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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 12 December 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 12 décembre 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers/Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESERVED PARKING FOR ELECTRIC
VEHICLE CHARGING ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LE STATIONNEMENT
RÉSERVÉ À LA RECHARGE
DES VÉHICULES ÉLECTRIQUES

Mr. Coe moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act respecting electric vehicle charging stations / Projet de loi 123, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les stations de recharge pour véhicules électriques.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I look to the member to lead off the debate.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I am humbled to rise in the Legislature to speak at third reading of Bill 123. As you know, Speaker, few private members' bills proceed to this stage of debate. It's a great honour to have my name affixed to the bill, which has received such significant support from the Legislature, and in particular, the government.

What makes me most proud is the cross-party support this bill has received, and the hard work of many members that has gone into its development.

Speaker, as you know, although my name is on the bill now, it was not originally. I must give credit to the government House leader who originally led development of this bill and was inspired by his own challenges of an EV owner.

I must also recognize my co-sponsor, the member for Guelph. I know the member for Guelph was an early supporter of the bill, and without his contributions I know that we would not have been this successful in moving the bill forward.

Now, Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to discuss some of the background to the bill. EV technology is developing every day and it's incredible, the vehicle options available to consumers. With any new technology, there are challenges with widespread adoption, but we're seeing the industry work hard to overcome these challenges.

If you drive a gasoline-powered vehicle, you can be confident that you can get from point A to point B in southern Ontario and not have to worry about the location of the next gas station. You can leave my riding in Whitby with

a quarter of a tank of gas to drive to Ottawa or Windsor with confidence that there will be numerous places to fill your tank along the way. For EV drivers, the situation is not the same. It's true that our businesses and property owners are investing in EV charging technology, but it's certainly less ubiquitous than the gas station. EV drivers, driving even within a city or a region, might have to work to find charging infrastructure nearby, but technology is helping in this regard as well, Speaker.

At committee, we heard from the EV industry, participants like ChargePoint and Tesla. Both companies manage networks for EV charging stations and make location data available to the public on mobile or in-vehicle applications. An EV driver can quickly see charging options near them and can plan their trip around them.

This technology is really very encouraging, but this is not the end of the story. Let's use an example of an EV driver who has a limited charge and has planned to stop at a shopping centre along the way to refuel. This driver can see on an application that there are charging stations at this shopping centre and even if they're not in use. Some networks even show the estimated time at which a charging station will become available if it is in use. In our example, however, the EV driver makes his way to the charging station, seeing it's not in use but finding that the parking spaces in front of the charging station are blocked. The driver in our example doesn't have enough charge to go to another charging station or simply must change his or her plans to find one. This just isn't efficient, and in a time when we want to encourage EV adoption, we need to improve access to infrastructure. This bill does just that.

There's a term for blocking charging stations, and the term is "ICE-ing." It's used quite a bit in the industry. "ICE" stands for "internal combustion engine." The term refers to those driving gas-powered vehicles blocking EV charging station spaces. This doesn't exactly tell the whole story, and it isn't quite fair to those who drive gas-powered vehicles.

In the experiences that I've heard from EV drivers, many times they find charging stations blocked by other EV drivers not using them to charge but using them as preferred reserved parking spaces.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Rude.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Yes.

This is not right. Businesses invest thousands of dollars to have these charging stations available for their customers, and even install them specifically to attract customers. This is a significant investment to sit idle because some choose to take unfair advantage of convenience. With this bill, we're making a real and practical change, but we're

also sending a message as a Legislature to all drivers: These parking spaces exist for charging, and only charging. If you don't need it, leave it.

I know that other speakers will speak to the environmental benefits of electric vehicles, but I wanted to take a moment to address this bill as an environmental policy. I've made very clear in my speeches on this bill the economic benefit to passing this bill. We know that businesses will invest in charging stations if they could be used to attract customers, and we know, Speaker, that they won't attract customers if customers can't charge. That is simple. But let's look at the other side of the equation: The easier it is to charge, the more people will invest in electrical vehicles rather than gas alternatives.

I also see this bill as a way to put in place an efficient and effective environment to promote the adoption of electric vehicles. As Ontarians, when we adopt electric vehicles, we reduce our carbon emissions and contribute, in the process, to a cleaner environment for our children and grandchildren—like Sophia and Annette, my two granddaughters. This is a bill that's not only economically wise, but it's also good environmentally.

In closing, I wish to thank everyone in this Legislature for considering Bill 123. It is truly an honour—an absolute honour—to stand in my place and debate legislation which bears my name at such an advanced stage.

I would also like to thank my co-sponsor, the member for Guelph, for his dedication on this initiative. And I would like to thank the government House leader, who developed and championed this bill as a private member.

I would encourage all members—I ask all members—to please consider the economic and environmental benefits of this bill. Let's make, together, this positive contribution to the EV landscape.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise today to speak on Bill 123, the reserved parking for electric vehicles act, which I am co-sponsoring with the MPP from Whitby.

I'm proud to co-sponsor this bill because I think that you can chew gum and walk at the same time. I can be critical of the government's climate plan and work with them to take a small but critically important step forward to support EV adoption in Ontario. I think people have voted for us to come here to Queen's Park, put people before party and to get things done for people, and that's what this bill does in an important and small way.

0910

I want to thank Guelph city councillor Phil Allt, who first approached me at the end of last year and said to me, "Mike, we need a bill in Ontario that stops ICE-ing," which is having a non-electric vehicle park in an electric vehicle parking spot. I promised him and others. I want to proudly say that about half of Guelph city council, including our mayor, all drive electric vehicles. I made a commitment to them that I would work on legislation like this.

During second reading of this bill, I told a story, and I think it's important to tell that story once again. Just a few weeks ago, I was pulling in to charge my electric vehicle

as I was driving back home to Guelph. There's a spot about halfway between Guelph and Toronto that I oftentimes stop to charge. I took the last charging spot. A person drove up and they started ranting at me a little bit. "Mike"—they didn't say "Mike"; they didn't know who I was. They started saying to me, "Somebody's got to do something about this. I'm sick and tired of going to charge my electric vehicle. I look on my app, and it says the charging station is available. Then I arrive and I'm low on battery power, and I can't charge because somebody else is parked in the spot."

If you can imagine—for those of you who don't drive an electric vehicle, imagine going to the gas pump and having a whole bunch of cars parked in front of the gas pump, and you can't charge your vehicle. So this bill takes an important step in addressing that issue, in saying that there's a \$125 fine if you're parked in that spot, to ensure that it's available for people to be able to park and charge their car.

We know that electric vehicle adoption is going to be an important development in Ontario in the next decade. Right now, in this province, about 3.5% of drivers drive an electric vehicle. By 2030, estimates are that about half of drivers in Ontario will drive an electric vehicle, and the government's own climate plan anticipates a 3,000% increase in electric vehicle adoption in the province. Now, I'm going to take issue with the fact that the Auditor General pointed out the government doesn't have a plan for that uptake to happen. I'm hoping that in the spirit of collaboration on this bill, we can encourage them to bring forward some plans for EV adoption in Ontario, because it's going to be critical to meeting our climate obligations.

Transportation is the largest source of climate pollution in Ontario. If we don't electrify our transportation system, we're not going to meet our 2030 or our 2050 targets. So we need to ensure that we invest in infrastructure that allows people to walk, cycle and to get around through active transportation, and not only do we need to invest in electrifying and expanding public transit, but we also need to invest in electrifying our personal transportation fleet.

I just want to say that I've had an opportunity to work with a number of advocates in the electric vehicle space. The president of the electric vehicle association, Wilf Steimle, came to committee and talked about how important this bill is for electric vehicle drivers across the province, to ensure that they have the trust and the reliability to be able to find a place to charge and know that charging station is available.

I also had an opportunity to meet with a representative from Tesla. I just want to quote what Tesla said about this bill: "We recognize the frustration and disappointment that EV drivers can feel when they arrive at a charging station, needing to connect their vehicle, only to find that the stall is occupied by a vehicle that does not require access to charging equipment. We are encouraged that Ontario is taking steps to address this issue."

Speaker, I oftentimes talk about the opportunities that exist in the \$26-trillion global clean economy. If Ontario is going to be an economic leader and attract investment to this province that will help us address the climate crisis and help improve our economy, ensuring that we have the

proper supports in place for electrification of transportation is critically important. We need to adapt our laws, our policies and our infrastructure to seize that opportunity. This is an important step in that direction.

But we also need to make sure that we invest in charging infrastructure. I would encourage the government to be looking at tax incentives to support businesses putting in charging infrastructure. I would encourage the government to reverse the removal of charging infrastructure from Metrolinx parking stations and actually start putting charging infrastructure not only in GO parking lots, but all public parking facilities should have charging infrastructure in place.

I would encourage the government to look at things like reinstating the rebate program for electric vehicles or at the very least take the provincial portion of HST off of electric vehicle sales, because for this law to truly be transformative, we need to make sure that there's charging infrastructure all across the province, all across our 400-series highways, all across our provincial highways, so that vehicle owners not only know that they have a secure place to charge their vehicle but they actually have a place to charge their vehicle. I think this is an important part of Ontario sending the message that we're open for business in the clean economy.

We know that \$255 billion will be invested by global automakers in electric and zero-emission vehicles in the next five years. The question is, is Ontario going to attract that investment? Is Ontario going to lead the electric vehicle transformation that the world is going to experience over the next decade? We need an auto strategy that prioritizes electric vehicles. We have the skilled workers. We have the plants. We have the companies that can deliver electric vehicle solutions, and we need to make sure we have policies in place that support that transformation.

Speaker, in my final minute I want to just put on the record, for the people watching today and for the people across Ontario, that part of the reason people are switching to electric vehicles is not only for environmental reasons—though that's a critical and essential component of it—but people are also doing it for personal economic reasons. We know that you can operate an electric vehicle for one fifth to one tenth of the cost of a non-electric vehicle. According to the Canadian Automobile Association, Canadians can expect to spend only around \$300 a year to fuel their electric vehicle. For some people, that's how much they spend a month to fuel their gasoline-powered vehicle. As a matter of fact, electric vehicles operate at one tenth of the cost of a typical pickup truck on gas.

According to Plug 'N Drive, EV operating costs are one fifth or less of a typical car. It costs about 25 cents a litre to charge your electric vehicle, and I believe that gas prices in Toronto were about \$1.17 this past week.

If the government wants to help people save money at the pumps, let's get rid of the pumps, and let's have people go electric, because that is the cheapest way to drive in this province. This bill, I'm proud to say, will help make it easier for people to charge their electric vehicles.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill today.

I want to just thank the member for Whitby and the member for Guelph for bringing this bill forward and getting it back into the House today so that we can pass it at third reading, and then it can become law. Again, I appreciate both of them for their hard work on this.

0920

I think the member for Guelph and the member for Whitby both were very correct in some of the things they were talking about. This is indeed a small step down the path. This won't solve all of the issues that we have, but I think it also highlights some of the challenges that we have as we develop environmental policy.

I have no doubt, as the previous Liberal government was rolling out their policies with respect to charging stations and so on and so forth, that it was never their intention to create a loophole that would allow EV chargers to block stations. But it wasn't in the original bills that they brought forward. This bill seeks to right something that has become a problem.

I came across this only after I purchased a hybrid vehicle. As the member for Guelph highlights, after being elected to this place, I was spending about \$400 a month in commuting charges getting down the 404/Don Valley to here. It was about \$400 a month. Since switching over to a hybrid vehicle, maybe less than \$50 a month is what I'm paying. So it has made a very, very big difference to me.

Where I began to notice and where I began to get frustrated as an EV owner is exactly as the members for Guelph and Whitby were talking about. You look on your apps and you can see where you charge. More often than not, as this has started to roll out, small, medium and large businesses, for that matter, have put these charging stations in advantageous spots on their premises.

To be clear, these are very expensive, especially the level 3 chargers, the fast chargers. These can cost a couple of hundred thousands of dollars for a business to install. This is not a cheap thing. This is a massive investment for a lot of them.

When you go to one of these businesses, when you've checked on the app, and you see that there is another vehicle stopped or parked in the spot and it is not charging, it is a very big frustration for EV owners. But it is equally a frustration for the people who invested in putting in these fast chargers—or the level 2 chargers, for that matter—to have people blocking them.

For me, it wasn't people who were driving gas-powered vehicles; it was always EV drivers who were blocking the stations and not charging. Many EV owners were using these stations, and continue to use these stations, as preferential parking spots, knowing that there is no consequence to parking right close to the front door, especially during the Christmas season. It's great: You go and park right next to the front door, because right now that's where these charging stations are. They're in very advantageous spots. You can park next to the front door, walk in and that's the end of it.

This bill will change that. It will change that so that the people who have invested in these fast chargers, or level 2

chargers, will know there is a benefit to them. But also, those people who have bought electric vehicles will know that when they check online, when they go to charge up, they will have a spot that is waiting for them.

Again, as I said, it is a very small step. I think both members have highlighted the fact that we need to make improvements across the board. This one step will not help us meet our Paris accord targets—obviously not. But it, again, highlights what the Minister of the Environment had been saying all along, that as we develop environmental policies, there will always be the need to make changes to that policy so that we can actually meet those targets.

As I said earlier, I have no doubt that when the previous Liberal government was bringing forward this bill, they had no intention of creating a scenario where EV owners would block stations and it would disadvantage small, medium and large job creators. This bill helps to correct that.

I really want to congratulate both members on doing this, on all sides of the House, because I know it received, if I'm not mistaken, unanimous support at second reading, Madam Speaker.

Look, it's a good first step. We have a lot of work to do. As the provincial government moved out of the direct subsidy of electric vehicle purchases, the federal government, obviously, moved into that space. But I think it is incumbent on us to start to continue to make investments in EV charging stations across the province so that we can continue to build out this network.

I understand what the member from the Green Party was talking about when he said that the GO train stations—I often wondered, and we can have a conversation on that, where it was an advantage to somehow have a car driving to a GO train station and sitting for eight hours, charging in what was a two-hour charging spot, but blocking a station for eight hours. We could have that debate in this House, but ultimately I foresee a time when this bill will need to be repealed because every parking spot will just have a charging station. I think that's the direction that we are going into. Whether that's in 10 years or 15 years, I think that's where we need to be, not only as a province but as a country. We need to give people the confidence that they can drive coast to coast to coast and have access to the best network of EV charging stations. We've also heard this from the auto manufacturers, that they are moving in the same direction. They are moving out of the space of the internal combustion engine and moving towards fleets of exclusively green electric vehicles.

I think I'll close at that—again, just to congratulate both members and to thank them for their non-partisan nature in moving this forward. I look forward to everybody's support of the bill.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill this morning. As people are well aware, we're debating a bill that will impose a penalty for those who block access to an electric vehicle charging station. The bill was brought forward by the MPP for Guelph and the MPP for Whitby.

The House leader just remarked that this was a very small step forward. That shows admirable modesty, and this government has much to be modest about when it comes to dealing with the climate crisis, because, in fact, although this step is not a negative step—it's a positive step—it has to be understood in the context of a wide-ranging suite of activities that undermine the response to the climate crisis. If one doesn't understand that, one doesn't understand how extraordinarily modest this step is—positive; I'm going to vote for it. I think it should go forward. But it deeply, deeply underscores the backwards nature of this government's action on the climate.

Speaker, this government, I think, can be reasonably characterized as one that is aggressive in its actions against climate action, one that is consistently trying to undermine the activity that's going to be necessary to preserve our society, to protect our property and our lives in the decades to come. I know the government will say very different. I think there's time left on the clock and I would not be surprised if there was a ringing defence of the government's activities.

But, Speaker, if you say you oppose children smoking and you stuff cigarettes in their mouths and you set fire to those cigarettes, then it may be that no matter what your words are, you support children smoking. If you support advertising for vaping products, something this government has done—and recently the really obvious health effects have forced some change of thought. If you support the expansion of sale of vaping products, which this government has and may be forced to rethink, then saying that you're against children being exposed to nicotine holds no water, because your actions are radically different from your words. That is the situation we find ourselves in, in this province.

This, Speaker, is almost literally the least the government could do. Now, they might do less. I don't know how: They'd have to be creative; they'd have to think about it. But it is almost literally the least they could do. I want to talk about some of the steps they've taken going backwards. The member for Guelph mentioned the ripping out of electric vehicle charging stations in GO stations around the GTHA. Twelve stations that had charging points had them cleared out; 24 chargers taken out of service on November 1, 2018. I have to say that if you want to encourage electric vehicle use, you don't actually rip out chargers. You just don't do that.

Now, the argument was made that the chargers weren't making money. It may well be true. I won't argue those numbers, but I'll say this: As you expand the fleet of electric vehicles in this province, reducing the number of electric vehicle charging points is an expression not of support for expansion, but blocking expansion.

0930

I was quoted by the CBC at the time, saying, "By ripping down electric vehicle charging stations that are already installed," this government "is dragging Ontario backward and burning money." I think it's a fair comment.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Very fair.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Very fair.

But that isn't where it ends, Speaker. Wait, there's more; they didn't stop there. Not only, as the member for Guelph noted, was there the removal of a rebate system meant to encourage people to put in chargers, but there was action on the building code. I was researching this last night, and I thought, "Okay, who do I go to about cancellation of electric vehicle charging station decisions?" Funnily enough, when you Google it, you come up with the Electrical Safety Authority. I have to give the Electrical Safety Authority the George Orwell obscuring-truth award of 2019—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The winner is—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: —the winner is—because when you actually Google their comment on the government's actions on electric charging stations, they write: "On May 2, 2019 changes to the Ontario building code 2012 regarding electrical vehicle charging systems come into effect." What changes could these be? "These changes were made by the Ontario government's Ministry of Municipal Affairs to remove the technical requirements related to electric vehicle charging infrastructure in houses and non-residential large buildings, such as workplaces. For more information please contact your local building official." It is not obvious what was done. What was obvious was actually set out by the law firm Stikeman Elliott, in their report, which essentially said that the government is cancelling the provision of electric vehicle charging in new houses.

I think it's one thing to cancel a move that would have automatically required the installation of electric vehicle charging in new houses. We build about 30,000 new detached, semi-detached and row houses in Ontario every year—in that range, fluctuating year by year. This government, in one stroke, eliminated roughly 30,000 new charging stations every year. I don't know what the member for Guelph has to say, but my guess is that this bill may affect several hundred charging stations. Maybe I'll go crazy and say it was 1,000. Thirty times more charging stations were eliminated by the government's action—30,000 per year. Over 10 years, you're talking a very substantial number of charging stations that would have been in place.

The previous government did have a \$1,000 rebate for retrofitting those electric charging stations on existing homes. It's pretty pricey to go back and do it afterwards, whereas when you're actually putting a house up, just running some cable from the breaker box to the back of the house, to the side of the house, to the garage, would be pretty cheap. If you want to expand the infrastructure for electric vehicles and actually take on the climate crisis, which is threatening our way of life, you could have left it in place. But that isn't what happened. Ones that were in existence in GO stations got ripped out, and tens of thousands that would have been put in place were blocked. That is a summary of actions of a government that is going backwards on the climate crisis, putting our way of life in peril.

This bill—which I agree is positive; I'm going to vote for it—is the lightest tinge of green wash on this government, which has no interest in taking on this issue. In fact, it has a negative interest. It wants to go backward on this issue.

Speaker, I just want to illustrate a little further by going to the report of the Auditor General on the activities of this

government with regard to its climate plan, because it's illustrative of where this government is going, contrary to what this bill has to say. When I first read the auditor's report—and I'll be honest, I was under time pressure and I just read her quick summary. But if you get the chance—because it's actually pretty well written, shockingly, for a government report—you should actually read the detail about the elements in the government's climate plan. I just want to note a few.

There was a piece in the government's climate plan about emissions reductions from compressed natural gas. The government climate plan has a target for reduction. But what the Auditor General found was that the government actually didn't do the calculations. There was an illustration brought forward from the Ontario Energy Association saying, "If you do this, you'll probably get reductions in this range." But the government actually didn't do the math. I've seen that in grade 9 essays. I've seen kids go home, look at a magazine cover, quote the title on the magazine cover, put it in their essay, and they had the same level of due diligence as this government.

"Our review found that the ministry did not assess whether this level of compressed natural gas uptake is feasible or cost-effective." So they didn't even do the simple mathematics on: "Does this work? What's the cost-effectiveness?" No wonder the government is saying, "We would like suggestions on how to take on this issue," because they didn't even do the numbers. And I know they actually have staff who can do numbers—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They do?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's shocking, but they have hired people who are both literate and numerate, people who can actually read, do math, and give an opinion.

But that wasn't the end of it, because the Auditor General went on to the whole thing with use of the renewable natural gas, which I think is a good idea. It's a small idea, but you've got manure digesters on farms that can put out natural gas. You've got sewage treatment plants in Ontario that can put out natural gas. We shouldn't waste that resource; we should use it. It's a wise thing to do.

But when the staff was developing this plan, they estimated that there would be negligible emissions reductions from use of renewable natural gas—just because there's not a lot of it, right? And it's fairly expensive in most cases. In this case, the staff actually did crunch the numbers—good for them. "Instead of using the internal staff analysis, the plan based emissions reductions in this area on an Ontario Energy Association submission to the ministry." The energy association, God bless them, said, "Our example is just illustrative." You actually need to do the math.

So, in the first case, no math was done and they plugged a number in. In the second case, they were told, "You should do the math." The staff did the math. They ignored the math and they plugged in another number—astounding.

But the last headline is the one that was most intriguing to me, and people should read the text. "Industry performance standards: Emissions reductions overstated in plan because of double counting and weaker finalized standards."

So when you actually look at the substance of what was brought forward, it's much grimmer than the headlines. A lack of math—no wonder this government is concerned about math in schools, because they don't practise it in their operations. I think math is a really useful thing and I think it should be used when you're doing estimates of the effectiveness of programs—or lack of effectiveness.

Speaker, I think I've established that we have a situation here where the climate crisis is like a cancer on our society. The potential for profound damage is clear, and we're talking about a minor sprain and addressing a minor sprain—while you should address a minor sprain, but the cancer is where you really need to be focused, and this government isn't.

The member for Whitby, when he spoke about this bill at second reading, said: "Although we know that there will be an eventual shift toward the increased use of electric vehicles, what remains uncertain is when and how rapid that shift will be. But what we should not be doing in these challenging times is identifying a problem and then not working diligently to find a solution."

0940

I agree. And when you've got a solution in place and you demolish it, then I have to ask the member: How does he address that? His government—and I'm sure he supported the changes that were in question—eliminated 30,000 charging points a year, demolished electric charging points in GO train stations around the GTHA, and now is talking about the need to help electric vehicle drivers.

Again, they should be helped. We should pass this bill. But this ignores the destructive initiatives that this government is engaged in that will make it harder for people with electric vehicles to get them charged in the years and decades to come and will impose on us, as the crisis deepens, the cost of putting in electric vehicle charging stations that would have been there anyway. More climate damage; more fiscal problem. That was ignored.

The member said, "Current electric vehicle owners have found it incredibly frustrating to arrive at a high-speed charging station only to discover a vehicle parked in that charging space—a vehicle not connected to the charger."

Well, he's right, you know. That needs to be addressed, and I think putting in a whole bunch of charging stations in other spots would help alleviate that. In any event, the member noted that, "Charging facilities are essential components to an expanding electric vehicle industry." Which is why maintaining, under the Ontario building code, the requirement for electric charging stations made sense. The elimination from the building code is directly contrary to the measures and targets that this member wants to see go forward.

The member notes, "The more barriers we can remove"—to charging—"the more attractive the purchase of an electric vehicle or hybrid will become." Absolutely true, and I wish he would have a talk with the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs about the need to change course again, revise the Ontario building code and actually expand the number of charging stations in Ontario—charging stations available to people who want to pitch in and

help deal with the crisis that we're facing. I don't see that before us.

The member for Guelph made similar arguments in second reading. I will say to the member, I understand what drives you to take action on this. I just also want to say to you that sometimes there are partners that you extend a hand out to who will take your hand. Be careful: Count those digits after you finish shaking. That's all I can say.

My colleague from Kingston spoke to this motion. He's an EV driver as well, and he talked about the frustration of pulling into a station, needing to charge, because Kingston to Toronto—that's a long enough drive; you're going to have to charge. Actually, you can probably make it in one charge, yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, in summertime you can go both ways.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes, but that being the case, occasionally you're going to have to have a charge. The frustration of pulling in and not being able to charge: I understand; it's pretty profound. He also noted the ripping out of the EV charging stations in GO train stations. Some days, I am left speechless.

The member for Mississauga Centre, who spoke well on this issue, and I have no doubt of her actual concern for the issue, said, "Electric cars and plug-in hybrids are becoming an increasingly common sight in Ontario, with their shining green parking signs that state, 'Electric vehicle parking only,' and there is a reason for that. The introduction of electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids to Ontario's automotive market was a positive step"—I agree—"as these vehicles are part of the solution to addressing climate change." I agree.

Her government voted to block the vast expansion of electric vehicle charging stations, something that they could have done with no cost to the public purse. I often hear, "We need to do things so that we're reducing government expenditure." Well, there was no government expenditure in having new houses equipped with electric vehicle charging facilities—no extra expense for government. It's much cheaper than going back, five years from now, and putting them in, much cheaper for consumers who are going to have to switch, not because the government will compel them, but because the impact on the climate will be so profound that they understand they have to switch. They will feel morally driven.

In Sydney, Australia, in the last week, the bush fires around the city were so extreme that fire alarms were going off in people's homes and offices because of the level of smoke. If your smoke detector is going off because the smoke outside your house is so high that your smoke detector says, "You are in danger. Get out," then you have a sense of a scale of the crisis.

People should keep that in mind when they demolish and roll back efforts to deal with this crisis, because some day their smoke detector is going to go off, and it's not because of the fire inside; it's because of the fire outside.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm delighted to rise in the House this morning to voice my support for the bipartisan bill that

was originally brought forward by the member from Markham–Stouffville, also the government House leader, and since has been sponsored by the member from Whitby and the member from Guelph.

Bill 123 is the bill to reserve parking for electric vehicle charging stations, and that is what we are debating today, the Reserved Parking for Electric Vehicle Charging Act. Bill 123 will help make electric vehicle charging stations more accessible and convenient to those that need them by ensuring that they are used for the express purpose of charging electric vehicles.

I think many of us know a friend, a family member or our colleagues, as was mentioned—the member from Kingston and the Islands and the member from Markham–Stouffville often talk about their frustrations, and I know the member from Guelph, as well, where you go to where you think it's going to be a convenient spot in order to charge your electric vehicle: a mall, for instance. This time of year, the malls are very busy. Sometimes it's impossible to find a parking spot. What will happen, often, when you have an electric vehicle charging station, is that someone might be blocking that station because, of course, everyone is busy trying to get ready for the holidays.

So the spirit of this bill and what it's really trying to accomplish—it's really a practical solution for common issues that we have across the province today, and that's just blocking EV stations. That's the matter before us in the House today. Again, these practical measures all add up together to make a big difference. They do make a change in the day-to-day lives of Ontarians. That's very much what we want to do in this House. No matter what your political partisan stripe is, we want to improve the lives of Ontarians and make their life a little bit easier. Certainly, this bill strives to do that by making a change that could make significant impacts to someone's day-to-day life.

For example, in my riding of Barrie–Innisfil, we have Park Place. It's a fairly large plaza right off of the 400. Often, individuals who are on their way to, say, cottage country, on their way up north, those who might be driving an electric vehicle will stop into Park Place and will charge their vehicle. But sometimes those spots could be blockaded. So they'll be calling the Park Place authorities, and it's difficult for them to enforce it, because there are just no laws in place. What this bill would do, obviously, is make sure that there are designated spots so, as the member from Guelph mentioned, we do stop the ICE-ing effect. That would be really beneficial to them.

