven times to have the government put forward PTSD legislation. After the seventh time, on the seventh attempt, the government said, "You know what? We can do this. We should probably do this. Cheri has done it seven times. Let's try it ourselves." Lo and behold, they passed it unanimously.

So our first responders and our police, fire and paramedic universes have PTSD coverage, presumptive coverage which says that it would be assumed that they suffered or incurred traumatic injury due to the nature of their job. That is the right thing to do. It's something that should qualify us as leaders in that realm, and I think it was a proud moment for this House.

However, with this new section in the Police Services Act, you effectively undo that whole thing completely. Do you understand that? I'm not joking here. I'm not making this up.

Ms. Soo Wong: Fear-mongering.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I am not fear-mongering. I am just relating to you the truth and the effect that this bill will have.

If you haven't heard it from our men and women in policing, then you aren't listening or you have been too busy to meet with them. They have been saying it quite clearly: This undoes PTSD coverage. You can't let that happen. This cannot happen and should not happen.

How can we stand in this House, being proud members, having seen a bill like the PTSD coverage come through, and support this? I don't know. I don't think we can. I don't think it's the right thing to do. I think it's actually counterproductive to supporting a safe workplace, a progressive workplace. I think it's ultimately regressive.

I think that the government really should be ashamed of themselves by even bringing this thing forward. They didn't have to. They had years to take a look at this. They had years to deliver on the issues that I think are paramount to policing. To throw those in speaks, I think, to the desperation of this government to find every penny that they can, hiding somewhere, with no regard to how it affects the people on the ground and the communities in which we serve. That's not right. It is not right.

There are so many other ways that you could find savings in this province. There are so many other gas plants that you shouldn't endeavour to build and then cancel. There is so much waste.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: The same one that your leader wanted to close as well?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Our leader never committed to building it, and any conjecture to the opposite of that is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): This is not a conversation. This is the Ontario Legislature. The member for Essex has the floor. He needs to address his comments through the Chair, and the members opposite need to refrain from heckling him, so that I can hear.

I apologize to the member of Essex for having to interrupt.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No apology is necessary, Speaker. I'm glad to get into that debate any time. However, I digress.

Again, the bill is massive, and it's certainly warranted for us to do. However, in my years in this House, I have yet to see such a massive poison pill built into a bill other than this. I can't emphasize enough how detrimental this would be to our communities, to open up the doors to privatization of our police services.

1440

There are some things in the province that you think are sacred. We thought that Hydro One was sacred. We thought that it was something that, as the province's most valuable asset, the entity that electrified the province and gave growth, where economies were born and communities grew and served us so well as a public, non-profit entity—we thought that was sacred. Not only did we think it was sacred because it was important and it served us well, but we thought it was sacred because we were

told time and time again by the Liberal government that it was sacred, that they were never going to privatize it. "You can trust us. We're not going to privatize it," came from the Premier's mouth. What they did do is they restructured it, or they used some terminology other than "privatize," because they couldn't get it out of their mouths.

They're the first ones to bemoan the Conservatives on their privatization endeavours, whether it be the breakup of hydro, or the 407, or other endeavours that haven't panned out the way they were advertised to be. But of all things, we would never and could never imagine that you'd have your local OPP detachment or your municipal detachment in your community like LaSalle or Amherstburg—a shout-out to those men and women who patrol our communities every day and who are instrumental in community policing, who are on the ground, not only doing the hard work that policing requires but also doing that extra work, going above and beyond and working with community groups to be proactive in policing, who are challenging and addressing the crisis in opioid abuse and the proliferation of opioid abuse. They're on the front lines of dealing with that. They're on the front lines of dealing with mental health crises in our communities.

When we are talking about finding savings, this Liberal government goes right after their wages and their benefits. They think they're too high-priced. They think they make too much. Instead of doing that, you know what you could do to save money? And the police have the right answer. If you want to talk to Rob Jamieson, he'll let you know—and Bruce. These presidents of their various associations will let you know where you can find savings: Address the crisis in mental health and ensure that there's support in our communities. Address the crisis in housing and make sure that people have adequate, affordable housing. Get to the root issues of child care and affordable child care in our communities. That's how you address the rising costs of policing in our communities: You address the fundamental socio-economic issues that are a cause and effect of criminality. Ensure that people have access to supports for addiction and mental health. We are so far behind in this province. It's not our professionals in health care that are dealing with folks in mental health distress who need care. It's policing. It's corrections. That's your first point of contact rather than where it should be: in our health care system and in our social system.

There are lots of ways that we could point to this government—and have over the years. I mean, this isn't something new you're hearing from New Democrats. We've talked about the socio-economic conditions of people in this province for decades. But it is evident in the fact that you haven't listened to us, because here we are: You're scrambling for dollars and cents, and where do you go to find it? You go to the wage packages and the collective bargaining rights of our men and women in police services. It's unconscionable.

So I hope—I truly hope—that this is giving some pause to some of the members; I don't know if it will. It

will probably have more effect because—you're hearing it from me as a partisan, and I'm probably not the most congenial to some of you some of the time. But at least listen to our men and women in the police services. Listen to them, because they've sounded the alarm as to what this bill is going to do to the quality of services in our communities.

Speaker, the Safer Ontario Act creates new and expanded abilities for municipal police services boards to replace police employees with private contractors; specifically—

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 174

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, I've got to intervene, and I have to ask you for unanimous consent.

Hon. Liz Sandals: For what?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: For what?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, I believe we have—you guys check with your House leaders—unanimous consent on a motion without notice to accept a prioritized list of witnesses for committee proceedings.

I move that the prioritized list of witnesses of the third party for Bill 174 hearings be accepted for consideration by the Clerk of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): First of all, you need to seek the unanimous consent of the House to allow you to move a motion.

The member for Essex is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I move that the prioritized list of witnesses of the third party for Bill 174 hearings be accepted for consideration by the Clerk of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Essex has moved that the prioritized list of witnesses of the third party for Bill 174 hearings be accepted for consideration by the Clerk of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

SAFER ONTARIO ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017

POUR PLUS DE SÉCURITÉ EN ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Essex continues to have the floor for debate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I thank my colleagues in the House for that intervention, for letting that happen. That was kind of weird. I've never had that happen before in the middle of a one-hour lead. Nevertheless, I guess it was important. So thanks for that.

Back to the issue at hand here, Bill 175: On the issue of privatization, the Safer Ontario Act creates new and

expanded abilities for municipal police services boards to replace police employees with private contractors; specifically, sections 11, 12, 13 and 14 of the Police Services Act.

Section 11 allows police services boards to jettison the enforcement of local bylaws as a responsibility. The municipality can then have anyone it likes enforce these provisions.

Section 12 allows for the government to take a specific service or services out of the hands of municipalities and hand it to private contractors so long as the regulation supports it.

Section 13 allows for regulations to be passed that would let municipalities use non-employees to provide core services.

Section 14 allows for the specific contracting-out to for-profit or non-profit third parties without regard to the employees being replaced or their collective bargaining rights.

Speaker, even though our police officials have negotiated rights to bargain and negotiated rights for their various employees, this bill effectively wipes those away. You can envision, I think, and you could also anticipate a charter challenge coming very soon, similar to the charter challenge that will be levelled, and possibly has already been levelled, on behalf of college faculty workers with the recent back-to-work legislation. That's something that this government has been precluded to as of late, and I think it's another indication of a desperation to find some sort of savings where they otherwise can't or are unable to do that.

The bill, again, is comprehensive. It's complex. I highly doubt anyone other than those who are intimately involved in policing or the corrections file or the community safety file has read through it in its entirety.

1450

We have tried to dig into it as much as possible over the last two weeks, I believe it was. You almost have to read it over and over again.

I want to give a big shout-out to our folks in our legislative research department here at the Ontario NDP who have done a wonderful job and have prepared a lot of the highlights for us, so that we can clearly articulate what the impacts of this bill are.

Schedule 1 amends the Police Services Act, including changes to police governance establishing expectations and makeup of police services boards, including training of boards, that fall short of what was sought by the policing community, however.

The potential massive scaling-up of service boards to service First Nations areas, and the creation of boards in other areas that are serviced by the OPP, are not identified in the bill. What does that mean? Specifically, when it comes to the First Nations, they will now have their own oversight mechanisms and boards, which is something that we welcome. However, they were hoping that it would have come under its own stand-alone legislation and not merely be lumped into the other reforms in this bill. That is something that I think they

should have had, and something that should have been supported through this bill. However, here we are with a massive omnibus bill.

The bill also opens up contracting out some professional services to the private sector as cost-saving measures for municipalities and possibly the OPP.

Schedule 1 creates the position of inspector general, whose office will oversee the administration of and compliance with the new Safer Ontario Act in matters of police conduct. The new inspector general will have powers to compel co-operation with its directives and edicts, in effect becoming the overarching regulator of police services in the province.

This is an interesting change as well. The inspector general will have the oversight of, essentially, police actions. You know, that is right: We should have oversight onto individual police actions and their motives, and whatever scenario that would lead us to have to question what transpired in the line of duty and what the outcome was, whether it be positive or negative or otherwise.

However, this little provision here, and the word that we have to be cognizant of and a little bit afraid of, is that the new IG will have powers to compel co-operation with its directives and edicts. That “compel” now subjects the officer to incredibly punitive measures should they not comply. If the inspector general requires that officer to provide their name, date of birth, place of birth and anything else that they want—any type of information that they want—and if that officer is not able to provide it or doesn't provide it in a timely way, that officer is subject to time in jail and, I believe, up to a \$5,000 fine, on top of potentially being reprimanded and being put on leave without pay, on top of possibly being fired. The “compel” there gives an enormous amount of power, in regulatory terms or in terms of oversight.

It's not something that you typically see. You would expect them to say something like “the Inspector General would have the powers to”—any word other than compel—“insist,” or anything else. But the compelling is a really restrictive thing. It potentially puts the officer within the control of that inspector general, outside of their own control, to provide that information. You have to envision these scenarios where the officer would be fully prepared to work with the inspector general, in all manners and all respects, but just simply isn't able to provide a certain amount of information. That opens them up and makes them vulnerable and susceptible to these enormously punitive measures for not compelling its co-operation with the directives and edicts. Something to be considered, Speaker.

The bill requires municipalities to have and adopt and implement a community safety and well-being plan and have it two years after royal assent to accomplish several changes. That is something that, I think, again, is positive. We want the municipalities to have community safety and well-being plans, but we would hope that they would have a supportive partner in the provincial government to resource those plans. What does that mean? That

means potentially more officers on the front line. That means more technology and technological advancements for departments to deal with the evolving nature of cyber-crime. It means more educational resources to be able to educate our communities around the nature of crime and what their role is and how they can protect themselves. These are things that—in the wording of it, that's great. Municipalities will have to adopt and implement a community safety and well-being plan—fantastic. You've got municipal budgets that are stretched to the limit already. You've got provincial governments that have historically downloaded essential services on municipalities. And now you're saying, “Make sure that you have these intricate community safety and well-being plans,” but there is no provision in this bill to support them with any resources.

So is it all talk and no action? You could be justified in criticizing it as such. Because if we've seen anything with this government—we've seen them, again, put all of the right words forward, but yet when it came time to the rubber meeting the road, they were nowhere to be found in support of our municipalities.

The bill, under schedule 2, rewrites the rules for police oversight and governance of all oversight bodies. This is part of a two-pronged, massive overhaul that establishes the Policing Oversight Act. The act includes oversight and reforms to the Special Investigations Unit, formerly called the SIU. It will now investigate incidents of police firearms discharging. It makes reports and results of investigations public, with major qualifiers for information and privacy rules. And it also increases the power for investigators to compel co-operation from subject and witness police to SIU scenes, with heavy fines and even jail time for non-cooperation or obstruction.

The Office of the Independent Police Review Director, the OIPRD, becomes now the Ontario Policing Complaints Agency and has an expanded mandate within that agency.

There are also whistleblower protections for reporting police misconduct. Also, the Coroners Act changes appear to be downloaded as a responsibility to appoint a coroner's inquest investigation to the Chief Coroner.

The SOA also includes the new Missing Persons Act, which I spoke to at the top of the one-hour lead. That act confers new police powers to potentially access personal records; for example, phone and banking information pertaining to missing persons that have not yet been deemed criminal. It also creates the Forensic Laboratories Act, 2017, that sets out how work can be done by accredited labs and then allows for the minister to set terms of accreditation.

The bill is huge. The bill has some important provisions in it. The bill has some aspects that have been long requested by civil society. It has some reforms to policing oversight that are questionable in their effect and how they will work to embolden and support transparency and accountability within the police forces. The bill does, again, address the missing persons gap that exists, which we know could play a role.

1500

But all of the good things that are wrapped up in the bill could be potentially eroded by the fact that the bill allows for all of those new provisions to be privatized. So you're putting all these things into a bill that ultimately could be delivered by Garda security and the likes of private security firms.

Let's just even think about the investment that we have put into our policing services over the years, over the decades—I'm not exactly sure how long we've had the Ontario Provincial Police, but I would imagine we're closing in on 100 years, if not more, of service under the OPP in the province of Ontario. Imagine the investment that we've put into that force: the training, the standards, the equipment, the technology, the infrastructure—the good faith that has been bred into our communities by interactions with the OPP; the sacrifices that have been made by many of those who work in law enforcement; and the sacrifices of their families, all in the name of public service, community service, community safety and a duty to your province. All of that can be eroded in this bill. It could be wiped away to the lowest bidder—effectively to the lowest bidder. That's what this bill does. I'm not fear-mongering; I'm laying it out, I believe, as plainly as it is written in this bill.