0950

But it's interesting to see how those spots in the Barrie Park Place plaza came to be. Tesla actually approached Barrie city council to build these EV stations. They covered the installation costs, and, of course, the municipality covers the operating costs. So this is happening somewhat throughout the province.

As many of you may know, to address the problem of other vehicles blocking charging stations, municipalities such as Sudbury—which I discovered thanks to the helpful research of my OLIP intern Marion Davies, who's in the

audience today—developed municipal legislation to reserve electric vehicle charging stations exclusively for the use of electric vehicles. So what we're doing here is that we're basically standardizing and expanding this framework and the rules for parking electric vehicles, ensuring that that happens all across the province, not just in Sudbury and in other municipalities.

This will complement really well with some of the effects happening globally when it comes to maybe building more of these stations; I know that Tesla was looking to create a few more of these. They're looking to establish vehicle charging stations between Sault Ste. Marie and Kenora so that there are connections from coast to coast to coast. This is an initiative that they're taking on themselves as a company, as it is in the interest of their supply-and-demand model for building vehicles as they know that more people will potentially buy one of their vehicles if they have the certainty that there's a charging station.

We often hear of the uncertainty or the anxiety that might be caused by people who choose to uptake an electric vehicle and they want to find an electric charging station. So what we're doing here is a practical measure to help that anxiety that may happen, to help the owner know that they can be certain that no one is going to be blocking that space and they can easily charge their vehicle as they wish.

I mention, of course, that we have this in the city of Barrie, but, as many people in this House know, I'm an avid outdoors individual who likes to hike quite a bit. I have a lot of friends in British Columbia. For them, they've found a way around the whole blocking of the parking spots for electric vehicles by really choosing where these spots go. So it really is up to working with our municipalities to also choose the places where these particular spots are being built so realistically there isn't an ability to block that particular spot. That's kind of their work-around. Of course you see this happening in all different municipalities all across Ontario.

What's really interesting when we're talking about hybrid and electric vehicles—I know that the Ontario public service, for instance, is also modelling the use of greener vehicles. In fact, 70% of its passenger fleet right now for the Ontario public service—that is, 1,632 vehicles—are plug-in hybrids or full-battery electric vehicles. So that's already happening within our public service. Certainly this particular practical measure that we're talking about today will help anyone who works within the public service, and they do need to charge their vehicle, to know that they can do so easily without someone blocking them. It's a very noble measure.

Of course, overall, this bill, sponsored by the members from Whitby and Guelph, will help make it easier for Ontarians who have made the commitment to drive a greener vehicle. It'll help them access charging stations and it will help contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Obviously, there are many ways that we can get there.

On the topic of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and using the electric grid in order to get there, it's interesting to note that “Ontario's low-emission combination of hydro-electric, nuclear, natural gas and non-hydro renewable

generating capacity has enabled the province to avoid up to 30 megatonnes of annual greenhouse gas emissions,” which is “equivalent to taking up to seven million vehicles off our roads. In 2017, approximately 96% of electricity generated in Ontario was emissions-free.”

So as we move towards some of these big accomplishments, and if you look at the accomplishments of Ontario—if you look at, for example, the targets that we have to achieve under the Paris agreement, you’ll see that while Ontario has reduced our greenhouse gas emissions by 22%, the rest of Canada actually increased by 3%. So when we talk about, say, clean energy and obviously utilizing our clean electricity here in Ontario, that is a wonderful example.

But, of course, as the Minister of the Environment has often said, the climate is a non-partisan issue. The member from Guelph understands that as well. We’re constantly working together with all members in order to find ways of protecting our environment in a responsible fashion that is good for all Ontarians, obviously balancing our economy and our environment. We’ll continue to work with our partners—municipal partners, federal partners, members across the way, our Indigenous communities—in order to ensure that we can pass on a cleaner environment for future generations.

But we also have to look at, when it comes to electric charging stations, the role that that’s going to play. I know there are a lot of students right now at Ryerson University, specifically at the Centre for Urban Innovation. President Mohamed Lachemi and my good friend the assistant VP, Jennifer Grass, are working hard with students there to come up with some innovative ideas, and some innovative ideas when it comes to the cost of many of these things.

This is obviously a very good step. As Neil Armstrong has said, it’s one step for man, “one giant leap for mankind.” It’s a very practical solution in order to help those individuals who do need to charge at an electric station, knowing that they have the certainty of their particular access to a charging station not being blocked. I commend the member for coming up with something that will affect the lives of day-to-day Ontarians and, of course, be very good for the pocketbook.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wanted to get in on this debate for a couple of reasons. First of all because I think it is a step in the right direction, but I also wanted to point out what my friend from Toronto—Danforth had pointed out, that the government has done more to get rid of charging stations in this province than they will ever do in this bill. I think that has to be said in this particular debate. But it’s a step in the right direction, and for that reason, of course, New Democrats will support it.

But I want to speak to the other aspect, and that is of electric vehicles. Most people know me; I’m from northern Ontario, a place called Timmins. I drive an F-150, a V6 that does 10.5 litres per 100 when I drive down to Toronto and back. I am waiting for Ford to come out with an all-electric. Why? For exactly the reason that was raised by my friend from Toronto—Danforth: It makes a lot

more sense to be able to drive an all-electric not only from an ecological point of view but from a cost point of view. To drive down to Toronto will probably cost me about \$120 or \$130 of gas coming here and the same thing going back. When I’m in my riding, I probably do about a tank a week as I drive to and from where I live, out of Kamiskotia Lake, and I go to constituency events, as you all do.

Moving to an electric vehicle just makes financial sense. The technology is becoming so advanced that Ford is now looking at putting on the market in the next couple of years an F-150 full-size pickup truck that can do 500 miles in the summer. That’s a game-changer. That means that people like me actually can buy an electric vehicle and are talking about doing it for roughly the same price that you’d pay for a regular F-150.

The reason I wanted to get on this debate—and I’m glad that my friend from Toronto—Danforth is here, because he and I have not always been on the same side of the ecological arguments, but on this one we’re lockstep. What’s happening will change the oil industry completely. I understand the debate around pipelines and the rest of it, but the problem that this nation faces when it comes to energy is that oil is going in the opposite direction when it comes to consumption over the longer run, especially if people are able to buy vehicles because it makes more economic sense for them to be able to buy electric. It’s going to mean to say that oil is going to be one of those commodities that we’re going to want less of.

I read a really interesting report about two weeks ago—or an article; I can’t remember which one—and it talked about the price of oil to compete with electric vehicles. Once the electric gets to where it’s going, the price of oil would have to be about \$10 a barrel.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Jesus.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, exactly. You can’t make money at \$10 a barrel in the oil sands. You can’t make money at \$10 a barrel even if you’re pumping rich crude. That completely changes the economics. What we’re now seeing is not just the ecological problems that we have from greenhouse gases and from various emissions; we’re seeing a transformation of our economy. I think what the Conservatives have to latch on to in the far right is that this is no different than the Industrial Revolution. This is no different than what happened to North America and to Europe at the turn of the previous century.

We’re not talking about 2000, but the years before that where we decided to go to a totally different manufacturing system around the automobile. That created an entire industry that fed the economy of North America and Europe for 100 years. This is going to do the same, but it’s going to do it in a greener way. The quicker that we latch on as a jurisdiction to do those things that we can do to encourage people to invest in those technologies in our jurisdiction called Ontario, the further ahead of the curve we’re going to be when it comes to being able to take advantage of the economic opportunities that greening our economy is all about. And that’s coming from a guy from northern Ontario. I just say—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Who drives a red pickup truck.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Who drives a red pickup truck, F-150—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Licence plate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Licence plate number—my point is, it is a-changin' and we've got to get in along with the change. I think the longer that this government, the Conservatives, try to deny that we need to go in this way—it is a mistake.

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

Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 11, 2019, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Coe has moved third reading of Bill 123, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act respecting electric vehicle charging stations. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: Sorry, Madam Speaker, no further business.

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

The House recessed from 1002 to 1030.

LOUISE LEBEAU

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask for the House's attention for a moment.

Louise Lebeau, the control room director of the broadcast and recording service, is retiring after 32 years here at Queen's Park. She is a long-time staffer. Louise has been here since the inception of television in the chamber.

She is an independent filmmaker in her private life. Louise was the driving force and creative mind behind a myriad of informational programs and documentaries, most notably *Women Should Vote: A Short History of How Women Won the Franchise in Ontario*.

She is accompanied in the chamber today—she's in the Speaker's gallery—by her partner, Marc Chiasson.

Thank you so much, Louise, for your public service to the people of Ontario.

Applause.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Will Bouma: I would like to welcome, on behalf of MPP Daryl Kramp, Ms. Tiffany Lloyd in the members' gallery today, executive director of the Napanee BIA.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: It is my honour to introduce my best volunteer: my mother, Marlene Hogarth, and her friend Susan Kular, who is the grandmother to page Julian. Welcome.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's a real honour to welcome a friend of mine from my Local Food days to the west members' gallery: Jamie Laidlaw. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I also want to wish everyone a happy holiday and a wonderful new year.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'm pleased to welcome the family of page Suhani Surya from Oakville North–Burlington, who is serving as the page captain today. She's joined in the members' gallery by her father, Nanda Surya; mother, Shubha Narasimhan; and her brother, Sujay Surya. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today Shae-Lynn Seeley-Reesor, who is the daughter of my constituency office assistant and who also works for the government House leader in the summer. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to do my daily welcome to autism families and advocates who have spent the entire session here in the Legislature with us. We have Amy Moledzki, Amanda Mooyer from York–Simcoe, Angela Brandt, Esther Tang, Laura Kirby-McIntosh, Stacy Kennedy from Oakville, Michau van Speyk, and Qamber Ali from Bay of Quinte. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to welcome the UTM students who are visiting us today from my riding of Mississauga–Erin Mills. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Vincent Ke: I would like to introduce my friends Xu Hu, Fong Hung, Shawn Byfield and Lin Li. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'd like to welcome Tim Lambrinos, chair of Canada's largest business improvement area, Emery Village, which is in my riding of Humber River–Black Creek. Tim is proud to be chair of the BIA's arts and heritage committee, a passion he learned from his late mother, Sheila Lambrinos, a former TDSB trustee and long-time New Democrat. Welcome.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I have an agreement with the government House leader. We're going to stand down our leads and move down our order while we wait for the Premier to arrive.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Agreed? Agreed.

So this would be the third question—two parts, right?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Fourth question.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): Fourth question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The fourth question? Okay. Got it.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

YOUTH SUICIDE

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: My question is to the Acting Premier. In April 2018, Devon Freeman's body was found on

the property of a group home where he was living. He had died by suicide nearly seven months—seven months, Mr. Speaker—earlier, but no one looked for him the whole time.

Devon was 17 years old and from the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation. Devon's grandmother and the First Nation are asking the provincial coroner's office to hold an inquest into his death, an inquest that would shine a light on Devon's life and death so this doesn't happen to any more children.

Will you support this request and take action on the inquest's recommendations: yes or no?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for your question. The death or injury of any youth or any child is unacceptable. On behalf of our entire government, our hearts go out to this family and community. I can tell you, as a mother, the devastation of a death of a child is unacceptable.

The safety and security of all Ontarians, especially our most vulnerable, is a top priority for our government. As you know, for privacy reasons, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services does not comment on individual cases. Furthermore, the decision to hold an inquest is made by the Office of the Chief Coroner. The chief coroner and his staff are experts in their field and are responsible for determining whether an inquest is necessary.

Children's aid societies follow a joint ministry and Office of the Chief Coroner directive when a child who has been in care within the last year dies, to help understand what happened and to identify opportunities so that further deaths may be prevented.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: The continued neglect of colonial governments, such as this, means that young people like Devon, Rydell Mekenak and Kerri-Lynn Bunting live without hope, Mr. Speaker.

This week, the government voted down an amendment to Bill 116 to create a provincial mental health and addictions strategy for Indigenous peoples, despite a clear need with the higher number of suicides committed by Indigenous youth.

How many more young people have to die? How many young people have to lose hope before we wake up, as senior levels of government, and do what needs to be done to give these young people hope so they choose life over death?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Referred to the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Referred to the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that very important question. Our government takes mental health and addictions in the province of Ontario very seriously. That is why there is now an Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. And that is why the strategy will look specifically at the needs of Indigenous people, to ensure that we capture and provide the services that they need, when and where they need them.

Unfortunately, 15 years of neglect in this area has created the situation we have in the province of Ontario. We have to build the services—connected and integrated and holistic—so that all individuals have hope and all individuals, including our Indigenous population, have the ability to have the peace and what they need in order to go along their journey and have that hope instilled in them. It is our intention, utilizing Bill 116, to ensure that that is, in fact, what we do as a provincial government.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: My question is for the Minister of Health. I was proud to join my colleagues to support the passage of the Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act yesterday. The issue of mental health and addictions services is not partisan. Everyone in this House wants to ensure that Ontarians are fully supported. Our government has already been working to get people living with addictions the help they need to stay healthy and end their addiction.

1040

Can the minister tell the House what our government has been doing to address opioids and what we are planning to do in the future?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore for his question on this. I'd also like to thank the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, the Attorney General and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for their very hard work on this file.

With yesterday's passage of the Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act, we are working to build a modern mental health and addictions system. The act addresses key recommendations of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, which was created in 2009 to address this important issue. The Solicitor General, the member from Nickel Belt, myself and other members heard testimony from hundreds of witnesses. Thanks to the support of our colleagues from both sides of this House, we are now finally able to take action.

We are confident that the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence will make a real difference in the lives of Ontarians.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you to the outstanding minister for her work on this important issue. All members in this House recognize the importance of improving mental health and addiction services. People in our communities have struggled with mental health and with addictions, as have friends and family members. For too long, mental health has not been prioritized as highly as physical health.

I am proud that our government has been working to change this and that we took another important step yesterday in passing the Foundations for Promoting and Protecting

Mental Health and Addictions Services Act. Will the minister update us on what our government is doing to expand and improve mental health and addiction services?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government has been listening to Ontarians, and we know they expect us to take action on the mental health and addictions file. With yesterday's adoption of the Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act, we are improving the mental health and addiction services that Ontarians need.

Our government will invest \$3.8 billion over the next 10 years, to be implemented by a new Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence. The centre, working within Ontario Health, will develop clinical, quality and service standards for mental health and addictions so that patients will receive excellent and consistent care across the province. This will also enable performance monitoring across the system, allowing the service providers to get the services they need to deliver to patients and families.

Our government will continue to listen as we transform and modernize our mental health and addictions system.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. One of Ontario's federally licensed meat processing facilities was recently closed. This has closed a major market for Ontario's livestock farmers. It creates an even bigger problem because we've got a shortage of federally licensed plants in eastern Canada and, quietly, American processors are also saying no to Canadian-finished cattle. What this is doing is dropping the price. So, due to market forces beyond producers' control, they could be losing up to \$400 a head.

We have a program—or had a program—to protect farmers against market forces beyond their control. It was called business risk management, and it worked. It was bankable and predictable until the Liberals capped it. During the last campaign, we both promised—the NDP and the Conservatives—to lift that cap. My question to the minister is, what on earth are you waiting for?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member across the aisle for the question. I want to ensure the member that the issue of Ryding Regency, though it is a federally inspected plant, is of great concern not only to the beef producers but to our government to make sure that we can find places to have safe food processed in the most cost-effective manner.

As it relates to the support programs, I can tell you that we have been working very hard with all the stakeholders in reviewing the business risk management program, which, as you mentioned, was capped by the previous government so that in disasters such as this, it no longer works. We're working with all the industry to come up with a program that not only is there going forward, but is there to the extent that they need it going forward, because the program as it's presently designed will do nothing to help these farmers in these circumstances. We want to make sure we have a—

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I agree with the minister that this program no longer works because it's capped. What the minister is not telling the farmers of Ontario is that since he has been the Minister of Agriculture, the budget for the Ministry of Agriculture has been cut by over 25%, over \$250 million. You would think that at the least, this government who claims to love farmers could have taken some of that \$250 million and lifted the cap under risk management.

Make the program better, but lift the cap so farmers have what they need: bankability and predictability. You've cut 25% out of the ministry's budget. Lift the cap and directly impact those farmers today.

Interjections.

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

To the Minister of Agriculture to reply.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you to the member for the supplementary question. As I was saying, the program not only was capped, but also it doesn't work in times of need. It is based on the across-the-board cost of production and helping everybody a little bit in bad times, but there is nothing in the program that deals with situations like we have here. So what we're doing is getting all the people together and saying, "This is the money that's available. Let us figure out the best way we can do it to make sure our agriculture community is protected in times of need under circumstances beyond their control."

Of course, the item that you mentioned is beyond their control, but we need to make sure that help is there to do that. We've had a number of other instances. We had it last year with the DON in the corn. The program does not cover that, and so we need to fix it so that when times hit when something happens beyond their control, we have a program. The whole industry is working with us to design one of those, and we will be bringing that forward when it's—

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

The next question.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Michael Gravelle: My question is to the Solicitor General. Speaker, with the guns, gangs and drug problems in Thunder Bay continuing to get worse, I need to press the minister further about providing increased resources for the Thunder Bay Police Service to deal with this enormous challenge. With gangs from southern Ontario infiltrating Thunder Bay and bringing major crime to our community, we need to see financial support from the province and we need to see it now. When the federal government provided \$65 million to the province to deal with guns and gangs, we were very disappointed that Thunder Bay was not a recipient of some of those funds.

The time has come for that support to be provided, Minister, so I ask the minister today: Will your government provide financial support to the Thunder Bay Police Service to deal with this overwhelming challenge?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The short answer is yes. In fact, we announced yesterday \$195 million across police services boards to access the Community Safety and Policing Grant.

I was pleased to make that announcement yesterday. As I said, there are 89 police services boards who put in applications that focused on local needs, that focused on provincial priorities including guns and gangs, domestic violence and, of course, human trafficking. Those monies have been announced, that money is flowing and we are making a real difference in ensuring that our communities are safe and getting the funds that they need.

I think there is no one—I hope that there is no one—in this chamber who would disagree with the statement that our police services and our boards need to have the support that they deserve to protect their communities. We are doing that as a government. As I said, \$195 million is flowing to 89 police services boards across Ontario.

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

Mr. Michael Gravelle: Thank you, Minister. We'll look forward to seeing what portion of that goes to the Thunder Bay Police Service.

1050

On a related justice note, Speaker, the Thunder Bay District Jail is in a state of virtual crisis. With extreme overcrowding, there is a dangerously increased tension between the inmates, unsanitary conditions, and extremely unsafe working conditions for the dedicated correctional service staff who work there. While we wait for the construction of a new correctional facility in Thunder Bay, we are dealing with a dangerous situation that will only escalate if not dealt with.

So I really have two questions for the minister: First, can you provide us with more details on the timing of the building of the new correctional facility, and do you have any plans to deal with the overcrowding of the district jail today?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As the member knows only too well, serving in this portfolio previously, there are challenges in our corrections facilities. The corrections officers and the individuals who work in the 25-plus institutions across Ontario deal with some very challenging individuals in some, frankly, old infrastructure.

We have made an announcement. I'm very pleased—and of course, you were there when we made the announcement—to invest in the city of Thunder Bay and build a new corrections facility. That is moving forward, but we are going to, and we continue to, work directly with the community and the impacted stakeholders. We want to make sure that the facility that we build is what the corrections officers need and deserve and what the community and the justice sector need and deserve. Those conversations are ongoing now. We are in the final stages of tweaking the design-build because we want to get this right.

You know only too well that there are facilities in the province of Ontario that approach 100 years old. We need to take the time now to get it right, and we are doing that by consulting directly with the community.

DÉVELOPPEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE FRANCOPHONE

M. Sam Oosterhoff: Ma question est pour la ministre des Affaires francophones. Dans ma communauté, Niagara-

Ouest, bien des gens ont un lien particulier avec le fait français, soit ils sont francophones, ont des ancêtres—voire un nom de famille—francophones, ou bien ils ont simplement un goût pour la culture française. Ce n'est toutefois pas toujours l'impression de chacun de mes concitoyens qu'il existe une grande activité économique incontournable impliquant la francophonie, et dont l'Ontario peut et doit tirer avantage, sous peine de ne pas capitaliser sur nos forces vives et notre créativité ontariennes.

Est-ce que la ministre peut nous dire quels sont ses plans pour ce qui est de l'approche générale et des mesures qui seront à prendre par le ministère des Affaires francophones au cours de notre mandat?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie le député de Niagara-Ouest pour sa question. Notre gouvernement suscite l'intérêt de la part des communautés d'affaires franco-ontariennes et nous nous en réjouissons. Pour illustrer cela, j'aimerais citer un groupe francophone important, le Conseil de la coopération de l'Ontario, qui affirmait ce qui suit après l'annonce de notre énoncé économique de novembre : « L'orientation politique est intéressante. La francophonie n'est pas folklorisée, mais liée au développement économique. »

En collaboration avec mon collègue le ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce, et dans l'esprit de la rencontre entre notre premier ministre et le premier ministre du Québec à la fin novembre, je veux faire fructifier les liens commerciaux qui unissent les francophones dans notre belle et notre grande fédération, en commençant par tisser des liens avec nos voisins du Québec.

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

M. Sam Oosterhoff: Je remercie la ministre des Affaires francophones pour sa réponse. Ce thème qu'elle développe est réconfortant par sa fraîcheur et son caractère très positif. Au cours des dernières décennies, nous n'avons pas toujours su bien exploiter tout le potentiel des communautés d'affaires francophones en Ontario vu notre proximité avec le grand marché québécois—majoritairement francophone, faut-il encore le préciser.

Je sais que la ministre s'apprête à parler à un public d'élites des affaires et du monde politique au CORIM, à Montréal, à la mi-décembre. Peut-elle nous en dire davantage sur le message qu'elle portera là-bas?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Comme ministre des Affaires francophones, je veux aller au Conseil des relations internationales de Montréal pour livrer un message d'amitié et un appel au développement d'une nouvelle solidarité entre Franco-Ontariens et Québécois, y compris dans le domaine économique, en vue de relations qui auront un effet positif pour tous les Ontariens, francophones et anglophones.

Je pense à une collaboration nouvelle fondée sur les nouvelles réalités économiques—par exemple les nouvelles technologies des communications et l'intelligence artificielle—tournée vers l'avenir et, possiblement, arrimée à des grands projets comme celui de l'Université de l'Ontario français. Je pense aussi aux possibilités d'exportations accrues des entreprises ontariennes vers les marchés francophones à l'international.

Le plus grand service à rendre aux Franco-Ontariens, à ce moment-ci de leur histoire collective, est de leur faire prendre une part très active au dynamisme des affaires et au développement des technologies, pour l'enrichissement de tout l'Ontario.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I want to start by thanking you for the lovely holiday party you put on last night, celebrating the wonderful people who work here at the Legislative Assembly, and also, on behalf of New Democrats, to thank Louise Lebeau on her retirement for the work she has done for many, many years here in the Legislature. I wanted to congratulate her.

Merry Christmas to everyone. I hope everyone has a great holiday season to celebrate with family and friends.

My question is to the Premier. Last spring, when the government announced their budget, the Premier stood in this assembly and boldly predicted that parents would welcome his classroom cuts and that not one teacher would lose their job. This fall, as parents were left to deal with cuts and conflict and chaos in the schools caused by those very cuts, the Premier has fallen silent, not answering a single question about education since October, despite being asked on 18 separate occasions.

So my question is, will the Premier break his silence today and explain to parents why he feels his cuts are justified?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to wish everyone a merry Christmas, happy holidays, and I look forward to getting back in the chamber in the new year to do great things for Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, it's unreasonable for the OSSTF to say to parents that they will continue striking unless they get an additional \$750 million. To put that into perspective, it's every resident in the leader's riding. As a matter of fact, let's make it all of Hamilton, all of Burlington and all of Oakville, going up to them and saying, "You're paying an additional \$1,000 of tax." That doesn't fly, Mr. Speaker. Our number one priority is to keep the kids in the classroom.

I always differentiate between the hard-working front-line teachers who work their backs off educating our students over the heads of the unions. The heads of the unions want to make sure they line the pockets of the unions. They don't worry about the teachers. They don't worry about the parents. Our government worries about the teachers—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, now we see the real Premier, the one who took on the unions from day one and said that they were union thugs and created this poisoned environment that has set negotiations so far back. It's really, really troubling. But the buck does stop with the Premier. He's the one who claimed that the parents would welcome these cuts, and, of course, they haven't. He's the one who said that larger class sizes would make students tougher,

and, of course, it won't. And he's the one who told teachers that not one person would lose their job, and, of course, many have.

Now, as parents, students and educators reel from the chaos caused by these cuts, all the Premier can do is name-call the people who work in our education system. How can the Premier pretend that he is not the one wholly responsible for this mess?

Hon. Doug Ford: We have two separate values here in the chamber. The separate values are: The leader of the NDP is beholden to the head of the unions—by the way, it's the public sector unions because she has lost all support in the private sector unions because they believe in what we're doing: creating jobs and prosperity and wealth. She has totally lost the construction trades; they know it.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what we can do with \$750 million. We can put 7,500 mental health workers on the front lines. We could help 64 new elementary schools or 28 new secondary schools—just to remind the public that under the previous regime, they closed 600 schools, more than any other government in the history of Ontario.

Our priority is to make sure we take care of the students, we take care of the parents and we take care of the teachers. We don't take care of the heads of the unions that are beholden to the NDP and the—

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

1100

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Unfortunately, nobody buys the Premier's vision of the world. In fact, our parents and people in communities value the work that education workers do in our schools to help their children build a good future.

Look, teachers and education workers have been pretty clear for this whole process. This is about the Ford government's classroom cuts, no matter which way the Premier wants to try to paint it. The Premier spent the spring, as we all know, picking a fight with the people who make our schools work, and he has spent every day since October trying to avoid blame for the conflict that he's created. But obviously today, Speaker, he's doubling down on that conflict, because that's what he thrives on.

Now parents and students are looking for the Premier to do the right thing by them, but obviously he's refusing to do that. So I guess my question is, will he finally stand in his place today and announce that he's reversing those reckless classroom cuts and making sure that our quality education system is still there for our kids?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, the parents I've talked to—and I've talked to a lot of teachers. Even they are fed up with it. Every three to four years, they hold the province hostage. They hold the economy hostage. They hold the parents and the students hostage. There's no predictability.

People want certainty, Mr. Speaker, and this government will make sure that they have certainty. They're going to make sure that the students have a safe place to go to school. We're going to make sure that teachers are well

compensated. They're actually the highest-compensated teachers in the entire country at \$92,000 a year.

By the way, the teachers do a great job. They really do. They do a great job. You know something? Some of the teachers I've talked to are frustrated with the heads of the unions. They want to get back in the classroom. They want to start doing what they're being paid to do, and that's teach our students.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier, but I can tell you that the only thing that folks in Ontario are certain about is that this government is holding our kids' education hostage with the highly illogical way they're handling this.

Nonetheless, my next question to the Premier is that last night on CBC News, Ontario families heard the tragic story of Oula Jaber, a mother and grandmother who has been forced to live in a hospital bed, breathing through a tube, for the last two years as she languishes on a wait-list for surgery.

Can the Premier explain to Ms. Jaber's family and to all Ontarians why anyone should have to live in a hospital bed year after year waiting for procedures that should be available but simply never arrive?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. This is a situation that we are aware of. Although I'm not able to discuss the particular circumstances, I am sorry for this woman and her family. I'm not able to discuss the particular circumstances because of privacy issues, which I'm sure you will understand.

However, I am able to say that this was a very rare and unusual procedure. There are very, very few surgeons who are able to perform this procedure. This was not anything to do with hallway health care; this had to do with the particular circumstances for this woman. Now, that's not satisfactory, but it was due to the medical procedure that this person needed.

However, I can tell you that in terms of hallway health care, we are making strides. We do have a plan that is reducing the number of people who are receiving hallway health care. Those numbers are going to continue to go down in the future, and we are working on many fronts in order to deal with that.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ms. Jaber has missed her daughter's wedding and the birth of her granddaughter while she languishes in a hospital bed. But her story is far from unique, regardless of the way this minister is trying to paint the situation. Earlier this year, I raised the case of Maria Konopeskas, an Ottawa resident stuck in hospital for two years while she waits for home care supports.

The Premier said he would fix hallway medicine, Speaker. Why are things going from bad to worse under the Conservatives?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Speaker, I wish to assure you and, through you, the leader of the official opposition and

the public that this situation is not the norm. It had to do with this person's particular requirements for a surgical procedure.

But we are working to reduce hallway health care. As you know, this is not a simple thing to do. I am working with the Minister of Long-Term Care in order to create more long-term-care spaces. We did make a promise that we would create 15,000 new spaces within five years. We're well on the track to doing that, because we need to make sure that those patients who don't need to be in hospital, the alternate-level-of-care patients, are able to move out of hospital. That has been a problem because of the previous government's inactivity on this file, their lack of creating those long-term-care spaces, that has allowed for this procedure to happen, allowed for this buildup of patients in the hospital.

We're also working on our mental health and addictions plan to make sure that the patients who cycle in and out of our hospital emergency departments are not doing that anymore, that they're going to be able to receive the community mental health supports that they need so they don't end up in the hospital because—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, re-announcing allocations of long-term-care beds that the previous government had already announced does not actually build beds. Twenty-one beds built when almost 3,000 new people joined the waiting list is not good enough for the people of Ontario.

The reality for patients like Oula and Maria, however, is that the Conservatives under Doug Ford have continued the same policies as the Liberals before them, effectively freezing funding for health care and leaving hospitals operating over capacity to deal with the fallout in crowded hallways. That leaves patients like Oula and Maria waiting under a Liberal Premier and now continuing to wait under a Conservative Premier.

Why is the Premier taking things from bad to worse when he promised to fix hallway medicine?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I'll remind the members that we refer to each other by our ministerial title, if applicable, and our riding name, if not.

I look to the Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Speaker. And again through you, I would like to indicate to the leader of the official opposition the actual facts of the situation, which are these: We are investing \$1.9 billion more in health this year over last year, we're investing \$384 million more in hospital operations and we've also invested an additional \$68 million to small and medium-sized hospitals, to correct a funding formula problem created by the previous government, where those hospitals were having trouble making ends meet.

But there's more to be done. We are working on that. We are creating those 15,000 beds. We are creating the local Ontario health teams. They're going to be able to connect care for people so they don't end up in hospitals in the first place. We have great examples of some of the

work that's already being done. Southlake@home is a great example being done at Southlake hospital that's connecting those patients who are alternate level of care with home care supports so people can go back home, which is where they want—

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

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank you again for hosting that wonderful party. It was great to talk with my colleagues. I want to wish everybody a merry Christmas as we head back to our families and our communities.

Speaker, it should come as no surprise that at the top of my Christmas wish list is for the Premier to actually answer one of my questions this session. So I'm hoping for a Christmas miracle, Speaker.

When the Premier announced back in June the roles of agents general, he said that those patronage deployments were experts. And for the expertise of his former party president, a 26-year-old lacrosse player and Dean French's niece, he offered to pay upwards of \$165,000 a year, plus expenses. He also said that the agents general appointees would be "accountable to real metrics, including deals closed and businesses helped."

So to the Premier, a very simple question: Will he table, today, that accountability document that he has clearly had prepared that shows what the two remaining agents general appointees have accomplished?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Our government is taking a thoughtful and thorough approach to filling these positions because we understand their importance in attracting trade and investment opportunities. We're taking our time in ensuring the candidates selected for our offices in New York and London are both credible and competent in their ability to serve the province and work on behalf of the people of Ontario in these key international markets.

But you asked for some metrics. Let me tell you: In fiscal 2018-19, Ontario's trade and investment offices generated \$394.5 million in investment attractions, leading to the creation of 1,640 new jobs and facilitated market access for 640 Ontario companies that have reported close to \$70 million in sales.

Speaker, we need good, qualified people who can continue to help sell Ontario to the world. We look forward to providing an update when we have more to share in the future.

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

1110

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Alas, Speaker, I guess it is a lump of coal for me this Christmas, and of course for the taxpayers of the province of Ontario, because the Premier, who once promised to respect the taxpayer, is now asking the people of Ontario to pay six-figure salaries to his friends, to his relatives and to insiders, and he can't even tell us what they do.

It's not just these jobs. From the high-priced Washington job he gave his campaign tour director to his request for an off-the-books personal pleasure wagon, the Premier has become the conductor of the gravy train he used to rail against.

Speaker, why does he think the hard-working people of Ontario should foot the bill for his personal patronage appointments?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, Ontario operates this international network of trade and investment offices. You asked again for results; I can give you the results. In our international trade office in South Korea, we can tell you that the Dayli company is investing \$20 million here in Ontario in a brand new investment fund.

In India, VVDN Technologies announced the hiring of 200 engineers—we're talking about master's- and PhD-level engineers—here in Kitchener-Waterloo. Those are the kinds of successes—we worked for months on that one, Speaker.

I can tell you that our agents general for Dallas and Chicago have been working through the long, mandatory and thorough security processes because both offices are co-located in the federal consul general offices. They're both hard at work, both in market and in Ontario, as they work through those processes. They will bring the same successes as all of the other successes we've shown—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. But first, I want to take the opportunity to thank you for the great party last night and to thank everybody here for the service they've given to the province of Ontario and to the people in their ridings.

Premier, our government had a monumental year, achieving many great successes in serving the people of this province, whether it has been our historic return of jobs and employment, the prioritization and planning of crucial infrastructure projects or helping to end hallway health care by investing in vital front-line services. What is clear is that our plan in this province is working and the people are finally receiving the support they have needed for some time.

Premier, can you elaborate on key milestones and initiatives that this government has achieved and brought forward and what our priorities will be for next year?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to first of all start by thanking our great MPP from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. He's doing an incredible job.

Our MPPs have seen it first-hand in the prosperity and growth that we've shown this province, with over 271,000 more families that are out there working, that can put food on their tables. As a matter of fact, for example, in the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula area, the unemployment rate dropped in November—are you ready for this one? This is a record throughout the country—by 2.4%, the lowest level in 19 years.

We have more people working, more people off the government payroll, and they're actually contributing. They're contributing back into society by paying more taxes. More money is coming up to Queen's Park, to a tune of \$1.6 billion. That's what happens when you make sure you that you have an environment where the economy can thrive, and employ more—

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

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Again, back to the Premier: Premier, this has been incredible news and one of the many great examples of the leadership and culture change that our government has brought back to Queen's Park.

I know that in my riding the support that our government is providing thanks to the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act and the Plan to Build Ontario Together Act will be making a major impact. Whether it's removing unnecessary and burdensome red tape on our local job creators, ensuring immediate financial relief to families through tax cuts or providing a five-year freeze on WSIB premiums for our not-for-profit organizations, our government is taking action for the people.

Premier, can you speak more to the actions our government has taken over the past year and our plans for the year to come?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, I want to thank our MPP. Mr. Speaker, one of the historic actions our government has undertaken is to support the commitment to get our province moving again. After 15 years of scandal, mismanagement and all the backroom deals, those days are done. Prosperity is here in Ontario. We've never seen so many jobs created over numerous decades. No matter where I go, no matter if it's in the United States, or our great Minister of Economic Development travelling the world, spreading the word that Ontario is open for business, open for jobs, we're going to continue making sure that we give incentives to the people out there by putting more money in their pocket, giving incentives to small businesses as we reduce their tax rate by 8.75%, again, until these small businesses can grow into larger businesses, buy more equipment—and, by the way, we expedite capital expenses of \$3.8 billion, a total of \$5 billion—

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

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

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

After 100 years of General Motors in Oshawa, this week most of GM's Oshawa assembly line workers will work their last shift, with the final vehicle expected to roll off the line next week. The end of GM production in Oshawa will leave thousands of proud auto workers in my community without a job, and it will have devastating ripple effects across the local economy and the auto parts supply chain.

This is a tough time for Oshawa. We deserved to have a Premier stand up for us and stand alongside us, but instead we got a Premier whose roll-over instinct was to say, "The ship has already left the dock. They're gone. They're done."

Those were his words then. Are they still his words now to the workers and families?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I want to reinforce that we have the best auto workers in the world and we will always fight for them. We know that now; we learned that when Toyota won the platinum award, announcing them as the best auto plant in the world. So we know we have the capacity.

We were very happy when we learned that Unifor and GM reached their agreement some time ago to keep 300 of those jobs in Oshawa. It was very good news for the city of Oshawa and all of Durham. We know that this historic site will continue to be a hub for vehicle parts manufacturing, technological innovation and regional economic growth.

Speaker, that's why we continue to invest in our auto strategy, driving prosperity. We continue to invest in all of the automotive parts, the mould makers and the automakers.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Back to the Premier: It was brutal that the Premier of Ontario didn't fight for Oshawa and the future of auto manufacturing in this province. He threw in the towel before even getting into the ring.

Speaker, since the Premier decided not to show up, let me update him on what has been happening at the GM plants in the US that were also slated for closure.

Last week, it was announced that the GM plant in Lordstown, Ohio, will now be making electric batteries, creating over 1,000 jobs. And just the other day, General Motors announced that they are prepared to produce electric trucks at their plant in Detroit. They were also told it was the end of the line, but their leadership didn't just decide to take it.

So I wonder what could have happened, what might have been different, if this Premier had had the nerve to fight back.

He accused us of false hope. Well, do you know what? The folks in Lordstown and Detroit also had some of that, and now they have manufacturing in their future.

Does this Premier think that there still was nothing that he could have done for Oshawa? Or is he just getting the GM commemorative T-shirt?

Interjections.

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

The question has been referred to the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Once again, I want to assure the people of Ontario that we have the best auto workers in the world and our government continues to stand up for them.

We've always made sure that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs, and that means protecting and creating jobs.

We're so pleased—I toured the General Motors facility in Markham just the other day, where they have 700 employees.

The neat thing about Ontario is that we have all five of the world's largest automakers in Ontario. We're the number two automaker in North America, just a bit behind Michigan. We're also the number two IT sector in North

America, just a bit behind Silicon Valley. We talk about that because the future of automotive is going to need both manufacturing and technology, and Ontario is the only centre in the world that has both of these.

We have a great future ahead of us in the automotive sector because Ontario is open for business and open for jobs.

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WOMEN'S ISSUES

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question is for the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. I know the minister has been very busy since she's been sworn into her new role in June, and I want to thank the minister for all her hard work. She has spoken in this House about child welfare reform, violence against women, women's shelters, hosting anti-human-trafficking round tables and increasing women's economic opportunities. Thank you, Minister.

Recently, the minister was in Victoria to speak with her status-of-women counterparts from all across this country. Can the minister please tell this House what was discussed at the conference and how it will impact Ontarians?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for her great question and all her hard work on this topic as well.

I was thrilled to be in Victoria last week to speak with fellow ministers of women's issues from many provinces and territories, as well as the federal Minister for Gender Equality.

Speaker, we all know that women's issues cross all government departments. Whether it's economic empowerment, justice issues or representation in appointments and boards, policies made by governments impact all genders.

One area of particular importance is combating gender-based violence. This includes shelter and safety systems, cyber violence prevention and sexual violence supports. I want to thank my colleagues from across the country for their insights into such an important topic.

I am also honoured to be the co-lead of the human trafficking task team in Canada. I'm looking forward to working further with my federal, provincial and territorial partners to explore opportunities to host a national conference, summit or expert panel to address the pressing issue of human trafficking across Ontario and Canada.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you to the minister for that answer, and for representing our great province with such grace on the national stage.

Speaker, as the minister mentioned, gender-based violence and human trafficking are serious issues that impact the lives of many individuals in Ontario. It is an issue that crosses economic spectrums, genders and ages.

I had the honour of hosting a fundraising event for our local Women's Habitat a few weeks ago to help decorate bedrooms for women in need, so they have a warm place to go when they are fleeing terrible situations.

Two weeks ago, our Premier named the minister, along with the Solicitor General, co-leads in our government's

anti-human-trafficking strategy. Our government also announced investments in supports for survivors and resources to combat such a horrible crime. Can the minister please explain further what those investments are meant for and how the strategy will be formed?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you again to the member for your question and for being an advocate for the women in your riding and across Ontario.

We know that the crime of human trafficking impacts victims and families in multiple ways. That is why our government's anti-human-trafficking strategy is being co-led. The Solicitor General and I have already been hard at work.

We are also working across ministries with our colleagues and across sectors to build a strategy that is truly impactful and that helps survivors, while holding offenders accountable.

As a first step, we have committed to \$20 million a year in annualized funding for survivor supports and aid to help bring traffickers to justice. Speaker, this funding will go toward wraparound services such as transitional housing, trauma-informed counselling and mental health and addiction treatments.

We are also providing funding for Indigenous-led initiatives that support culturally appropriate care, that are designed by, and led by, Indigenous people.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Gurratan Singh: It's 2019, and in Canada, no one should be prohibited from working because of their faith. But currently in Ontario, Sikh paramedics are being told that they have to choose between their faith and their profession.

A change in specifications to helmets worn by paramedics is threatening to make it impossible for Sikhs in Ontario to serve in that role. Despite repeated requests to the ministry to provide an exemption or a waiver that would respect the human rights of Sikhs, the ministry has taken no action.

My question is to the Premier. Will he act now to end this discrimination and ensure that Sikh paramedics can continue to serve in the valuable role that they were trained to do?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Steve Clark: We value our municipal partners. We very much respect the information that the honourable member opposite has placed on the table.

I again want to say to the honourable member that I appreciate your bringing this matter before us. I would be more than happy to sit down with you after question period. But, again, our government has pledged that we are going to continue to work with our municipal partners. We want to sit down and, really, if there are issues that they need clarification on, there's always the opportunity for us to have those meetings.

I want to thank the honourable member for placing that forward.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Back to the Premier: This situation was highlighted in a recent arbitration between the

city of Hamilton paramedic services and OPSEU. In her decision the arbitrator says, “To exclude capable and valuable paramedics ... is an intolerable result. Can it really be that a Sikh cannot be a paramedic in this province if he observes his religion by having ... Kesh?” However, this is what she felt she had to do based on the Conservative government’s regulations.

The ministry said last August that they would consider changing the regulation. With just a few days left to live up to this commitment, will the Premier end this discrimination now?

Hon. Steve Clark: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the question. Our government believes in building inclusive workplaces in Ontario. We are certainly aware of the recent arbitration and are reviewing the decision. We are working with our partners in the Ministry of Labour and the paramedic service that was involved in this case. We are working to ensure that reasonable accommodations are available to health care professionals. We respect the work that they do very much.

We will have more to say on this issue shortly. Thank you very much for the question.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Ontario’s investment in refurbishing its nuclear fleet has enabled the nuclear industry to develop and advance its skills and capabilities. Our mature industry of operators, suppliers and highly skilled trades are exactly what’s needed to support the development of small modular reactors. Mr. Speaker, this positions Ontario as one of the best places in the world to develop new nuclear technologies.

Will the Associate Minister of Energy tell the House how signing an MOU with New Brunswick and Saskatchewan will create even more highly skilled jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Bill Walker: I thank the honourable member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for an excellent question and for all the work he does on behalf of his constituents.

We’ve already invested \$26 billion to refurbish the province’s nuclear reactors to support reliable, emissions-free energy and highly skilled jobs, making us a leader in the world in this sector. The nuclear industry supports over 60,000 jobs across the province, many of them in my great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. And, Mr. Speaker, even more jobs will be created as a result of further investment in nuclear technology right here in Ontario.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that 6,000 highly skilled jobs will be created per year from 2030 to 2040 if we invest in small modular reactor—SMR—technology accordingly. In addition to creating jobs, SMRs will have significant investment and export potential for Ontario.

The Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines will outline this incredible potential in the supplementary answer.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: It’s apparent that investing in SMRs will support thousands of jobs while producing non-

emitting power and substantial export potential. Would the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines tell the House about the future market potential of developing SMRs here in Ontario?

Hon. Bill Walker: Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I thank the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for the work that he does and for his question. I want to wish all my colleagues in this place a merry Christmas and safe travels back to your ridings.

Last night, we spoke at a reception with the Ontario Nuclear Advantage and the Canadian Nuclear Association. It wasn’t as big as your reception, but we were loud and proud, Mr. Speaker: a full room of people who see the economic opportunity that’s attached to developing small modular reactors.

In terms of on-grid potential, we could replace fossil fuel plants in our system, with an economic value of \$108 billion; off-grid, more than \$35 billion in remote communities, forestry and mining operations; and of course, the export—if we get this right, and we will, by 2030, we’ll see an economic potential of more than \$150 billion.

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The Premier’s leadership in signing the MOU with our partners in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick has already attracted other provinces and jurisdictions who want to get in on the action and make sure that SMRs are part of the energy solution for the future of Ontario, Canada and the rest of the world.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to wish all my colleagues Merry Christmas and happy holidays.

Hon. Todd Smith: Merry Christmas, Tom.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you.

My question is to the Premier. The recent Auditor General’s report confirmed what new home buyers have been saying for years: that Tarion protects bad builders and not consumers. The previous Liberal government ignored the problems at Tarion for 15 long years as Ontario families struggled with cracked foundations, leaky windows, mould and other serious deficiencies in their newly built homes. But the current government is making these families wait even longer for help. The status quo will continue for at least another year.

Tarion won’t slowly fix itself. Why won’t the Premier appoint an administrator to take over Tarion and start fixing the problems for families who are struggling right now?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: One thing the member opposite and I absolutely agree on is that for the last 15 years, the new home warranty program in Ontario absolutely crumbled under the Liberal government’s watch. It was absolutely appalling, what they allowed to happen.

The fact of the matter is, we have been very decisive and we’ve been taking action based on what we’ve heard from consumers. Our reform has focused on overhauling the warranty program, enhancing claims and dispute resolution processes, introducing measures to ensure better

built homes, and increasing transparency at Tarion. We've been listening and we've been acting, and we're bringing confidence back into new home ownership in Ontario.

I have to share with you that we need to be measured in how we go forward. We have acted on 27 out of 32 recommendations from the Auditor General.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: The government is tinkering around the edges at Tarion, with changes that don't go far enough and won't happen for at least another year. That's not good for families in Cardinal Creek Village, who need help right now.

This morning, I provided the Premier, the Minister of GCS and other government MPPs several letters from these families, who are dealing with serious deficiencies in their new homes and can't get help from Tarion because Tarion would rather protect the developer instead of these families.

Later today, I will table a bill that would help these families right now. Why does the Premier think the families in Cardinal Creek should wait a second longer for help?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, I really appreciate the question. We have been very decisive and acted very quickly, quite frankly, as soon as the Auditor General report was tabled, because we care about families across Ontario who have not been properly treated and respected when it comes to the new home warranty.

The reality is, we are moving quickly and we're going to be absolutely overhauling the board at Tarion. We're going to make sure that the consumer's voice is heard. In doing so, we're reducing the size of the board from 16 to 12. Home builders and vendors will not be allowed to have more than one third representation. Another third will be made up by appointments, with the remaining third being experts and consumers, who deserve to have their voices heard when it comes to what matters when building the biggest investment that they may be making in their lifetime.

I am so proud of the work that our team has done in a short amount of time. I can tell you with certainty that people will have confidence in the new home warranty program that we'll be bringing forward.

I thank you very much for this question. I look forward to working with you—

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

POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: My question is to the Solicitor General. Yesterday, the Solicitor General announced that our government is providing police services in Ontario with a \$195-million investment so that they have the needed resources to keep their communities and citizens safe and to combat crime.

In my riding of Markham–Thornhill and across York region, we have a strong partnership with the York Regional Police service. I want to thank them for their dedicated service to our community.

The individual needs of police services across Ontario are as diverse as the communities themselves. That's why I'm grateful that the Solicitor General's new Community Safety and Policing Grant program allows local police services to receive funding to tackle the local needs of community safety.

Can the Solicitor General tell us how the YRP is being supported through the Community Safety and Policing Grant program?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I appreciate the question from the member from Markham–Thornhill. I know that he understands how important it is that we keep our communities safe and provide the resources our police need to do the important work they do.

As you mentioned, I was pleased to announce the recipients of the \$195-million Community Safety and Policing Grant yesterday. In particular, because you are from York region, I would like to highlight what York region is receiving. The York Regional Police services will be receiving \$16 million through the Community Safety and Policing Grant. They have rightfully highlighted a number of key initiatives that are going to make an important difference to the people of York region.

They are supporting an integrated and multi-sectoral partnership that aims to address the issues of gun violence, sexual violence and harassment, and human trafficking. It's important for people to understand that human trafficking in particular is a funding pathway that gangs are using in the province of Ontario to fund their illegal activities. The investment that we're making in York region and across Ontario is going to chop that funding opportunity off so that gangs are not using our young people as fundraising revenue to assist their illegal activities across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I hate to say this, but that concludes question period for 2019.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask the pages to now assemble. Is everybody here?

It is now time to say a word of thanks to our legislative pages. Our pages are smart, trustworthy and hard-working. They are indispensable to the effective functioning of the chamber. They cheerfully and efficiently deliver notes, run errands, transport important documents throughout the precinct, and make sure our water glasses are always full. We are indeed fortunate to have them here.

Our pages depart having made new friends, with a greater understanding of parliamentary democracy and with memories that will last a lifetime. Each of them will go home and carry on, continue their studies and no doubt continue to contribute to their communities, their province and their country in important ways. We expect great things from all of you. Maybe some of you someday will take your seats in this House as members or work here as staff. We wish you all well.

Please join me in showing our appreciation to our legislative pages.

Applause.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I recess the House, I hope the House will grant me the indulgence of making a few concluding remarks. We've had a very interesting and busy fall sitting of the Legislature, and I think we've raised the bar in terms of decorum. I want to thank all of the members for their assistance in that objective.

We all share our responsibilities representing our constituents and working together to improve life in the province. You've worked very, very hard this fall and you deserve enormous credit for the work that you've done on behalf of the people of Ontario, so thank you for that.

I want to wish you and your families, your staff, and all the staff who help us in the chamber all the very best for the holidays, merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah and all the best in 2020. Thank you very much.

This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.
The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I would like to introduce a wonderful constituent from my riding of Markham-Thornhill, Sharavati Bhide. She's here in the gallery to watch her daughter Leela Bhide, who is serving as the page captain today.

Thank you for being here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I'd like to welcome Radu Cucui. He's the proud father of page Alexandra Cucui from my riding of Mississauga-Streetsville. Welcome to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Joel Harden: I rise on some sombre news today. Unfortunately, we have an intractable problem in Ottawa which I know is shared across the province and across the country, and that is an affordable housing crisis and a homelessness crisis.

I want to salute my colleague Catherine McKenney, who's the councillor in Ottawa for Somerset ward, who is moving a motion later this month for a housing emergency. At this point right now in our city, 12,000 households are waiting for community housing; 600 people are living in cramped hotels rooms, which have been rented by the city because our shelters are overflowing; 19,000 households in our city spend over 50% of their income on shelter, leaving them impoverished; and last night, according to public health reports, 92 people slept outside in the cold Ottawa winter. I think that should be sobering for all of us thinking about generosity in the holiday season, that so many of our neighbours in Ottawa and around the province are living without affordable housing.

I want to salute Councillor McKenney's call. I also want to make note of the fact that inasmuch as we debate

how much money we have for housing, another announcement crossed my wires today, and that is that Canada's banks have recently disclosed that they will be paying out bonuses in excess of \$15 billion to executives in the banking industry. I want to ask us, at Christmastime, what kind of a province we're living in when billions are flowing to banking executives and people don't have a safe place to live? We need better priorities.

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF EASTERN ONTARIO

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: From a young age, I was incredibly fortunate to be able to rely on the world-class care provided at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, CHEO. I was born with a cleft palate that could very well have left me with difficulty speaking, were it not for the incredible doctors at CHEO. They have since provided top-notch care to both my brother and I as we were growing up dealing with various health challenges.

Since then, I have tried to give back to the hospital that has given my family so much. I've volunteered with them for over 20 years, including at their annual telethon fundraiser, and I was honoured in 2007 to receive CHEO's Order of the Good Bear award.

Last week, I had the chance to tour the site of the future 1door4care project on the CHEO campus, where initial geological work is already under way. I was incredibly pleased when our government committed funding to this project in our 2019 provincial budget—a cause that I have been fighting for since my election. The 1door4care project will centralize mental health and developmental services at the CHEO campus, providing one-stop access to families who are in need of support. I am excited about this project and how it will improve services for children and youth across Ottawa.

I look forward to continuing to be a champion for CHEO as an elected representative, as I have been my entire life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and merry Christmas to everyone.

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Today, I rise to speak about the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In March 2019, I stood in this House and introduced my private member's bill to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Ontario. Bill 76 would require the government of Ontario to take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Ontario are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

On November 28, 2019, British Columbia passed Bill 41, which made it the first province in Canada to pass a law that implements UNDRIP. This is a historic shift in Canadian legislation, and I commend British Columbia on passing such an important law. British Columbia has stepped up and shown that they have the political will to leave colonialism where it belongs—in the past.

I stand here again and again and talk about many issues: inequity and inequality in access to services in the north, environmental racism, lack of clean drinking water—basic human rights. I normalize when our people pay for the mistakes of the government with their health and with their lives. I am tired of the jurisdictional games that are played with the lives of the people. If Ontario unequivocally supports the human rights of Indigenous people in this province, then why aren't they doing the right thing and moving Bill 76 forward? Meegwetch.

FAITH DICKINSON

Mr. Dave Smith: We've reached the time of year when our focus is on Christmas and the concept of giving without an expectation of receiving anything in return.

I'd like to talk about a young girl from Lakefield, a community in my riding, who embodies this. When she was just nine years old, Faith Dickinson found herself wanting to do something because she learned that when cancer patients are in the middle of their treatment they often get very cold. Faith knew that her fleece blanket was something that kept her warm when she cuddled up with it on the couch, and this inspired her to do something to help. Her idea was to make fleece blankets for cancer patients, hoping it would bring warmth, comfort and a sense of love to those individuals who are fighting this horrible disease.

In 2012, she made her first cuddle blanket and gave it to her aunt, who was battling cancer. Her initiative has grown, and she now has a drop-in centre in Lakefield where volunteers come in to help make this little gesture that means so much to those who are fighting cancer.

To date, she has given more than 4,000 "cuddles" to patients across the globe. In 2017, Faith was awarded the Princess Diana legacy award for her charitable work and was actually invited to attend the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle.

Thank you, Faith. Your small gesture for those battling this horrible disease has made life a little bit warmer and a lot more loved.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Paul Miller: I had a visit the other day from Elizabeth Stec. Elizabeth is a constituent, a registered nurse and one of the 43,500 members of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. The RNAO is asking us—all of us in this Legislature—to focus our minds and resources on an escalating public health crisis in our province: opioid overdoses.