There are multiple areas in which the government is allowed now to dilute and erode our public service and our policing. It's frankly frightening, because if I have to pick up the phone in an emergency, I want to know that the highest-trained individual is there, the one who is closest to my emergency, the one whose consideration is not whether it's financially advantageous or economical for them to respond to my call—I want them to do that out of a duty to my safety and to that of my community. That's a contract that we have with our men and women in law enforcement: that we recognize that we put them in precarious positions but that we support them through the collective bargaining process and we ensure that they have a fair wage. It's a recognition that we give them the tools to be able to perform their job. It's a recognition that we know that we ask them to do things that we can't do ourselves.

Why do we do that? The outcome is and should be—and I would argue has been—the maintenance of a civil and cohesive society. Are there areas where it fails? Of course. We've seen times where it has failed, where civil rights have been trampled on. We think of the G20 and the issue of kettling, and the protests in downtown Toronto. Have there been incidents where the actions of individual police officers have to be called into question? Absolutely. We've seen those. It's incumbent upon us to ensure that, again, civil rights are protected, and that the use-of-force continuum is adequate and appropriate, given the nature of the threat.

But what is our responsibility as legislators to provide the resources to give them the tools to deal with that? We haven't done anything on mental health—next to nothing. There is a crisis in our communities around mental health, where people can't get the help and the

services that they need. They are thrown into the justice and judicial system, where they make up the largest component of our provincial inmates, who are essentially being warehoused and should be given the mental health supports they need. We have an explosion of poverty in our communities, stretching out to even rural areas of our communities, that we had never seen before, and a lack of access to those public services that are meant to deal with all these issues. What does that create? Well, it creates crisis almost on every street corner in our communities. You can find it anywhere, and you only have to talk to those who work on the front lines to see it. Talk to nurses and our folks in police services and in corrections, and they'll tell you that these people need support and they need help. They don't need to be locked up and thrown in jail every three months. So there's a gap there that could be addressed in terms of doing the right thing and also saving money, which the government has not done yet. It has not taken that proactive approach.

Where they are going to find savings today is clearly highlighted in this bill, Bill 175, and it's a direct attack on the collective bargaining rights of police services and law enforcement officials in the province. It erodes their ability to bargain collectively, it erodes their jurisdiction, and it also questions our commitment to them when they are injured in the line of duty. I don't think that's fair. Not only is it not fair, but it's fundamentally against the rule of law, our Human Rights Code and our Canadian charter.

I don't know what the government intends to do in terms of amendments to the bill. They have the full authority to pass this bill and they have the majority in the House to do so. I would imagine that once this bill gets to committee, they will finally hear and hopefully open their minds to what the effects of privatization will be in our communities.

We've seen it before. We've seen it in corrections, under Mike Harris and the Conservatives, when they attempted to start to privatize our corrections facilities in the province. That was a total disaster. It became an industry. It became a money-making venture for those who were charged with safeguarding our inmates and safeguarding our communities from those inmates. They quickly turned it into a money-making endeavour rather than what it should be: a valuable, integral component of our public services.

That's where you're heading with this. You're going to turn policing and law enforcement into a for-profit endeavour. Just think about those ramifications. I almost don't even have to articulate them here. Think about where the priority isn't the safety of your community, but the priority is now the economic and financial viability of your company. That is not what our communities want. That's not what they paid for. That's not why they pay taxes. They support our men and women in policing. They want to know that they're adequately compensated. They want to know that they have protections on the job should they become injured or ill or pregnant. They want to know that we're doing that in this House. With this

bill, you've shown them that you're not willing to do that.

I would ask the government to give this a second look and question the motives that are built into this, because it certainly doesn't position our province in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: In my two minutes to respond to the member from Essex, I want to remind the member that there are certain things he said that are very much fear-mongering.

First of all, when we call 911, we want the very best, well-trained, highly skilled and prepared first responders at the door. That's very important.

The fact that the member cited section 115 with regard to the legislation in terms of accommodation—I want to remind the members of the fact that this particular act, if passed, will address and ensure that police officers with disabilities are accommodated as per the Ontario Human Rights Code.

He's citing some quotes. I want to quote the other chief. Grand Chief Fiddler talked about this particular bill:

“This is a game changer for all of us.

“It's a historic day for the Nishnawbe Aski Police Service and for” NAN “and for indigenous policing for the province.”

1510

Chief Day, Chiefs of Ontario: “We are proud to have partnered with Ministers Naqvi and Lalonde in reaching this critical juncture, and look forward to continuing the good work that the regionally representative political technical table tirelessly dedicated themselves to. We commend the ministers for demonstrating strong leadership on this file....”

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to listen attentively to the member opposite, and I know we are going to work together to ensure the passage of the Safer Ontario Act in the near future. I look forward to further opportunities to speak about this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to rise and speak to Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act, 2017, and follow the member from Essex. I thought he had a lot of good points. He stopped short—and I thought it was coming—of accusing the Liberal government of maybe bringing in the Wisconsin agenda, or Governor Walker's agenda. I thought that's where he was going, and maybe that's where Kathleen Wynne came up with this idea of privatizing policing in the province of Ontario. I know it's something that we've seen in the UK, as a matter of fact. I met with local police officers a week or two ago, and they're very concerned about the direction that this Liberal government is going when it comes to privatizing policing.

It's interesting, it was just brought to my attention a couple of weeks ago, that this government seems to be

moving forward with using drones to protect and monitor highway speeding in the traffic act in Ontario. I was called by a local radio station that read an article in the Globe and Mail that the Liberal government is going to use drones to patrol the 402 and the 401, which caught me off guard because I've always believed that it is the responsibility of government to protect families in the province of Ontario. That includes investing in front-line police officers. That's the best way, the surest way, to keep our communities safe and our roads safe.

I agree with what the member from Essex raised when it comes to privatizing policing in the province. I think the officers who were here at Queen's Park—I know many members of the government would have heard the same concerns from them. I would ask the government to consider what they said.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate the member for Essex on his thorough review of a very exhaustive piece of legislation. He highlighted some of the key concerns in the bill, which I know the government will be hearing more about as the debate on Bill 175 goes on.

In the very brief time that I have right now, I just wanted to address one of the governance changes that are proposed. The bill requires that municipal councils that have police service boards prepare diversity plans to ensure that the board members are representative of the diversity of the population in the area.

I want to give a shout-out to the London Police Services Board, because the board got approval to expand from five members to seven members. They did two things when they got that approval. First, they passed a motion that one of these two additional members who is going to be appointed to the board should be an indigenous representative, because they recognized the systemic racism and the historic injustice that has been experienced by indigenous people, and the tensions between indigenous communities and police services. They felt that this was very important.

The second thing: Most recently, they appointed Councillor Mo Salih as the second elected representative to the police services board. Speaker, Councillor Mo Salih is the only elected black official in the entire province who now has a seat on a police services board. That is very problematic when we do not have police services boards that are representative of our communities. I congratulate the efforts of the London Police Services Board to ensure that representation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge to add a few comments to the debate and in this particular one, Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act. Speaker, for many years I was a member of the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council. The executive director there, Christiane Sadeler, and the team that I worked with were very involved in preventing crime and addressing some of the root causes of crime. When this bill started to be consulted on many

years and many months ago, the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council was able to come forward and discuss some of the pieces.

In reference to some of the comments that the member from Essex made, I just worry a little bit that he is thinking of over-reliance on a reactive policing model. The over-reliance on a reactive model of policing will respond to crime or fear of crime instead of building relationships to help identify and address potential issues and risks. That strains resources, and it doesn't necessarily contribute to a better outcome.

Shifting to a collaborative approach of community safety and well-being planning to help municipalities to lead partnerships that provide collaborative solutions to local needs is really the model that we have done in Waterloo region. In my own community of Cambridge, we've had a community safety and well-being planning table. That has been very effective, with a number of different partners, to identify issues early with a particular individual or a family. We've brought them together with wrap-around services and pre-empted some of the issues there. So we've addressed the local risks, we've managed to provide better outcomes—better resources utilized from our police services. I could go on at length, but my time is out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Essex can now reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the members for Scarborough–Agincourt, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and London West, and the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

To the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex: You wonder if they have taken their cues from Governor Scott Walker in Wisconsin, where he has privatized everything. Let's remember that Governor Scott Walker also has made a right-to-work state too, right? Yes. So they might do that as well. We know that you guys are opposed to right-to-work now, I think. Are you? Maybe? I'm not sure.

They will call it anything but privatization. What we will hear next out of this bill, Bill 175, is that they are not privatizing police services. The Premier will stand up, or the minister of corrections and community safety, will stand up and say, "We're broadening the ownership of the OPP." That's what we can expect from them. They will never say "privatization" because they know what the effect of privatization is in our communities on essential services. It degrades and erodes the quality of the services and it turns it into a for-profit venture. It's ridiculous.

Speaker, here is a scenario for you: Under this whole aspect of being able to privatize various services, we can surmise and imagine that a canine unit could be privatized. So you would now have a private operator of a canine unit. Sure, their dogs are great and they're trained and everything else, and the person who is the trainer and that agent has them doing the right things, but the dog goes sideways and attacks a civilian or attacks one of the other police officers. Who is responsible for that? Well,

this bill says that it's not the private operator; it's actually the OPP or the OPP or municipal officer. There is no oversight or regulatory regime for those private service providers. We have seen that time and time again: You weed out oversight for private sectors but you stick it to the ones that are public service workers. It's reflective of a government that is doing the wrong thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon in speaking in support of Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act, which is a comprehensive public safety legislation package that the member from Essex earlier debated, representing the third party. This particular legislation, Mr. Speaker, if passed, will represent the largest transformation in policing in a generation here in Ontario.

1520

Our government is committed to ensuring and building a safer, stronger community across this province, whether you live in the city of Toronto, like I do, or in the northern part or southern part of Ontario.

More importantly, we are making sure that modernization of the policing framework is community-focused, accountable and sustainable. Most importantly, we live in a very diverse Ontario.

The proposed legislation that we are introducing encompasses a new Police Services Act that will modernize the Ontario policing framework. This includes a collaborative approach to community safety and well-being, outlining police responsibility and community safety service delivery, and enhancing the whole issue of policing accountability.

There are a number of schedules. I want to list these eight schedules on record. The first schedule focuses on the Police Services Act. The second schedule deals with the Policing Oversight Act. Schedule 3 deals with the Ontario Policing Discipline Tribunal Act—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I don't believe we have a quorum, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Do we have a quorum in the House at present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): 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 a certain bill in her office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act and to make related amendments to other Acts / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi, la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail et la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

SAFER ONTARIO ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017

POUR PLUS DE SÉCURITÉ EN ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough—Agincourt has the floor.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to go back to what I started, to identify the eight schedules of the proposed Safer Ontario Act.

Schedule 1 deals with the Police Services Act. Schedule 2 deals with the Policing Oversight Act. Schedule 3 deals with the Ontario Policing Discipline Tribunal Act. Schedule 4 is the Ontario Special Investigations Unit Act. Schedule 5 is consequential amendments. Schedule 6 is the Coroners Act. Schedule 7 is the Missing Persons Act. Schedule 8 deals with the Forensic Laboratories Act.

Before I begin my remarks dealing specifically with Bill 175, I want to do a shout-out to a number of individuals, the Toronto Police Services Board, and 42 Division in Scarborough.

First, I want to thank Ken Jeffers, who was re-appointed to the Toronto Police Services Board—he is also a constituent—and has done exemplary work in the past years serving on the Toronto Police Services Board.

I also want to pay tribute to 42 Division of the Toronto Police Service, and all the men and women across Toronto Police Service, because we depend on them every day to ensure our streets are safe, but more importantly, they have contributed significantly to the growth of our city of Toronto.

I want to do a big shout-out to Staff Sergeant Andrew Ecklund, who was on a round table with myself and Minister Coteau last week; also to the current chief, Chief Dave Saunders—welcome back from your surgery; also a shout-out to former police chief Bill Blair, the current parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Justice, who was just in my riding last week to talk about the new federal cannabis bill.

This particular legislation is quite significant in ensuring policing across Ontario. In my short 16 minutes now, Mr. Speaker, I want to focus on community safety but, more importantly, the well-being of our communities.

As I said earlier, there are eight schedules in this particular legislation, and this approach to policing is in consultation with municipalities but also front-line

Ontarians. Every day, we have heard expressed concerns about the fact that this policing act needs to be improved, that we should be shifting from the model of reactive to more proactive, more crime prevention and, more importantly, addressing the front-line concerns of systemic racism and discrimination, but also ensuring that first responders, particularly the police, are properly trained and supported in our communities. We have engaged with our community partners, front-line police, but we also consulted the police chiefs as well as various community leaders. I know that various communities like Ottawa, Halton and Lanark have already begun their implementation of this plan that's being proposed by the government.

To be effective in community safety and well-being, we need to collaborate with various partners and we need to do this wide range. We have been dealing with this consultation now for years. I held my own community consultation in Scarborough—Agincourt. I want to say thank you to Agincourt Community Services Association under the leadership of Lee Soda. All her staff and the board have been very much big supporters but, more importantly, listening to our community and working very closely with my office and our community.