In 2016, just over two Ontarians on average were dying a day from an accidental opioid overdose. In 2017, it was three per day. In 2018, it was four per day. In the first quarter of 2019, an average of over five people died per day across our province as a direct result of opioid overdose. And yet, in the face of this crisis, the government's response has been wholly inadequate.

Rather than meeting the crisis head-on with a focus on saving lives, they have placed an arbitrary cap on the number of consumption and treatment service sites to 21 in a province in which communities from east to west, north to south, in all of our ridings, are dealing with loss and grief from accidental overdose deaths. Moreover, 18 months into their mandate, only 16 of those 21 sites have been funded, and this government's approval process has bound communities into knots with bureaucratic and political barriers.

I urge the government to listen to our front-line health care workers, who see the real impact of this crisis every day as part of their jobs. We must listen to our nurses and hear the cries for help from constituents who are struggling with their own addictions, as well as those who are dealing with the loss of loved ones to these addictions. This government must move as though life depends on the response, because it does.

1310

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD PROGRÈS DU GOUVERNEMENT

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Good afternoon, Speaker.

'Twas the night before Christmas and all in this chamber

Will reflect upon 2019, so let's take a look at the numbers;

271,600, the number of jobs created,

\$30 billion in infrastructure funding to build what is needed,

\$1 billion saved annually through centralized procurement

And fixing the hydro mess, so the lights can stay on for our seniors, is a requirement.

We announced \$27.5 million in support for Indigenous economic development

Et nous avons investi 1 milliard de dollars pour rendre le logement communautaire plus sûr et plus durable. Nous n'avions pas hésité.

From our new Ontario health teams who collaborate on patient-centred health care

To announcing long-term-care projects so those who need not be in the hospital can be elsewhere.

We increased the number of high-dose flu shots for those most vulnerable

And invested in programs and services for our seniors, so they can be more comfortable.

We're telling the world that Ontario is the place to be
To do business, for jobs, raise a family, we all agree
But we acknowledge there's more to be done

Alors travaillons ensemble, and let's continue the work we have begun.

Now I conclude my version of this classic

My friends in the opposition, let's try not to be so dramatic

Please, all members, staff and Clerks come back safely in the new year

The opposition, the independents, our government caucus and our Premier.

Have a merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah and a wonderful new year, everybody.

JULIA LANE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: As always, it is a great pleasure to rise in this House to recognize the achievements of the great people in the Windsor-Essex region. Today, I have the honour of recognizing swimmer Julia Lane from Windsor, Ontario, who is a four-time world record holder, with a pending fifth world record after competing in a swim meet in Windsor this past weekend.

At just 20 years old, Julia holds the Down syndrome world records in swimming for the 50 fly, the 100 free, the 200 free, the 400 free categories, and a pending fifth record for the 50 free category. Julia's first three records were set at a swim meet in Windsor, Ontario, on November 4, and the fourth at a swim meet in London on November 24.

Julia's dedication and passion for swimming started at the age of three when she started hanging out around a pool deck. Julia swims six times a week and trains in CrossFit, waking up as early as 4:30 in the morning for practice.

She's currently training to compete in the next world Down syndrome games in Portugal in 2022, where I know she will make this entire country proud and inspired by her achievements.

Julia is truly an inspiration to our community, province and country. At 20 years old, this is just the beginning for Julia, who will undoubtedly be setting world records for years to come. I look forward to following her achievements and her demonstrating that with dedication, passion and commitment, the sky is the limit.

Julia, we are all so proud of you. Thank you for inspiring us all, and good luck in all your future endeavours.

LORNE NELSON HOOPER

Mr. John Fraser: I'm really pleased and proud to say a few words about my father-in-law, Lorne Nelson Hooper, who passed away on November 30 at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre in Ottawa.

He was born August 17, 1922. He served his country both in the forces and at the Department of National Defence for more than 60 years. He also left an incredible legacy of a family: an only daughter, Linda, who is my wonderful, patient wife; three grandchildren, Kirsten, John and James; and three great-grandchildren, Vaughan,

Sloane and Fraser, who all got to visit him the week before, on the Saturday, which was really quite special.

At age 94, he wrote a letter that got his wife, Yvonne, my mother-in-law, a chance to meet the Queen, a really incredible thing, which just goes to show that even when you're 90, there are things to look forward to.

He was an incredible person. He had all his marbles—he scored higher on cognitive tests than I would. He peacefully went in his sleep, something that I think was very fitting for him.

I just wanted to say a great deal of thanks to his friends, Olaf and Pat, Joanne and Claire, Joyce and George and the many others who visited him quite frequently. He was never missing any visitors, which made a big difference in his life. You took a genuine interest in him because he took a genuine interest in everyone.

I want to thank the staff at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre, especially the folks on Ottawa 2 east, the recreation staff—all the staff there. They knew him as Charlie Brown. Yes, he got himself a nickname. He made up his nickname. They took it up. He kind of looked like Charlie Brown. It was really special to him and they treated him in a great way. It made a world of difference to him in the final years of his life. Linda and I and all our family can't thank you enough.

SINDH MUSIC FESTIVAL

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Over the weekend I had the pleasure of attending the Sindh Music Festival in my region of Peel. I would like to thank the Sindhi Association of North America, or SANA Canada, for inviting me. I also want to take the opportunity to congratulate the organizers, volunteers, performers and attendees for making it such a successful event. Without all of their hard work and dedication it would not be possible to put together one of the largest shows of Sindhi culture and music in our community.

The Sindhis are an Indo-Aryan ethno-linguistic group who speak the Sindhi language and are native to the Sindh province of Pakistan. They are so very proud of their language and traditions which they are passing on to their children, which was very evident at the event.

Ontario is a vibrant province with a diverse community that welcomes residents from all around the world. This is reflected in my riding of Mississauga Centre, across the region of Peel and, of course, across Ontario. In Ontario we proudly share our culture, as well as celebrating the culture of our friends and neighbours of different backgrounds. This is what makes my job as an MPP so very exciting. Experiencing the vibrant tapestry of cultures that make up Ontario is a true privilege.

It is undoubtedly true that music is a universal language which transcends linguistic differences and unites people from diverse backgrounds. I truly enjoyed listening to the different performers from around the world and all the way from Pakistan. I even danced to the different music that was there and there is a video as well.

I just wanted to say it has been an honour and a privilege to serve these past 18 months. I wish everyone a merry Christmas.

NANJING MASSACRE COMMEMORATIVE DAY

Mr. Vincent Ke: Tomorrow is December 13, the 82nd anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre, where hundreds of thousands of innocent children, women and men became victims of an unimaginable war crime that happened in Nanjing in 1937 and left many survivors with a lifetime of pain and suffering.

Two years ago, the Ontario Legislature passed motion number 66, which recognizes December 13 as Nanjing Massacre Commemorative Day in Ontario. By remembering those who have been murdered, and their families who still suffer, we do not bear hatred against anyone, rather, public truth-telling leads to a journey of healing. Forgetting this history means betrayal, and denying the crime is to repeat it again. We must all work together as a community to educate others, especially the younger generation, about what happened on December 13, 1937, to make sure that as the years go by this tragic moment in history will never be forgotten and will never repeat itself.

We must also acknowledge the horror of these crimes, learn from the lessons of the past, strengthen our commitment to peace and build a better world for all.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 63(c), the supplementary estimates 2019-20 of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services; Ministry of Education; and Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care before the Standing Committee on Estimates are deemed to have been passed by the committee, and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Pursuant to standing order 62(c), the supplementary estimates 2019-20 of the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines and Treasury Board Secretariat, not having been selected for consideration, are deemed to be concurred in.

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Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 28, 2019, the Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than Thursday, November 28, 2019.

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain offices on Thursday, November 28, 2019, as required by the standing orders of this House and the order of the House dated May 28, 2019, pursuant to standing order 63(b) the estimates before the committee of the Office of the Assembly,

Office of the Auditor General, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer and Ombudsman Ontario are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the estimates 2019-20 of these offices, not having been selected for consideration, are deemed to be received and concurred in.

Report deemed received.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ms. Catherine Fife: I beg leave to present a report on Review of Government Advertising, chapter 4 from the 2018 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Fife presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Catherine Fife: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I'm pleased to table the committee's report today, entitled Review of Government Advertising, section 3.02 of the 2018 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the committee: France Gélinas, Vice-Chair; Jill Andrew; Toby Barrett; Stan Cho; Stephen Crawford; John Fraser; Goldie Ghamari; Norm Miller; Michael Parsa; and Nina Tangri. This committee shows up every week well prepared and asks very good questions. I'm particularly thankful that we operate in a non-partisan manner at this committee.

The committee also extends its appreciation to officials from the Treasury Board Secretariat and the communications division of the Cabinet Office.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and report-writing deliberations by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee, and staff in the legislative research service.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Fife moves the adjournment of the debate.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HOME WARRANTIES TO PROTECT FAMILIES ACT, 2019 LOI DE 2019 SUR LES GARANTIES DES LOGEMENTS POUR PROTÉGER LES FAMILLES

Mr. Rakocevic moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide for competition in the delivery of new home warranties / Projet de loi 169, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Régime de garanties des logements neufs de l'Ontario pour ouvrir le secteur des garanties des logements neufs à la concurrence.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member like to explain his bill?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you, Speaker. I will.

The bill amends the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to discontinue the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan that is currently operated under the act by the Tarion Warranty Corp., being the only provider of new home warranties in the province. The bill would replace the single-provider system of new home warranties with a multiple-provider system, appoint an administrator to assume control of the corporation during its transition, and provide immediate help for new home owners facing warranty issues.

PROTECTING PASSENGER SAFETY ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA SÉCURITÉ DES PASSAGERS

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 170, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for transporting a passenger for compensation without a licence, permit or authorization / Projet de loi 170, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin de majorer la pénalité prévue à l'égard du transport de passagers moyennant rémunération sans permis d'exploitation, licence ou autorisation.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Ottawa South care to explain his bill?

Mr. John Fraser: This bill amends the Highway Traffic Act with respect to transporting and picking up a passenger without authorization or a licence or a permit. It addresses the issue of what they call bandit cabs and the risk they pose to public safety, where people are not properly insured or not properly educated in transporting people.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding a temporary substitution to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice with respect to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

Again, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that Mr. Fraser be substituted for Mr. Gravelle on the Standing Committee on Social Policy for its consideration of Bill 141 during the winter adjournment.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that Mr. Fraser be substituted for Mr. Gravelle on the Standing Committee on Social Policy for its consideration of Bill 141 during the winter adjournment.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My petition is Stop the Ford Government's Education Cuts.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:"

Whereas the Ford government's "new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes starting in grade 4;

"Whereas the changes will mean thousands fewer teachers and education workers and less help for every student;

"Whereas secondary students will now be forced to take at least four of their classes online, with as many as 35 students in each course;"

Whereas the government's "changes will rip over \$1 billion out of Ontario's education system by the end of the government's term; and

"Whereas kids in Ontario deserve more opportunities, not fewer;

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

"Demand that the government halt the cuts to classrooms and invest to strengthen public education in Ontario."

I agree with the petition, will be affixing my signature to it and giving it to Isabella to take to the Clerk.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Roman Baber: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario hospitals are currently facing system pressures and bed capacity challenges as our population both grows and ages;

"Whereas the Ontario PC government is committed to ending hallway health care in Ontario;

"Whereas there has been much uncertainty with respect to the revitalization of the former Branson Ambulatory

Care Centre in North York since the relocation of various health care services in 2017;

“Whereas the proposed redevelopment of Branson to become a reactivation care centre would directly help reduce wait times and end hallway health care, benefiting residents of North York and the greater Toronto area;

“Whereas the reactivation care centre is an innovative approach designed to relieve system pressures by creating additional in-patient care outside of hospitals;

“Whereas early data from Humber River’s reactivation care centre has shown through rehabilitation services, it has led to an increase in discharges to home rather than long-term care, decrease in emergency department visits, and alleviates overall health system pressures;

“Whereas innovative models like the reactivation care centre are part of the fourth pillar of Minister Elliott’s plan to end hallway health care in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the government of Ontario to invest in the former Branson Ambulatory Care Centre, by financing the capital improvement and operation of a new reactivation care centre.”

I fully support this petition. I’ve affixed my name to it and I’ll pass it to page Sarah.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the decision of the government to abandon the relief line will delay subway construction in Toronto;
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“Whereas the decision to route this subway line, called the Ontario Line, above ground south of Gerrard Street will damage parks and residential streets;

“Whereas routing of the Ontario Line above ground will require the rebuilding of six railway bridges from Gerrard Street to Eastern Avenue;

“Whereas the bridge reconstruction will cause extended traffic jams for many months, if not years;

“Whereas continuing the Ontario Line underground from Gerrard Street to south of Eastern Avenue would address all these problems;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to call on the government to keep the Ontario Line underground from Pape and Danforth to south of Eastern Avenue and to carry out a thorough and inclusive environmental assessment and consultation with the affected community.”

I agree with this petition, I affix my signature and I give it to page Alexandra for the Clerks. Thank you, Alexandra.

GOVERNMENT’S AGENDA

Mr. Aris Babikian: Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the previous government left the province not only with the largest subnational debt in the world, but also significant, daunting challenges, including hallway

health care, transit and roads that are heavily congested, and government services inefficient and outdated;

“Whereas progress should be made to reduce the deficit while maintaining critical services like small and medium-sized hospitals, public health units, child care and programs to help our most vulnerable;

“Whereas life in Ontario should be more affordable for families and individuals in every corner of the province, by putting more money in people’s pockets;

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

“Proceed as effectively as possible to balance the budget by 2023-24 through prudent fiscal management by immediately passing Bill 138, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes, so that:

“(1) Amendments are made to the Co-operative Corporations Act to remove some restrictions;

“(2) Subsection 329(2) of the Municipal Act, 2001, which sets out how certain property taxes are to be determined, is amended to include rules about recalculating property taxes when there is a change to the permitted uses of land;

“(3) Section 2(2) of the Gasoline Tax Act is re-enacted to set out the current tax rate, which is 6.7 cents per litre.”

I support this petition, I put my signature on it and I give it to page Ally.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition from the Ontario Disability Coalition, titled “Petition for an Inclusive Disability Program.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas every child, youth or adult with a physical or developmental disability deserves access to sufficient treatment such as occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, vision therapy and ABA, as well as other necessary supports so they can live to their fullest potential;

“Whereas in developing the Ontario autism plan (OAP), the government has inadvertently created a provincial disability plan that separates and excludes all other diagnoses that are not autism, as well as discrimination based on age;

“Whereas excluding people with other diagnoses from provincial services is discriminatory and a human rights violation;

“Whereas Ontario needs a true investment in services and supports that meets the needs of children, youth and adults with all disabilities as well as their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to invest in equitable, needs-based disability services to all individuals who need them regardless of diagnosis or age.”

I couldn’t agree more, Mr. Speaker. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Filip to bring to the Clerk.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm pleased to be here in the assembly today and I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government remains focused on reaching agreements with education labour unions to provide parents with predictability, certainty, and peace of mind over the coming year; and

"Whereas the government demonstrated that it has been a constructive force at the bargaining table by reaching a voluntary agreement with the Canadian Union of Public Employees; and

"Whereas the government remains available 24/7 to negotiate deals in good faith with education labour partners that support the needs of students and keep them in a positive learning environment throughout the year; and

"Whereas labour partners have engaged in job action under each government for the past 30 years; and

"Whereas labour partners continue to escalate towards strike action despite the government continuing to make reasonable and expanded offers to education labour partners; and

"Whereas strike action caused by unions could mean school closures, disruption and uncertainty to students and parents;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the government to continue bargaining in good faith with its labour partners to reach deals that keep kids in class, where they belong."

I fully support this petition and am pleased to sign it and give it to page Leela.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas" the Ford government "is going in the wrong direction on the environment by ignoring our climate emergency and cutting funding to deal with the climate crisis;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the government of Ontario to implement the Green New Democratic Deal to:

"—achieve net zero emissions by 2050, starting by cutting emissions 50% by 2030;

"—create more than a million new jobs;

"—add billions of dollars to Ontario's economy;

"—embark on the largest building retrofit program in the world by providing homeowners with rebates, interest-free loans and support to retrofit their homes to realize net zero emissions."

I fully support this petition. I'll be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Emily to deliver to the table.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. John Fraser: I'm putting this petition forward on behalf of my colleague the member from Guelph.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care ... recommends that the Appropriateness Working Group limit full OHIP funding for outpatient psychotherapy delivered by a physician to 24 hours per year, to ostensibly save \$13.2 million, with a final decision required by January 31, 2020;

"Whereas decades of peer-reviewed studies show that intensive psychotherapy is cost-effective, clinically beneficial; and that the arbitrary cap will increase risk of hospitalizations, reduce recovery time and create other social costs, as occurred in Australia;

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

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

I'm affixing my signature and giving it to page Sarah.

EDUCATION

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: "Whereas every child in Ontario deserves to attend school without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age or mental or physical disability;

"Whereas discrimination in education can have a profoundly detrimental effect on a child's education;

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to make Ontario's schools a" welcoming "place for Ontarians of all backgrounds;

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

"We call upon the Minister of Education to use all tools at his disposal to ensure that Ontario schools are" welcoming "to all. We also call upon the minister to remove any obstacles to creating welcoming schools" in Ontario.

I fully support this petition. I sign my signature and pass it to page Leela.

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VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mrs. Nina Tangri: "Petition in Support of Constructing a Memorial to Honour Our Heroes.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces members served in the war in Afghanistan including the 159 Canadians who made the ultimate sacrifice; and

“Whereas the Premier made a commitment to the people of Ontario to build a memorial to honour the bravery and sacrifice of our armed forces; and

“Whereas, by remembering their service and sacrifice, we recognize the values and freedoms these men and women fought to preserve; and

“Whereas the memorial will be a place of remembrance, a form of tribute, and an important reminder to future generations of the contributions and sacrifices that have helped shape our country;

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

“That the government of Ontario immediately construct the memorial to honour the heroes of the war in Afghanistan.”

I sign my name to this petition and give it to page Sarah.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Ginette Rancourt for this petition that reads as follows:

“MS Specialized Clinic in Sudbury.

“Whereas northeastern Ontario has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis (MS) in Ontario; and

“Whereas specialized MS clinics provide essential health care services to those living with multiple sclerosis, their caregiver and their family; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is recognized as a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly to “immediately set up a specialized MS clinic in the Sudbury area that is staffed by a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of multiple sclerosis, a physiotherapist and a social worker at a minimum.”

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: “Support Bill 153, the Till Death Do Us Part act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are 35,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care; and

“Whereas the median wait time for a long-term-care bed has risen from 99 days in 2011-12 to 152 days in 2018-19; and

“Whereas according to Home Care Ontario, the cost of a hospital bed is \$842 a day, while the cost of a long-term-care bed is \$126 a day; and

“Whereas couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

“Whereas Ontario seniors have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity in care; and

“Whereas Bill 153 amends the Residents’ Bill of Rights in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide the resident

with the right upon admission to continue to live with their spouse or partner;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Long-Term Care to pass Bill 153 and provide seniors with the right to live together as they age.”

It is my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Emily.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Jessica Bell: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the provincial government should match municipalities’ funding contribution to operating and maintaining municipal transit systems across Ontario and funding should not be used to replace or reduce municipal contributions to transit.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Today I’m rising to speak to the motion to have the province match municipalities’ contribution to local transit systems across Ontario, including operations and maintenance. The reason why I’m bringing this motion forward is because I believe that transit and the ability to move is a human right. We should be able to easily and quickly travel on public transit from A to B at an affordable price. Unfortunately, that is not how many people travel today.

We travel on overcrowded streetcars where we get to enjoy the smell of each other’s armpits in the summer. We wait too long for the bus to arrive every day, especially in areas around Rexdale in Etobicoke and in Scarborough, which are heavily dependent on buses. We’re late for work because the subway has broken down again.

We get home after dinner, after our kids are asleep, because we can only afford to live hours from where we work and play. This lack of affordable and fast transit is why people, especially low-income people, choose to walk or stay at home, because they can’t afford to get to where they want to go on public transit. This lack of fast and reliable transit is why so many people continue to drive, contributing to our very disappointing record of having North America’s worst commute times, costing us billions of dollars in lost productivity. The board of trade, for instance, estimates that we lose up to \$6 billion a year in lost productivity because we’re stuck in our cars and we’re stuck in public transit instead of being where we want to be: studying, working or playing. This lack of fast and reliable transit is why—still—our transportation system is one of the leading contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, catastrophic climate change and air pollution.

I co-founded TTCriders, a transit advocacy organization, at a time when the mayor of Toronto was Rob Ford and transit funding was under threat. From then until

today, there was near-unanimous consensus among transit experts, city councillors and transit agencies that the single most practical way to dramatically improve how we move is to invest in transit operations and maintenance. I have been advocating for this solution for many years.

There have been many who have inspired me and motivated me along the way, and many people who have advocated for me and for this cause. One of them is here today: Be So. Be So is a Scarborough resident and an anti-poverty activist. I remember when we were at city council in late December almost five years ago and we waited over 12 hours to speak to the city executive about the need for a low-income pass in the city of Toronto. It was about 9 o'clock at night before Be finally had the chance to speak. She told of her personal experience of what it's like to live in Scarborough and not be able to afford public transit and to walk in winter to get to where you want to go. That discount pass passed that night, and it led the way for a low-income pass that now exists in Toronto, but only part of it is funded. The rest still needs to be funded.

I think of Helen Liu, a former garment worker and leader in the Chinese seniors community in Toronto and in Ontario, who advocated for discount fares for seniors until she passed away a few years ago. That fight continues to this day, for discount fares for seniors, who are often stuck on their own, which exacerbates the loneliness that many of them feel.

I think of the airport workers, whom I have worked with for many years, who are the baggage handlers and the cleaners at our second-largest employment hub in Toronto. Some of them tell me stories of how they have to sleep in their friends' cars at night in the car park because their shift starts at 4:30 in the morning and there is no transit to get them home from 11:30, when their last shift finishes, and get them back to the airport so they can start their work again serving our community. I think of them.

I think of Adam Cahoon, a man who lives in a mechanized wheelchair when he travels, and who understands first-hand the indignities of our transit system, where even now, in 2019, there are still many TTC stations that do not have an elevator, even though this government has committed to making our transit system accessible. But there's no funding in place.

I think of Chemi Lhamo, a U of T student who has advocated for better public transit to go to U of T Scarborough and who commutes up to two hours one way to get from her home in Parkdale to U of T Scarborough. There is only one way to get there for her: public transit. She spends up to four hours a day just to do what she needs to do to live and study. Thank you for your advocacy.

Transit agencies across Ontario need fair provincial funding to deliver accessible, fast and reliable transit at an affordable price. It used to happen. As a friend, Vincent Puhakka, recently told me: Back in the days of Fresh Prince, New Kids on the Block and Walkmans, the provincial government used to fund 50% of transit agencies' operating costs. But the Harris Conservatives scrapped that funding, and the former Liberal government refused to reinstate it.

This decision to let transit get worse because of a lack of funding has put Ontario's transit agencies in a very tough situation. It's tough because it is very difficult to fund transit on your local tax base alone. And so every year, transit agencies face a budget shortfall, which means they have got some very tough choices to make: whether to delay maintenance, whether to cut service or whether to hike fares.

You face a difficult dilemma because when you raise fares, riders leave. If you cut service, riders leave. And if you delay maintenance, you get more breakdowns and delays, which means riders leave. When riders leave, they take their fare funding with them. What that does—and we've seen this in Toronto in the 1990s—is that it kick-starts a spiralling race to the bottom to really substandard transit, more pollution and more road rage, because people turn to their cars.

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Instead of this race to the bottom, I believe we should aim for the top, and that happens when we fund public transit.

If we fund public transit now, it means that the London Transit Commission wouldn't be forced to raise fares by 17%, which they are currently considering doing, to cover the funding shortfall.

It means that Brampton wouldn't have to hike fares, and they would be able to provide quality service to meet the record ridership demand that is happening in that fast-growing community just close to us.

That fair provincial funding would mean that Ottawa could provide better service for those with disabilities, which they are currently having difficulty doing because of a lack of service.

Fair provincial funding would also mean the TTC would have the funds available to move forward on very important initiatives, like dedicated bus lanes. Dedicated bus lanes on key routes across the city have the capacity to carry far more people than current subway routes currently do, at far less cost. But the TTC doesn't have the money for it, so bus riders wait.

The TTC would be able to fund a fully funded fare discount program, so we can continue all the advocacy that Be has done and low-income riders across the city have done—and get what they fully deserve, which is discount and free fares, because they need it.

It means contributing to critical maintenance, like the \$24 billion that Toronto needs just to keep our system running smoothly.

Those things make a lot of sense to me.

This government likes to say that it's committed to improving congestion and helping reduce commutes. But the challenge is that all these new transit lines that this government wants to build—none of them will be in operation for years. Meanwhile, transit riders wait.

This government's commitment to improve transit for the future feels pretty hollow when this government can't bring itself to help transit riders today. Ontarians don't want to wait a decade for transit relief. They don't want to wait a decade to get to work on time. They want relief now,

and they can have relief now. Fairly funding public transit is the relief.

If you want to solve congestion, if you want to help the thousands of people who struggle to afford their fares, if you want to help all the Ontarians who want to spend less time travelling and more time getting to their destination, the answer is clear: Stop talking and start funding. Support this motion.

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: Madam Speaker, it's always a pleasure to rise in the House. I will be speaking to the motion presented by the member from University–Rosedale. As you know, I represent the best riding in the province, the riding of Etobicoke Centre, so for me transit, transit funding, and the balance between municipal and provincial responsibility is of utmost importance.

In my riding, like many others, we constantly have to fight to get our fair share of transportation funding from the city of Toronto. Thankfully, under the vision of Premier Ford and the leadership of our government, the province and the city have reached an agreement whereby Etobicoke will finally get the underground transit that they have been waiting for.

I understand the balance between funding sources for municipal transit and the importance of provincial support and money in making these transit systems work across the province.

Public transit plays an essential role in getting people around in communities across Ontario. Transit should be fast, accessible and reliable, and that is exactly what our government is working towards.

I therefore thank the member from University–Rosedale for bringing forward her motion. Municipal public transit systems need to be built in a responsible manner to match demand with service and anticipate the future needs of a community. They need to be fiscally responsible with their approach to expansion, as well as with managing existing routes as demand in a region can change with shifting population and ridership patterns.

This can certainly put pressure on any municipality to keep up with building new infrastructure while maintaining and operating existing service routes. It can come with financial challenges. How the province balances out the different needs of unique communities across the province, by supporting them with growth, operation and maintenance, while remaining fiscally prudent is an important discussion and one that I am happy to have.

The member from University–Rosedale put forward her motion to debate this very matter. It is, however, problematic. I was pleased to see that she was able to speak to her motion first, to help clarify some of the inconsistencies that I have found. It was good to hear from the member from University–Rosedale what she understands her motion to mean. But the motion, as it is written, lends itself to multiple interpretations, and it is my belief that all of us in this chamber would like to be clear on what we are debating and voting on. We cannot approve a motion that is unclear or ambiguous.

So what do I mean when I say it's open to multiple interpretations? The motion says that we "should match municipalities' funding contribution to operating and maintaining municipal transit systems across Ontario and funding should not be used to replace or reduce municipal contributions to transit."

Madam Speaker, when I look at this motion, I wonder if the member opposite is asking us to match the operating expenses of municipal transit systems. Today, the net operating expenses of these systems is \$1.67 billion. That's the amount not covered by fares. There is no way that this is what the member opposite means. If municipalities cannot use this money to replace or reduce their funding for transit, then they would be operating as they currently are, but with an additional annual cheque from the province of \$1.67 billion. What would they be using this money for? That \$1.67 billion represents 73% of the operating budget of the entire Ministry of Transportation. This is a huge amount of money. Surely, at a time when the government is working diligently to balance the books in a responsible manner—and I commend my colleague the Minister of Finance for his leadership on this—the member opposite cannot be suggesting that we should add an annual line item of \$1.67 billion to the budget.

So perhaps the member opposite had taken into account some of the ways that the province already funds the operating expenses of municipal public transit. She must have been thinking about the gas tax funding.

Madam Speaker, the gas tax program dedicates two cents from every litre of gas sold in Ontario to municipal public transit. In the 2018–19 fiscal year, this has equated to \$364 million. This money has been sent to 109 municipalities providing public transit service to 146 communities across the province. These communities represent 92% of Ontario's total population. One of the benefits of the gas tax funding is that it allows municipalities to make choices about how they spend their money. They can spend this on either infrastructure improvements or operations. Thus, it assists eligible municipalities in improving and expanding transit services. Furthermore, it benefits both large and small municipal transit systems. Moreover, with the funds capped at 75% of the municipalities' own transit spending, it encourages them to financially support their own systems and not reduce their own contributions. I know, from speaking to municipalities, that this is a program that's truly valued.

In many ways, this sounds similar to what the motion from the member from University–Rosedale is asking for, so I assume she maybe is taking the gas tax program funding into account in her motion. Well, Madam Speaker, if this is the case, then she would be calling for the province to match not the net operating expenses of \$1.67 billion but the net cost minus the provincial operating contribution made through this gas tax. Thus, she would be asking for the province to contribute an additional \$1.45 billion annually. This raises similar concerns of fiscal prudence as the previous interpretation I had for this motion.

So maybe the member from University–Rosedale is asking to have the province and the municipality equally

split the net operating expenses for municipal public transit. That seems to be what the member was suggesting at her press conference yesterday. The net operating expenses for municipal public transit are \$1.67 billion. If the province and the municipality split that amount, each would bring \$835 million to the table. This amount, while still a huge annual line item for the province, is at least somewhat more reasonable when compared to the \$1.45 billion or the 73% increase to the MTO transit budget I mentioned earlier. The people of Ontario voted for fiscal responsibility in the last election.

1400

The problem with this interpretation is that it would reduce the contributions of municipalities to their transit system, which the second part of the motion specifically prohibits. The motion reads, “Funding should not be used to replace or reduce municipal contributions to transit.” So you see, Madam Speaker, this motion is unclear, and we cannot support it.

But the member raised important points about the importance of public transit as a vital resource for the people of this province, and we agree. That’s why, through the gas tax program, we’re spending \$364 million in 109 municipalities across this province.

It’s why, through the ICIP funding stream, which is a joint venture with the federal government, the province has committed \$7.3 billion over the next decade for public transit infrastructure projects. These funds will be allocated to municipalities and regional transit systems based on their share of transit ridership.

It’s why, through the Community Transportation Grant Program, we will distribute up to \$30 million to 39 municipalities over the next five years to provide more rides to more people to more destinations.

That’s why we are moving on a historic \$28.5-billion expansion of public transit through the four priority transit lines we have announced earlier this year. Those transit lines are going to change people’s lives for the better, connecting more people in more communities to more opportunity while reducing gridlock on our roads and overcrowding on the existing network.

But the member opposite and her party opposed this initiative, even as they tell us how important they think public transit is. If they really cared, they would get on board and support our efforts to build better, faster public transit. On this side of the House, we believe that public transit is for all—not just downtown Toronto. It is for Etobicoke. It is for Scarborough, for those in Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park. It is for the people in York region.

The Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension, the underground Eglinton West subway extension and Yonge North subway extension are all part of our GTA transit plan, which will provide transit relief to so many corners of this city.

It is for communities in the GTA like Mississauga, Brampton, Markham, Vaughan, Barrie, Ajax, Oshawa, Whitby and, yes, Kitchener, whose communities will

benefit from the GO rail expansion as we move to secure all-day, two-way service across the network.

It is for Wawa, Woodstock, Schreiber, Thorold, Owen Sound, Point Edward, Espanola and the rest of the 109 municipalities the gas tax program supports.

It is for White River, Arnprior, Manitowadge, Sioux Lookout and all of the 39 recipients of the community transportation grants.

I want to add that the member from University–Rosedale voted against every single one of these initiatives at the estimates committee.

Speaker, we cannot support this motion. It is ambiguous. It is unclear. But what is unambiguous and what is clear is our commitment to public transit, and I urge all members of this House to get on board with our transit initiatives.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: We are calling on this government to stop abdicating your responsibilities to Ontarians, and specifically to our communities in Toronto–St. Paul’s. Fund public transit.

Massive construction has contributed to accidents, pedestrian falls, deaths and people feeling scared for their kids as they travel to school. Our community has shared their concerns about noise pollution, increased density and—one of the biggest consequences—the detrimental cultural and economic impact of this phase of gentrification on some of our most beloved neighbourhoods.

I think specifically of Little Jamaica along Eglinton West and the many small businesses—like Vernal Small’s tailor shop, which has been a standing pillar in the community for 40 years and counting—that fear closing, and have closed, due to construction, transit delays and, frankly, no parking spaces for consumers even wanting to shop. I invite everyone here to watch the film *Tallahawah Abroad: Remembering Little Jamaica*, by Sharine Taylor. It tells Vernal’s story and, sadly, many others.

It is important for everyone to know that Metrolinx does not compensate business owners or tenants in the form of tax breaks or operating subsidies for businesses that remain open during construction. They are completely at the mercy of the pie-in-the-sky completion dates of these transportation plans. These small local businesses are families, and they are hemorrhaging, Madam Speaker.

Even academics are weighing in on the issue. Academic Debbie Gordon, in her thesis *The Erasure of Little Jamaica: Exploring the Role of Design in the Gentrification of Toronto’s Eglinton Avenue West*, 2018, speaks to the neo-liberal changes related to a large regional transit development initiative for the GTA and Hamilton. She also addresses the political power and capital effect, and how these contribute to the displacement of predominantly Black communities on Eglinton West.

Currently there is extended construction at Eglinton and Dufferin from December 3 into mid-2020.

From 9 a.m. to 12 noon, December 13, Eglinton Avenue East and Mount Pleasant Road will be reduced to one lane only, alternating traffic in each direction while work takes place.

From 4 a.m. to 6 p.m., December 14, is the closure of Chaplin Crescent and Eglinton Avenue West.

Generally speaking, the main intersections around Dufferin and Eglinton, and Bathurst and Eglinton, are still a mess. Gridlock is what results.

Yonge and Eglinton is no picnic either. Getting on and off the Allen is still very time-consuming. Up and down Eglinton, businesses are continuing to suffer. Families are hurting. Money is being lost. Culture is being lost.

We're simply asking the government to get it right. Fund public transit, and fund it properly, so we can get around quickly and accessibly to where we need to be.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It really is a pleasure to rise today in support of this motion, on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Davenport. I want to thank the member from University–Rosedale for this motion calling on the government to match municipal funding contributions for transit systems.

Transit riders across the province, but especially in Toronto and in my riding of Davenport, have been battling overcrowding, delays, long wait times and higher fares for far too long. It's time this government showed them some support.

As I've said in the past, a strong, integrated public transit system is crucial for the constituents of my riding. Our riding is literally defined by public transit—the boundaries by the CN railway, shared by GO Transit. Public transit is how we get to work. It's how we take our kids to school. It's essential for connecting our growing community.

However, our underfunded transit system is reaching its breaking point in my community. The riding features three of Toronto's five busiest bus routes. During weekday peak hours, the 29 Dufferin operates at 122% of the crowding standard. You'll often hear residents refer to it as the Sufferin' Dufferin.

In addition to this, the 929 Dufferin express, on the same street, boasts the title of fifth-busiest bus route in the city. Just one subway stop away, the 47 Lansdowne is the third-busiest route in Toronto.

I should actually mention that this morning, when I had more students here from Bloor Collegiate Institute, some grade 10s, I asked them: "What are your number one issues? What do you care the most about?" I had a couple of the students say, "The Dufferin bus." That was actually the issue they raised with me, because they're coming by bus to school, and from other parts of the city too, right?

Anyway, while we're at it, let me also mention how, in the coming years, there are multiple new condo towers slated to be built around this area of Dufferin and Dupont, and Bloor and Lansdowne. This means potentially thousands of new transit riders in my neighbourhood, where people are already forced to wait 20-plus minutes for a bus that they can't even board.

That's why this motion is so important for the people of Davenport, to help keep them moving and get them moving. We know that the Liberals did nothing—

nothing—to address this issue, despite having 15 years to do so. Now the TTC is facing a \$24-billion funding gap in their capital plan for the next 15 years. This is where the province needs to step in.

The government likes to stress how they are open for business and always looking out for businesses. Well, a good business mind would understand the need and the benefits of public transit investment.

1410

The American public transit association has estimated in the past that for every \$1 billion of public transit investment, over 50,000 jobs could be created. Instead, the government has been doing things like cancelling planned increases to the transit transfer, equalling a loss of \$3 billion in transit investments for municipalities over the next 10 years.

The conclusion is simple: Better transit means better communities. It's time to give our public transit the funding it deserves.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am delighted to rise today in support of the motion that was brought forward by my colleague the member for University–Rosedale to require the government to match municipal operating subsidies for public transit.

I want to speak today from the perspective of Londoners. Speaker, when the previous government of Mike Harris was in power in Ontario, they chose to cut government operating funding for transit. This had a devastating impact on our transit system in my community. By 1997, ridership was 32% lower than it had been just seven years earlier. It was not until 2006 that ridership returned to the 1990 levels. There are very real concerns in my community that the combination of the increased fares that the London Transit Commission will have to impose, the services that will have to be cut—this, once again, has the potential to completely upend the transit options in London.

London has lost \$10 million because of this government's decision to cancel the doubling of the gas tax. As of January 2020, London transit riders are going to see, overall, a 15% increase in fares. The city has directed all agencies, boards and commissions to limit their budget asks to a 1% increase. For the case of the London Transit Commission, they need a 20% increase just to maintain current levels of service, which we know are not meeting the needs of people in London.

I heard the member across the way talk about the importance of transit to employment, and certainly that is a huge concern in my community. In 2015, the Employment Sector Council, an umbrella organization of agencies that provide employment services, found that two thirds of the clients they served missed job opportunities because their work site was not on a bus route. Two thirds said they weren't able to get to work on time because of a lack of access to the bus route or inconsistent scheduling. Some 60% said they were not able to get home safely because of the current bus schedules.

Speaker, those experiences of employment services clients were echoed by employers. In 2017 and again in 2018, surveys of employers were conducted. Numerous companies in London said that poor transit service made it difficult for them to find and retain employees. Several of the companies that responded to the survey said they did not hire employees who were relying on transit because they did not feel confident that these employees would get to work on time. This motion would provide that funding stability that transit services like the London Transit Commission require in order to provide the reliability of services that people in London need.

Finally, Speaker, I did want to also talk about Londoners' reliance on cars and greenhouse gas emissions. In London, we have an almost 1 to 1 ratio between the number of cars in our community and the number of adult Londoners. Fifty per cent of households' GHG emissions are because of a reliance on personal vehicles. About one third of those emissions are associated with trips within the city that could be taken on public transit if we had access to a reliable transit service.

Londoners want to do their part to reduce GHGs. They want to take action to address the reality of the climate emergency that we are facing in this province. But what this government is doing to transit operators like the London Transit Commission is completely counter to our ability to deal with reducing GHGs.

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

I return to the member for University–Rosedale, who has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you also to other members who spoke to this motion.

For the member for Davenport who spoke about the overcrowding—127% overcrowding on the Dufferin bus; it is infamous for all the wrong reasons.

Thank you to the member for St. Paul's, who talked about the impact of construction with the Eglinton Crosstown line on predominantly Black businesses and how they're being priced out of running what keeps them sustainable.

Thank you to the member for Etobicoke Centre for expressing her confusion.

Thank you also to the member for London for talking about the impact of cuts to service and fare hikes and what that means long-term for the quality of the public transit system.

We have seen what fiscal caution means for public transit over the last 18 months with this government. We have seen this government cut Metrolinx's subsidy by over 30%. What that means: fare hikes, numerous bus cuts and the elimination of entire bus routes have taken effect, which has had significant impacts on people's lives.

We've also seen this government take back its promise to increase the gas tax. Now the gas tax is currently under review. What that has meant is that transit agencies all across Ontario are struggling to work out how they're going to deal with this sudden shortfall in funding, and it

means significant fare increases, like what we are seeing in London.

Transit isn't cheap. Let's not pretend that transit is cheap. It's not. But you get what you pay for. You get an economy that works. You get people getting to work on time. You get equality, because everyone gets the right to move around, because transit is a human right and everyone deserves to travel from A to B at an affordable price, quickly and—

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

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES
AMENDMENT (TILL DEATH
DO US PART) ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES FOYERS
DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE
(JUSQU'À CE QUE LA MORT
NOUS SÉPARE)

Ms. Fife moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 153, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide spouses with the right to live together in a home / *Projet de loi 153, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les foyers de soins de longue durée afin d'accorder aux conjoints le droit de vivre ensemble dans un foyer.*

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks for the opportunity to speak today about an issue that's very close to my heart.

Before I begin, I want to thank the hundreds of people who shared their stories in support of Bill 153. I also want to thank Jim McLeod for being here today. Jim has been separated from his wife of 61 years, Joan, for the last two and a half years. He was brought here today by Elaine Shantz, who is the executive director of Fairview and Parkwood Mennonite communities. I want to thank you, Elaine, for being here as well.

Actually, Jim is proving—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, give him a hand. At almost 80 years of age, Jim is proof that it's never too late to start lobbying a politician.

The Till Death Do Us Part Act amends the Long-Term Care Homes Act and the Residents' Bill of Rights to provide individuals in long-term care with the right upon admission to have accommodations made available for their partner in the home. Couples should have the right to live together as they age. But in Ontario, our long-term-care system is in crisis.

1420

The bill before you today in this Legislature came about because three years ago I was trying to help a couple come back together. Seniors do not age at the same rate, and so the wife was in a long-term-care facility and the husband was in a retirement home across town. I was not able to be

successful in my advocacy, Madam Speaker, and I will never forget—

M^{me} France Gélinas: You can do this—deep breaths.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I have to get angry. I'll stay angry.

The husband said, "I took an oath, a vow—until death do us part," and it was one of those moments that will stay with me forever. That is why this bill is before you today.

So how did we get here? Well, recently, our Financial Accountability Officer reviewed our long-term-care system. We will know that the Liberals held power in this province for 15 years, and for the last 18 or 19 months the Conservatives have been in power—both majority governments. A true lack of investment is truly the culprit here.

The FAO report showed that there are nearly 35,000 people on the wait-list for a long-term-care bed. That number has grown by nearly 80% in the last eight years. Why? Because our population of people in this province aged 75 and over has increased by 20% while the funding for long-term care over that same period has only been 0.8%—not even 1% in funding for seniors in Ontario.

We are in a place right now where the only people who can get into a long-term-care facility are people on a crisis list. The entire system is in crisis. I had one person who manages a long-term-care home tell me that 90% of their new residents come to the home off the crisis list.

Spousal reunification is made exceptionally difficult because our system has not been invested in. Not only are we speaking about keeping seniors together—because they ought to be together; this bill essentially is about shining a light on all of the ways we can work to improve the system and what our responsibility is as legislators to make sure that that happens.

We as a party, to be fair, have been advocating for years for improvements to our long-term-care system. We consistently have called for a comprehensive fix-and-find inquiry into our long-term-care system, because we cannot fix what we don't understand. You need the data. You need the information. This was supposed to come out of the Wettlaufer case.

A four-hour minimum standard of care: We have consistently called upon governments of all stripes for this.

The member from Nickel Belt has advocated over and over for evidence-based policies that treat people, whether they live or work in long-term-care homes, with respect. This work has been continued by the member from London–Fanshawe.

We will not stop fighting for appropriate care for Ontario's seniors. We will not. That must mean a mandated four-hour minimum of care for people who require long-term-care services.

Personal support workers: It is not an exaggeration to say that PSWs are essentially holding together the frayed social and health care net that is in this province. It's time for a fair wage for personal support workers, who carry our long-term-care system on their backs. But it's also time for a fair workload. This is the key piece, because if we're truly going to treat seniors with dignity and care in our system, PSWs cannot have 30 patients to care for. It is

cruel for them as workers, and it is extremely cruel for their patients.

Earlier this year, the Waterloo Region Health Coalition put together a phenomenal survey on PSWs in long-term care in Waterloo region. This is what they found: There's no mandated ratio of PSWs to residents, meaning that, depending on the type of home, residents can receive wildly different levels of care. In local not-for-profit homes, the ratio is sometimes from 1 to 7.5, but it could be as high as 1 to 23. There are, of course, also frequent staff shortages, which go back to wage issues and untenable workload.

There are no incentives to train or remain employed as a PSW. We cannot fix the long-term-care system without putting in personal support workers and valuing them as important people in our system. It will not happen. There are no benefits, raises, mileage, career advancement or educational funding. We've essentially taken personal support workers for granted for years now, and it must be addressed.

In Waterloo region, for-profit long-term-care chains offer wages from \$15 to \$16 an hour, versus a not-for-profit home like Sunnyside, for instance, in Kitchener. They offer \$27 an hour. That speaks volumes about how you treat the people in your system.

I want to make a financial case for investment in long-term care so that reunification can actually happen. The cost of a hospital bed versus a long-term-care bed—listen to this. These are 2016 numbers. A hospital bed is \$842 a day. A long-term-care bed is \$126 a day. Care at home for a senior is \$42 a day. It is fiscally irresponsible to not accelerate and invest in long-term care. You will not address the hallway medicine issue in this province without first addressing long-term care.

Just this past week, CBC did an article on Ottawa hospitals. They spend more than a quarter of a million dollars caring for patients who are occupying beds they don't really need. Seniors in hospital beds are—they call them bed blockers. I don't call them bed blockers. It's not their fault. It's not the seniors' fault that there aren't options for them. It's the fault of the Legislature. It's the fault of successive governments that have not built options and quality care for those folks. In Ottawa, it's \$1.8 million a week. Think of that. Over one week in Ottawa hospitals, the three acute hospitals there, they see 292 ALC patients. These are patients who should not be in a hospital. They should be in long-term care or in retirement or assisted living options.

So the financial case is here—it's right before you—to invest. I think our seniors are owed that.

This government talks a lot about the moral imperative of our work here, and then they go in very different directions, in my view.

We say a prayer here in this House on a regular basis, as legislators. It's a non-denominational prayer. It says, "Give to each member of this Legislature a strong and abiding sense of the great responsibilities laid upon us. Guide us here in our deliberations. Give us a deep and thorough understanding of the needs of the people we serve. Help us to use power wisely and well." Essentially,

we're praying for ourselves—and listen, we need all the help we can get, because the problems are real. But if you are truly focused on the people we're elected to serve, we must all come to a very principled position in this House: that we have neglected seniors across the board.

Now is your chance, as a government. These appeals were made to the Liberals for years and they were never taken up.

I want to say, the social media support that I received—I've never received over 350,000 views of a bill before. This bill touches everyone across the province, across the ridings. Some of the stories are definitely heartbreaking, and I want to respect those voices.

Ann Marie says, "We had to put Mum in long-term care as she has dementia and Dad couldn't take care of her anymore. He had to give up on their apartment and move in with my brother, as their pensions barely cover Mum's room." So the cost of long-term care is a major factor. "He is a lost soul, and his heart is broken without my mum. They've been married 59 years this past June and together 62 years. Dad is literally dying of a broken heart, as he has been deteriorating since it happened."

You can't hear these stories, you can't bear witness to this, and then not do anything.

The case to accelerate the funding is there. The economic case is there. The moral case is there. If you truly want to address the health care system and all of the impacts of hallway medicine and the pressure on our system right now, then accelerating funding and streamlining the licensing process is a needed step.

Parkwood and Fairview are long-term-care homes that are ready right now—38 beds in Parkwood, over 100 in Cambridge. Their application is right on the minister's desk.

It should not take three years to build a bed. If you want to talk about red tape, then this is red tape that we will certainly try to help you with; let me be very clear about that.

I just want to say, the way forward is to accelerate the investment and streamline the licensing process, so that we are not here in a year's time. Because I'm not going to give up on this. The members from Nickel Belt, London-Fanshawe and London—we're not going to give up on this. This is going to require all of us to get it right.

1430

Every story that came across my desk and into my office has a common theme. When spouses are separated in the last years of their lives, often, after decades of marriage, they ultimately die of a broken heart. We have so many testimonials to confirm this. I just want to say to all of the people across this province who have reached out to me, who understand that this needs our full attention: I'm very hopeful—I need to be very hopeful that this government will do the right thing and pass Till Death Do Us Part.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I am pleased to join the debate on this bill. Let me first acknowledge the importance of the issue that the member for Waterloo is

addressing today. Our government believes that it is vital to keep spouses in long-term care together.

The Minister of Long-Term Care regularly spoke about her vision for a modern and respectful long-term-care system where couples who have spent their lives together can stay together while receiving the care they need.

In my work as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Long-Term Care, I've toured the province and seen the challenges in the system. I've met with nurses and doctors, personal support workers, management and other front-line staff in long-term-care homes, and I've listened to them. Most importantly, I've met with people trying to get into long-term care, their families and their loved ones.

People in my own community have been asking for help to access long-term care, as I know they do for every member in this House. Everyone wants more spaces in long-term care, and they want to be able to keep spouses together. The best way to do this is to get more long-term care beds built and opened.

The legacy of the last government, we'll all agree, left us with a long-term care system that cannot provide beds for those seniors that desperately need them, much less provide spaces for their spouses.

Our government is committed—absolutely committed to creating a 21st-century long-term-care system. This commitment means we are going to build 15,000 new beds in five years and redevelop another 15,000 beds in five years. I am proud that our government has now announced more than half of those 15,000 new beds.

Realistically, we know that they cannot be built in a day. Had the Liberal government managed long-term care properly, building and opening a steady supply of beds over the years, we would not have the backlog we have today—and the backlog is not just of beds but of our seniors waiting months to get into the proper care. They are the people who built this country and this province, who raised their families and, for some of us here, they raised us and are waiting for long-term care.

To the member for Waterloo: Thank you for raising this important issue. We all share a commitment to the health of our seniors and to the quality of their life. We are committed to the dignity of our seniors, who need and deserve the best long-term care we can create.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: First, I'd like to commend the member from Waterloo for bringing this very important issue forward. Bill 153 is talking about reunification of couples in long-term care, so I'm going to focus on that.

What this bill does is amend the Residents' Bill of Rights set out in section 3 of the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, by adding the right of residents not to be separated from their spouses upon admission but to have accommodations made available for both spouses so that they can continue to live together. The bill also provides partnered long-term-care residents with the right to live together, if they so choose, regardless of the care needs, which is important, because everyone deserves the right to live with their partners as they age. I don't think anyone here is going to argue.

But I do have a unique story that came to my office in London. It's a son who reached out to us about his parents. His father is 94 years old, and his mother is 96 years old. His father is a veteran. He served our country, and he made the ultimate sacrifice. So, he is in a long-term-care home specifically for veterans. His mother, right now, is eligible to go into a long-term-care home. But there is a very unique eligibility piece to this, which is that where he is, where there are veterans in a long-term-care home, his wife doesn't qualify because she's not a veteran.

I really think, when we're looking at bills like this—for civilians—and we're pushing for rights for reunification for partners who lived together 50, 60 or 70 years, we need to make sure we include veterans in that. Not everybody is going to marry a veteran and then qualify to be in that long-term-care home. I really wanted to highlight that. I think we need to make sure, as we go forward in legislation like that, that we take that unique need and make sure that veterans are respected, and their spouses are also in that equation of reunification.

I hope the government is going to support this bill. Again, I congratulate the member from Waterloo for bringing this forward.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'd like to start by thanking our seniors, who have shaped our province in countless ways and paved a better path for millions of Ontarians. As they age, they deserve to receive dignified, compassionate, appropriate care, including in long-term-care homes if they need it, and they deserve to live alongside their spouses or partners.

The Minister of Long-Term Care has spoken extensively about her vision for a long-term-care system that feels like home, and is doing tremendous work to make this a reality.

The Till Death Do Us Part Act echoes our government's commitment to keeping loved ones together. We are building the capacity to do just that, and I'm pleased to join my colleagues, on both sides, in supporting families in this province.

Our government has made a promise to build 15,000 new long-term-care beds over five years and to redevelop 15,000 older spaces to modern design standards. In October, the Minister of Long-Term Care announced that 7,889 new beds had been allocated, crossing the 50% commitment line. With each space brought online over the coming years, we will be able to serve much-needed care to seniors and their spouses in the communities in the province.

Madam Speaker, this September, I had the pleasure of joining the Minister of Long-Term Care, the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, and my fellow MPPs to tour Malton Village long-term care in the great riding of Mississauga–Malton. It was a fantastic opportunity to learn about the role of long-term-care homes, and the positive impacts that supportive care can have on our seniors. I enjoyed speaking with the seniors and seeing first-hand the high quality of care being delivered.

I'm very pleased that the development of 457 new long-term-care beds and the redevelopment of 275 long-term beds is under way in Mississauga, which is an important step in meeting our commitment of 15,000 new long-term beds.

Madam Speaker, I know and I understand the value of relationships, as somebody who has lost his father, Mr. S.L. Anand, who passed away on November 29. That is about two weeks back. Through the eyes of my mother, Santosh Anand, I know the value of togetherness and the pain of isolation.

I truly believe in the value of being together as a family at all stages of life. The social, health and emotional well-being of the spouses and the partners is at the heart of this bill, and I'm very happy to support this bill fully.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: As some of you know, I have been the health critic for my party for the last 12 years. Not a month, not a year has gone by that I haven't had people from all over the province reaching out to me because their mom and dad were in two different long-term-care homes. Their mom and dad had lived together 60 years or 70 years. The longest was 73 years together. They came to me. They were separated, living apart.

I still have fond memories of Paul and Marjory Springer. They had been married 66 years. They were in the same long-term-care home, unable to move by themselves to go visit one another, and the long-term-care home would not put them in the same room because they wanted them to pay semi-private to both be in the same room and the couple didn't have the money to pay for semi-private.

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They took apart people who loved each other for 66 years because they did not have the money to pay for a semi-private room. We shamed them into doing it, and I'm happy to tell you that they celebrated 70 years of marriage and are quite happy living together.

The same thing with Gottfried and Hildegard Adler. They are two people from Sudbury who were in two different long-term-care homes, married for 67 years. It took them coming to me, putting their stories for everybody to see in the paper, to shame the long-term-care homes to accept them into the same home.

Then there were people who called. She was in one long-term-care home; he was in another. He called the CCAC every single day because he wanted to move in with her. She died the day they got together.

This has to change. This bill will change that.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 153, the Till Death Do Us Part Act, introduced by the member from Waterloo. I want to thank her for this important bill. I would like to thank, as well, the members from Oakville North–Burlington, London–Fanshawe, Mississauga–Malton and Nickel Belt for sharing their views on this bill.

Speaker, last month I hosted a fundraiser in Mississauga to support six young Ontario artists who were nominated for the Hollywood Music in Media Awards. Neena Rose from Hamilton was nominated for the music video she filmed at the Hamilton LIUNA Station, where her father, Vico, is the general manager.