We also collaborated in preparing this legislation, collaborated with other folks such as health care workers, social services, educators and other leaders in their communities. So, with regard to policing, because this is a very large bill—and I know the member from Essex mentioned it earlier—in my 13 minutes I want to focus on a number of pieces. One is police responsibility. Let me be very clear, Mr. Speaker: Police services boards across Ontario are very diverse, serving their communities. That's what their role is: serving their communities. We need to ensure that they're the best-trained and that they are supported every day across Ontario. Since 2003, the Ontario crime rate has dropped by 34%. The violent crime rate has dropped by 27%. This is significant data to be looking at.

The other piece is that the Safer Ontario Act will help us to do a number of pieces. One is to clearly outline police responsibilities. Modernization of special constables—and I noticed, Mr. Speaker, when the member from Essex presented earlier, he never once mentioned the special constables, so I'm going to do a shout-out about this particular program because I dealt with them when I was a front-line public health nurse, when I was also working in the community. Also, making sure our police are properly trained and supported in terms of education, training and standardizing of all police services across the province and, more importantly, the modernization of police disciplinary procedures and processes.

We also want to make sure of the clarification of police responsibility, working with our partners and making sure that non-police personnel, whether they're front-line civilians working at front desks at various police stations, know when to deal with these issues, being effective and properly resourced to support them. I

know that the members across would all be with me that every day, when they pick up the phone and call 911, they know there's a professional person dealing with these calls.

1530

The other piece here is with regard to police responsibility. We have a collective responsibility as members of this Legislature to make sure that we provide support for the professionalization of policing, to make sure that they are equipped with the proper equipment to respond to those emergencies at all times.

We are now creating, if the legislation is passed, two streams to enter policing. The first deals with the completion of two years of community college—a diploma—a university degree or equivalent. The second way to get into policing is the completion of secondary school education plus additional requirements such as experience working in mental health and social services and working with youth. I'm very pleased that recently we appointed a member of the Toronto Police Services Board with an extensive mental health background, and she will be a great asset to the Toronto Police Services Board.

We are creating—we already had it in the past—a category called “special constable.” If the legislation is passed, there will be special constables. There will be requirements in terms of qualifications. They must have a secondary school diploma and additional educational criteria to meet their requirements.

Under special constables: We have them every day already in our system. For example, as I said earlier, as a resident of the city of Toronto, special constables right now are with Toronto Community Housing, they are also with the Toronto Transit Commission, and I also worked with them when I was working in public health. A lot of people don't know that there is a special constable hiring category in terms of public health inspectors. They have a category dealing with special constables who enforce the no-smoking legislation. I remember that when the Minister of Community and Social Services was the commissioner of health services in York region, her employees in health services were given that designation, and enforced the no-smoking bylaw across York region.

These special constables have defined responsibilities if this legislation is passed. These changes include restricting the labelling: They will be called “special constables;” they're not police officers. There are new firearm prohibitions, unless there's a ministerial exemption. They will streamline the special constable requirement process. They also will introduce independent oversight of the special constables. The other piece is regarding the term “policing;” it will only be given to those who are qualified police. It is not to be given to special constables.

I want to address the comments made earlier by the member opposite with regard to alternative delivery of services. We have very complex policing, especially right now with technology. As a matter of fact, I hear every day, as the member of provincial Parliament for Scarborough–Agincourt, how fast the advancement of

technology is. Technology is changing our everyday lives, but more importantly, it's also changing policing. Right now, cyberbullying is the number one issue. When you look at any young person, this particular piece is a concern for our young people's safety every day.

But more importantly, with the alternative delivery of services, we need to make sure the core function of police—the everyday men and women out there policing have to have intelligence. They have to have services. They also have to have the equipment to make sure they're safe, but also for investigation purposes.

The proposed legislation, if passed, spends a lot of focus on accountability. I know the members opposite would agree with me that we need to make sure that when we pass legislation, the new Police Services Act will address this concern about accountability. We hear that every single day. What does that mean? What does that really mean? If passed, the Safer Ontario Act would create a new position called the inspector general, who would have independent oversight monitoring police services and police services boards, which I believe is the right thing to do.

The inspector general will have a mandate—a mandate—to deliver an effective policing process across the province. It will also make sure that police services boards—I remember hearing the member from, I think, London talk earlier about the representation on the police services board in London—are reflective of the community, minimum and maximum members of police services boards. The other piece is that the inspector general will have the capacity to monitor, investigate, inspect and audit—how cool is that?— police services boards, to make sure they're meeting the standards, and the fact that meetings are transparent, and that they will be complying with the new legislation.

This particular individual will also have power to inspect the police services boards—we have never had that ability, Mr. Speaker—to ensure that they are meeting the legislative requirements and the regulatory requirements. The inspector general also makes sure that the police services boards are complying with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code. I believe every member of this House would agree with me that this is the right thing to do: making sure that every member of the police services boards complies with existing legislation, in this case the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is, again, a very, very important piece.

The other piece here is that I don't hear a lot, when I hear this debate on Bill 175, Mr. Speaker, about the oversight piece. It is very convenient for the members opposite to talk about how bad this particular legislation is. I can tell you, when I travel across the province—not just in my own riding of Scarborough–Agincourt—this is transformation in terms of where for the first time in about 25 years we now have proposed legislation that deals with oversight. Now, this was driven—and I want to do a shout-out to Mr. Justice Michael—oh, what's his name?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Tulloch.

Ms. Soo Wong:—Tulloch—thank you, Deputy Premier—and his work to guide us in this process of creating Bill 175. I want to thank Mr. Justice Tulloch for his work in terms of independent review and all of his 129 recommendations. These recommendations frame Bill 175, Mr. Speaker.

In my four minutes, I want to talk about how Ontarians have asked this government to make sure that when we bring in legislation, that legislation has to be transparent. It must focus on rebuilding trust and respect between the police and the communities. We hear those concerns every single day, whether we're in the chamber or out in the community. They have asked us, and then Mr. Justice Tulloch also said the same thing. In his 129 recommendations he wants this government to improve policing oversight. I challenge any member opposite saying that's not the right thing to do, because at the end of the day, the public expects us to improve accountability but, more importantly, to improve oversight. That oversight means, Mr. Speaker, that trust is a critical piece.

Right now, there are three oversight bodies: the SIU, the Special Investigations Unit; the Office of the Independent Police Review Director; and the Ontario Civilian Police Commission. Combined, they're supposed to provide oversight. If passed, this particular legislation will strengthen the obligation of police officials to comply with oversight investigations, because we have heard concerns when we were out in the community, in terms of consultation. We also heard that we need to make sure that we eliminate the ability for police services to investigate public complaints about their own officers—the issue of conflict of interest. We need to make sure that officers do not investigate themselves. Equip the police officer, in terms of oversight bodies, with more tools—more tools dealing with racism.

In my short time remaining, I want to share some of the facts I heard recently. Last week, I held a round table with Minister Coteau in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt. The number one concern was the relationship between racism and mental health. This is so disheartening. There is systemic racism, systemic discrimination in our community. How can we not address this in our proposed legislation in Bill 175?

1540

I want to thank all those who attended the round table, Mr. Speaker, because I know some of them may be watching today, in this particular debate on Bill 175.

At the end of the day, oversight is important, and we need to get this right. I heard the member opposite asking, will there be a proposed amendment down the road? Yes, we will be listening, very clearly, but oversight is not just one step; oversight means that we need to gather information based on evidence, based on data, based on demographics. The recent data from Statistics Canada in 2016 very clearly tells us Ontario is very diverse.

Also, expanding the oversight piece—dealing with the expansion of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction for all three

police oversight bodies: Again, I believe the member opposite would support the expansion of the Ombudsman's role and that piece.

The final piece I want to share with everybody: The piece that we need to do better on is the fact that the police are a very important part of our community. I know they have a very difficult job every day when they're out and about to support us, to keep Ontario safe, and I want to say to each one of the men and women officers and the civilians who work in every police force in Ontario: Thank you, thank you and thank you.

I look forward to the debate this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, to hear my colleagues opposite and also my own colleagues from the government side talk about Bill 175.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to respond. I just want to make a few comments. I listened to the debate from the member from Scarborough–Agincourt and I would like to pose a question to her. Maybe she can respond in her final summation.

We know that this bill in large part is the result of Justice Tulloch's review. I met with Justice Tulloch. I think he did a marvellous job reviewing the concerns and the problems with our police oversight bodies, and much of this bill encapsulates a number of those functions.

I do want to ask the member, because there's one schedule in this bill, schedule 8, which comes out—I don't know where it comes from. It was certainly not referenced or mentioned by Justice Tulloch in his review. That is the Forensic Laboratories Act. Why did this schedule 8 get inserted into this bill?

I can't help but suspect or believe that, of course, there have been problems with forensic laboratories in this province. Everybody is aware of the great failings that happened and the tragic circumstances with the Motherisk laboratory and the many people who were injured, and tragically so, and are still left without remedy for the failings of the Motherisk laboratory: having their children and grandchildren removed and having the courts come down hard on them, all due to false laboratory testing.

I'm just wondering if this is the Liberal government's way of trying to circumvent that but not actually talk about Motherisk and not actually talk about the remedies and the need for this government to do something for those people tragically hurt by Motherisk laboratories.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I guess I'm saying there are good cops and bad cops, the same as good members of provincial Parliament and maybe some not so good members of provincial Parliament.

If we mess up in here, perhaps the wider audience doesn't notice, but if a police officer messes up on the streets, these days especially, everybody with a cellphone and taking pictures or capturing video—they are held to a higher standard. I don't know the fairness of that, but that

seems to be the reality of our situation, that our police officers are held to a higher standard. They wear a badge; they are there to protect us. In doing so, they put their lives on the line each and every day they go to work, but they also are held to a higher standard. Because you have one or two officers that aren't up to that standard, the rest of the forces and departments and police services are suffering. Part of the reason for that is what has happened, as we all know, in many, many cases, which has led to this act in front of us this afternoon.

When we discuss this act we should also keep in mind that we are talking to a wider audience. What we say here will impact what others in the community hear, what they feel about and their perception of our police officers, because sometimes, as you know, Speaker, perceptions can become realities. We shouldn't be speaking today as if there's a war on police officers in this province. We're here to fashion an act that will do better for us all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for her comments. Speaker, I thought I'd just chat shortly, today, in my two minutes, about some of the work that we do at the AMO MOU table, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the memorandum of understanding that exists between them and our government. As Minister of Municipal Affairs, I have the pleasure to chair that table. We deal with a great many issues that affect all 444 of our municipalities on a very regular basis. One of the issues that municipalities talk about on not just policing but when it comes to first responders generally—police, fire, paramedics and the like—is that they have raised concerns over a long period of time about the cost of providing particular services to their communities.

One of the things that I've talked about a little bit in my home community of Thunder Bay but perhaps many of us haven't talked about often enough is that we have been providing support to our municipalities, through a couple of different policing programs, for 10 years or more. There was one really good program that came in under the former government. The Progressive Conservatives had brought in a program. I forget the name of it, but the city of Thunder Bay applied to that program and hired five officers under that program. The province gave about \$30,000 a year. It was going to sunset in five years. We made that program permanent, so the city of Thunder Bay has been receiving \$150,000 for those five officers.

We then brought in our own program. The city of Thunder Bay hired eight officers. We are funding those officers at \$70,000 a year—we put a special northern rider in there—so they've been receiving, in Thunder Bay, \$560,000 a year for those eight officers, and \$150,000 for the previous program that we made permanent. So they're receiving a significant funding allocation from us, and have been for a long time, to support the efforts of the first responders in their communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to rise to offer my comments about the remarks from the member from Scarborough–Agincourt. There are a few parts to this bill, and I'll be speaking to it later, too, but there is one thing that we have some cause for pause, or pause for cause, or however you say that. This bill injects an unprecedented level of ministerial discretion into policing decisions and it lays the groundwork for political interference in policing decisions, which is quite troubling. It also does this without additional funding to pay for it.

I don't know who on the government side—in fact, I don't know anybody on this side—but maybe they can tell me: Who has been a police officer? Who has actually done the job for a number of years? It's a very specialized position, but if you haven't walked in their shoes, it's difficult for someone to have oversight of what they do for a living. I am troubled that somebody could be appointed to this that has no experience with policing and has no experience with what they go through on a day-to-day basis. It can be a dangerous profession, although I would submit that anybody who has been involved for a number of years as a police officer enjoys it and wants to do a good job. But to me, one of the troubling aspects of this bill is that it could put someone in charge who has no experience at all in the policing profession, and I think that's something that should be addressed and should be changed, and that we leave these things in the hands of people who have had experience and should know what they're doing.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments. I return to the member for Scarborough–Agincourt for her reply.

Ms. Soo Wong: Before I respond to the members opposite, I wanted to correct my record that I said earlier. The chief of Toronto police is Mike Saunders, not Dave Saunders. Dave Saunders is actually my friend, who is the former deputy chief of police.

Interjection: Mark.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mark Saunders, thank you.

The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington talked about schedule 8. Right now, as we speak, Madam Justice Lang is reviewing the Motherisk file, as you know. While she is doing the commission, it is very important that everyday policing deals with the forensic lab. Crime happens every day. You don't wait, right? You've got to get to the lab, get the forensic stuff. So if this legislation is passed, we will be the first province to have accredited forensic labs. Now, to me, it's the right thing to do. Coming from health care, it is very, very important.