Speaker, when Vico's mother, Gilda, Neena's grandmother, entered long-term care in Hamilton six years ago, she couldn't get a bed in the same facility as her husband, Domenico. For the first time in 60 years they were forced to live apart. The wait-list was so long that a transfer would take many years.

The Premier and the Minister of Long-Term Care have spoken about our vision for a modern long-term-care system in Ontario that would focus on the residents, build capacity for the residents and caregivers, and provide a place for our province's most vulnerable people to call home. Our government recognizes how important it is to ensure that couples who have spent their entire lives together can stay together while receiving the care they need.

Across Ontario, there are more than 36,000 people waiting to get into a long-term-care home. This wait-list is making it difficult for our seniors to find long-term-care beds where and when they need them, and it puts a strain on our hospitals. That's why we are committed to build 15,000 new long-term-care beds and to redevelop 15,000 existing beds over five years. So far, we have allocated almost 8,000 new beds, including almost 500 in Mississauga alone. These beds are part of our strategy to end hallway health care and to ensure that our seniors get the high-quality care they need, together with their loved ones.

Again, I thank the member from Waterloo for this important contribution today. I look forward to voting for this bill and I encourage all members to support it.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to talk about Clarence and Jessie, who were 93 and 92 years old when I first met them in 2016. Clarence and Jessie never spent more than one night apart in six decades of marriage. They loved each other dearly and were always there for each other. Clarence and Jessie were set to celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary together. Madam Speaker, they were interrupted when they needed long-term care. They were separated for the first time when one had to go to St. Catharines and the other one had to be in Grimsby. It caused hardship on those two and also their family, who had to go to two communities to see their mum and dad.

This has to stop. You have to support Bill 153. No loving couple should be separated simply because they need long-term care. This couple helped build our community; they need us to make sure.

Here's one that I think the member already said, but I don't think we understand it: When your parents or your grandparents are separated, because they're separated and the stress it has caused, they die sooner. The stats show that they die sooner.

The good news to this story is that because of CHCH, the local newspaper and CBC, we were able to get this

couple together. They both ended up in the facility in Grimsby. They're back together, and they died with a smile on their face because they were back with their loved ones.

I support this bill; I encourage everybody to support the bill. Stop blaming Liberals, Conservatives, the Green Party, NDP—these are our parents, our grandparents; we love them all. Get it done, and get it done immediately.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: It is an absolute pleasure to be able to rise and speak to Bill 153 today that has been brought forward by my colleague from Waterloo region, the member for Waterloo.

I just wanted to say a quick hello to Jim and Elaine. It's my first time getting to meet Jim today, but Elaine and I have sat down a few times, not only in my office but also out visiting Parkwood Mennonite Home in north Waterloo. I have to say, they've got an amazing facility there. We had a chance to talk with quite a few of their staff and also some of the residents, and they do a fantastic job representing Waterloo region, and of course everything that they do for the community. So I just want to thank them for that.

I wholeheartedly support this bill. The member for Nickel Belt brought up something that we should never have to do, and that's shame a long-term-care home into being able to have two people who have been together for the majority of their lives, to actually be able to have them together in one room and to allow them to live out the rest of their lives in dignity.

When we look at the vision of what our government is trying to do, especially when we look at long-term care now being a separate ministry—we have a dedicated minister for that—we as MPPs need to be advocating on our constituents' behalf. I do that on a very regular basis when it comes to long-term care in our communities. Like I said, I've had a chance to get down to see Parkwood; peopleCare is another great provider in our area. Of course, Schlegel Villages is really leading the way when it comes to seniors' care, when it comes to the Research Institute for Aging, which is also in the member for Waterloo's riding. I've had a chance to get through that facility several times, and they're doing amazing work.

So we're really on the right track. We're making some significant investments into long-term care, obviously. Within the next few years, we're going to be creating 15,000 long-term-care beds. We just released 147 in Waterloo region over the last year, and I know that Parkwood is, in fact, hoping to be able to build up some of that capacity along with some others that we have in the region.

Like I said—I'm going to try not to get too emotional—we've all had parents or grandparents that have been in long-term care. I've had a couple myself, and I was lucky to be able to be there towards the end of their life and visit. But I couldn't imagine what it would be like to have a husband or wife or partner or significant other, whatever you want to call it, not be able to spend those last

remaining years together. I think that it's something that's so important.

I will definitely be standing in favour of this bill. I'm looking forward to seeing the support from all the members in this House, and definitely, again, want to commend the member for Waterloo for bringing this forward.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I'm very honoured to stand as the seniors critic for this province and to support my colleague MPP Fife in moving this bill forward. It's incredibly important, as everybody has said.

I think, at the end of the day, we judge a society not by how big its buildings are and how beautiful its stationery is; we judge it by how we treat our elders, primarily, how we treat our children and how we treat people who are in a vulnerable position in their life.

It's also my experience in the last 15 months as an MPP to be in contact with families that are facing this situation. It took me right back to memories I have of my mid-20s of helping to look after my grandmother and grandfather. My grandmother suffered with Alzheimer's disease and my grandfather suffered with Lou Gehrig's disease; they said they suffered together. My grandfather used to say to me, "Joel, growing old is not for sissies. It's hard." It was a responsibility for us as a family to help visit, look after them and to hold their hands. I couldn't imagine what the impact would have been on my grandfather were he to be separated from his spouse.

We were very lucky to have them housed in the Maxville Manor, which is a fantastic non-profit in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. They looked after both of them. But I can't even imagine what it would have meant for our family to have them separated in those twilight palliative hours. As the member for Waterloo said, if we can't give this, if we can't give couples who have done so much to give us everything we have in this building and everything we have in this province, then what good is anything?

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What I'll end by saying, in addition to thanking the member for moving this forward and thank you for the good sentiments I'm hearing around this building, is: Let's also be mindful of the path we walked down 20 years ago when we gave blind faith to private industry to build the capacity for long-term-care facilities. Let's acknowledge that was a mistake, and let's do more than announcements. Let's actually creatively think about how we can build more than 21 long-term-care beds in 15 months. Let's think about how we can revolutionize new housing opportunities for elders, because we owe it to them.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am very pleased to rise today to support the private member's bill that was brought forward by my colleague the member for Waterloo. I want to add to the stories that have been shared here today that really reveal the inhumanity of our long-term-care system

in keeping couples apart. I want to share the story of Everett and Simone Price. Those names, Everett and Simone Price—their story was already discussed here in this Legislature back in March 2013, before I had been elected. At the time, the leader of the NDP asked the question of the Premier: Why are Simone and Everett Price being forced to live apart after 67 years of marriage?

Speaker, this was a couple who were living together, happily, in a retirement residence. As the member for Waterloo said, couples don't age at the exact same pace, and Simone's health deteriorated. She had to go to hospital. After she returned from hospital, she wasn't able to go back to the retirement residence. She needed long-term care. There was a long-term-care facility that adjoined the retirement residence where Everett and Simone were living. Wouldn't that have been an ideal placement for Simone, to put her in the long-term care that was adjacent to the retirement residence so the couple could continue to see each other?

But no, that could not happen under the long-term care act, and so Simone was placed in a long-term-care facility on the other side of the city. The notion of Everett being able to drive to visit Simone—it's just not possible. In advocating for Simone and Everett, their daughters, Marilyn Savage and Sharon Smeltzer, talked to the leader of the NDP about what this was doing to this couple.

After I was elected in August 2013, I also raised the story of Simone and Everett. But Sharon, one of the daughters, said, "[Simone] is lost, she is always wondering why she can't be with him. It affects her well-being, her happiness." The other daughter, Marilyn Savage, said, "My mother sometimes gets very, very anxious. I'm sure that this situation contributes to her state of anxiety." She asks, "When is it going to happen? Why is it taking so long?" Marilyn went on to say, "The two of them" are both "anxious about the whole thing.... It makes my sisters and I feel very frustrated at the government's lack of action to help reunite them."

Speaker, this is an issue that governments have faced. The Liberals did nothing about it. This government has an opportunity, not just to stand up today and say, "Oh, yes, we support the member for Waterloo's bill," but to act on that bill, to actually make the changes that are going to help couples like Simone and Everett Price live together and fulfill that vow, "till death do us part."

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

I return to the member for Waterloo, who has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to thank everyone in this House who contributed to this debate.

As I knew in my heart, everyone has a story from our own ridings, nobody wants to see this situation get any worse, and we are looking for a solution.

What do we need to do now? We need to take action. How are we going to make sure that Jim and Joan can spend the rest of their days together? How are we going to make sure that Don and Pat Oberholzer are able to spend their lives together, or Bill and June?

We need to refocus our efforts on building campuses of care. These are a continuum of care, so that if you require retirement care or supportive housing or assisted living or long-term care, you're on the same campus at least. Jim should not have to drive 45 minutes every single day to go see his wife. It's not sustainable.

We need to put the humanity back in the system and provide people with the right to live with their partners as they age. It makes them happier, which improves their health outcomes. It decreases stress on caregivers as well. We need to treat the people who have built this province with the decency and respect that they deserve.

Also, I'm going to call out to the President of the Treasury Board because we need the funding to flow. Help us help you in this regard. There is a financial and economic case to be made for ensuring that you fast-track and accelerate the long-term-care investments in the province of Ontario. It's a win-win for everybody: It alleviates the pressure on our hospitals and makes sure that seniors actually can age in a healthy manner. There are good jobs to be created, as well, in the province of Ontario if we truly invest in creating quality long-term-care options for people.

At the very least, we should endeavour to build in this principle and pass this piece of legislation that ensures that couples who have been together for years live their last years together. It's a principled stand, and I hope that this entire House supports it.

ENSURING TRANSPARENCY
AND INTEGRITY IN POLITICAL PARTY
ELECTIONS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 VISANT À ASSURER
LA TRANSPARENCE ET L'INTÉGRITÉ
DES ÉLECTIONS DES PARTIS POLITIQUES

Mrs. Karahalios moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 150, An Act to enact the Ensuring Transparency and Integrity in Political Party Elections Act, 2019 / Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de 2019 visant à assurer la transparence et l'intégrité des élections des partis politiques.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: It is an honour and a privilege to rise today to speak on second reading of my very first private member's bill: Bill 150, the Ensuring Transparency and Integrity in Political Party Elections Act.

Having the opportunity to speak to this bill and to improve on the state of our democracy is one of the reasons I decided to run for public office and to serve.

I will take this time, Madam Speaker, to explain to this House what this bill does, what this bill does not do, the recent electoral trends that have made this bill most necessary today, and the support that this bill has received in the two weeks since I introduced it.

I would like to thank quickly, before I begin, the legislative lawyers who helped to draft this bill. I won't name them because I know that they're quite modest, but I did want to say thank you to them. I hope that he is watching today.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to start by explaining exactly what this bill is about. Bill 150 is about supporting, respecting and strengthening the democratic tradition of the grassroots of Ontario's political parties determining their own party leadership. Specifically, the bill focuses on elections that select a party leader, party president or its candidates through nominations. This bill bolsters the confidence of Ontarians in grassroots participation in whichever registered political party they choose to participate in, and will strengthen our democracy.

It does this by setting election transparency requirements on registered political parties and by setting consequences to deter the undemocratic actions of those who seek to thwart the will of grassroots members of political parties. This bill is designed to ensure that internal party elections are always decided by the will of the voters.

1500

Let me be clear on what I mean by "undemocratic actions."

This bill is not about whether or not a leader or political party can appoint or disqualify candidates, as per their party's constitution. This bill does not deal with procedural matters that may be gamed in an internal party election. While gaming the fringes of a process can be frustrating for a candidate, Bill 150 does not seek to micromanage or take over the administration of an internal party election. Under Bill 150, internal party elections would still be administered by registered political parties.

What Bill 150 focuses on is deterring the most egregious of undemocratic behaviours: ballot-box stuffing, voting when not being eligible to vote, voting more than once, mishandling paper ballots, furnishing false information about election results, or inducing or procuring an unqualified person to vote. These are behaviours most commonly referred to as "electoral fraud." When done in an Ontario general election, our Election Act refers to them as "corrupt practices."

The most egregious of undemocratic behaviours is what Bill 150 seeks to address. It does this in three parts:

(1) The act requires a report to be filed with the Chief Electoral Officer within seven days after an internal party election. The report must set out, among other things, the number of persons who are eligible to vote in the election, the number of persons who voted and the number of votes that each candidate received. As the law currently stands, once a political party determines its leader, party president or one of its candidates, Elections Ontario is to receive some kind of documentation, to be made publicly available, identifying the individual selected.

Bill 150 simply asks all registered political parties to clearly identify whether the individual occupying that position was appointed or acclaimed, or selected through an election. If they were selected through an election, Bill 150 requires the political party to provide, with the

individual's name, the specific details of the vote that I just previously mentioned.

Maybe there was a time when political parties didn't want the public to know these details. The old boys in the back will tell you the standard line: "We don't release that information because we don't want the other parties to know." But we all know that this is an archaic and outdated excuse, because nowadays there isn't an election for a leader or for a nomination candidate, or even for a party president, that doesn't get fully reported to and by the media.

(2) Bill 150 permits a candidate to contest the validity of an election by commencing an action in the Superior Court of Justice. Some might ask, "Well, why does this need to be in the bill? Can't you just take it to the courts now?" You can, but these undemocratic actions, while awful, are not actually an offence when they're done in one of these elections. So part 2 of this bill would fix this gap in the law.

(3) The act sets out various offences relating to undemocratic behaviours in an internal party election, as I have already described, with penalties ranging from fines to jail time.

If you think the ideas in parts 1, 2 and 3 of Bill 150 sound familiar, you would be correct. That's because the principles and ideas contained within Bill 150 are already present in Ontario's Election Act, with regard to general elections in Ontario.

The transparency requirements are the same. The right to contest an internal party election in court—if passed—would be the same. And the consequences are the same standards set out for any Ontario general election.

Bill 150 doesn't seek to reinvent the wheel. It simply asks to apply the same standards that we expect in a general election to an internal party election for leader, president and for a party's candidates.

Since I tabled Bill 150 a couple of weeks ago, I have quite simply been overwhelmed with the support I have received not only from my riding of Cambridge, but from across Ontario—from Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Bracebridge, all over our province. I received support from voters and supporters of all political parties. The Macdonald-Laurier Institute said that my bill was needed reform. The Samara Centre for Democracy said that the changes proposed in my bill match recommendations from their Party Favours report.

In these last two weeks, I've been reminded of examples of why Bill 150 is necessary today, right now, and not sometime in the future. In the lead-up to the 2018 election—under my party's prior leadership, I will add—there were several well-documented cases of ballot-box stuffing and electoral fraud that resulted in nominations where more ballots were counted than voters who voted. It occurred in Hamilton, Ottawa, Scarborough. Of course, in Ottawa West–Nepean, the member was fortunate to see that nomination overturned after months and months, and as a result of this, he became a candidate for that riding, he won the election and he now has the privilege of sitting in this House as my colleague today. But for others, well, they weren't so lucky. Perhaps the best publicized of these

cases was in Hamilton, where nearly two years later and well after the election, police concluded that voter fraud occurred, but no charges were laid.

Of course, it would be ridiculous to suggest that this only occurs in one political party, because it doesn't. It occurs within all parties. Let me be clear: This bill is not about casting a character judgment on any one political party. It is about addressing gaps in our current legal system. There have been incidents, over the years, across all parties, where such reports of ballot-box stuffing or other similar practices have surfaced. Whether it occurs once or it occurs a dozen times, it is unacceptable in a functioning democracy like ours that someone may find their way into elected public office as a beneficiary of an internal party election where ballot-box stuffing or electoral fraud made them the winner. That is not the hallmark of our political system in Ontario. The fallout of these incidents, regardless of which party they originated from, becomes a problem for all of us in this House.

Some have started to suggest that we spend taxpayer dollars and expand the role of Elections Ontario so that they take over administering every party's election for leader and its candidates. But there is no reason to take such a drastic step when the most obvious step hasn't been yet tried: to close the gap that exists in the current law. Currently, there are no requirements to disclose the details of an internal party election, and there are no consequences for fraudulent behaviour. Ontario voters are rightly shocked to learn about this—that someone can rig a candidate selection meeting by stuffing ballots or other means and there is nothing anyone can do, with the exception of specific cases of identity theft. I've been asked, "Belinda, how can this be?" I don't know what's worse, that this happens in Ontario, that there's nothing in law against it, or that some people in the backrooms of our political parties just shrug their shoulders and say, "Well, that's politics. Get over it."

A couple of weeks ago, a Conservative strategist was on the CBC saying that party convention votes are "always rigged." One professor I read about in the paper said, "If you don't like it, don't be a member. It's a private meeting." Well, that's not good enough. The vast, vast majority of Ontarians disagree. The people in this province who pay our salaries disagree.

Free, fair and democratic elections are the hallmark of our system of government. I struggle to see how there would be any concept of human rights—a right to free speech, a right to freely assemble, a right to participate in the political process, any rights at all—without the right to a free and fair election. Our political parties in Ontario, right now, receive taxpayer subsidies to operate. These are not private clubs that can have private meetings in a black hole of anarchy where anything goes. Just look at the current state of our election laws to understand how ridiculous it is to have such a gap in our legal system.

Madam Speaker, I realize that I have 24 seconds to go. I will continue at a later time.

1510

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm really, really pleased to join this debate today. It could be a historic day, in fact, on our last day of the session of this year.

I want, right off the top, to congratulate our colleague from Cambridge. She's a newly elected member. I don't want to call you a rookie; you've been here long enough to know how this place works. I think that anyone that's ever studied provincial politics or any level of politics—we all admire the courage that it takes for you, as a newly elected member, to address this issue head-on, knowing full well the ramifications that it could cause in terms of consternation within your own internal caucus. That takes guts; my goodness. Congratulations for hitting this head-on. It is a worthy bill, worthy of our debate, and it is worthy of our support. We are going to do that, as the New Democratic caucus, today.

Why is it worthy of our support? Well, it couldn't be more poignant, unfortunately. Madam Speaker, we've seen, very recently, a degradation of the system, where politics is done in a way that excludes people, that gives others the advantage and that doesn't quite keep the balance and the scales even.

Interruption.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, I'm a little bit distracted. The member's phone is going off. That could be the members of the Conservative caucus hopefully calling that member to support this bill, because it makes a lot of sense to us in this House.

I have such a limited time to speak because there's a lot of interest in the New Democratic Party to address this issue and to support this issue. We have the word "democratic" in our party because we take these rules seriously. We understand the value of grassroots support and their ability to see a transparent process and to have an accountable process.

I think, by and large, if you studied the models around riding associations and candidate nominations and elections, you would see that New Democrats have a stringent set of regulations that are bottom-heavy. They are run by the grassroots, and there are a lot of measures to be accountable there. We take it seriously and it's something that this Legislature should take seriously because it has ramifications downstream. If they elect the wrong people for the wrong reasons, who have the wrong intentions, we get bad policies and we get scandal and we get ethical violations and less accountability and less transparency.

I point to some recent incidents and evidence of that. Under the current Premier, there have been some violations and some less-than-ethical approaches to nominations.

The member's own husband, who I believe is in the gallery today—congratulations, sir; you're also standing up for this, and it's really important that they do that—has launched a lawsuit against the PC Party of Ontario, as he ran for the presidency of that party and was witness to some violations that were not fair. It takes a lot of guts to go up against your own party, but we certainly appreciate and acknowledge that when you see a violation, you've got to call it out and you have to do something about it.

In the spring of 2007 an investigation was launched into claims that in the Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas nomination the meeting was rigged in favour of federal Conservative staffer Ben Levitt.

In May 2018, during the general election, York police investigated the theft of 407 ETR data, including the names, addresses and phone numbers of 60,000 customers, allegedly involving former 407 ETR employee Simmer Sandhu, who resigned as PC candidate for Brampton East.

Speaker, it gets worse. A PC Party candidate named Nick Gahunia is suing the Toronto police for over \$12 million.

There are violations that need to be dealt with. The member's bill assesses and addresses some penalties, and it should send a message to all parties—not just the PC Party that is under the microscope right now—that we have to be above board, the process has to be transparent and accountable, and that we can put the democracy back into this House, where it belongs.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Let me first start by saying this is a very important bill that is before all of us as legislators, and I would like to commend the MPP for Cambridge for her courage. What you've shown here today is an absolute display of courage that we should all take lessons from as legislators.

As we know, the PC Party has faced multiple police investigations into the conducting of many things, not the least of which is their nomination process. I would say that this I know very well because I was a candidate in the riding of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, and the Conservative candidate that I ran against, Ben Levitt, was part of an investigation that was launched in the spring of 2017 in relation to the nomination race that they had in that riding.

The claims and the concerns about what happened at that nomination meeting are very familiar. We heard about ballot-box stuffing. We heard about memberships that were bought and paid for in the names of other people—which is contrary to what we would consider ethical. We heard about falsification of documents—again, sort of a familiar refrain. In fact, police investigators discovered that at the nomination meeting, forms appeared to be falsified. That's what they said: They appeared to be falsified. In fact, what was happening was that there was a printer in a classroom at Ancaster high, and they were generating identifications to be used at the balloting table. It wasn't clear whether or not some of the 407 data was being used in that instance. So this is a terrible, terrible story. The investigators found that one person who cast a ballot at the nomination meeting had actually passed away.

This is all well documented in a CBC news article entitled, "How to Rig a Political Party Nomination Meeting." If you read this article, you will see that these are the kinds of concerns and stories that we're hearing now from the MPP for Cambridge.

Court documents show that the Conservative Party really didn't want a particular candidate to win, so they tipped the scales in favour of their preferred candidate. In a sworn affidavit, the past PC Party president stated that the candidate "inspired mistrust," "might not be a reliable team player" and didn't fit the demographic that the party wanted for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Interjections.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes. This was all happening during the campaign. At the doorstep, I have to say that it created a black cloud over the nomination, over the race. People, as we know, are already deeply cynical about politicians, so it didn't help us in Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas to have a race that was about the issues that people were really concerned about—about hydro rates, about affordability; instead, there was this cloud of suspicion that we had to work through.

We agree with this bill. We agree that the people of Ontario need to have confidence in the political process. It's a fundamental component of our democracy. It shouldn't even have to be described as that; we should just all understand that. I support that this bill ensures that measures are in place, that we will get rid of this old cronyism that seems to be getting worse, not better. I'm happy to offer my support to this bill, especially given my experience.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to join my colleagues in expressing my congratulations to the member for Cambridge for her courage in bringing forward this bill. Certainly, stories have been shared today demonstrating the need for this kind of legislation that will put some legitimacy around the person who is elected as a candidate for a political party, the leader of a political party or the president of a political party.

The importance of this legislation, I think, is really shown in a media story that came out in the National Post just a couple of days ago that says that this member's party is responding to this legislation with a proposal that there be a code of conduct for party members instead. They don't like the notion of a legislative framework. They want this code of conduct. The reason they have given for needing this code of conduct is, the president of the party said that calls are coming from ridings that volunteers are expressing inappropriate and discriminatory views, mainly on social media.

1520

The question is whether a code of conduct will deal with that, or should we have legislation like this? I think the answer is clear: We need legislation.

But, Speaker, more than free and fair elections, for the functioning of a healthy democracy, we also need to ensure that we have electoral systems in place that genuinely reflect the will of the people. So, much as I applaud the member for this bill, I would have loved to see her go even further.

In the province of Ontario in 2018, 40.5% of Ontarians voted for a Progressive Conservative government, but

61% of the seats in this Legislature are occupied by Progressive Conservative Party members. Without a system of proportional representation, we have first-past-the-post governments that don't reflect the will of the people. The need for proportional representation as a system of governing, I think, has never been greater.

I think that many of us were so thrilled to see the news from Finland. They have a five-party coalition government that is led by five women leaders, four of whom are under the age of 35. That's the kind of result you get when you have democratic reform and a system of proportional representation. That's what we should be looking at in Ontario, not only to increase the representation of women but also, as we know, as evidence shows, the engagement of youth in our political processes. That's what we need in Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to stand up and have a few words to say about Bill 150 and transparency in the electoral process.

I had hoped that we would have had fuller participation in debate today, because the reality is that none of us is immune from this. We can talk about political parties here, but it's actually the ability for somebody to take advantage of no rules. That doesn't know any bounds.

I don't know why people could not support applying the same rules that we do in an election to these elections, that are really critical.

Take a look at nominations and party leaders. We already ask people to meet the standards that we ask for people getting elected to elected office. It's the same standard. But we have a standard for the process for people getting elected to elected office. What's so hard about applying that same rule to that? I mean, these are rigorous demands, regulations, that we put on people for transparency.

I believe that transparency in government is important. It's sometimes a struggle to do that. We all know that, within our own parties, when you're in government. It takes a lot of courage to stand up and put forward a bill on transparency.

I was fortunate to put forward a bill on transparency when I first got here—three weeks in—which was on disclosure of members' expenses. You can all thank me for that. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh would remember.

What I want to say is, I knew we were going to have to get there, so I don't think that was a courageous thing. I think what you're doing is, you're saying something that maybe people don't want to hear or don't want to talk about.

I don't think we should make it a really partisan thing. I think that's why we have to have a more healthy and fulsome debate.

I want to thank you for doing that. I want to thank the member from Cambridge.

Maybe we could just all put everything down for a second and look at it this way: Think back to your nomination. Think back to when you got nominated.

Think back to all those people who helped you. Think back to your family. Think back to your friends. Think back to all those people who gave you money, right? Remember all those people, and think of how you would feel if your election or nomination as a member was stolen from you because somebody cheated.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order, please.

Mr. John Fraser: Think back. Forget about—

Miss Monique Taylor: Sudbury.

Mr. John Fraser: No, think back. That's why this law is important. It comes at personal consequence not only to candidates but for a whole whack of people—people who support you, people who work hard for you, volunteers, people in your community.

Then, on top of that, there's the big picture, which is when something like what people have described here has happened—and it has happened in other parties; we know that. What does it do? Well, people look and they read the stories, and what do they say? "They're all bad. They're all corrupt." That's what they say. It's a pox on all our houses.

This is a reasonable bill, with reasonable measures, and I encourage everybody in this Legislature to support it, even if you're uncomfortable with it.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this debate today. It's certainly one that I know I've been waiting for and that a number of my colleagues have been interested in, so I do appreciate the opportunity. I've been listening very carefully to what has been said across the floor from all the members.

Let me at the outset say this: Part of the reason that this bill troubles me is that I don't believe that a majority Parliament should be imposing its will on parties. I think it should be a fundamental agreement that political parties govern themselves. I think we hit a slippery slope when we allow political parties, especially a majority party, to decide how the affairs of other parties should be run.

Now, having said that, Madam Speaker, at the same time, let me say this. We heard from the members of the NDP, and they talked about—I can only suspect that they were talking about their party when they were talking about cronyism within their party, when they were talking about the challenges of their nominations—

Interjections.

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

The official opposition will come to order, please, so that I'm able to focus on the speaker. Thank you.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The members opposite were talking about cronyism and the difficulties and challenges of nomination meetings. The member for Essex called this bill "historic." I can only surmise that that means that they have had such challenges within their party that they deem this bill to be something of extreme importance for them

in order to ensure that their party is functioning in the right way. And I'm listening to that. I think, all of a sudden, this side of the House sympathizes with the members opposite and the frustration that they've obviously had in governing their party. I think that's probably why—Madam Speaker, you may agree with me—since Confederation, they've only won one election: because the people in the back-rooms of the NDP have not allowed them to grow, and that is why they feel that this type of a bill is necessary for them.

I don't think that it is necessary in our party. Did we have challenges before? Yes, we did, Madam Speaker. We had challenges before, but I'm happy to say that with the—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I hope he takes the full 12 minutes. Keep this rolling.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. I apologize again to the government House leader.