In my short period of time, if we pass this legislation, Ontario will be the first province in Canada to have such legislation to make sure all forensic labs be accredited and that they have effective management, quality management, making sure those forensic items they pick up from crime scenes are protected and making sure they will go before the court. There is nothing worse than that we don't have accredited forensic labs. The other piece

is, they have to have proficiency in testing and internal auditing, but more importantly, the personnel who work in these labs are professionals who are properly trained and supported.

At the end of the day, I hear the concerns and comments made opposite, but more importantly, Mr. Speaker, this is a very important piece of legislation and we need to make sure everybody has a chance to not just debate it to death but to send it to the committee sometime soon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do appreciate the opportunity to address the Safer Ontario Act and so many changes to the Police Services Act. It's labelled Bill 175. It seems to be a fairly comprehensive reform of policing and police oversight. Regrettably, as we know, the government is rushing this one through yet again. It doesn't leave much time for proper consultation.

There are a few positive aspects to the bill. It seems to take a reasonable approach with respect to suspension without pay for officers who commit very serious crimes. It introduces a Missing Persons Act. So there are some changes that seem to make sense, but there are some problems, and I would say some major problems, as we've been hearing during debate this afternoon.

Enforcement officers—we've had a chance to chat; there was a reception a few days ago. They highlighted that their input was really not sought in drafting this legislation and they did express concerns. And there are a number of concerns that we have in the official opposition.

When you look at these changes to the Police Services Act, you can see what I consider—what appears to be—an attitude of distrust of our officers. We understand an update is needed. There's always need for updates, but the government seems to have failed to acknowledge some of the realities or the new realities that officers are coming up against and doesn't seem to be providing the necessary tools to deal with some of those things.

We recognize the difficult job officers have to do every single day, every shift on duty and oftentimes off duty. Very simply, they're prepared to risk their lives to protect the rest of us, and this is something we've always recognized. As a former government member, we recognized that under Premier Eves. We recognized it under Mike Harris and Bill Davis and, I would say, John Robarts. I recall very little of that era. I really wasn't old enough to follow things. But back then, and now, an officer is the first person you call when you get in trouble, if it's something you figure you can't handle yourself. Without fail, without hesitation, a cop will step in harm's way to protect others.

One example just came to mind. There was a runaway car on a major thoroughfare somewhere, a bit of a nut-case going at a very high rate of speed. There were cars that stopped, anticipating this. A cop swung his cruiser out in front of all the other cars, swung out sideways, to absorb the blow of this runaway car. He was still in the cruiser himself.

It's not just our officers. Down my way in Haldimand–Norfolk, a rural area, the police auxiliary play a very important role. They're there for the parades and things like that. Some of the people I know have been doing this for years. The officers themselves just couldn't do a lot of the work without the police auxiliary, and, obviously, without their civilian backup.

All of this together is critical for the organization, for the police themselves and for our communities, for our society. So just to start off, we say a big thank you.

I've got very good memories of working directly with officers, in my previous career, in Brant, Brantford and Haldimand–Norfolk, and on Six Nations and at New Credit. My work was with the Ontario Addiction Research Foundation. I got out of Toronto and back into my community in the early 1980s and through to the mid-1990s.

A lot of our work back then, working with the police, was on drinking and driving. We set up a very energetic program of high school assemblies. We were in and out of every high school constantly. We'd get every single high school kid in the assembly and talk about drinking and driving.

I also worked with community cops on a grade 6 program, the VIP program: Values, Influences and Peers. I really found that quite valuable. My very first foray into public speaking in front of an elementary school class was with an OPP officer, Ed Crawford, and that was his very first event as well. Ed did a tremendous amount of work in that area after our first foray.

I worked with another officer, Eric DeSerranno, in Norfolk. This guy was really plugged in to the kids. Marc Perrier was another great community cop. I worked with Staff Sergeant Gord Little. He was out of Dunnville originally.

We'd do the high school assemblies. You walk in and there are a thousand kids in this assembly. Why would they want to listen to me and a cop talk about drinking and driving? Gord Little filled me in. He had a film. He had a tremendous sound system set up, and as I recall, the music was ZZ Top, pretty high-energy stuff. He would turn ZZ Top right up to the top volume. All the teachers would leave the assembly, and we would have a thousand kids get their assembly.

Another person who I did a lot of work with was Constable Peter Taylor. This guy was an icon. He was a community cop when I was in high school, and I got to work with him. We'd meet in a restaurant, this well-known, old-style restaurant in Dunnville, and then we'd head out on the road. So I've got fond memories of the community officers. Of course, many of us in rural areas have many other memories of encounters with officers on the back roads. I won't get into details, Speaker, but that also—

Interjection.

1600

Mr. Toby Barrett: Someone said, "Troublemakers"—that also garnered a great deal of respect amongst us in rural Ontario.

We're hearing concerns about this piece of legislation, Bill 175. We hear concerns about the outsourcing of the day-to-day work. There's vagueness in the legislation's language. It leaves the door open to who knows what—private contractors, security companies, for example. There's a problem here. It really doesn't define the core functions of police work versus what would be outsourced. Three of the major Ontario police unions, as I understand, have raised objections that it "opens the door to privatization of core duties normally carried out by police"—and the example via outsourcing to private security. That can really increase the risk. If there's a terror threat at a public event—we think of the Boston Marathon. I think much of the security there was outsourced. Do we trust private contractors to respond, in comparison to a qualified, fully trained police officer? We think back to 9/11 in Manhattan. I think of the recent Toronto Santa Claus Parade. Many of us were here on that Sunday, so I had a chance to go up and visit the parade before the parade, to take a look at Bloor Street. You could have literally shot a cannon down Bloor Street and you wouldn't have hit anything other than one little kid with a hockey stick, which I thought was kind of cool. I took a picture of him. Would we leave that up to security guards? Toronto cops were there. I question some of this business of outsourcing.

If this government wants to remove powers from the police, lay it out specifically in the legislation itself so we can continue to debate it. Lay it out so we can vote on it. Don't leave it later on for regulation. We don't get a say in the regulation. I question some of the consultation around setting of regulation.

I feel our cops deserve better. I just don't know whether there's this lack of trust in officers being able to do the job effectively or efficiently—and then they want to hand it over to somebody else.

Having said that, updates are needed. There are some new realities. Regrettably, there's a lack of consultation to determine just what those new realities would be.

Municipalities: Certainly, with OPP contracts down our way, there has been quite a debate at the municipal level on how to provide the service. I always feel that local people know best. I have a great deal of faith in our municipal representatives. It's not necessarily the business of the province to impose a solution for anything. Leave the choice up to a particular community. They have a good feel for the public safety needs of their area. We have local police service boards for a reason.

I have to mention Sir Robert Peel. Many would know that he was the founder of today's policing—the "peelers," 1829, in London. That's not London, Ontario; that would be in England. As he said, "The police are the public and the public are the police." That can be extended to the concept of, we the public use the cops as a consultant, but we do the policing. The cops are the experts, but it's up to us to ensure that our society operates in a safe manner. To me, that's always a good starting point in any discussion of changing any structure or responsibilities or organization or governance and measurement of those kinds of services.

We're worried this change in legislation may expand bureaucracy, say, around the police oversight discussion, without resources.

Not that we need more bureaucrats, but there's always that call for more resources. If this results in a higher workload and more paperwork and duplication, unfortunately, that requires more staffing and more funding.

There was one example on oversight: The requirement of a coroner's inquest if there's a death when there's a mere presence of a police officer. Again, what if there's a heart attack in the back of a cruiser? To what extent is an officer dragged into that kind of an issue, or is the officer a witness of a death?

Mental health issues: That is something that is in discussion and is oftentimes in the same sentence as policing. We know the crisis in Ontario and the failure to address that crisis. Obviously, officers see much more of that, certainly with the calls and when they show up at the door. Those with mental health problems oftentimes—this goes without saying—do get in trouble with the law. Our officers become, essentially, front-line mental health workers without that kind of psychiatric training.

There are some good programs being developed. In my riding, for example, Patrick Brown and I had a get-together in Hamilton with the community and officers who had set up a program. It's a program we made a commitment to on the weekend to expand the COAST program. COAST stands for Crisis Outreach and Support Team. It's a pilot project that partners plainclothes cops with mental health workers. It's a division of labour; don't put it all on an officer's shoulders.

PTSD: We obviously think about that with mental health issues. We supported the NDP PMB to lower the barriers for those first responders in need of the critical incident stress counselling and treatment that can oftentimes be required. So there's some change that's long overdue with respect to that area. We can't leave officers out there fighting the bureaucracy at WSIB and trying to prove something that's really difficult to diagnose in the first place.

Patrick Brown also put out a document this weekend with a commitment not only to update but to strengthen the Mandatory Blood Testing Act to protect first responders, which would include our officers.

Just going back to the mental health side, in 2015, the London Police Service revealed about 15% of their budget goes to mental health calls. Windsor police respond to something like eight mental health crisis calls a day. That would be reflected again and again across cities and towns across the province. We know there's not adequate funding in this field. It has been neglected for years. It's always at the bottom of the pile with respect to any money, which basically goes to doctors, hospitals and direct treatment for physical ailments. Much of that money is wasted, as we know. Mental health has to be a priority. We are making it a priority, by the way. It was only a couple of days ago that we announced the largest mental health commitment of funding in Canadian provincial history—

Mrs. Gila Martow: Monumental.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I heard an accolade behind me. As Progressive Conservatives, we commit \$1.9 billion to build a comprehensive mental health system. That suggests what we have now is not comprehensive and it's not a system.

Here's another issue, Speaker: Ontario has the highest number of contraband tobacco purchases in the country. New data has come in. It's getting pretty close to 40% of consumption is illegal tobacco. Whatever the province has been doing is clearly not working. Illegal cigarettes end up in the hands of, obviously, young people and lower-income people. How do they get there? It's really through organized crime—again, the connection with policing.

1610

We have to increase our powers to fight illegal tobacco. We need a much better approach to the search-and-seizure side of things. We have to ensure that all police forces are integrated in this fight, and one answer—and I know Quebec has gone a long way in this—is the sharing of proceeds of crime revenues.

Again, we made a commitment—it just happened to be about two days ago—to expand the provincial OPP enforcement team to combat contraband tobacco and to include local police forces, giving them the necessary tools and giving them the money to do the job.

Cannabis: Again, police are wondering what they will be responsible for with respect to Ontario's cannabis distribution program that's in the wings. Of course, any legalization is fraught with problems without data and reliable, quantifiable indicators.

This isn't Ontario's fault, necessarily; that decision really was made for political reasons, so it's difficult to predict what officers are going to be up against, what measures they'll have to take with respect to the criminal justice system, the black market, organized crime, and an equitable application of new regulations coming forward in this province.

I did a private member's bill relating to this about a year and a half ago. We know the people who are involved now will see if government can take them out, and it ranges—it's a broad network. It's organized—that goes without saying, whether it's biker gangs or Mexican cartels or various mafia groups. They're in the business to make money, and the hottest money, the best way to make a good chunk of change, is through drug trafficking.

My time is running out, Speaker.

There's so much more that could be done with respect to gun violence, and we saw diminishing of funding in this area. I'll just end with yet another commitment that we made on Saturday: We will restore provincial funding levels for the anti-gang and the anti-gun task forces in Ottawa and Toronto.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe there's a point of order. The member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Speaker. I want to correct my record. The new Toronto Police Services Board

member's name is Uppala Chandrasekera. I just want to correct my record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to comment on a part of the speech that was just given by my colleague from the Conservative Party.

I was very much amazed, in fact, by the launch of the Conservative Party platform. It just occurred to me as I was listening to it: They were really Liberals in a hurry. There was a whole bunch of stuff in there that I was quite shocked—but the one—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, the thing about today which is really funny is that the Liberals are trying to be Tories, and the Tories are trying to be Liberals, and I think it confuses people. That's why we, as New Democrats, will be very clear going into the next election whose side we're on and what we're going to be putting forward as far as platform. Some of that you know: pharmacare for all; electricity, 30% reduction; and a number of other initiatives.

On this whole thing in regard to the announcement on mental health dollars, I agree with the member. It is important that we do something about mental health, but you stole a page out of the Liberal government's book. You say, "I'm going to do something, and it's going to take me 10 years to roll out \$1.8 billion." Come on. Ten years—\$1.8 billion? Do you guys realize what you're saying there? You're actually saying that you're really not going to be doing anything major to deal with mental health issues in our municipalities, in our communities. You in fact are going to take the page out of the Liberal book and pretend you're Liberals by saying you're going to do something, making the number look big but hoping that people don't read the fine print to find out this is over a 10-year period.

We've been down this road I don't know how many times with the Liberals, and I would have hoped that the Conservatives would have learned the lesson from watching this current Liberal administration not to copy the Liberals, because they got it wrong. You shouldn't be trying to emulate what, quite frankly, hasn't worked. I just say to my friends in the Conservative Party, what happened to the old Conservative Party that we all used to love to hate or love?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I listened intently to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and his comments about mental health. I think every member of this chamber totally agrees with his comments, like the member from Timmins–James Bay. The mental health piece is not 10 years from now; it's right now, in the present.

I heard the comments he made about the first responders. Many of the 911 calls today are related to mental health or domestic violence. We need to make sure when we're dealing with Bill 175 that it is not just about the policing, the oversight, but making sure the men and

women at the front line have the resources to respond appropriately, in a timely manner and, more importantly, effectively, because at the end of the day, all of us are affected if we don't get this right.

More importantly, with regard to mental health, mental health is not just here willy-nilly. It has to be comprehensive. The proposed legislation is making sure that the front-line personnel dealing with policing have the resources and continuous training and support.

More important is the whole issue of oversight, because we have seen tragedy recently dealing with policing. We've got to make sure we're listening to the advice of Justice Tulloch and what he recommended in his 129 recommendations, and moving forward to continue to create trust and respect in our community, because we live in a very diverse community, whether it is the city of Toronto where I come from, in Scarborough–Agincourt, or anywhere in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act, and my colleague Mr. Barrett. I believe this is the first time in 20 years that the police act has been reviewed, so we're pleased to see that. There are some positive aspects, some things that I think are a reasonable approach to things like suspension without pay for police officers who commit serious crimes, and it introduces a Missing Persons Act.

But I had OPP and police officers in my midst last week. We were talking about some of the challenges with this bill. First and foremost, they didn't feel they were properly consulted. The front-line police officers—those who put their lives on the line, those who go in to whatever the concern is to protect us—weren't even at the table to have this discussion. It's very concerning that they didn't have the ability.

We hear now that a core thing that constitutes the core function of police officers will only be defined, and is still to be written, in regulations. Here are our first responders, the people who we value, respect and want to take care of safety for our families, loved ones and friends, and they're not even at the table to have that. You would have thought there would have been more transparency before the legislation was introduced. You would have thought that they would have actually asked for their input beforehand.

We're concerned, again, that there's a growing bureaucracy overseeing policing. It certainly makes things more complicated: more paperwork, more red tape and administration, which we're always concerned about. It even goes some places to the extent that—regardless, one of the most problematic aspects of the changes is the requirement that a coroner's inquest will be called whenever there is a death involving even the presence of a police officer. That could mean that if a police officer stopped to help pull someone out of a burning car, who then dies, or if someone has a fatal heart attack in the back of a police car, that officer would be automatically suspended pending a coroner's inquest. To me, that goes way too far.

We need to be focusing on giving the police the tools they need—like the cannabis legislation; they haven't even given them resources there. I think we should have consulted the police officers. The core safety of people has to be critical.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is a pleasure to make comments on what my friend from Haldimand–Norfolk was talking about. As you know, he's a world traveller. He's been all over the world. I want to take you back, Speaker, to your childhood, in 1965. There was a song big on the charts. Roger Miller had a song out: "England swings like a pendulum do/Bobbies on bicycles, two by two." I mention that because two-person patrols versus a one-person patrol—and cops, I don't know if you're aware of this, Speaker, but constable on patrol, C-O-P, cops: That's where the terminology comes from. But it is more expensive to have two-person patrols than one. I know that in my area we like to have them in our neighbourhoods, we like to have foot patrols, or we have satellite police stations—or we did—in certain neighbourhoods.

1620

Every officer comes with a cost. I heard my friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs talk about a subsidy that was enjoyed in Thunder Bay, where new officers were brought in. We had a similar situation in Windsor when we got Ontario's first gambling casino and Caesars opened up. Everybody recognized that it could be a magnet for crime. We had a subsidy for six or eight officers, I think, to keep that neighbourhood safe.

I know from AMO that the cost of the Ontario Provincial Police in many rural municipalities across the province has been going up and up and up. They traced that back to a collective bargaining promise given by the Liberal government to the Ontario Provincial Police: "We won't give you a big raise this time, but don't worry about it; when your next contract comes up, you're going to be the highest paid in the province." Municipalities are still paying the price for that Liberal promise.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member from Haldimand–Norfolk can respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly welcome the comments, and I appreciated the other debate this afternoon as well. There were some really good ideas that came out. When we talk about travelling and two officers in a car, I think of so many of the countries I was in. In South America, every car had four officers. Then there were military soldiers backing them up. The police officers—and I got to talk to a number of them down there—are drafted. In those countries, like Argentina at the time, you were drafted to be a cop. Nobody wanted to be a cop. We've got a lot going for us here. We have to keep that within our society and we have to get—and from what I hear, people here want to get this legislation right. After all, we owe that to our officers. They're here to protect us. We're in a position, as elected people, to ensure that that continues, that we continue to see the upholding of the law.

We've got groups of people there—men and women. They're brave people, they're dedicated and they're an example of what public service really looks like. They remind us as well that we take the safety of our families and our communities, unlike in certain countries—and I think of El Salvador and Bolivia and certain countries that I've visited—for granted. A lot of these were private security with shotguns with deer shot in it, the big pellets. We don't have that in our society.

We have to get this right. Safety comes at a very high price. It is expensive. It requires skilled professionals, but most importantly, going back to Robert Peel, we as a society are the police. We are the ones that guarantee safety, and the officers are there just to consult, really.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's indeed a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 175. I do want to give some context, though, to this piece of legislation, because I certainly as a citizen and as a member of provincial Parliament feel strongly about components of it. I just want to say that this is a normal piece of legislation, right? There is an act. This is Bill 175. It is massive, Mr. Speaker. It is the kind of legislation that really causes us as legislators to call into question the motives of the government. I mean that in a very serious way, because there are pieces and components of this legislation which obviously are in the public interest, and then there are others that have not been tested in this House. That is a very important role that we have as legislators: to look at all schedules contain within the legislation to explore all of the unintended consequences of any piece of legislation and laws which will guide this province going forward.

I really struggle with this. I think the government's intentions are obviously to squeeze the Conservatives on certain parts and to put us in a corner on other parts. That really is a most unfortunate state of affairs because this piece of legislation will impact Ontarians for years to come, unless a future government has the ability to undo some of the damage.

I would like to start off by saying that Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act, was a major topic of concern, as you would acknowledge, when the Police Association of Ontario came to visit us the week before last or maybe last week. I know they're all running together now at this stage of the game. I was mentoring some Pathway students that day, and so those Pathway students from Kitchener–Waterloo sat in on the lobbying session with the professional association of police officers during that point in time. It was incredibly interesting to have some young students in this educational program in Kitchener bear witness to the ask from the Police Association of Ontario. Their primary concern, as has been very well articulated by other legislators on this side of the House, is the privatization and outsourcing, the contracting out of police services in the province of Ontario. We share those concerns.

I want to thank Mark Egers, John Foster, Tim Reparson and Mike Stotts, who took the time and who actually sat

in my office, took open questions from the students about Bill 175, had conversations about carding, about what that process looks like, when it happens and why it happens. They had honest questions around the opioid experience in the province of Ontario—fentanyl—and the response, or the lack thereof, by the government. These are students who obviously have had experiences with friends who have experienced overdosing. I want to thank the police officers from Waterloo region for embracing that experience, for talking extensively about their own experience, and honestly, as police officers who are on the street.

I also want to say—I'm not sure what's going on over here, but there seems to be a little altercation—that until you have a personal experience with police forces as an individual, as a citizen in the province of Ontario, you actually don't know how important those people are who serve on the front line. My personal experience happened when I was 18 years old, over here in Kensington Market. I was a student at Harbord Collegiate, just down the way. I happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. I happened to be in the exact place where a store owner, down in Kensington Market on Augusta Avenue, decided that I was the enemy, and so he decided to drag me down Augusta Avenue by my hair and physically assaulted me. He had a mental breakdown. The police were called to the scene. I remember the name because his name was Officer Burger. He took copious notes. He was very clear in his documentation of the assault. Of course, when you're in these instances, you don't really know what is going on. You're in shock. He, though, was of great assistance to me because, obviously, sometimes these cases make it to court and, in that instance, his documentation validated the fact that I was the victim in that situation. I've never had the opportunity to thank Officer Burger of the Toronto Police Service. It was 30 years ago; it's been a long time coming.

But it leaves the question, because as this government really aggressively—and with open hostility, I feel, towards our police services—embraces this concept of renting out police services, of contracting out, of outsourcing certain police services, really all within the facade of oversight, if you will—greater oversight. We know that to be the great myth of privatization. You don't improve accountability and oversight when you privatize; you actually lessen it. You water it down.

1630

In speaking to police officers across the region of Waterloo—this act specifically addresses a number of areas that our party has legitimate concerns with. If you are going to outsource surveillance services—I hope everyone in this House would share in my privacy concerns and, potentially, charter concerns, Mr. Speaker.

The outsourcing of reviewing crime scenes, of evaluating and documenting what happened in a criminal situation: Do you want someone who has just been hired to do that, or do you want someone who has an in-depth knowledge of the law and of policing doing that analysis?

Motor vehicle analysis, when accidents happen: This government has enabled, through Bill 175, the outsourcing of analysis of motor vehicle accidents, discounting the lived experience and the real experience of police officers who have the specific skill set for that.

Breath analysis: Now, this is really interesting, don't you think? This government is enabling the ability for the outsourcing of analyzing Breathalyzers in the province of Ontario; this, as we are on the cusp of reviewing and legalizing marijuana and cannabis.

There really is no good rationale. In fact, the research that I have conducted and that I'll be referencing in a moment does not support this direction at all. It is a poor use of legislative tools, it is a poor use of taxpayer money and it will not serve the public.

So the question is, why would this government be going down this road? To appease municipalities who have funding pressures? I'm not sure. But I guarantee you that no municipality in the province of Ontario wants the ability to rent security cops to do Breathalyzer analysis or to do motor vehicle analysis or to look at crime scene evaluations.

Certainly, it also begs the question, where is the money going to come from? These are not services that are cheap. If they are cheap, then you get what you're paying for, and if you get what you're paying for, then you actually are not serving the public good in any real sense.

The question really remains, as this government touts a 25-year review—it took 25 years to bring this comprehensive omnibus piece of legislation forward—where is the money going to be saved, and who is going to be hurt in the process? I would argue that the citizens of this province will not be well served by the watering down of police services in the province of Ontario, nor will the level of accountability and public oversight be improved through this process.

I'll give you a quick example. Part of Bill 175 pretends to deal with the fact that when officers are suspended, they're suspended with pay. This piece of legislation gives some latitude, if you will, to police chiefs to make that decision. But, essentially, it is something that we refer to as a cloak, if you will. It does not really empower the chief of police to make that decision. This is very personal for a lot of people because, occasionally, this does happen in police forces, where there is a police officer who is suspended and then who takes advantage of the system which the association has built in to protect the rights of those police officers for due process to come into play.

This actually happened in Waterloo region: "Former Officer 'Mocks' Police with Email, Thanking the Service for Paying Him While He Was Suspended." You can imagine. It just adds insult to injury that you have a police officer who has been removed from the workforce, who has totally broken ranks from the calling of police officers, who is really doing a level of disservice and disrespect to the calling of being a police officer and then who has the gall and, really, the shame to mock them. In

this case—and this is a matter of public record—it was Officer Markham who mocked what is supposed to be a fair judicial system. Our police chief is very strong on this. He said this does a huge disservice to the police officers who go to work every day and who put their lives on the line and who have a deep sense of integrity as they go to work. This piece of legislation pretends to deal with these officers, and it fails on that front. What a missed opportunity it is.

To return to this piece of the legislation, which opens the door for the privatization of police services, I had a look at what other jurisdictions have done. There was a research study out of the United States called *Walking the Line on Police Privatization: Efficiency, Accountability and Court Decisions*. The research reviewed local police services by discussing economic and political pressures for police privatization and the concerns regarding the quality and the accountability of privatized police. It did a cost-efficiency analysis—"sought from police privatization outweighs a critical side effect of a growing confusion regarding police oversight and significant uncertainties in accountability."

This is exactly what I've just referenced in these few examples. Who are these contracted-out security people actually working for? Are they working for the company that is paying them, which, obviously, indirectly will be through the government? There's a definite lack of accountability there. Who are they ultimately responsible to?

They went further in this research. They analyzed the court decisions in the US dealing with the question of whether constitutional protections extend to private police conduct: "Relevant court decisions suggest that the confusion may grow even worse and local policy-makers may need to pay more attention if they decide to privatize police services."

So you have a lack of accountability and you have the potential violation of human rights and charter rights throughout this process.

While police privatization occurs in some jurisdictions in the States at all levels, this study first clarified the motives behind police privatization and then brought to light the side effects that may occur, especially around accountability. This should act as a guide for local policy-makers, because accountability and cost-efficiency are major concerns when considering police privatization. To add insult to injury and to weaken the whole oversight perspective, people get very poor value for the money that is invested.

The other section that I care deeply about in Bill 175 and which I brought to the Legislature floor is the missing persons legislation, primarily because an amazing woman, an amazing mother, Maureen Trask, came into my office four years ago. Her son Daniel Trask went missing in Temagami almost six years ago. As a mother who was grieving through the process, she realized that her ability and the police's ability to track down Daniel's last moves, his last placements, his last account, his last emails were very limited because there was no criminal

activity suggested, Mr. Speaker. Not only was she frustrated about the fact that her son had gone missing and that she was in this constant state of limbo around grieving for him, but the police—their hands were tied, if you will, on this, in that because no criminal activity was suggested, they could not do a thorough investigation. In fact, they could not even determine if a criminal activity had occurred. For this mother, her grief became advocacy, and so her grief became my advocacy, as well.

In 2015, I brought a motion to the floor of this Legislature which was supported by all parties: “We ask that the Attorney General’s office work with the office of the privacy commissioner to implement missing persons legislation that grants investigators the opportunity to apply for permissions to access information that will assist in determining the safety or whereabouts of missing persons for whom criminal activity is not considered the cause.”

Essentially, this motion—and I need to be very clear: Almost every province in Canada has missing persons legislation. It has a profound effect for those people who suffer from dementia and who wander off and go missing. It has a profound effect for those people in the indigenous community who have seen thousands, hundreds of people disappear. And it gives these improved skills and tools to police officers to pursue missing persons.