To the official opposition: We have a debate to continue. I ask the House to come to order, please.

The member may continue.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I can see that we've touched a nerve with the opposition. Given their desire to stop debate on what they called a historic bill—and now they don't want to have the debate.

Madam Speaker, did we have challenges as a party? Of course we did. But under the leadership of the Premier, we made changes and we made sure that the things that happened before did not happen again.

I believe that changes like this should be done on the floor of a convention. I don't think that they should be done in the House, in the Legislature, and I don't think that a majority party, as I said, should be imposing its will on others.

1530

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I've been moved by what I've heard today. And because I have been so moved by what I've heard—because the challenges that the NDP seem to face and because they feel it is so important that these measures come into force—I'm prepared to support the bill. I hope that my caucus will support the bill as well. But I want to be clear: I intend to support this bill, and our caucus intends to make amendments to this bill when it is called to committee.

And because I have heard what the opposition NDP and the Liberals have said on how important these measures are to them, we will be suggesting amendments that allow 30 days for the leader of recognized parties to opt in or to opt out of these measures. Let me be very clear: Progressive Conservatives will opt out. We do not believe that we need these measures for our party. Our party and our grassroots decide how our party functions, not the Legislature.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Because we are a party of the grassroots, I will make sure to always try and protect the grassroots of the Progressive Conservative Party.

But again, I want to be clear because I've listened, because we've listened, because of what you have suggested with respect to the cronyism that has run rampant in the NDP, because of the challenges that you have had with nominations, and I know full well that there is—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. Again, I apologize to the member who indeed has the floor.

The official opposition and all members of the House will resist the urge, and please come to order. We're in the home stretch. Come to order.

Please continue.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It sounds like some of them are now upset. Maybe they aren't so happy about the fact that we'll support it.

But having said that, Madam Speaker, we said when we came back that we would reach across the aisle and work as best as we could with the opposition, and we've done that. Since we've gotten back here, we've passed a provincial animal welfare system; we've done that by working with the opposition. We've made progress on the real estate business brokers act by working with the opposition. We passed important legislation with respect to health care yesterday—unanimously—working with the opposition.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. I again apologize to the government House leader.

I am unable to focus on the government House leader's remarks because of the enthusiasm of the government members. Would you please rein it in so that I am able to hear the government House leader, who indeed has the floor.

I'm sorry for the continued interruption. Please continue.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, Madam Speaker, in that spirit of co-operation that has been the hallmark of our time since we have been back—as I said, I've been moved by the passionate speeches across the floor—I am excited to help them democratize their party to make it work better for them. I think it behooves me and all of my colleagues to do that on their behalf.

To summarize, we will be supporting this bill—this historic bill, as the NDP have called it. And as I said, we will propose amendments and we will allow 30 days to opt in and 30 days to opt out. We will further ask that that opting in and opting out be made permanent. We will ask that with all new parties registered after the 30 days, the leaders of those parties will have the same 30 days to opt in. And again, to be very clear, Madam Speaker, Progressive Conservatives will opt out. We do not believe that we need this. We do not believe that we should take this away from our grassroots, but we are always willing to help the other parties in this place become more democratic and to meet the needs of their grassroots.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): This House will come to order. The member from Essex and the government House leader: The crosstalk is not helpful.

Further debate?

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: I want to thank the member from Ottawa South; the member from Essex; the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, also called HWAD; the member from London West; and, of course, our government House leader for all of their comments. I will be taking up the remainder of the four minutes plus my two minutes in one go.

I just want to be clear that this was not meant to be a PC Party problem thing; it's not. It happens across all parties, like I mentioned before. The bill wouldn't affect the governance structure. The party would still be able to govern themselves; it's just a reporting requirement. It's just rules around—offences being created so that there are actual penalties around doing things like this.

If there is a problem in the system, I say let's clean it up by passing Bill 150. If you don't believe in these past reported problems, then let's pass Bill 150 anyway as a safeguard and deterrence measure moving forward.

Madam Speaker, I know it is a privilege to sit in this House and represent the people of one of the best places to live on this planet. I also know that my time in this House won't be forever. As my three-year-old son Victor grows up and he asks me to look back at my time here, and when he asks me why I spent so much time in this place—what did I do it for, what did I accomplish—I want to be able to tell him I didn't just waste my time here and miss an opportunity to try to make things better, to try to bring my unique perspective to this House in order to leave things better off than I found them. For me, this is what Bill 150 represents: a meaningful piece of legislation that defends the most basic of universal principles that we believe in here in Ontario, the right to free and fair elections.

Bill 150 will help to improve and strengthen our system of democracy moving forward. That's what Bill 150 represents to me, and I do hope that the other members in this House will agree and allow for this bill to be debated further in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will deal first with ballot item number 94, standing in the name of Ms. Bell.

Ms. Bell has moved private member's notice of motion number 46. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will deal with this vote after we finish other business.

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES
AMENDMENT (TILL DEATH
DO US PART) ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES FOYERS
DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE
(JUSQU'À CE QUE LA MORT
NOUS SÉPARE)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Fife has moved second reading of Bill 153, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide spouses with the right to live together in a home. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Justice.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy? Agreed.

ENSURING TRANSPARENCY
AND INTEGRITY IN POLITICAL PARTY
ELECTIONS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 VISANT À ASSURER
LA TRANSPARENCE ET L'INTÉGRITÉ
DES ÉLECTIONS DES PARTIS POLITIQUES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mrs. Karahalios has moved second reading of Bill 150, An Act to enact the Ensuring Transparency and Integrity in Political Party Elections Act, 2019.

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

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1540 to 1545.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All members will please take their seats.

Ms. Bell has moved private member's notice of motion number 46. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Sattler, Peggy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Schreiner, Mike
Arthur, Ian	Harden, Joel	Shaw, Sandy
Begum, Doly	Hassan, Faisal	Singh, Gurratan

Bell, Jessica	Hatfield, Percy	Singh, Sara
Berns-McGown, Rima	Kernaghan, Terence	Stiles, Marit
Bisson, Gilles	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter
Burch, Jeff	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Paul	Vanthof, John
Fraser, John	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	West, Jamie
Gates, Wayne	Natyshak, Taras	Yarde, Kevin
Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom	

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Jones, Sylvia	Piccini, David
Baber, Roman	Kanapathi, Logan	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Rickford, Greg
Bailey, Robert	Khanjin, Andrea	Roberts, Jeremy
Barrett, Toby	Kusendova, Natalia	Romano, Ross
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	MacLeod, Lisa	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Martin, Robin	Sandhu, Amarjot
Calandra, Paul	Martow, Gila	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Clark, Steve	McDonell, Jim	Skelly, Donna
Coe, Lorne	McKenna, Jane	Smith, Dave
Crawford, Stephen	Miller, Norman	Smith, Todd
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mitas, Christina Maria	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	Mulroney, Caroline	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	Nicholls, Rick	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fedeli, Victor	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Park, Lindsey	Wai, Daisy
Gill, Parm	Parsa, Michael	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Mike	Phillips, Rod	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 35; the nays are 59.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Please open the doors for 30 seconds.

ENSURING TRANSPARENCY
AND INTEGRITY IN POLITICAL PARTY
ELECTIONS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 VISANT À ASSURER
LA TRANSPARENCE ET L'INTÉGRITÉ
DES ÉLECTIONS DES PARTIS POLITIQUES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Karahalios has moved second reading of Bill 150, An Act to enact the Ensuring Transparency and Integrity in Political Party Elections Act, 2019.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Hardeman, Ernie	Piccini, David
Andrew, Jill	Harden, Joel	Rakocevic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harris, Mike	Rasheed, Kaleed
Arthur, Ian	Hassan, Faisal	Rickford, Greg
Baber, Roman	Hatfield, Percy	Roberts, Jeremy
Babikian, Aris	Jones, Sylvia	Romano, Ross

Bailey, Robert	Kanapathi, Logan	Sabawy, Sheref
Barrett, Toby	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Sandhu, Amarjot
Begum, Doly	Ke, Vincent	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bell, Jessica	Kernaghan, Terence	Sattler, Peggy
Berns-McGown, Rima	Khanjin, Andrea	Schreiner, Mike
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Kusendova, Natalia	Shaw, Sandy
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Singh, Gurratan
Bouma, Will	Mamakwa, Sol	Singh, Sara
Burch, Jeff	Mantha, Michael	Skelly, Donna
Calandra, Paul	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	McDonell, Jim	Stiles, Marit
Crawford, Stephen	McKenna, Jane	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Miller, Norman	Tabuns, Peter
Downey, Doug	Miller, Paul	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	Mitas, Christina Maria	Taylor, Monique
Elliott, Christine	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Mulroney, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fife, Catherine	Natyshak, Taras	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fraser, John	Nicholls, Rick	Vanthof, John
Fullerton, Merrilee	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Gates, Wayne	Pang, Billy	Walker, Bill
Gélinas, France	Park, Lindsey	West, Jamie
Gill, Parm	Parsa, Michael	Yakabuski, John
Glover, Chris	Pettapiece, Randy	Yarde, Kevin
Gretzky, Lisa	Phillips, Rod	

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The eyes are 95; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: General government, please.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on General Government? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Paul Calandra: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding private bills.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding private bills. Do we have consent? Agreed.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the orders for second and third reading of the following private bills shall be called consecutively and that the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bills be put immediately without debate: Bill Pr11, An Act to revive 598968 Ontario Limited; Bill Pr12, An Act to revive 2345260 Ontario Ltd.; Bill Pr13, An Act to revive A&One Fashion Jewellery Wholesale Ltd.; Bill Pr14, An Act respecting the Special Ability Riding Institute; Bill Pr15,

An Act to revive Haggart Belting Canada Ltd.; Bill Pr18, An Act to revive 1191650 Ontario Limited; Bill Pr19, An Act to revive 1549408 Ontario Inc.; Bill Pr22, An Act to revive Olympic Floor Cleaning Inc.; and that Mr. Coe may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr22 on behalf of Mr. Thanigasalam.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Calandra has moved that the orders for second and third reading—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

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

598968 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2019

Ms. Sattler moved second reading of the following bill: Bill Pr11, An Act to revive 598968 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

598968 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2019

Ms. Sattler moved third reading of the following bill: Bill Pr11, An Act to revive 598968 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

2345260 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2019

Mr. Crawford moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr12, An Act to revive 2345260 Ontario Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

2345260 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2019

Mr. Crawford moved third reading of the following bill: Bill Pr12, An Act to revive 2345260 Ontario Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

A&ONE FASHION JEWELLERY WHOLESALE LTD. ACT, 2019

Mr. Babikian moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr13, An Act to revive A&One Fashion Jewellery Wholesale Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

A&ONE FASHION JEWELLERY
WHOLESALE LTD. ACT, 2019

Mr. Babikian moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr13, An Act to revive A&One Fashion Jewellery Wholesale Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

SPECIAL ABILITY RIDING INSTITUTE
ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2019

Mr. Pettapiece moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr14, An Act respecting the Special Ability Riding Institute.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

SPECIAL ABILITY RIDING INSTITUTE
ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2019

Mr. Pettapiece moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr14, An Act respecting the Special Ability Riding Institute.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

1600

HAGGART BELTING CANADA LTD.
ACT, 2019

Mr. Crawford moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr15, An Act to revive Haggart Belting Canada Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

HAGGART BELTING CANADA LTD.
ACT, 2019

Mr. Crawford moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr15, An Act to revive Haggart Belting Canada Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

1191650 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2019

Mrs. Martow moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr18, An Act to revive 1191650 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

1191650 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2019

Mrs. Martow moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr18, An Act to revive 1191650 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

1549408 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2019

Mr. Pang moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr19, An Act to revive 1549408 Ontario Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

1549408 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2019

Mr. Pang moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr19, An Act to revive 1549408 Ontario Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

OLYMPIC FLOOR CLEANING INC.
ACT, 2019

Mr. Coe, on behalf of Mr. Thanigasalam, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr22, An Act to revive Olympic Floor Cleaning Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

OLYMPIC FLOOR CLEANING INC.
ACT, 2019

Mr. Coe, on behalf of Mr. Thanigasalam, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr22, An Act to revive Olympic Floor Cleaning Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Paul Calandra: I seek unanimous consent that, in advance of commencement of debate on Bill 6, the member for Windsor–Tecumseh and any other member who may have somebody in the galleries be given the opportunity to introduce those members without impacting the clock with respect to debate on Bill 6.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent. Do we have consent? Agreed.

VISITORS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, for your indulgence. We have a number of people we'd like to introduce this afternoon before we start the debate:

—Mike Downie is here with Patrick Downie, Willo Downie and Clemens Downie—and on their way, I think, Lily Downie and Cate Downie are coming—and Leo Timmins, Kaya Usher, Nancy Bradley and Gillian Reiss.

—Kevin Hearn from the Barenaked Ladies is on his way. He was the music director of Secret Path.

—Tom Wilson is here, founding member of Blackie and the Rodeo Kings and Junkhouse, He is also an author and a visual artist.

—Shafiq Beig is a Toronto poet and is also the tailor for all the table officers and the speakers. He has a book coming out next month.

—Members of the League of Canadian Poets are here: Lesley Fletcher, the executive director; Ayesha Chatterjee, the past president of the league; and Kate Marshall Flaherty. Thank you very much.

—Marty Gervais, Windsor's poet laureate emeritus, is on his way.

—A.F. Moritz, Toronto's current poet laureate, is here.

—We have my friend George Elliott Clarke, Toronto's fourth poet laureate and Canada's seventh Parliamentary Poet Laureate; my buddy Leroy Siemon from my old CBC days; and and the love of my life—she's put up with me for 44 years—Gale Simko-Hatfield.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I would also like to introduce some guests I have in the government side gallery: poet Asad Chowdhury; Delwar Elahi; Iqbal Hasan; Sirajul Iqbal;

Salma Bani; Mashud Khan; Hosne Ara Jamee; Saifullah Mahmud Dulal; Delara Nahar Babu; Mou Mohubontee; Aftabuddin Ahmed; Shaugat Ali Sagor; MD Hossain Soman; Subrata Kumar Das; Nurul Islam; Rojina Chowdhury; Emdadul Amin; and Nadim Iqbal.

They're also poets, and family members, of course, as well.

POET LAUREATE OF ONTARIO ACT
(IN MEMORY OF GORD DOWNIE), 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LE POÈTE OFFICIEL
DE L'ONTARIO (À LA MÉMOIRE
DE GORD DOWNIE)

Mr. Hatfield moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario in memory of Gord Downie / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant à créer la charge de poète officiel de l'Ontario à la mémoire de Gord Downie.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Hatfield.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Gord Downie was best known as the lead singer of that great Canadian band the Tragically Hip. But he was also a published poet, and one of the goals of creating the position of Poet Laureate of Ontario is to help keep alive the memory of Gord Downie. He was known from coast to coast to coast. Since 1984, the Kingston-based band had criss-crossed Canada dozens of times, playing in small towns, dingy, smoke-filled bars, concert halls, hockey arenas, and outdoor concerts where 30,000 or 40,000 fans sang along with each and every song.

The Hip were nominated for 45 Juno Awards. They won 16 of them. They sold eight million records. They've been named to the Order of Canada. Gord Downie viewed Canada through a distinctive Canadian lens, and the songs he wrote reflected that. Before he died from a rare form of brain cancer, the Tragically Hip hit the road on a cross-Canada tour in 2016. It led to a summer of national bonding. We celebrated with Gord and his bandmates, Rob Baker, Paul Langlois, Gord Sinclair and Johnny Fay. Their final concert in their hometown of Kingston was aired on the CBC and 12 million fans tuned in. I watched much of it from 35,000 feet, flying from Toronto to Calgary on my way to a public accounts conference in Yellowknife. It was almost as if we were invited in advance to Gord Downie's wake.

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Part of the proceeds from that final tour were dedicated to the Sunnybrook Foundation, and more than \$1 million was raised for cancer research. The Canadian Press named Gord Downie as the 2016 newsmaker of the year.

Gord Downie died at the age of 53, just over a year after the Hip's final concert in Kingston. In Maclean's magazine, Michael Barclay wrote, "Downie is considered by a lay audience as one of Canada's greatest poets—even if he only ever published one book of poetry ... and his work is communicated primarily through a rock band."

When asked once about his book of poems, Gord Downie said, "I think it would be cool if Coke Machine Glow means more people will go into the poetry section of the bookstore ... I just want people to buy more poetry. Poetry characterizes a nation...."

Maclean's put out a commemorative issue devoted entirely to Gord Downie, his life and legacy. Very few Canadians are ever so honoured. In that Maclean's edition, there's another quote from Michael Barclay: "Poetry and pop music are not strangers, of course: just ask the committee who granted Bob Dylan the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature."

Laurie Brown, a former host on CBC Newsworld's program *On the Arts*, once wrote, "Gord doesn't consider himself one of the great poets of the nation ... but he is!"

Speaker, this isn't rocket science. More than 20 countries have named a poet laureate. Italy has had a poet laureate for more than 700 years. Great Britain has had one since 1668. Canada has had a poet laureate since 2002. There's one in Yukon, PEI and Saskatchewan.

In my home community of Windsor, I was on city council when we named Marty Gervais to the position in 2011. He is now our poet laureate emeritus, as Mary Ann Mulhern assumed the role recently, and we also named Samantha Badaoa as our youth poet laureate for the city of Windsor.

We have great publishing houses in Windsor, such as Biblioasis and Black Moss Press. We have dozens of very talented poets, and thanks to our local publishing houses, our poets find a wider voice.

Some of the communities in Ontario with poets laureate include Dufferin county, Cobalt, Barrie, Brantford, London, Mississauga, Ottawa, Owen Sound, Sudbury and Toronto. In our schools, poetry can convince children to enjoy reading and writing and stimulate their creativity. They can grow to see the world differently and believe in themselves and the literary arts.

This Gord Downie bill is a non-partisan attempt to promote literacy and to focus attention on Ontario's amazing poets and the wider arts community in our province. Our poets go into our schools. They bring excitement. They assist with writing workshops and they arrange poetry readings.

Our poet laureate would be Ontario's literary ambassador. They will work with our legislative librarian, as they do in Ottawa, advising on the latest acquisitions and collections to add to the legislative library. They could be called upon by the Speaker to write, attend and read their work here at special celebrations at Queen's Park. A visit from Ontario's poet laureate would be big news, especially in rural and northern communities.

During a debate on an earlier attempt to create the poet laureate position, my friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Mr. Walker, said, "This opportunity is even more relevant in smaller cities and places where residents don't have access to things like museums, ballet, opera, the symphony or other blockbuster art events. Then they have even more reason to look to a poet laureate as a way to

promote literature and to contribute and build a thriving arts and culture scene."

When Windsor's poet laureate brings others from across the country to readings at our historic Willistead Manor, it's always standing room only.

There are thousands of photographs of Gord Downie. In many of them, he's wearing a faded blue denim jacket with a yellow button on his right chest. It reads, "Open books, open minds, open hearts." Ontario's poet laureate would do just that. He or she would motivate people to do more reading, encourage people to open not only their minds to poetry, but to open their hearts to a wider appreciation of the arts in general. Cicero, the ancient philosopher in Rome, once said, "A room without books is like a body without a soul."

Gord Downie was always writing in a notebook, always jotting down combinations of words and phrases. He referred to his need to write as "lifting the 400-pound feather."

The poet and editor Damian Rogers says, "The greatest compliment you can give a poet is to say she's a rock star. The greatest compliment that you can give a musician is to say he's a poet." Gord Downie is both.

From an editorial in the *New York Times*, we are told, "The place of honor that Mr. Downie occupies in Canada's national imagination has no parallel in the United States. Imagine Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan and Michael Stipe combined into one sensitive, oblique poet-philosopher, and you're getting close."

Michael Barclay wrote a book, *The Never-ending Present: The Story of Gord Downie and the Tragically Hip*. It made the short list here, Speaker, at the Speaker's Book Award recently. In there, he again quotes Damian Rogers speaking about the relationship of Gord Downie with poets: "I can't think of anyone else of our generation who is so deeply engaged in this country's poetry. Not just that he's read by poets, which he is, but also, he reads them. I can't overstate how unusual that is."

Three short lines from Gord Downie's *Coke Machine Glow*:

I walk the floor
Child in one arm
Al Purdy in the other.

Canada's seventh poet laureate has joined us today. George Elliott Clarke writes on the value of the Gord Downie bill. He says: "In contracts and Legislatures, language can look like Latin and sound like gobbledygook, but the importance of the poetry of Gord Downie and of this bill that heralds his name is its reminder that the most meaningful speech is that which connects us, heart to heart, as clear as a slapshot and as civic as a kiss.

"Just as Gord Downie achieved in his songs, so will now the poet laureate of Ontario strive to represent, in poetry, the feelings and experiences and histories that bind all Ontarians in a commonwealth of imagination and of intelligence, of dream and of purpose."

Poetry lasts forever. More than 100 years ago, Major John McCrae wrote *In Flanders Fields*. That poem is still read, memorized and recited every year.

Soon, no matter how you celebrate the holidays, we'll all hear various renditions of a poem that was first published in 1823:

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house

Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.

Poetry touches our daily lives. Our Ontario poets deserve more attention and new respect. They add greatly to our cultural fabric. They bring our history back to life. Yes, they can be cryptic, oblique and confusing at times, but they tell our stories. They sometimes show us the simple truth. They can lift our spirits when we're down or light the candles on a new romance.

April is Poetry Month. It will be a tight timeline, but wouldn't it be great if the selection committee could name Ontario's first poet laureate by next April?

In that regard, Gord's brother Mike has asked if a family member could sit in on that selection process in a ceremonial role. I think it's a great idea myself. I passed it along to the Speaker for his consideration, as he will chair the selection committee. I see it as adding even more prestige to the process, and highlighting Gord Downie's legacy to future poets laureate.

Before he died, Gord Downie became an outspoken advocate for Indigenous issues and reconciliation. The Assembly of First Nations gave him a star blanket, an eagle feather and a Lakota name, *Wicapi Omani, The Man Who Walks Among the Stars*.

After the tour with the Hip, Gord released a solo album he had been working on, *Secret Path*. It was the story of Chanie Wenjack. He was a 12-year-old First Nations child who died from exposure while running away from a residential school in Kenora, 400 miles from his home. Gord and Mike Downie turned *Secret Path* into an animated video which has won wide acclaim worldwide. In a letter to his fans, Gord wrote, "Chanie haunts me. His story is Canada's story. This is about Canada. We are not the country we thought we were."

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Speaker, in this Legislature, let's become the assembly we thought we were. Let's put down our policy and process swords, pick up our pens, and sign our names to a non-partisan bill to honour a talented Canadian from Ontario and create in his name the position of poet laureate for generations to come.

This bill is important to the wider arts community of Ontario. They've been struggling to cope with the size of the government cuts to their funding. Naming a poet laureate holds the promise of a new approach for the greater arts community. They're underappreciated. The arts sector in Ontario employs 300,000 people. It's a \$27-billion industry.

Finally, Speaker, my advance apologies to the real poets in the gallery today, but:

It is my humble opinion and supposition
That it is difficult for a member of the official opposition

To convince the government to consent
To a bill they themselves didn't craft and present
But today—in a display of democratic leadership
Let's show the gallery some true non-partisan fellowship

Together—be we—be bourgeois or proletariat
For Gord Downie, let's create a poet laureate.

Applause.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I'll be brief. I just want to congratulate my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh, because I can see there's support in the House. I guess three times is a charm. Sometimes it takes an effort to get private members' bills here, and I congratulate the government as well, too, for helping this come forward.

Poetry is something we could use more of in this place, I think we all know. You hear it every once in a while. Words are powerful, and they last forever. There's a poem by Carl Sandburg. It's one that I always remember, maybe not often enough. It's called *Proud Words*. It goes like this:

Be careful how you use proud words.

Proud words have long boots, hard boots; they walk off;
they can't hear you calling—

Be careful how you use proud words.

Poetry is important because it lasts forever and it's words. This is a great honour to the family and to Gord's memory—very special. He was a poet in the likes of Carl Sandburg and Woody Guthrie and all those people who brought music and poetry to people throughout the centuries. It's just an honour to say a few words.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: To my dear friend Percy: This bill is a long time coming, and on behalf of the government of Ontario, I want to convey, on behalf of the Premier and the entire government caucus, that we will support your bill 100% and are committed to working with you to see your dream into fruition.

I really appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak today on behalf of the government, as the Minister of Heritage and Culture, to talk about how important this piece of legislation is. I'd like to welcome the Downie family and friends for being here today and showing your leadership.

I'm a bit star-struck here today. Back in 1997, I was going to StFX. I'm a girl from New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, and I was a big Hip fan. I watched the Hip at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre—I should actually say at the metro Halifax Convention Centre. I won't tell you what I did that night, but I had a lot of fun.

From being a young girl, the Tragically Hip were ingrained in my memory. If you can imagine becoming the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, I now get to work with the people who put on the Junos. Allan Reid, just after I was moved into this portfolio said to me, “Do you know the two most famous television programs ever played on the CBC?” I said, “I imagine it’s a hockey game.” He said, “Yes, in 2012, the Canada-US gold medal game. The second-most-watched program in this country’s history was Gord Downie’s last concert with the Tragically Hip in Kingston, Ontario.”

Look, we have divisions in this assembly sometimes. We have, right now, some challenges within our country in terms of alienation in one part of the country and separatism in another part, but what unites this country is within this Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. It is the people who make and create, the people who, on a global stage, are either topping podiums or topping charts. We attach ourselves to them because they remind us of what it means to be a Canadian and, in this case, what it means to be an Ontarian.

Percy mentioned—if you don’t mind, Speaker, I’ll be a bit familiar—the cultural fabric of the province of Ontario. We consider, within this ministry, that we have a double bottom line. The first is to preserve, protect and promote our cultural fabric. It’s to make sure that we support emerging artists and amateur athletes. But the second thing, and Percy mentioned this as well, is that the number of jobs created in our cultural industries is astounding. The Ontario Arts Council says that last year alone over \$25 billion in economic activity was created in the arts because of talented musicians like the Tragically Hip, like the Barenaked Ladies, like the Tenors and, as the mother of a 14-year-old daughter, like Shawn Mendes.

I have to say I’m absolutely thrilled to be here because engrained in the lyrics of every Tragically Hip song is meaning—poetry for certain. But listening to the lyrics, you learn so much about our country and our heritage. Think about the songs: Bobcaygeon, Fiddler’s Green—my personal favourite—Nautical Disaster, At the Hundredth Meridian. I could go on, Speaker, but we all know all of these songs, and we learned a little bit about Canada and our history as we listened.

Our government will continue to support this private member’s bill long after it is passed because, as the minister responsible for the Ontario Arts Council, we’ll make sure that they work with the member as well as the Speaker, as we continue to promote the Poet Laureate of Ontario. I do believe it will promote arts and literacy and, as my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, the Associate Minister of Energy, said and was appropriately quoted in Percy’s speech, have the opportunity to make arts, poetry and literacy accessible and attainable right across this province, and that’s one of the things that’s very important to me.

The establishment of this position would further support our cultural sector. Our government understands how valuable culture is to the lives and communities of all Ontarians, regardless of where they live and regardless of

what their income is. Again, Speaker, the culture sector contributes so much to our economy that every dollar we put in, we immeasurably get back. That’s why the ministry is going to continue to support our arts, heritage, libraries, cultural industries and cultural agencies.

Given a sufficient profile, the activities of the Poet Laureate of Ontario would raise the profile of poetry and spoken word and promote literacy and celebrate the many facets of life here in Ontario. Our government recognizes the importance of supporting artists who play a valuable role in building a strong and prosperous Ontario.

As I said, my favourite Hip song was Fiddler’s Green, but oftentimes, when I’m driving through my constituency or other parts of Ontario, it’s Bobcaygeon I listen to. I always loved the lyrics: “It was in Bobcaygeon, I saw the constellations / Reveal themselves, one star at time.”

Thanks to the persistence of my friend from Windsor–Tecumseh, today we’re going to be able to see, for the foreseeable future, poets laureate reveal themselves one star at a time here in the Ontario Legislature. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Gord Downie was an artist like no other. He was a poet who captured the imagination of our nation. Gord’s poetry delivered messages from our past of good, injustice and sorrow, and we listened. We listened when he spoke to us about Tom Thomson, Bill Barilko, Hugh MacLennan, his young nephew Charlie, and the Secret Path of Chanie Wenjack.

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He was truly a compelling artist, a genuine artist, but let’s not forget: He was also a true rocker. Gord burned down the house, and he burned a hole in our hearts. Gord’s voice was a soundtrack to generations of Canadians.

I met Gord in Kingston. My first husband, Tom Wilson, who’s here in the gallery today, is a musician. In the day, we spent a lot of time with the Tragically Hip at Dollar Bills, the Terrapin, Lakeview Manor—all the haunts.

Actually, Madam Speaker, I’d like to take a moment to recognize a special anniversary for Tom today. Tom, from me and on behalf of our kids, thank you for 20 years of sobriety.

My favourite Gord moment happened about 20 years ago when my daughter was about eight. I was giving Gord a ride home from Chez Piggy. Just as Gord reached for the handle of the car to get in the front seat, Madeline called out “shotgun.” Gord and I looked at each other, and Gord just said with a chuckle, “Shotgun rules.” I share this story because—well, it’s kind of funny for me, but also, this was the Gord I remember: a straight-up Canadian guy.

People might ask, “What makes us a country? What do Canadians believe in?” Well, I can tell you: On the night of the Tragically Hip’s farewell show, people filled a stadium. It was transformed, for one night, into a place of worship. All across our country, people sang in one voice. We all knew the words to those hymns, and if anyone ever prayed for a miracle, they did it that night. Gord showed us the real power of an artist—the power of poetry.

He used his final years to shine a light on the injustices inflicted on First Nations people. Let me tell everyone gathered here today that I have been given a rare gift, and that is to sit beside MPP Sol Mamakwa. He stands in his place and raises issues of inequity; of environmental racism; lack of clean drinking water; heartbreaking, unimaginable suicides; basic human rights. All of MPP Mamakwa's New Democratic colleagues agree with him when he says, "I'm tired of our people paying for the mistakes of government with their health and their lives."

Gord has passed us a torch to light the way for true and meaningful reconciliation. So let me end with Gord's powerful and poetic words, "To become a country, and truly call ourselves Canada, it means we must become one. We must walk down a path of reconciliation from now on. Together, and forever."

Applause.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for that, and thank you so much to the family.

Madam Speaker, I seek unanimous consent for the New Democratic Party to use the time not used by the independents so that we can continue to commemorate Gord Downie and to speak in favour of this very, very important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Shaw is seeking unanimous consent. We have consent to use the time. Agreed.

Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: In honour of the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, who put forward this Bill 6, An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario in memory of Gord Downie—I'm a little bit hoarse just so that I sound a little bit more like him. That's being done on purpose, of course.

I know that the member opposite has put forward this initiative at least a couple of times since I was elected, and I spoke on it. He asked me if I would find the time to speak on it today as well. I was very honoured, and I feel very privileged to offer my support.

We both often, at the holiday time, which it is right now, try to outdo each other with our holiday poems. Last year, I tried to sing I'm Dreaming of a Balanced Budget. I did my best. He always does an incredible job with his poems during debates, and I hope that he continues to entertain us with his poetry.

Today, I'm going to start with a bit of a spoof. It's a spoof of the song In the Market for a Miracle, from the musical A Christmas Story Live!

At Christmastime when you're a Jew,
It's easy to feel kinda blue,
With everyone reminding you
You're different from the rest.

But they can keep their Christmas trees.
Our lawns don't need nativities.
We've got matzo balls and Maccabees!
So why bother being depressed?

After all, Madam Speaker, Hanukkah is here
And it reminds us every year
That when the days are dark and cold,
A light might just appear.

So throw some latkes on your plate.
Come stuff yourself and celebrate.
No need for us to legislate,
This festive time of year.

And if the teachers want to strike,
It'll have to be some other night,
For this is the festive season of light
When we all should get along.

Teams orange, red, green and blue,
I think we all know what to do.
If you're not sure, I'll give you a clue:
Support this private member's bill, yes, do!

So let me end
By thanking my dear friend,
With his white moustache, from Windsor–Tecumseh
For reminding us how important poetry can be.

For here, in the best province, in the best country,
No matter what your politics might be,
We truly want to remain free
To celebrate with a Christmas tree
Or perhaps ... without!

I just want to say that Gord Downie really touched a lot of hearts, not just in Canada but around the world. As we heard the member from Tecumseh say, he was known for his poetry as well.

I want to mention a little bit of the history. Gord was born Gordon Edgar Downie, in the Kingston area. That's where he met his friends who later became his bandmates in the Tragically Hip, which is obviously so well known around the world.

Unfortunately, Gord died of glioblastoma—as a former optometrist, unfortunately, I know exactly what that is—a type of brain cancer, on October 17, 2017, at the young age of 53, here in Toronto. He's survived by his four children.

We all know that it became a really heartfelt, emotional outpouring of support for Gord Downie when he came out with his diagnosis. He didn't go into hiding. He went out and performed across the country. People watched on TV. Not everybody could make it out to the final concert, but for those who did, it will be one of those things they remember throughout their lives.

Gord became the 2016 Newsmaker of the Year in the Canadian Press. That's something that's typically reserved for politicians and public servants, so it was a bit of a breach, I guess, from the typical person who's named for that.

I want to mention one of his poems, *Ahead by a Century*, one of his early pieces, and I want to read a little bit of it.

First thing we'd climb a tree
And maybe then we'd talk
Or sit silently
And listen to our thoughts
With illusions of someday
Cast in a golden light
No dress rehearsal
This is our life.

When I read through a lot of poems, this poem touched me a little bit extra, because it was the type of poetry my late mother really loved. When we would try to write poems or things like, she would always recognize when we were really hitting on what she felt was very meaningful and symbolism—not to be so obvious, but to be symbolic, so that people could interpret the poem how they want to interpret it.

We all know that poetry is something to be really celebrated. In school, we all used to kind of groan when we were given those assignments to interpret poems, but in the end, when we felt forced to do it, we all enjoyed it. I certainly did.

I want to talk a little about what was brought up, the very famous song, *Bobcaygeon*. What I found in my research was that they chose the word “*Bobcaygeon*” because it rhymed with “*constellation*.” I don’t know how perfectly accurate that is, but I guess it played well. On Parliament Hill, actually, after Gord passed away, they played the tune of *Bobcaygeon*.

One of the interpretations I found on the Internet for the music video for *Bobcaygeon*—since I already put a bit of a Jewish theme to my talk here—was that it was based on Gord’s stance again racism and anti-Semitism. He really was an outspoken person for tolerance and for support of Indigenous communities. He called on governments to do more to help the Indigenous communities across Ontario and Canada.

In the song, he referenced “*Aryan twang*,” and that was a reference, obviously, to Nazism. The imagery from that music video brought to mind, for a lot of people, the *Christie Pits* riots right here in Toronto, which is an unfortunate legacy of when Jewish baseball players got attacked by mobs.

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I think it’s really interesting that the *Tragically Hip* wasn’t really a political band, yet when you do research on the Internet, there’s a lot of politics that’s interpreted, I think specifically because of Gord’s poetry.

I want to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for never giving up, and I want to thank all of the colleagues here from all sides of the House for supporting this initiative. I think it’s a wonderful, wonderful way to end off the session in the holiday season: with a bit of camaraderie but also with a bit of culture, a bit of talk about our heritage, a bit of thinking about our province—

how great it is, but also how much better it can be when we all work together.

Merry Christmas. Happy New Year. Happy Hanukkah. Happy Kwanza. Happy Diwali—it has since passed, but I’ll say it anyhow.

I want to wish everybody a wonderful, wonderful bit of a break. Enjoy it with all of your friends, all of your families, and yes, please get along with your neighbours.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: I’m so proud to represent the people of Kingston and support an act to create the Poet Laureate of Ontario, and, in doing so, honour one of Kingston’s favourite sons, Gord Downie.

It seems like not that long ago that people gathered from miles around to see the band one last time, to be part of that moment in history, a collective experience of both the sadness and joy that we shared as a country.

I was working that night as the chef at that same little restaurant, *Chez Piggy*, that had hosted the *Hip* so many times. The mark of the band and of Gord is all over my little town, but my city also made a mark on Gord’s prose. I’d like to share one small example that is particularly close to home.

There’s a park in my neighbourhood that we unofficially call *Skeleton Park*. It’s where I help with spring cleanups, where I help organize Easter egg hunts for neighbourhood kids, where I cook for folks at music festivals and play hockey in the winter. But it’s another little piece of my town that is immortalized in song by Gord. It goes like this:

In *Skeleton Park*
One fine summer evening
They teased the dark
Like the last strawberry
I could hear them on the breeze
Hear them moving through the trees
The ghosts of the Rideau Canal start to sing.

The park was originally a cemetery, Speaker, and it was filled with the workers who built that canal. The *Hip* are a touchstone not just for Kingston, but for Canada, our music and even our identity. It is strange to say, but the arts are simultaneously a celebration of what makes us different and also what makes us the same. It is the use of words and sounds to bring us into the perspective of another, to feel that while we are not the speaker, we are closer to understanding them, and our empathy has grown.

I’d like to share a few of Gord’s words on this subject, spoken about music and a shared passion of ours—the environment: “*Music is the ultimate medium for expressions of love*,” he says, “and those expressions find a beautiful backdrop in the environment. Music is also a popular rallying point—at its central core, it’s a way for people to get in touch with the best parts of themselves and to voice the love in their hearts. And the environment is one of the great loves of our lives—when we think of the

best parts of ourselves, the environment is always there, informing us, as a backdrop.”

His words resonate. They inspire, hearten and sadden, and they last. They last, Speaker. Just last night, I opened my phone to read about a late-breaking story on the CBC. It said, “‘His Legend Lives On’: MPPs to Vote on Creating Poet Laureate in Memory of Gord Downie.” Well, here we are.

Gord was right once again when he wrote:

“You’re going to miss me
Wait and you’ll see”
Fully and completely

We do, Mr. Downie. I hope this shows just how much. Thank you for everything.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: First, I’m going to address the Downie family. The protocol is that we turn and face the Speaker, so I’m not turning my back to you; I will be speaking to the Speaker—because if I face you, I will cry.

When I first found out that I was going to be speaking to this, I thought I would start off with some lyrics from my favourite Hip songs, with “Watch the band through a bunch of dancers / Quickly, follow the unknown.” But then I decided it’s probably not best if I started it that way, so instead, I’m going to have a restart. I’m going to start with another piece of poetry. It’s a piece of poetry that was written about 150 years ago by a well-known poet to her husband.

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day’s
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood’s faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote that 150 years ago for her husband, but I think it could have been written for Gord Downie. I’m going to take a little bit of a twist on it, because her last sentence—“I shall but love thee better after death”—is a reflection that her love would continue greater after she passed away. But what I think that we’re seeing today, and what we have seen for the last two years, is that there’s been a love for Gord Downie that has grown significantly since his death. Establishing a poet laureate in his honour not only makes his legacy live on, but it shows that is something that is trans-generational.

I had the opportunity to speak to this at second reading, and I talked about my own children, my love for the Tragically Hip and the fact that I have been to 22 of their concerts. I talked about the 22nd concert, and how much I wanted to go to the one in Kingston and my wife wouldn’t let me because it was her cousin’s wedding—the cousin I had never met and my children had never met. I offered to rent a family for her and she said no. They wouldn’t have known, because they’d never met us, so it wouldn’t have made any difference. I’m not bitter about that at all. We did get to see the Hip at the ACC, so we did get to experience it as a family.

In that speech at the second reading, I talked about some of the things that my kids had done as a result of the Tragically Hip. I recalled, and I’ll repeat it, an interview that Gord had done. He was asked about the song Cordelia. His response to the interviewer was, “I don’t know. You’ll have to read King Lear.” My son, at the age of 12, decided he was going to read King Lear to find out what Gord Downie was talking about. Gord had introduced my son to Shakespeare before he’d gone to high school.

I think that there are others that probably had a lot of the same experiences, where things that were introduced to them through the song, through the lyrics that Gord had written, had lasted with them. It made an impact. That’s what poetry does. It makes an impact. Each of us feels something because of it. It is trans-generational. My parents like the Tragically Hip. They’re in their 70s. After 22 concerts, obviously I like the Tragically Hip. My kids like the Tragically Hip. Just like the poem from Elizabeth Barrett Browning, there are things that—his lyrics will reach and it will resonate with you.

1650

In my office here at Queen’s Park, I have a very large photograph—a very large, framed item, I guess, would be the best way to describe it. It has a series of photos from the final concert. The main photo is Gord facing the audience, and you see him from behind. There’s a silver Tragically Hip album that’s part of it. But most important for me are his handwritten notes from one of the concerts. There are some things that he has said in it that describe the songs that are going to be played in the order that some of them are going to come in, but there are also some handwritten notes about different things that he says to the audience.

This is one section from it that stands out to me:

The thought sends pictures
That tomorrow is
Or will surely be
Read. Read. Read
Receive, love, receive
Be happy
It’s all you have
I’m so relaxed I’ll turn my music up.

Even when he was making notes, he was writing poems.

I had the pleasure earlier this year of going up to the northern part of Ontario as part of my role as the parliamentary assistant to northern development, mines and energy. We—by we, I mean my staff—decided that because we were going to be driving, I needed to get SiriusXM radio, because they didn't like most of what my music was.

As we were driving up there, we heard a number of different Tragically Hip songs, and every time a Tragically Hip song came on, I turned the radio up. My assistant said to me, "Why do you like the Hip so much?" I said that it's not just the Hip that I like. There's a lot of other bands. But I'll give you some very specific things about it. I like the guitar sound. I've always liked guitar-sounding music. But more importantly, the lyrics tell a story. When you look at all of the hits that the Tragically Hip had, all of the songs that Gord wrote, they didn't follow the traditional pattern that most music does. There was no hook. They didn't repeat something over and over again. It wasn't, as my assistant says, "kitschy." I'm not 100% sure what "kitschy" is, but that's the word she uses a lot when it comes to the music I like. The lyrics from the Tragically Hip stand alone without the music. The music from the Tragically Hip stands alone without the lyrics. What you had was a perfect marriage. When you listen to the songs, although there is a beat, a tempo to them, the lyrics were poems. They didn't have to fit that predefined four or three beats per frame.

Gord would sing his poetry, and it fit and it resonated. He inspired because of it. Today, we have an opportunity to pass a bill that will have that inspiration live on—and it will live on in infamy. Ontario will have a poet laureate. Ontario has a poet laureate. We'll have an award immortalizing Ontario's poet laureate.

It's been said that Al Purdy is Canada's poet laureate. Perhaps Margaret Atwood could be considered a lifelong poet laureate. Gord Downie will always be recognized from this day forward as Ontario's poet laureate.

I'd like to thank my friend from Windsor–Tecumseh for putting this forward because I think it's very valuable. I think it's something that everyone in this House absolutely stands behind and supports because it unites. That's really what poetry does. It resonates with you, it unites us, it evokes emotion—it does all of the good things that we, as humanity, enjoy because it brings us together.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I am beyond privileged to be standing in the same room with Gord Downie's family, with George Elliott Clarke, with Al Moritz, and with all of the artists here in the room today. Thank you for championing literary arts and wordsmiths.

It is an honour, as our culture critic, to speak in full support of this historic piece of legislation, put forth by our member from Windsor–Tecumseh, calling for the establishment of the office of the Poet Laureate of Ontario.

This bill is named in honour of Gord Downie, the acclaimed lead singer and lyricist of the award-winning rock band the Tragically Hip, who died in 2017. Not only

was he a world-renowned artist, but Gord was an advocate—not afraid to speak up and out against systems of oppression; namely, Canada's history of anti-Indigenous racism and the historical and contemporary effects of settler colonialism.

Our inaugural Poet Laureate of Ontario and each one to follow will inspire hope in the hearts of generations to come. They will capture our humanity and the truest moments of democracy we're able to demonstrate in this Legislature.

Poetry advocates, it agitates, it pushes back, and it can reimagine the status quo, all of which Gord Downie did.

Not only may our Poet Laureate of Ontario be the conscience of this building, a creative archivist, a literary adviser to our legislative library, but the artist will also help keep alive and relevant the many diverse and complex stories, cultures, identities, languages, lived experiences and memories of Ontarians. The poet's words will live well beyond us, and all 14.57 million of us will be their creative muse.

The arts have seen devastating cuts, with inter-generational impacts on Indigenous, racialized, rural, northern and other priority groups. With the loss of the Indigenous Culture Fund and deep cuts to the Ontario Music Fund and the Ontario Arts Council, today is an opportunity that we can be thankful that this government is changing course. The instalment of the office of the Poet Laureate of Ontario will inspire this government to continue to take a deeper look at not only the economic contributions of the arts, but its incomparable ability to galvanize, to teach and to nurture the imaginations and possibilities of our youngest and oldest learners, current and future leaders.

I will end with Gord Downie's words from the Tragically Hip's *Ahead by a Century* on their *Trouble at the Henhouse* 1996 album:

With illusions of someday casting a golden light
No dress rehearsal, this is our life.

Thank you very, very much, Gord Downie's family, for blessing us with him.

1700

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

Ms. Doly Begum: "Poetry characterizes a nation," said Gord Downie. It is my deepest honour to speak to this poet laureate bill in the name of the legendary singer and poet Gord Downie. I am proud to stand with my colleague and friend the member from Windsor–Tecumseh to support this bill, which promotes literacy and puts a focus on Ontario's poets. Our poet laureate would be Ontario's literary ambassador, encouraging students and young minds across the province through poetry.

Madam Speaker, we are blessed to live in a nation where we can practise artistic expression with freedom. We find poets and writers in every community, in almost every neighbourhood, to connect us to our roots, celebrate

our diversity, and reflect the multicultural mosaic that we are.

Today I have the privilege of introducing some of the literary jewels of my community, many of whom are residents of Scarborough Southwest. They have been bestowed with awards and honours from across the globe, but the reason why I invited them to join us today, when we debate this bill, is to introduce this House to the abundance of talents and treasures we have in the fields of art, culture and literature here in Ontario.

Speaker, in the members' lounge we have Mr. Asad Chowdhury, a proud Torontonion now and the recipient of the Ekushey Padak—the Ekushey medal, the second-highest civilian award from the government of Bangladesh—and numerous awards and honours from various countries.

In the members' gallery, we also have many other amazing poets and writers that I have introduced, like Delwar Elahi, Iqbal Hasan, Hosne Ara Jamee, Salma Bani and many others on both sides of the members' galleries, all of whom have made remarkable contributions in the world of literature here in this province. I hope, today, all these amazing artists will go home from this Legislature, from their Legislature, with a renewed assurance that we are committed to support and champion the literary community with utmost sincerity. I hope that through this legislation, the words of our poets in Ontario will be heard even louder.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to share a story with the family of Gord Downie, something that touched a community that I represented, which was Fort Albany, in a way that nobody could understand unless they were there.

We had St. Anne's school. It was a residential school, and a lot of hurt and a lot of things happened in that school that leave the scars until today. It's intergenerational. The community decided that we had to close down St. Anne's and build a brand new school, so I worked with the community, along with their federal member at the time, in order to build what eventually became Peetabeck Academy.

So of course, as a provincial member of Parliament who was involved in the file, I got invited to go up to Fort Albany, as the local member, to do the opening. As some of you know, I'm a pilot and I fly my own plane. I got in my plane and I flew up to Fort Albany that day. As I was flying to Fort Albany, about 30 or 35 knots out, I see this smoke rising out of the community, as if there were something really bad going on when it came to a fire. As I started getting closer and closer to Fort Albany, I started asking myself, "What's going on? What's all this smoke about?"

Guess what it was? It was St. Anne's school burning down. The community had decided that enough hurt had been done in this school that it had to be burned down. So the night before, somehow, miraculously, a fire started in St. Anne's school. As I flew into the community, the school was in flames and there was smoke coming out of it.

But that's not the whole story. The next part of the story is that Gord and his band came up to Fort Albany in order to sing at the opening of the Peetabeck Academy school, which I was going to. So I land my plane and I get on the ground and I'm wondering what tragedy has happened here, and I can see the smiles on the faces of the parents who had suffered at the hand of St. Anne's and were looking at that school burning down. I understood very clearly because I used to go into that school, and never were there parents of my generation in that school with their children, because the hurt was so bad they wouldn't go, even to see their own kids in that school.

Fast forward to that evening: We end up at the Peetabeck Academy opening. Gord was there with his band and played a concert in the rain, in the fall, in northern Ontario, on the Albany River. It's the only, only concert I've gone to of your brother's band. It was something to see. All of the people that were in attendance from Fort Albany, Kashechewan and other communities nearby—guess what they were doing? They had lighters, and they were lighting lighters in the rain. It was a sense of hope. It was a sense that we were turning the page on what had happened with that residential school that had brought so much pain and hurt to the community.

On behalf of the people I used to represent on the James Bay coast, we want to say to your family and the band a big thank you, because you helped us turn the page to a certain degree on St. Anne's.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier tous les membres de la famille de M. Gord Downie qui sont ici avec nous aujourd'hui, ainsi que les poètes et les écrivains qui sont venus pour être témoins à ce projet de loi historique qui va nous donner un poète officiel pour la province de l'Ontario.

Lorsque le député de Windsor–Tecumseh a commencé ce processus, Paul Demers, qui nous a donné « Notre Place », était encore vivant; Michel Dallaire, qui nous a donné Violoncelle pour lune d'automne, était encore vivant. Mais je sais très bien que ce projet de loi permettra à la communauté francophone et permettra à la langue de Molière—la langue de l'amour, le français—d'être bien représentées.

Merci beaucoup d'être ici.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to rise on behalf of the constituents of Windsor West, the neighbouring riding to Windsor–Tecumseh. We share part of the town of Windsor together. I want to thank my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh for bringing forward this bill, for his persistence in getting this through the Legislature and for dedicating it to Gord Downie.

I can tell you the importance of Gord and the Tragically Hip to my family. When my daughter was 11 years old, we had a surprise birthday party for my husband. I won't tell you how old he was, in case he gets mad at me for revealing that now. But at 11 years old, my daughter was

singing, and her teacher at the time was actually a country singer. She didn't sing things like Tragically Hip or many of the other songs we listened to, but she taught my daughter a song that I chose that I thought was a good kind of crossover song that would be easier for a country singer to teach. The song was "Wheat Kings." I will never forget when my daughter stood there at my husband's party—I'm not going to get through it without crying—and she sang "Wheat Kings" to him. How touching that was for us. Now, I have to be honest, it was a surprise birthday party, so he was a little drunk at the time, but he spent a lot of time playing the guitar and singing with her. He doesn't have a lot of memories, but we have it on tape.

I can tell you I remember where we were when the last concert happened. We were up north at a cottage, sitting out on the lake, and we were listening to people out across the lake who were singing along, because we didn't have cable, so we couldn't watch up there. But the people who had cable that were singing along—you could hear it coming from all around the lake.

Madam Speaker, for some of us—my brother is a poet. He's a teacher, and he's a poet. He's very eloquent. I have a hard time when I'm reading poetry, but to me, the poetry that you sing, which is what Gord did, is what is so important to me and my family. I know my daughter and my son were both very disappointed that they didn't get an opportunity to join us once again at Caesars Windsor to watch the Tragically Hip.

1710

Again, I want to thank the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for continuing a conversation here in the Legislature, a conversation that wasn't just about music; it was about Indigenous rights and other things, and that was so important.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 10, 2019, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Hatfield has moved third reading of Bill 6, An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario in memory of Gord Downie.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, Her Honour Awaits.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario entered the chamber of the Legislative Assembly and took her seat upon the throne.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

Hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell (Lieutenant Governor): Pray be seated.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly of the province has, at its present meetings thereof, passed certain bills to which, in the name of and on behalf of the said Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed:

An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario in memory of Gord Downie / Loi visant à créer la charge de poète officiel de l'Ontario à la mémoire de Gord Downie.

An Act to enact the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence Act, 2019 and the Opioid Damages and Health Costs Recovery Act, 2019 / Loi édictant la Loi de 2019 sur le Centre d'excellence pour la santé mentale et la lutte contre les dépendances et la Loi de 2019 sur le recouvrement des dommages-intérêts et du coût des soins de santé imputables aux opioïdes.

An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act respecting electric vehicle charging stations / Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les stations de recharge pour véhicules électriques.

An Act to revive 598968 Ontario Limited.

An Act to revive 2345260 Ontario Ltd.

An Act to revive A&One Fashion Jewellery Wholesale Ltd.

An Act respecting the Special Ability Riding Institute.

An Act to revive Haggart Belting Canada Ltd.

An Act to revive 1191650 Ontario Limited.

An Act to revive 1549408 Ontario Inc.

An Act to revive Olympic Floor Cleaning Inc.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): In Her Majesty's name, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor assents to these bills.

Au nom de Sa Majesté, Son Honneur la lieutenant-gouverneure sanctionne ces projets de loi.

Hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell (Lieutenant Governor): Madam Speaker, if I may.

Good afternoon. Bon après-midi. Boozhoo. Around the world these days, it seems as if everyone is noticing a fragility in our democracies, and in particular, the fundamental institutions are showing cracks.

In this House, you are making such an important contribution to maintaining something that is precious to all of us: our precious democracy. On behalf of the people of Ontario, I want to thank each and every one of you for the contribution you make—for your energy, your time, your intellect, your passion to make this a better place.

As you now take a few days with family and friends—enjoying a joyous holiday, I hope—I hope that in whatever way you choose, according to your own culture, according to your own traditions, it is a time that you will remember.

I hope as well that you will reflect—that we will all reflect—on how we can collectively make 2020 much richer in terms of the possibility for peace and prosperity. We all have a role to play, you more so than most.

I want to thank you and wish you well. Merci. Meegwetch.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that on the ballot list draw of November 4, 2019, Mr. Anand assumes ballot item number 11 and Mr. Ke assumes ballot item number 59.

THE SHOEBOX PROJECT

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the collection of shoebox donation gifts—for women impacted by homelessness and fleeing violence—for the Shoebox Project, in members' offices.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Kusendova is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the collection of shoebox donation gifts in members' offices. Do we have consent? Agreed.

Ms. Kusendova.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I move that members be allowed to collect donations for the Shoebox Project—to

help women impacted by homelessness and fleeing violence—in their offices and constituency offices for the remainder of the calendar year.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Kusendova has moved that members be allowed to collect donations for the Shoebox Project—to help women impacted by homelessness and fleeing violence—in their offices and constituency offices for the remainder of the calendar year.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Hon. Steve Clark: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion carried.

This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 18, 2020.

The House adjourned at 1721.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioic Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud- Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (PC)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (IND)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Yakabuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Vacant	Orléans	
Vacant	Ottawa—Vanier	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Wayne Gates
Randy Hillier, Andrea Khanjin
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Michael Parsa
Randy Pettapiece, Peter Tabuns
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

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Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
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