1640

Bill 175 ironically pairs this untenable situation for us, which is the privatization of police services and the outsourcing of police services in a very unaccountable, irresponsible, inefficient and fiscally irresponsible manner, with a piece of legislation that I care deeply about. You can imagine the dilemma that I am faced with as someone who has been fighting for four years to see a piece of legislation come into force. I already looked into the possibility of pulling this out because I strongly believe that it should be a standalone piece of legislation which we can monitor, which we can have some accountability with, which we can bring voices in as delegations to depute, to share their personal stories so we actually understand how important it is to have an effective piece of legislation to address missing persons.

It is important. This affects everyone in this room, Mr. Speaker. There are 330 ongoing missing person cases right now in the province of Ontario. About a dozen of those come from Waterloo region, but last year over 6,700 people—6,700—were reported missing in the province. The legislation will hopefully bring needed clarity for police around what measures they can take to find these people. This legislation will, of course, issue warrants allowing police to track phone, banking and travel records of missing people.

This legislation already exists, for a number of years now, in six other provinces: in Alberta, BC, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Saskatchewan. Quite frankly, it should have happened in 2015. This House agreed in 2015, through an NDP private member’s motion, that this was an important issue that affects every single person in this House, every single riding across the

province. These are our sons, our daughters, our grandparents, our parents. Why bury it in a controversial piece of legislation which runs counter to the very principles, quite honestly, that we should have coming to this place? And that is, you do the best work for the people who elected you. You don’t sell them out. You don’t water it down. You bring forward a piece of legislation that will actually work. This government chose not to do that.

I think of Daniel Robert Trask, who was 28 at the time. He was on his journey in the Temagami backcountry. He went missing November 3, 2011, and it took a Michigan Backcountry SAR team to find him in 2015. They could never have found him because they didn’t have the information to find him. He was an avid canoeist and fisherman. We should pull the missing persons legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for her remarks this afternoon and sharing her personal experiences from her younger days, but also her compassion about dealing with this.

There are multiple schedules. I think in the latter part of her 20 minutes she focused on the section dealing with the Missing Persons Act. With regard to this piece of legislation, if passed, it will remove barriers to allow the courts the power to grant judicial powers to police to access the personal information the member from Kitchener–Waterloo spoke to earlier.

More importantly, with the aging population that we have in Ontario—in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, in the recent census, about 21% of my constituents are seniors. We hear every day that different communities have a missing senior. For a variety of reasons they went missing. So through this legislation, if passed, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be giving more ability for police to track down some personal information, and to enter premises, if required, to search for that missing person—the sooner the better—to get that information.

Most recently, our government has been addressing the issue of human trafficking, especially dealing with indigenous communities. This is a very disheartening piece. I hear the concerns the member has with regard to her compassionate comments earlier, dealing with a missing person.

There are multiple pieces of legislation being proposed in Bill 175. What the member opposite is asking us to do, basically, is to have eight different pieces, because there are eight different schedules in Bill 175.

I look forward to more debate on this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I’m very pleased to rise today to make a few comments on Bill 175, which is called the Safer Ontario Act.

We just heard from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo on her concerns about privacy, and that this new legislation will give police the opportunity to go into

private residences, to outsource surveillance and to outsource the analysis of accidents.

That's the balance, the challenge, that we always face. We here can all, I think, remember a time when we could go into sporting events without having bags searched. We could go through airport security very quickly. Now we're dealing with all of these intrusive measures to try to keep us safer.

I'm not saying that we necessarily have all the answers, but we always sort of hash it out, and we try to find a compromise that not too many people are too miserable with but that we know is not going to make anybody particularly happy.

We've seen doctors raise concerns about health safety, with nurse practitioners and other health care professionals taking on tasks that historically have been left to doctors. Yes, a lot of senior doctors have concerns. But then we find out that the younger doctors who have worked with these new up-and-coming professionals with expanded roles find it quite safe and feel quite comfortable.

So again, it's always that balance between cost, efficiency, effectiveness and safety.

As the member from Scarborough–Agincourt just said, we're trying to combat human trafficking. We're trying to locate missing persons quickly, especially people with dementia, in our communities before they freeze to death in the winter. Sometimes we have to do things we would prefer that we wouldn't have to do or give the police the powers to do, and we do.

We are having a very good discussion, and I want to thank you and thank everybody here for their roles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I did listen intently to my friend from Kitchener–Waterloo, and I thank her for her contribution to this discussion this afternoon.

As I heard her, she questioned the Liberals' intentions in this bill. She saw it as the Liberals trying to squeeze the Conservatives in part of the bill and put the NDP in a corner in other aspects.

She told us about meeting with the Ontario Provincial Police Association, the OPPA, and their concerns about contracting out core duties under this bill.

She mentioned the breathalyzer for alcohol, as we're on the cusp of trying to figure out what we're going to do with cannabis testing.

She also said this would lead to extra costs for watered-down services, suggesting that taxpayers will get poor value for the money invested.

Then she turned her attention to a case very close to her heart, a constituent who came to her office talking about a missing son. It was quite a story indeed, of 28-year-old Daniel Trask, who went missing in Temagami in November 2011. His remains were found in May 2015 by a team of Michigan backcountry search-and-rescue volunteers.

Daniel was an avid canoeist and fisherman. He had a passion for the outdoors. The notice that visitors to the

funeral home were given says that his remains were found "cradled in a thick carpet of pine needles beneath towering old-growth trees, alongside a babbling brook on the east side of Lady Evelyn Lake opposite Walsh Lake." It almost seems fitting that somebody who loved the outdoors so much ended up in a place so peaceful.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to rise today to make a few comments in regard to the remarks from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. The piece that I focused on in her remarks was definitely the case of missing persons; she has a particular and very clear sympathy towards that particular aspect of the bill. I understand that we each relate to one of the important provisions of the bill.

For me, the changes to the Coroners Act are going to be important and very, very helpful. I have given evidence at a coroner's inquest, and though it didn't involve the police in the case of this unexpected death, certainly the family involved was very close to the case and wanted to ensure that the coroner's jury did everything they could to make recommendations to avoid a similar case in the future. So when I read in Bill 175 of the changes that we're making there, I think that they are really important. They're going to ensure that inquests be mandatory when there is use of force by a police officer, special constable or other officer, and it is the direct cause of death. This is obviously a tremendous tragedy for the family.

Even during my time here in the Legislature, I've heard of questions to the Attorney General: "Why do you not make an inquest mandatory in this particular case?" The fact that we're moving on that here in this legislation is, I think, extremely important. Also, Justice Tulloch did call for greater support for family members whose loved ones have died in a police-related incident. They're important provisions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I now return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I do want to thank the members from Scarborough–Agincourt, Windsor–Tecumseh, Thornhill, and Oak Ridges–Markham for their feedback.

I do want to end on how the member from Oak Ridges–Markham mentioned that the Tulloch report made these references around missing persons, but they also called for stand-alone—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Hey, hey—for stand-alone legislation for police oversight. This bill, like most bills the Liberals are tabling these days, should be broken up. Missing persons legislation is too important to be contained within a massive piece of legislation which privatizes police services. It is an untenable position. It is irresponsible legislating in the province of Ontario.

I want to say that when I tabled this motion in 2015, we had gained the support of a number of organizations,

including the Canadian Mental Health Association, Community Justice Initiatives, the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council, and the Friends of Temagami. In principle, the police chiefs of Ontario endorse the concept of additional tools to look for missing persons, as well. I do want to thank Chief Bryan Larkin for his leadership alongside, because it takes all of us, all levels of us. But to bury an important and crucial piece of legislation, which can and will change the lives of people in this province, in an omnibus piece of legislation is downright irresponsible.

I have this marker that was given to me by Maureen Trask in honour of her son Daniel. It's a quote from Jack Layton: "My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world." But we will not change the world with omnibus pieces of legislation which do not involve the due diligence that we should be exercising as legislators.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

I just wanted to take a few minutes to speak to a piece of the proposed legislation that really leapt out for me. I will start by saying that, I think, in the area that I live in York region, we have one of the finest police forces and one of the finest police boards anywhere—not only in the province, but anywhere in Canada and North America. I can think back to when I was just a teenager growing up in King township. We had a very different relationship in those days—as my kids would say, when dirt was young and dinosaurs ruled the earth. We did not have as good a relationship with our police force as we do today. Frankly, we were fearful of the police. I contrast that with the force we see today, a very modern and diverse force. I see how they interact with my son at school, and I'm a little jealous, because it's a very different relationship the police have today in York region, I find, with young folks, especially teenagers.

Just to recap, the Safer Ontario Act is a very comprehensive public safety package that represents the largest policing transformation in a generation. Our government is working to build safer, stronger communities across the province by modernizing the current policing framework to make it community-focused, accountable, sustainable and culturally responsive. I can say that when I look at the police force in my region, we've gone down that road, and, because of it, we have an excellent police force.

The proposed legislation would introduce a new Police Services Act that would modernize Ontario's policing framework. A number of speakers have touched on those areas, so I won't go through them. But one that leapt out at me was the focus on First Nations and First Nations policing. First Nations police officers face unique challenges, and they really deserve support in

keeping their communities safe. We've been engaging with indigenous communities, provincial-territorial organizations and indigenous police services themselves across the province through a very comprehensive process led by the Chiefs of Ontario and the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. We worked closely with First Nations to support this process and incorporate engagement findings into this transformative framework for First Nations policing.

It's something that in my travels around Ontario as a minister—first as Minister of Housing and minister responsible for poverty reduction and now as Minister of the Environment—even though those aren't my areas of focus, I heard time and again when I met with the community and I met with police services and police officers: that they really needed to see some transformation.

We have, in addition to this, a long-standing engagement with the First Nations chiefs of police who have made valuable contributions around their operational expertise and their community's perspectives to support the development of the proposed legislation.

Through this proposed legislation, if passed, it will mean that First Nations police services boards would be required to meet the same provincial standards and oversights as those governing other police services in Ontario. Things like:

- policing standards for quality and effectiveness in areas like service delivery, training, equipment, civilian governance and oversight;

- ensuring that those services are culturally responsive and appropriate by enabling First Nations communities to have a greater input in the governance and direction of their police services board; and

- being subject to the same oversight as the rest of the police services in Ontario.

I think that these changes to First Nations policing are long, long overdue and really show our commitment to supporting both those who are policing indigenous communities and First Nations communities, and those communities themselves.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 175, Safer Ontario Act.

It's appropriate as I started my day at about 8:30 this morning in the region of Halton with a number of—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Did you sleep in?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: No. That's not when I got out of bed, Speaker; that's when I arrived at this incredible event that I went to this morning, and that was at the region of Halton. It was held in the town of Oakville.

It was part of the Safer Ontario Act—to ask communities if they would undergo a development and an implementation of initiatives that would make their communities safer places.

I come from a region where we've taken public safety very, very seriously. It's as much, I think, a result of the wishes of the people who live in Halton as it is the

leadership that is provided by the region of Halton and the Halton Regional Police Service and, of course, the Halton Regional Police Association.

I started the day today with the regional chair—you will know Gary Carr. He was there this morning. He spoke highly of you, Speaker, when he was introducing those of us who were there and those of us who represent the region.

The mayor of Oakville, Rob Burton, was there this morning as well. He's also the chair of the police services board. Chief Steve Tanner was there—excellent chief, I think, well respected by the management and the elected officials and by the rank and file within the police services. And two excellent deputies, Carol and Nish, were there as well.

They really talked about how we can take a region like Halton, which is amongst if not the safest in all of North America—how can we take a region like that and make it even safer? I don't think you can have that discussion without recognizing the incredible impact and the service that comes from the front-line people, from police officers themselves, who every day when they're doing their shifts—some of them strap on bulletproof vests and they carry arms and they put themselves in harm's way on our behalf, to make sure that our community remains safe. Sometimes we don't appreciate that. I think sometimes we take that for granted. I certainly don't.

It was a pleasure over the past couple of years to develop a PTSD strategy with our police forces and with other first responders. The idea behind that was a recognition of the incredible work these folks do but also the situations they find themselves in.

Post-traumatic stress disorder or occupational stress injury—there's a number of names for it, but to work with people like Bruce Chapman and Chris Hoffman, to meet specifically with the president, Barry Hughes, and Sarah Diamond from the Halton Regional Police Association really gives you a feeling that you've got to get all sides of this issue to make sure that what we're doing under the Safer Ontario Act takes into account all views on this.

What I said to my folks in the association when they came for lobby day the other day was that I would like to go back and have a longer discussion with them about Bill 175. I think this Friday I'll be meeting with Barry and Sarah in Halton to understand some of the concerns, some of the ideas they had, some of the ways that they thought we could make this bill even better.

I'm really proud to be from Halton, because we've been a little bit ahead of the game on this. At the end of the day, what we really want to see is our communities become safer—to remain safe, but we think we can make them even safer.

There are parts of this act that are overlooked a little bit, I think, when you start to focus on some of the main elements. But there are going to be changes in this, to the Coroners Act, to the Forensic Laboratories Act, to the Missing Persons Act. It really gives you the idea that this is a very large transformation. We've got a reputation as

being a very safe society, a very civil society. I think when you have pieces of legislation like this, that examine what it takes to maintain that, and you bring all the partners in to the consultation—the municipalities, elected officials, people in our school system, in our health system all relate into this. I think if we get this right—and I believe we are getting it right in Bill 175—our communities are going to be the better for it.

It's been a pleasure to add a little bit to this. It was a pleasure to start the day with the men and women who keep us safe.

Thank you very much, Speaker. I'll pass it on to the next speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As we've been discussing this this afternoon and as we talk about ways to keep our communities safer, my mind keeps going back to a woman named Lorna Bruce. Lorna was with the London Police Service, a very thoughtful, committed police officer. Lorna was very concerned, after the Robert Pickton murders in British Columbia, that sex trade workers in London could go missing, and nobody would ever know they had gone missing until many, many of them had in fact gone missing and been murdered.

Lorna developed a program where she borrowed a great, big black car that was the chief of police's car. I went out on a ride-along with her, so I got to know her work. She, in this preventative policing model, would actually get to know the people who were working on the street in London. She helped me understand the link between opioids and prostitution. She taught me.

I remember meeting a woman who, just a few months earlier, lived in Byron, which is a part of London that's an upper-middle-class neighbourhood. This woman had lived in Byron. She had a minivan. She had children. She had her own business. She also had back pain, and as a result of that back pain she was prescribed opioids. She had become, in a short period of time, so addicted to opioids that she was crushing and injecting OxyContin. She had lost her children, she had lost her family, she had lost her home, she had lost her business and she was living a very precarious life.

It was a police officer, Lorna Bruce, who was actually working to prevent crime by getting to know those women, by getting contact information—voluntarily—for those women. In fact, if you went into Lorna's office, you'd see a whole wall filled with photographs, with information that these women had voluntarily given her, the idea being that if someone was not seen for a while, there was a person they could talk to: "Have you seen So-and-so?" They could phone home and say, "Have you seen this woman? She's not where we usually expect to see her." That's the kind of creative policing, that prevention work, that I think is embedded in the principles of this bill. Police officers do so much more than respond to crime; they prevent crime.

I just thought I would take this opportunity to pay tribute to Lorna Bruce. As a result of her work, we have

now programs where people can leave that life, get housing and get the support they need. It has been a very successful program in London and, I'm happy to say, funded in part by this government, because often with victims of crime, we may know who's at high risk. Being there for them, helping them leave that risky lifestyle, to get the supports they need to get clean and get their kids back, is a huge driver.

I remember before I went out on the ride-along, and I confess, I was so ignorant. I knew nothing, and that's why I was there. I remember asking Lorna and Ian Peer, who was with the police services then, "Talk to me about the intersection of opioid addiction and prostitution. What percentage would you guess of the women who are working on Dundas East have an addiction?" They looked at each other, smiled and shook their heads as if to say, "We really do have a rookie here," and they said "99.9%." These women were doing what they were doing because they were driven to it by addiction, in many cases an addiction that started with a prescription for something like back pain.

It's been very interesting: As I reflect on the changes, it was that police officer, Lorna Bruce, who changed the trajectory of many, many women. That's the kind of police services I'm proud to see in my community of London.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to rise and to add my voice to the conversation on Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act.

This is comprehensive public safety legislation, as many of my colleagues have indicated. It would help to build a stronger, safer Ontario, stronger communities across the province, by modernizing the current policing framework to make it community-focused, accountable, sustainable and culturally responsive.

One of the things that it would do is shift to a collaborative approach to community safety and well-being planning, to help the municipalities lead partnerships that would provide collaborative solutions to local needs.

Why are we presenting this comprehensive piece of legislation? We all know that the nature of policing and community safety has changed significantly since the old Police Services Act was introduced in the 1990s, and the issues that the police face today are far more complex. Crime has become more complex and more global, I would say, in nature. There is increased interaction with vulnerable individuals that calls for more effective tools and systems. These new realities require a transformation of our policing and our community safety delivery framework.

I want to speak for a moment about my community. We recently held a crime safety meeting that was organized by our local councillor and Toronto Police Service's 12 Division. We were trying to address the concerns specifically of the residents of the village of Weston in

regard to the recent murder of a 50-year-old man who came to Toronto from a smaller town and was stabbed in broad daylight in front of a Shoppers Drug Mart. It made the news all over Ontario about a week ago. The community, which is a very proud and caring community, a community that really cares about its history but also wants to work towards an improved community—they were expressing their concerns.

I want to acknowledge that 12 Division in our community is doing a great job. We have wonderful police officers, not only the ones who were present that evening at the meeting but who work across the entire division.

Community members were asking for better strategies and suggestions on crime prevention. There were questions on the rules around bail, and how the community can try to decrease crime. As we are working through addressing these issues that were brought up together as a community, I think that the Safer Ontario Act could help to address some of the concerns, because it looks at a new and holistic approach to community safety and, as I was mentioning before, well-being planning.

A community that is vulnerable, for example, to guns and gangs has a different set of priorities than a community that is combatting, perhaps, an increase in opioid addiction or overdoses. It's impossible to build one single model of policing that can work well for the whole province.

We must also shift from just the emergency police response to a model that can be proactive and more focused on crime prevention. It must engage all partners, including the police. I know that in Ontario, there are some communities that are already implementing this, such as Ottawa, Halton and Lanark county. We need this collaborative approach to identify and address the local risks, and bring together the police, health care, social services, education and others, if necessary. I think that will help us build greater communities and better communities, including my own.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: It's intriguing. There were so many comments very recently from the other side on this issue and examples of the kind of work that the police do on our behalf to keep us straight and provide direction. We create the laws and they're handed the sometimes unsavoury job of enforcing those laws.

I just picked up some information about a symbol of the debt of gratitude that we do owe to police officers. It's really only a few hundred yards from here. It would be going east that way, just on the other side of the University Avenue circle: the Ontario Police Memorial. It's been there for about 17 years. It has, regrettably, well over 700 names on it of police officers who were killed in the line of duty.

There was an opening on May 7. The Premier of the day, Harris; the Solicitor General, David Tsubouchi; and Hilary Weston, Ontario's Lieutenant Governor opened this police memorial to fallen officers. As I understand, it came about over several years of planning. It was

proposed by the police themselves: the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Senior Officers' Police Association, Toronto police and also the OPP Association. We have a memorial. It's our way of saying thanks for what has gone on the last couple hundred years in policing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm just going to raise something where probably some people will sort of say, "Oh, really?"—this whole issue of the power of a police officer to not be suspended while under investigation for an alleged crime of some type. There's this big backlash that has been going on in our society for some time, where they say, "Well, that's not right. Look at this extreme case where a police officer did something illegal, and that person got to keep their job for two or three years," as they were going through the process before they were actually sentenced, found guilty in a court and sentenced.

In those really extreme cases, I can understand why people are mad about that. I get it. But, on the flipside, I also worry about police officers being put under pressure by the public if you were to abuse that right in the other direction. I wonder if in this bill we've actually found the balance here. I know this is sort of a political kind of thing that the government does because they think they'll get some kudos for it, but I think when you look at what police officers have to do when it comes to dealing with, let's say, going into a domestic issue and the person who is arrested by the police officer—or whatever it might be—all of sudden says, "I'm going to get back at you by accusing you of something that you haven't done"—because it's egregious that we can fire the person or the person is not paid while they wait to go through trial. I think there might be cases out there where you don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

I just worry, in this legislation, that while we'll trying to get to something that is politically, I understand, an issue, we don't want to do something that throws the baby out with the bathwater, and that we afford police officers the protection they need to do their jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: As we debate Bill 175, I want to do a shout-out. Just today, we heard about the tragedy in Minister Jaczek's riding on Highway 9 between Concession Roads 11 and 12, where the OPP have responded timely and professionally to this fatality. Every member in this chamber experiences these kinds of stories, and we know we can count on our police officers every day to keep Ontario safe. Just today we heard about this tragedy, and I want to do a shout-out to all the officers in the OPP in that particular detachment.

1720

I also heard the comments made by the member from Timmins–James Bay. We know that every day we hear of these critical incidents. We recognize these concerns. But more importantly, we also heard from police services boards and from police chiefs telling us that front-line

officers need to be held accountable. Similarly, members of this chamber have to be held accountable.

We heard the concerns, but with the proposed legislation, Bill 175, if passed, there will be greater oversight. There will be oversight by the inspector general, but also making sure police services boards are held accountable in terms of auditing, in terms of reporting, in terms of those race relations data that I have heard all the time in our community, whether it's in the city of Toronto—when we were travelling dealing with this particular bill, there were express concerns raised, whether it was in North Bay, in Windsor or across the province.

I'm looking forward to more conversation about this particular piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll just add a few other comments into the debate today on Bill 175, and that is, again, coming out of Justice Tulloch's thorough review. One of the elements that I see missing in Bill 175 is the lack of reform and amendments for police services boards in this regard. We've all heard, especially from our rural municipalities but probably in others as well, that the police services boards need to have greater and more meaningful impact and influence in the administration of policing services. We know that our municipalities are the ones that pay for policing services. They are presented a budget but they have very little meaningful effect on the policing costs, anything under the operational side. Even when we've seen some police services boards and municipalities attempt to exercise some influence in that regard—I think there was a case about a year ago with a Peel region municipality trying to have some meaningful influence in policing in their community and it was just rejected. I think that's one element that has not been explored or examined or rectified within Bill 175, but a very needed and necessary mechanism that's required for our municipalities, which, at the end of the day, have to pay for it. They should have a role and a voice in those budgets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I look to the government to reply. I see the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I would like to thank the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his comments, the member for Timmins–James Bay, the member for Scarborough–Agincourt and the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I hope I said that right.

Mr. Randy Hillier: You did. You get five stars.

Hon. Laura Albanese: Thank you for the five stars.

As many of the members highlighted during their conversations, it is clear that the role of policing has been changing significantly and that it's much more complex today than it was many years ago. This is what brings us to the requirement of a transformation of our policing and our community safety services delivery framework. We have to find ways to respond better to the challenges of

today. That's whether we think of the complexity of the crime, of the issues of civil liberties and human rights that arise, or of the changing demands that our police officers have. They're increasingly involved in socially complex calls.

We do need to strengthen the police oversight system and to clarify the mandates of all three oversight bodies. We owe it to our police forces that work so hard across our province, all over Ontario. They've been achieving success. We have to give them the tools that they need in order to do a better job. We have some of the best officers anywhere in the world, and we have to do this for them and for our communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm certainly pleased to speak to Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act. This is a huge piece of legislation. It touches on almost every aspect of policing, including the duties of police officers, oversight and discipline, training and data collection, a new Missing Persons Act, rules for accrediting forensic labs, and lots of other measures. I don't have to go through them all.

In my remarks, I would like to offer my view of the bill as a whole, the sort of message that it sends to police officers and the communities they serve. I will also talk about some specific problems with the legislation which the government should fix.

Bill 175 is supposed to modernize policing to bring it in line with the challenges of today. That's long overdue, since the existing Police Services Act dates back to 1990. As the Minister of Community Safety said during her leadoff speech, this is a pivotal time for law enforcement and community safety and well-being, and I agree with that.

Unfortunately, with this bill, the government has set a very bad tone. To me, the overall message is, "We don't trust police officers to do their job." This message is expressed in many ways. For example, the government boasts that this bill was more than five years in the making and that it had a comprehensive, province-wide consultation, yet I am told that the government failed to properly consult front-line police officers when writing this legislation—the group that arguably will be the most directly impacted by the bill, and they didn't meaningfully consult them. That's not right.

Bill 175 adds layers of oversight and red tape that will make it harder for police officers to do their work effectively. That's not just my opinion; the Police Association of Ontario, PAO, which is the official body representing front-line police personnel across the province, said, "Unfortunately, contained in this legislation are some elements that will severely undermine the efficient and effective provision of policing around the province."

This brings to mind a letter brought to my attention by my honourable colleague from Haliburton. The letter comes from a member of a rural police services board, and in it she expresses a strong concern over the creation of Ontario Provincial Police detachment boards, which

she believes will erode the independence and autonomy of local police service boards. She points out the vast distances that a detachment board member would have to travel in a rural setting and notes that the bill doesn't spell out the number of members on a detachment board or how communities will be represented. Again, the government is irresponsibly leaving these details to regulation.

Bill 175 puts a lot of new power in the hands of the minister with respect to policing decisions. This opens the door to political interference in some police work, which is very troubling.

Another thing the bill does is allow for outsourcing of some police functions to private organizations, such as security contractors. However, the government has left the details around this to be sorted out in regulations. That is not very transparent.

1730

Finally, the bill adds yet another layer of oversight, the Inspector General of Policing. That is on top of the existing three bodies that oversee policing in Ontario. Taken together, these measures say to police officers, "We really don't respect the work that you do. We're going to keep adding more and more red tape and extra oversight, even if it undermines your ability to do your jobs."

On this side, Speaker, we believe that the vast majority of police officers take their oath of service seriously. We also believe that you're never unsafe with police.

There's a lot of heated rhetoric going now around police officers, and much of it has become politicized. Unfortunately, I think the government is simply throwing gasoline on the fire by peddling the idea that police are untrustworthy.

In my years as a member of provincial Parliament and councillor in North Perth, I have had the privilege of meeting many of the fine men and women in blue who serve our communities. They put their safety on the line each day to protect us.

Speaker, I have a personal note I would like to mention in the House. I have two members of my family who are police officers: my son Mark and his wife, Sherry. They've been members of the Guelph Police Service for 17 years now. I can hardly believe that—17 years they've been police officers. They share some of these concerns. They just want to do their job.

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Right.

They want to do their jobs, they want to do them effectively, and they don't believe they need another layer of bureaucracy to tell them how to do their jobs, or that could interfere with what they're doing.

I'm going to expand on some of my specific concerns on Bill 175. The first is the lack of precision around the core functions of police officers. The three major Ontario police unions have all objected to the vague language in this bill, which they argue could lead to the privatization of core police duties. Obviously, there are situations where a police officer could be replaced by a private

contractor without much risk to the public safety. Construction sites and traffic direction at busy parking lots are both good examples. But there are certain situations where outsourcing could put public safety in jeopardy. For example, police officers often serve as security at large sporting events. In recent years, these sorts of events have also been favourite targets of international terrorists. If we have private security working these events instead, will they really know what to look for? Will they have the same rigorous training that police officers do to spot a threat? And what if, God forbid, a terrorist incident actually happens? Those first few minutes could be crucial. Without police on site, it could be a much worse outcome.

Obviously, the situation is hypothetical. But since the government has left the legislation vague on policing functions, we just don't know. I ask the government, why not spell this out more explicitly in the bill? Putting it into regulations to be written sometime down the road leaves a lot of unanswered questions. And frankly, Speaker, I don't trust this government to get it right.

At the same time, Bill 175 leaves a lot of power in the hands of the minister. For example, under schedule 1, the minister would have the power to impose different disciplinary measures on police officers, including temporary suspensions and forfeitures of pay. This is troubling to me because it injects politics into what should be a non-political process. Police chiefs and boards are in a better position to manage discipline within their ranks. Adding the minister into the mix is inappropriate and bad public policy. For instance, if a police incident is making news and becomes a political problem, what's to stop the minister from stepping in and interfering? It would be perceived as political meddling and could undermine public confidence in our institutions.

Another problem with Bill 175 is that it imposes a lot of new obligations on municipalities and police forces without offering even a dollar of extra funding to cover the costs. To quote a recent Ottawa Sun editorial, "Such 'money' questions should be answered as soon as possible. For the sake of taxpayers, who want better policing but also have their own bills to pay, thanks."

Let's talk about municipalities in particular. Under the act, municipalities would have to develop a community policing plan and ensure that police service boards are representative of the population in the area. While there may be merit in both of these changes, they require new spending to implement. The same goes for human rights and systemic-racism training for all police officers. These are important issues, but there's a cost burden attached.

It's interesting to note that these new training requirements and rules being applied to police officers would not apply to private contractors. Since we don't know which police functions might be outsourced, this seems to potentially create a big double standard.

The cost issue has been raised by the Police Association of Ontario, and some of the numbers are quite alarming.

"We are extremely troubled with the practical problems that will arise if the act is tabled as drafted. Both the

SIU and OIPRD will quickly become overwhelmed with investigating matters and individuals the public expects would be investigated by local or provincial police. The result will be an inability to focus resources on those matters where there is a true public interest in an independent civilian reviewing of events. The public trust will only be harmed by such an unchecked expansion.

"We also have concerns with the incredible amount of scarce public resources that will need to be allocated to make the act a reality. In our estimation, both the OIPRD and SIU will expand their caseloads by at least a factor of 10. The majority of this expansion will take away from the duties of the oversight agencies which were created to ensure transparency, accountability and fairness in a timely manner for all affected parties.

"The corresponding budget required to properly equip these agencies with needed staff and resources in order for them to conduct investigations that the public would never expect them to conduct would be an unwise and structural drain on the public purse."

Another concern: In addition to the three existing police oversight bodies, the bill would create a fourth body, the Inspector General of Policing. The Inspector General of Policing—the IGP—would have broad new powers to monitor and enforce the act. They would be able to recommend that the minister use disciplinary power. And in the case of non-compliance, they could fine police officers up to \$50,000 for failing to follow their direction.

The Police Association of Ontario has raised red flags with this part of the bill too. They contend: "Under the proposed act, Ontario's oversight bodies would grow to a level out of step with public expectations of police oversight—beyond the practical ability of oversight agencies to do their work, and the municipal and provincial budgets available for policing in Ontario generally. As drafted, this act would ensure poorer results for all interested parties."

I'm struggling to see the point of layering even more oversight on top of the existing already complex structure. What will this achieve? It's certainly unclear.

Another concerning aspect of the bill is a requirement for a coroner's inquest whenever there is a death involving police, even if they are simply present when the death occurs. This sort of absolute requirement can lead to some unintended consequences.

Consider, for example, a police officer going to an active-shooter situation, if they pull a victim to safety and the person unfortunately succumbs to their injuries. That heroic officer would automatically be suspended pending the coroner's inquest—in essence, treated like a criminal for putting their life on the line to save another.

What kind of message does this send? As my honourable colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock rightly asked in her lead-off remarks, do we really want our police officers to think twice about helping someone who is dying on the street for fear of being suspended from work? That's totally unacceptable, and it really drives home the argument that the government is presuming bad intent on the part of police officers with this bill.

1740

I'd also like to speak briefly about something the police forces have been calling for but that was not included in this bill, and that is making updates to the Mandatory Blood Testing Act to protect our first responders.

As it stands, a first responder who ingests the bodily fluid of a person while responding to a call can get a warrant to test that person's blood for infectious diseases. We're talking about illnesses such as HIV, AIDS, hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

Speaker, I have some personal insight into that. For 13 years, I was a referee for OMHA hockey. I was breaking up a fight at one time. Just as I went into the fight and I told the two guys to stop, one of the combatants got punched right in the nose. That blood went flying, and guess where it went? Right into my mouth. So I can understand what police officers and first responders are facing when they are very frightened of something happening. I did go to my doctor, and he said, "You should be all right," and I guess I am. But certainly, that gave me a thrill when that happened. It just happened so fast, and I ingested the blood.

I am told that this process of testing takes too long, which means that the first responder either needs to take antiviral drugs, which can be toxic, or wait for the test results, which puts them at risk of infection. The government should have introduced changes to speed up the turnaround time of tests and close loopholes with respect to deceased persons or folks out of the province. For such a momentous, five-years-in-the-making piece of legislation, I'm quite disappointed that they left this out.

I don't want to entirely be negative with my comments; that would certainly be unfair. There are some positive things about Bill 175, absolutely. I think the bill has the right approach on suspension without pay for police officers who commit serious crimes. And it introduces a Missing Persons Act to help make it easier for police to locate a missing person. Those are both worthwhile measures.

But, unfortunately, the negatives far outweigh the good in this legislation.

It began with the lack of proper consultation with front-line police officers. As a result, we have a bill that fails to define core policing roles, and opens the door to outsourcing, which has potential risks.

It creates new layers of bureaucracy and oversight that will be a significant draw on police budgets and could undermine police officers' effectiveness in doing their jobs. None of these new functions are funded either, so who knows how municipalities and police forces will pay for them?

The bill also puts the power to discipline police officers into the hands of the minister, which raises the spectre of political interference in policing.

Most egregiously, Bill 175 sends a message that police can't be trusted, that they need to be heavily monitored and treated with suspicion, even when risking their own safety in the line of duty.

Speaker, it is deeply disappointing that the government has chosen to go this route. That is why I find it very difficult to support this bill in its current form.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There are a number of aspects and things in this bill that are problematic and are really a departure from where policing has been for a number of years. It's not to say that you couldn't have change. Change is a good thing; that's what every modern society does. But there's a huge problem, I think, with what the government is doing by allowing more privatized services within our police services. I think that's dangerous.

I know they say, "Well, it's not a big deal. We can just send a private firm in order to do some of the things that the police do which are not as important," as they say. But I think, quite frankly, that police officers are properly trained in being able to do what it is. They take a risk when they go out and do that job, and the public has a certain confidence in their ability to do that.

I think opening up more and more policing to privatization is the wrong way to go. In fact, who knows how far this initiative will take us when it comes to what police services will look like five, 10, 15 years from now? Most of this is left to regulation, and this is the part that really is scary. If the government was to clearly enunciate in the legislation what the dos and don'ts are when it comes to what the private sector can do in replacing the work police officers do, I guess then there would be some comfort in knowing what the government's up to.

In this case, they're saying, "Trust me. Nod, nod, wink, wink. We're going to do it by regulation." Regulation means that they can do absolutely anything. You can decide to send police to do traffic on the corner of Algonquin and Mountjoy in Timmins. You can send private sector police officers to investigate a crime scene. Anything is possible when you open it up to regulation. I think the government owes it to police officers and the citizens of Ontario to be more forthcoming with an explanation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: It's again a pleasure to rise this afternoon on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge and add a few comments to Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act.

Earlier, I was talking about my volunteer experience with the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council and how I really learned how a community can come together along with its police force and partner with a lot of agencies and with a lot of troubled individuals to ensure a better outcome in a safer community.

I very much support some of the changes here in Bill 175, the Safer Ontario Act, but I also wanted to reiterate that an overreliance on a reactive policing model isn't necessarily the way we should be going. Crime has become more complex. There's a lot more mental-health-related issues that we see amongst those who are requir-

ing police services. So shifting to a more collaborative approach to community safety and well-being planning in a community with all partners at the table is really a better way to go about it. It's an approach that has municipalities helping to lead some of those discussions.

I saw it in action when I did a ride-along—actually, a walk-along—with three local police officers a couple of weeks ago. The community beat officer had gotten to establish a lot of relationships with our homeless population. Cambridge has a homeless shelter called The Bridges, and every evening, the folks who were on for the police services in that area in downtown Cambridge would go and visit. I watched this police officer go to at least 40 or 50 people who were milling about and getting their last snacks for the night—knew everybody, knew the relationship that she had with them, and wanted to reach out and talk to the people. That's what this bill supports, and why I support it very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on Bill 175, An Act to implement measures with respect to policing, coroners and forensic laboratories and to enact, amend or repeal certain other statutes and revoke a regulation, and the speech by the member from Perth–Wellington on this bill. He did, right at the top, talk about the fact that I believe his son Mark and his wife, Sherry, are both police officers. I think that was important. I should, I guess, disclose that my spouse is also an OPP officer.

He did bring up a lot of concerns with the bill. I know the government introduced this bill, which I thought was kind of interesting, on the day that was kind of the lobby day for the Police Association of Ontario. It seemed that the police officers I met with weren't too thrilled with the bill. One of the points that was made by the member from Perth–Wellington was that there just wasn't much consultation with those front-line officers about the bill. That seems a little surprising to me as well because obviously it's going to affect the front-line officers more than anyone else.

The member from Perth–Wellington also pointed out that there's going to be more paperwork as a result of this bill. It seems to me that the officers are doing an incredible amount of paperwork at the current time, so more paperwork is not going to help increase the level of safety on our streets. Would you rather have the police officer in the office filling out forms and doing reports or would you rather have them out on the street trying to make our streets safer?

There was also the question of outsourcing and the fact that there's no definition of core functions in this bill, that it's going to be left to regulations. That is certainly a concern.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I have a couple of concerns in this act. Weakening the police officers' mandate and limiting

input in several critical police service areas by privatizing some of these areas of expertise will complicate and undermine these departments. What role would the regular officers play when their duties overlap with the privatized departments, for one thing? The municipalities are looking for these big savings that they think they might get by going private, but if the public decides to sue the police department because of the lack of policing experience of the private companies, those savings are going to go out the window in court cases.

I'm going to question what level of training will be expected from these other departments that they want to implement into the Police Services Act. For example, if you go to a scene where there has been a shooting or there may be an ongoing situation with a shooter or things like that, and the private officer, or whoever has been mandated there, is under attack, what does the regular officer do? Does he go to the assistance of the private officer? Does he protect the public? Does he go after the shooter? What is his situation going to be? Who is going to be in control of that situation? Is it going to be a regular sergeant? Is it going to be a private officer? Is it going to be a captain? Who is going to be in charge of this scene? There are going to be too many chiefs at the scene and not enough rank and file, so I'm very concerned about where it's going to go.

I think people have to take a hard look at this, because I don't think a lot of homework has been done on how they're going to handle these types of situations out there in the community. Their implementation may be quick, but is it effective?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments. The member for Perth–Wellington can reply.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you to the members from Cambridge, Timmins–James Bay, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and, certainly, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I'd like to address the comment made by the member from Cambridge about mental health. I was so proud that this weekend we found out that we, if we are elected to government, are going to put \$1.9 billion more into mental health than what is currently being put into the mental health system right now, so thank you for bringing that up.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka also raised issues of consultation, or the lack thereof. That certainly has been pointed out by this party and certainly has been pointed out by members who are involved in police services in Ontario, that the consultation process, although the government said it has taken five years to do this, was certainly lacking in this whole process.

I do want to speak a little bit about the paperwork and the red tape that is going to be involved with this. It's certainly something that a lot of police officers get tired of, the constant, constant red tape and paperwork that they have to do. Even for the most simple cases, it's just paperwork after more paperwork. They would rather be

out on the street protecting you and me than doing some of this, what they consider unnecessary, paperwork which has been imposed upon them. I do agree that this act, if passed, is certainly going to increase that type of thing.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek mentioned training costs, and that's certainly an issue because there's no money mentioned for municipalities in this. There's no money mentioned in this for the police

services. So who's going to pay for this? Costs are totally going to be on backs of who it's directed at.

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1754.

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Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Grant Crack, Jennifer K. French
Jack MacLaren, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Mario Sergio
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Lorne Coe, Bob Delaney
Vic Dhillon, Joe Dickson
Harinder Malhi, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Peter Tabuns
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley