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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 11 March 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 11 mars 2020

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REBUILDING CONSUMER
CONFIDENCE ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 VISANT À RÉTABLIR
LA CONFIANCE CHEZ
LES CONSOMMATEURS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 10, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection / *Projet de loi 159, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la protection du consommateur.*

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

Mr. Joel Harden: It's an honour to rise in this House today, not only as a member of the opposition but, I have to say, as the seniors critic for this province. I know I'm only 48 years old, but one of the reasons I was very happy to be given this particular critic portfolio is that I was actually raised in my formative years by my grandparents and taught that it's important to listen to our elders.

I've had the great fortune, as the seniors critic in the last 18 months, to listen to seniors from across Ontario. One of the seniors I've had the great fortune to listen to is Bill Hillier, who lives in a neighbourhood called Cardinal Creek, in the riding of Orléans. Mr. Hillier is one of those who deputed to the travelling committee that wanted to hear from Ontarians on this Bill 159, which is intended, as I understand from my friends, to increase consumer protection. But what Mr. Hillier's story revealed to the travelling committee and revealed to the government—and certainly revealed to me as seniors critic in the opposition—is that we are failing consumers. We have been failing consumers in the home building industry since the year Tarion was created, 1976. Why is that, Speaker? And what did Mr. Hillier have to tell us about that?

I want to read from a news article that my colleague MPP Rakocevic from Humber River–Black Creek cited in his terrific one-hour lead on this particular bill. It's revelatory because it was written in the exact same year, 1976, that Tarion was created. The author was Jacob Ziegel, a U of T professor of law. What he wrote about Tarion, when it was founded, was this: The provisions in the bill “are neither novel nor objectionable in principle.

They are indeed widely regarded as necessary for the operation of a successful warranty scheme”—the various things Tarion wants to do. “What is without precedent in Ontario consumer protection legislation is the nature of the body entrusted with the administration of the important powers contained in them.

“For it is not the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations or any government agency that is entrusted with the task. It will be a non-profit corporation of undetermined composition incorporated under the Ontario Corporations Act and at best only indirectly accountable for its actions to the Legislature.

“There is no secrecy about the reasons for this feature of the act. It is a surrender to the long-sought goal of HUDAC, the Housing and Urban Development Association of Canada.

“The association has argued for several years that warranty schemes for new homes should be administered by the builders themselves and that the construction industry should have majority representation on the corporation to be established for this purpose. In earlier discussions involving the establishment of a national home warranties scheme, the federal government refused to accede to this demand. There are strong indications the Ontario government will prove more compliant.”

There you have it, Speaker: On the very year that Tarion was brought into being, one of the more informed voices in Ontario was warning us: “Be careful.” We aren't impugning the whole home building industry. The vast majority of operators in that sector—some are family members of mine—are fine, but we don't let industries this significant regulate themselves. It ought to be the job of government to do that. That's what Professor Ziegel was warning us about.

To take us to the neighbourhood of Cardinal Creek, to take us to Mr. Hillier's home—it was in 2017 when he and his spouse had purchased a beautiful home. I've seen it myself. It's beautiful from the outside. They went down to the basement, because they were having people over for Christmas dinner, and they noticed an enormous pool of water in the basement. Understandably, Mr. Hillier began to ask himself, “What? Where's this water coming from? This is a brand new home. I don't see a leak in the ceiling. I can't see any leak in the foundation of this brand new basement.”

But in fact what they found was massive ice in the walls which then turned into mould. And Mr. Hillier—hi, Bill, if you're watching this—right now is living with cancer. What's worrisome about this story, aside from the fact that Mr. Hillier and his family have to go through that, as so many other families in Ontario do, is that this is ominously

reminiscent of another story involving Tarion. My friend, the former minister for consumer and government relations, MPP Walker, particularly, met with someone who fought Tarion for 27 years—27 years, if you can believe it, Speaker—and took his own life. In the last moments of that life he was battling with cancer. MPP Walker, to his credit, did a press conference when he committed on behalf of this government to fix Tarion, which he alleged was broken—I agree with him—with the spouse of that gentleman.

I would say, as the seniors critic, on behalf of not just seniors but all people in this province, we cannot allow seniors and their families to suffer. They've built this province. Everything around us—everything: Every single brick in this building, every public institution we have, we have because of grandmothers and grandfathers.

But right now, what I can tell you with confidence is that someone, Mr. Hillier, is sitting in a home in Cardinal Creek which is flawed and faulty, struggling with cancer, worried about the fact that that very home may be making his health condition worse. I want us to marinate in that for a second. I want that to seep in, because I can tell you something. Mr. Howard Bogach—apologies, Mr. Bogach, if I mispronounce your surname—who was Tarion's CEO, last year earned a salary of \$681,000 and had a car allowance of \$87,000. Thanks to MPP Gates, who made the point of insisting under the previous government that the Attorney General look into Tarion and fix the Tarion mess—thank you, MPP Gates—what the Attorney General found out is not that Tarion is being weighed down by a culture of executives rewarding themselves, it is also inclined, rather like bad apples in the insurance industry, to incentivize people working for Tarion who deny claims to people like Mr. Hillier. The Attorney General found that between 2014 and 2018, Tarion refused over 9,700 requests for defects in homes built because the homeowners missed these tight 30-day deadlines that Tarion insisted upon. Speaker, 1,300 of those people missed that deadline by a single day, often due to delays in correspondence, not concerns from the particular nature of the defects, the severity of the defects.

0910

I was happy because of Canadians for Properly Built Homes, a terrific organization that does great work in this particular field, that's helped Mr. Hillier and other people like him. Myself and MPP Rakocevic, we went to a large meeting in Orléans, down the road from the Cardinal Creek community where so many homes have been improperly built. I met with so many homeowners who confided in me privately, "Joel, we would love to struggle against Tarion publicly, as Mr. Hillier has done, but we're worried what that would mean to the property values of our homes. If we complain, we won't be able to sell our homes." Can you imagine, for the most important investment one will ever make in their life, being put in that position?

Nonetheless, there were over 200 people in that room. Mr. Hillier spoke fantastically; so did Karen Somerville. Karen, if you're watching this, thank you for all your work

for justice on this file. I really struggled—I tried to think, on my way back to downtown Ottawa and later on my way back to the Legislature, how do I understand this culture? What has happened? What Professor Ziegel said in 1976 was probably the most apt, but what has happened since?

This is difficult subject material, so I'm going to struggle for levity, if you will allow me, Speaker, with some of my time left. I know there are some people in this House who are suffering Toronto Maple Leafs fans. You've suffered for a long time. If there is something Toronto Maple Leafs fans understand, it's the culture of ineptitude and the self-serving nature that happened under Harold Ballard's leadership. We're talking about an owner of a hockey team, a major crown jewel of this country, who records show—charges were laid, convictions were prosecuted—not only took money from this hockey team for himself, but doled out money for limousines for his daughter's wedding, bought motorcycles for his son. If you can imagine all those players, all those coaches, all those fans who for years showed up in that hockey rink, supporting that team—and this is what Mr. Ballard was doing with their money.

So Mr. Ballard gets convicted, is sent to Kingston for a short stint in the Kingston Pen—short—and was then allowed, as he described it, motel living conditions, with a television, steak dinners and photos with corrections officers. He operated with impunity, Speaker, operated with impunity. I would hazard a guess that despite the great work—and I'm not a Maple Leafs fan, if I'm honest with you—despite the great work of the fan base supporting that team, the coaches and the players since, they are still living under that legacy. They have not had a reckoning with that legacy.

I think the same is true with Tarion. You have a corporation that, for some reason, was allowed to operate outside the orbit of government on probably the most important investment opportunity for consumers in this province. Some of us in this House may have personal savings or capital gains savings or whatever savings that would be larger than a house; I suspect many of us won't. The home is the biggest thing that any of us ever invest in. And we have set up, since 1976, an entity which allowed the home building industry, until recently, to regulate itself. The majority of the executive governing body of Tarion, until recently, was the home building industry.

That's where I'll give my friends in government some credit here. I appreciate the fact that you've changed the governing body of Tarion to reduce the impact of the home building industry having the plurality of votes there—fine, great. But what remains worrisome for me is this: We still have a situation in which Tarion, as an entity, is not democratically accountable to the people of Ontario. There is still a firewall between Tarion and us, and we have to ring the bell pretty hard in this place to get noticed. The Canadians for Properly Built Homes, Mr. Hillier and others, they have to ring the bell pretty hard for us to notice.

Again, I was taught when I went to school that it wasn't good enough, if I saw injustice, for me to just rail into the wind. I had to try to understand my adversary; I had to try

to understand how they thought. So I'm going to give Tarion the benefit of a doubt—I can use this now, I'm told, by the standing orders—and I'm going to quote what one of their policy folks said when MPP Walker, Minister Thompson, MPP Rakocevic, MPP Gates and others pressed, from within this place, questions on their executive compensation scheme. Because it seems ridiculous on the face of it, right—the notion that someone working for the people of Ontario should be entitled to a salary that is three times what the Premier of this province makes. But I digress.

What Melanie Kearns said to the CBC in response to this question about executive compensation was the following: “We use market salary surveys and independent external HR compensation experts to review our board and executive compensation programs and we benchmark our compensation against Ontario’s other administrative authorities as well as comparable public sector organizations.”

She went on to say, according to the CBC, that the members’ compensation on the executive of Tarion is reviewed every two years and, with the exception of the board and committee chairs, the board’s remuneration hasn’t changed since 2005.

If I’m understanding what Ms. Kearns was telling us through the CBC, the fact that executive compensation has been bloated at Tarion since 2005, the fact that \$4 million was spent on its executives alone and that Mr. Bogach received over \$681,000, and that that has somehow been held flat for the last 14 years is supposed to satisfy Mr. Hillier, Ms. Somerville, MPP Rakocevic, MPP Gates and others who have led this fight. All that tells me is that there has been a massive problem of outpaced compensation of Tarion executives for a long time, even if it has not been keeping pace with inflation.

It’s certainly not going to give Mr. Hillier any comfort. It’s not going to give—if you’ll allow me the brief digression, Speaker: If you think of what we’re going through as a province, as a country right now with the COVID-19 scare and the need for us to keep each other safe—I woke up this morning and my first thought was for all the foodservice workers in this province, who, because right now if they don’t have the capacity to call in sick they are being compelled to go to work sick, could carry a lot of fear in their heart on their way to work about what they could be transmitting to us—fear in their heart.

I’m going to make a guess that people working in that industry are not well compensated, probably not full-time, probably don’t have benefits, and don’t have a lot of stake. Ms. Kearns’s assertion to us that, “Oh, well, we’ve held executive compensation relatively flat since 2005, even if our executive makes three times the salary of the Premier”—okay, that just shows the entitlement in this corporation. Because that’s what it is. It is an entitled corporation we’ve allowed to develop and exist for decades.

My friends in government have said it’s broken. I agree. But if Tarion is broken, how is the answer allowing members of that same Tarion management team to regain control? Mr. Bogach is on his way out, but the people

continuing to run the operation are part of the same Tarion bureaucracy that has existed there for years.

If my grandmother were here, Speaker, whom I’ve spoken about before when you’ve been here—my Presbyterian grandmother, whom I love—she would say, “You do not let the fox guard the henhouse.” You do not. You do not let people who have ripped consumers off for years and rewarded themselves retain control of a corporation that has such an important role in the lives of people in this province. That doesn’t do justice to Mr. Hillier; it doesn’t do justice to what is right.

I want to say something else about Bill 159, because, of course, it’s about much more than Tarion, and my friend MPP Rasheed talked about this yesterday: Part of what this bill will do in ticket sales is ensure that commercial transactions are done in Canadian dollars.

My friend MPP Rakocevic said to committee and in his one-hour lead on this issue that he brought amendments to the relevant committee on Bill 159 asking for ticket sales and resales to not exceed 50% of their advertised price. That amendment was defeated by my friends; it has not been accepted by the government.

Here’s what’s happening to ticketed events right across this country; indeed, from what I can tell, across the world: Scalpers and ticket originators are colluding to restrict the supply of tickets. You have situations where—last year, when our Toronto Raptors did that magnificent run on the way to the world championship, front-row courtside seats—which I will never be able to afford, but nonetheless—at those games were \$13,000 each.

0920

Here’s the rub, Speaker: It’s not only that these tickets are the province of the most wealthy folks. Get this: Because of federal tax exemptions that exist—not here but at the federal level—some corporations and some wealthy individuals will be going to those Raptor games that have inflated ticket prices because this legislation doesn’t go far enough and writing them off on all of us. The tax expenditure covers 50% of the value of the ticket. That’s what people will get to write off. Can you imagine?

In a province where we have a child poverty rate, where we have one of seven people, as my friend MPP MacLeod often has said in the past, living in poverty, that we allow a situation where people can write off 50% of the cost of meals and entertainment expenses, like a Raptors game, a ticket that costs \$13,000 because this bill doesn’t go far enough—we let that happen. We let that happen in a context where, as my friend MPP Sol Mamakwa has mentioned, we have boil-water advisories, we have unpotable water, we have people living in abject poverty, we have a suicide crisis across Indigenous lands. Yet we let an executive write off the cost of a \$13,000 ticket to a Raptors game? What is going on with this?

I understand there was a prayer breakfast this morning, Speaker; I’m sad to have missed it. We’ve got to pray for something deep. We’ve got to pray for something really deep if we’re allowing a province where people can write off 50% of a \$13,000 ticket and Indigenous kids are taking

their own lives, Indigenous communities do not have potable water and kids are living in poverty.

I implore my friends in government, show some leadership in this aspect of your bill. Put that cap on the resale value of tickets. Tell the scalping, ticket-originating community, “Do not gouge sports fans or entertainment consumers.” And absolutely, don’t let executives write off the cost of that and make us pay for it. That is the most egregious part of it, Speaker. Send a letter to your counterparts in the federal government. Tell them the gravy train has to stop. Tell them that just because you’re wealthy, you don’t get to ask the rest of Ontario—who have real needs—to pay for your exaggerated lifestyle.

I just want to say in closing: Again, I want to give thanks for people in this House who carried this fight for a long time. I didn’t mention MPP Rosario Marchese, who was a critic on this file for many years—and MPP Gates and MPP Rakocevic.

I take to heart what my friends in government have said about Tarion being broken. Fix it. Also, fix the ticket industry. This is your chance. You’re the ones with the reins. Use them for the wisdom of the people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Thank you to my colleague from Ottawa Centre.

When this bill was being reviewed in the justice committee, my colleague the member for Humber River–Black Creek proposed: “An owner may submit a claim to the corporation at any time during the applicable warranty period and may submit one or more updates setting out unresolved defects to the corporation at any time during the applicable warranty period.”

Many homeowners have complained that their claims were denied simply for missing the 30-day window at the beginning and end of their one-year warranties.

In committee, the government members claimed that there were IT problems and talked about needing to consult more.

What would be the impact of extending that deadline?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I turn it back to the member from Ottawa Centre for a response.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Speaker. I always like it when you say my riding name. You have that theatrical voice. Never lose that.

I want to say that we’ve heard from consumers, Speaker, that all of these rules—including one my friend from Thunder Bay–Atikokan didn’t mention, which is that if a consumer misses a home visit from a Tarion representative, they’re all of a sudden in default and have fallen outside of rules to allow for warranties to be covered. So these IT rules are important.

It bothers me that home builders—because it’s home builders and home purchasers, who, by their fees, allow Tarion to exist. It sits on a reserve fund of a quarter of a billion dollars. That’s how it operates; it’s how it’s funded. These are rules meant to prevent against claims, often worthy claims, being brought to Tarion’s executive, and I think we should be empowering consumers to seek redress.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Our government has acted quickly in addressing 29 recommendations from the Auditor General in the province of Ontario, a well-esteemed individual who I have had the pleasure of working with over a number of years. Again, we’ve acted quickly on this. If the proposed legislation is passed, it will quickly support consumer protections in the province of Ontario and an improved warranty program will be launched in the fall of 2020.

So I ask the member opposite: Why is the opposition trying to stand in the way of progress, trying to stand in the way of these recommendations that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services as well as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing are trying to bring to consumers to protect them? I don’t understand why the opposition always has to oppose. They can be critical thinkers, they can improve the piece of legislation, but why must they always oppose whatever we propose?

Mr. Joel Harden: What I would say back to the member is: In this place, representing our city of Ottawa, she stood ferociously when in opposition, holding governments to account. That’s what we’re doing. We’re doing our job.

But here’s the point: When you produce a bill that allows the majority of Tarion’s executive team to stay intact, you can expect some squawking from over here, because that’s what consumers have asked for.

I will also say this: I would welcome an opportunity with the member to get out of Cardinal Creek, to get out of Orléans. Let’s take this opportunity on the road in our city of Ottawa. Let’s go to Nepean; let’s go to Barrhaven; let’s go to Kanata. Let’s go to places where homes are springing up like mushrooms. They’re being built so fast—

Mr. Wayne Gates: They’re falling apart.

Mr. Joel Harden:—and homeowners are talking about them falling apart.

So ask the consumers, is what I would say to the member—who is not listening now; it’s too bad, because I’m answering your question. Ask the homeowners if they’re satisfied with the existing Tarion leadership being able to meet their needs. I suspect, given what we’re seeing in the media, they are not. It’s our job to stand up and fight for them and we won’t apologize for doing so.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: When this bill was being reviewed in the justice committee, my colleague the member for Humber River–Black Creek proposed: “No person may serve as a member on the board if, at the time of the appointment, they would have a real or apparent conflict of interest, as defined in the regulations.”

Conflict-of-interest rules for board members make sense. I think we can all agree to that. What do you believe could be the reason that the government would not support this amendment?

Mr. Joel Harden: It’s so tempting when I get a question like that to go deep into partisan mode and throw

words back from the previous Parliament against this government to humiliate them. But do you know what?

Mr. David Piccini: But you're better than that, Joel.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, MPP Piccini. I am better than that.

The point here is, when there is a real or apparent conflict of interest—if someone is earning their salary or has worked as a consultant on behalf of the home building industry, because there are wonderful, respectable people in that industry who I count as family members—you've got to recuse yourself from being a consumer advocate. You have to.

Consumer protection ought to be completely indivisible; it ought to be completely available to everyone. When your case goes to that appeal body, you have to believe that the people who are seeing this are serving no other paymaster than the rules and the better interests of the people of Ontario.

But what I think the evidence has shown us is that that hasn't been the case with Tarion—and my friends in government agree with them. So it's time to flush the executive team that exists at Tarion out. That's when we'll believe this is actually changing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I can assure you that on both sides of the House, we share the concern. We all hear it; it doesn't matter where you sit in this House. We have had abuse upon abuse, and that is certainly not acceptable.

That is why this government has moved. We've moved very, very aggressively. Now, we would all want this problem solved right tomorrow, but we do have legislation, we have processes in place that we all have to follow. That's why, with my other colleague across there, we sat—the real estate proposals alone were part of the solution to this. We've moved forward with the recommendations of the Auditor General. We've begun the actual process of setting up the new regulatory board. We've required the public posting of boards and executive positions. We've introduced new measures for prospective buyers and sellers and a myriad of things.

0930

This is a process in action. By this fall, the new regulations and proposals should be in place.

I ask the member—your advice, your counsel, is certainly welcome on this, but let's be part of the solution instead of part of the problem, as we have been on all sides of this House, in the future.

Mr. Joel Harden: I brought up the story of Mr. Bill Hillier because he has entered into my heart. I've listened to him. It has upset me that, as a senior, he has had to struggle—it isn't the first time he has struggled with Tarion, by the way. If you look at the Hansard, MPP Rakocevic went into detail about the other two occasions in which he had to engage Tarion, to little success.

I want to end with the story of Marcel and Julie Bellefeuille. They also live in Cardinal Creek. Marcel used to be the coach of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. Let me tell you something: Tarion picked on the wrong guy and the wrong

woman when they picked a fight with the Bellefeuilles. I went to their home with MPP Rakocevic, at their invitation, with the Ottawa media. When you walk into their home, you would think you're walking into a war zone. The basement was completely ripped up because radon gas was leaking up into the home. It was the builder's responsibility to put in a barrier to ensure that doesn't happen. That's law. We needed to do better. The Bellefeuilles say, "Change it. Fix it. Now. Completely."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions? The member from Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you, Speaker. I also always love hearing you say our riding names.

My friend MPP Harden did a beautiful job outlining some of the issues we have in this bill.

This is actually something that was long coming. We had to fix Tarion. There were a lot of problems. Does this bill go far enough? What do you think?

Mr. Joel Harden: I think you can imagine my response. No, it doesn't.

MPP Kramp, I hear you, but at the same time—I was on a story about the Bellefeuilles, and I thought I had a little bit more time, so I'll say this in my response: Marcel said that if you have a losing team in the Canadian Football League, your answer is not to retain the starting quarterback, the starting head coach or any of the coaching staff. You flush it out. You rebuild. Anything short of that is a failure in this case. That's what consumers are looking to you for. They want you to really tell Tarion you need not just a culture change; you need a personnel change.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There is not enough time for further questions and responses. Therefore, I now turn to the member from Guelph for further debate.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Like my colleagues, I do like the way you can uplift "Guelph" and make it pretty exciting on a Wednesday morning.

I rise today to speak on Bill 159, the Tarion reform bill. Oftentimes in this House, we have an opportunity to tell the people of Ontario where we stand on issues, especially when it comes to issues of whether we're going to defend and protect the public interest or private interest. Really, what Bill 159 should be is a consumer protection bill, a bill that's definitively going to say that the government of Ontario is going to stand up for consumers and is going to put the public interest ahead of special interests.

Since 1976, Tarion has operated with impunity, regulating itself. Tarion's failures have been well documented by Justice Cunningham's report, by the Auditor General's report, by consumer organizations such as Canadians for Properly Built Homes, and by individuals.

I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for telling some of those personal stories. In my limited time, I'm not going to go into those. But I would like to say that I had hoped that the government had fully heard all of those stories. I understand they've heard some of it and they've made some changes. But I had hoped and, I believe, the people of Ontario, especially people purchasing homes, had hoped that they would have delivered the

full-scale systemic, transformative change that Justice Cunningham's report showed was needed.

So this bill does tinker around the edges. It makes some improvements, it answers some of the reforms from the Auditor General, but it doesn't deliver the systemic, transformative change that Tarion so desperately needs.

In December 2016, Justice Cunningham delivered his Tarion review report to the Ontario government. I will have to say it's unfortunate that the previous Liberal government failed to even act. But anyway, in effect, what the justice said is that Tarion needs to be dismantled, with a multi-provider competitive model introduced to replace it. And Bill 159 doesn't deliver on that.

The members opposite have said, "What does the opposition have for a recommendation?" Well, my recommended solution is what Justice Cunningham called for: a multi-provider system. This type of system works very well in other provinces; I don't see why it wouldn't work in Ontario. I realize that the Auditor General cited oversight as a possible concern, but we can create mechanisms through a crown agency, for example, to oversee and regulate a multi-provider insurance system. As I said, it works well in provinces other than Ontario.

In this vein, I want to quote from Justice Cunningham's report. This quote is a bit long, but it's critically important.

"At an executive level, the structure of having the same leadership team responsible for the rules of the monopoly warranty program, financial management of the program, dispute resolution and builder regulation will inevitably give rise to situations where financial objectives compete with other objectives such as consumer protection. At an operational level, there is potential for conflict when the same person receives a claim, investigates it, attempts to assist the parties in resolving the claim and then sits in judgment on the claim if not resolved. While Tarion has worked hard to build internal controls to mitigate this conflict, I believe that current controls do not adequately respond to these challenges in a manner that can achieve the objectives outlined above. I do not believe that this problem and the challenges I have identified can be adequately addressed in the current model without significant and"—I emphasize—"structural changes to the new home warranty sector in Ontario."

Bill 159 fails to adequately address what Justice Cunningham called for. We still have members of the home builders' association on the board of Tarion. It's like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse. Justice Cunningham called for massive, systemic changes. But here we are, tinkering around the edges, a few little steps forward here—and I'll give the government credit; a few steps forward, absolutely—but not the changes that homeowners, home purchasers need.

I want to conclude by quoting from Canadians for Properly Built Homes, who presented to committee. It's in regard to Bill 159: "It does not go nearly far enough to provide adequate consumer protection, and it is taking far too long to address the serious issues with Tarion."

This government has a choice to make: Are they going to stand up for the public interest and consumers or are

they going to stand up for private interests and home builders?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Thank you to the member from Guelph for his talk this morning, much of which I agreed with.

0940

Much of the current bill is in response to the Auditor General's scathing report on Tarion. One of the things the Auditor General recommended was a review of the executive compensation, and they reviewed the large bonuses many executives also receive. My caucus colleague proposed an amendment to cap executive compensation. When this amendment was brought to committee, the government did not support it. In committee, the government members said that disclosing executive pay was enough. I don't think they're going to be embarrassed. They haven't been embarrassed for many years, obviously.

As the member from Humber River—Black Creek said, it's not enough to know what the executive compensation is; we have to bring in a cap. We have to be fair.

What does the member believe would be fair compensation?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the question from the member.

Four million dollars of executive bonuses is not acceptable, period. I don't think you need to be a member of provincial Parliament or have a PhD in economics to understand that those types of compensation levels are completely unacceptable. So I support the amendment that the member from Humber River—Black Creek put forward. We should have caps on executive bonuses.

I'm thinking back to the trust in real estate bill and when it came to committee. I had the opportunity to work with the member from Humber River—Black Creek. In that case, the government actually listened to us and worked with us to improve the legislation, which doesn't happen very often at committee, which is why it's so unfortunate that it didn't happen with Bill 159.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you to the member from Guelph for his statement on this bill. You mentioned the recommendations, as well as how extensive this bill—how extensive the response should have been. In your opinion, do you think this government has done enough to focus on some of the issues that we're facing, especially with putting a cap on salaries, and also in terms of the suffering that a lot of people went through throughout the past many, many years?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I thank the member for the question.

Clearly, this bill doesn't go far enough. It doesn't address the systemic changes that Justice Cunningham, in particular, called for, but also that Canadians for Properly Built Homes called for and a lot of the individuals who have struggled for years—the stories of individuals who have struggled for years for just basic justice, basic consumer protection.

I would actually argue that it's in the best interest of the home builders' association themselves to ensure that the

system works properly, because when you have one bad actor treating people in an egregious way, it paints all home builders with a bad brush, and that's not right. There are a lot of good home builders in this province who do things well, and they too want to make sure the system works properly, because it protects their reputation as well as consumers.

This bill clearly doesn't go far enough. It's disappointing, because this was a perfect opportunity for the government to show that they were on the side of consumers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to have some questions for the member. I listened to his remarks very carefully. I guess my biggest question is: How can the member say that the government is not moving quickly when we've begun the process of setting up the regulatory body outside of Tarion; we've required the public posting of board and executive compensation; and we've introduced new measures for pre-construction condominium projects? We've taken major steps to overhaul the Tarion board, and we've also passed the trust in real estate services bill—a bill that will provide all kinds of transparency in the purchase and sale process of a home. I'd like the member to speak to those questions.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. I just ask the member to listen carefully to the comments I made earlier. I clearly stated that I thought the government was moving forward and doing a few good things with this bill. They did act quickly, but the problem is that they don't go far enough. Here's the opportunity to deliver systemic change.

One of the changes that Justice Cunningham called for was a multi-provider, competitive model that works well in other jurisdictions. I kind of thought the members opposite, given the fact that they're a party that generally likes competition and doesn't like government monopolies, would have actually gone for those kinds of changes. It seems like it fits with the way they think about the world. But unfortunately it didn't go that way, and I think it's because they didn't want to land on the side of consumer protection.

What's the best system that would put the public interest first and protect consumers? I think one of the things we have a responsibility to do as a Legislature is to look at other jurisdictions and look at what works well and then take that evidence and apply it to Ontario in order to protect consumers here in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you very much to the member for Guelph for his presentation this morning, for speaking about this legislation—important legislation, to be sure.

The member opposite referenced other jurisdictions when it comes to a multi-insurance-provider model. I'm just wondering if you could explain a little bit more about what some of the cost-benefit analysis has been in those jurisdictions and if that has informed his comments this morning. If he could speak to that in a little more detail,

for the sake of the House and understanding just a bit more where he's coming from, I think it's a valuable contribution.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the opportunity to elaborate more. Thank you to the member for Niagara West.

When you have a multi-provider, competitive model, you move away from having a government monopoly and you actually introduce competition within the home warranty system. In particular, you have a model that's not being overly controlled by home builders. The system is supposed to regulate home builders and ensure that consumers have the best protection in place.

What that model provides is that it gives consumers options. So if the government monopoly is not serving their interest, is not putting the interests of consumers first, it gives people an opportunity to select the best system that works for them. I think that's the best way we can move forward. It's one of the reasons I think Justice Cunningham recommended that particular model and it's why other consumer protection groups have been recommending that model. The government monopoly model that has predominantly been controlled by home builders, which essentially then puts the fox in charge of the henhouse, hasn't worked for consumers because it hasn't put consumer interests first and foremost.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: I'd ask my friend from Guelph if he wouldn't mind elaborating on the potential impact that not completely revamping Tarion might mean for green home building, because if we allow for bad apples within the home building industry to slap them up quick, move on to the next project and have no accountability for bad building, it would seem to me—and I could be wrong; the member knows a lot about this—that those builders who take a lot of time and care into building the next generation of a suburban home, of an urban in-fill, of an enterprise for retail are disincentivized. Why make that investment? It would seem to me that it's a lot better, they would be led to believe by the market, to simply go with where the bad apples are going: low cost, quick turnover, move on to the next project. Does this hurt green building? That's my question to the member.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question.

It's an absolutely excellent point that oftentimes the quick and cheap way of doing things may look like it's cheaper at the beginning, but it actually costs you more in the long run because your operating costs of the house, particularly to heat, cool and light the house, are more expensive over time.

As a matter of fact, right now I'm working with a constituent in my office who spent their entire life's savings to have a highly energy-efficient house that wasn't built properly. The HVAC systems are not working properly. It's been devastating for this individual, because it was literally their life's savings for the home they had planned to retire in and have it affordable because they

wanted their energy costs to be low. But because of shoddy building, that's not going to happen and it has threatened their life savings.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: It is my honour to rise once again, as the member for Ottawa West–Nepean, on behalf of my constituents today, to contribute to the debate on Bill 159, the Rebuilding Consumer Confidence Act. Bill 159 is the next step in our government's plan to strengthen protections and promote trust and confidence for the people of Ontario.

We know how important consumer confidence is to our overall economy. The people of Ontario need stronger protections because our economy works best when people have trust in the businesses, products and services that they spend their hard-earned money on. This is true whether they are investing in one of the biggest purchases of their lifetime—a new home—or just regular things such as travelling, using an elevator or making a purchase with their credit card.

One of the key priorities of our government is to put more money back in the pockets of hard-working Ontarians. Part of putting money back in your pocket is ensuring that we are responsible with tax dollars and keep taxes low.

Another critical component is making sure that proper rules are in place to protect our province's consumers. The Ontario government is strengthening protections for consumers by proposing more effective enforcement tools to address businesses that continue to cause harm to consumers.

Bill 159 includes a wholesale review of the Consumer Protection Act for the first time in 15 years. Fifteen years is a long time. To put it in perspective, I was 13 years old the last time that this act was reviewed. The way that people make purchases has changed drastically in that time, especially with the rise in e-commerce over the years. Consumers now often look for products or services online using sites like Kijiji or Facebook Marketplace, which did not even exist the last time the Liberals conducted a wholesale review of the Consumer Protection Act. People were still using flip phones when the act was last overhauled. Clearly, a review is long overdue. We need to make sure that every element of the legislation works for consumers and businesses in this province.

This review is being centred around holding consultations with stakeholders and consumers. These consultations will enable us to continue to implement stronger protection for the people of Ontario. Extensive consultations give an opportunity to highlight how the government is listening to ensure that we get changes right.

Despite initially reviewing the Consumer Protection Act at the beginning of their mandate, this file was not treated as a priority by the former government. For the rest of their term, the Liberal government took a reactive approach to consumer protection instead of a proactive one. Updates since then were made on an ad hoc basis to address new issues in the marketplace, which sometimes

led to new rules that were difficult for both businesses and consumers to understand. Calls for reform from members of the opposition, and even committees that the Liberals controlled with their majority, were effectively ignored. At times, this reactive approach came with severe consequences.

You don't have to take my word for it, Mr. Speaker. In 2009, the Auditor General reported that the Liberal government needed to be more proactive in overseeing problem industries and repeat offenders. Although the Standing Committee on Public Accounts had recommended in 2004 that the ministry conduct a review of how well industry-sponsored oversight authorities were protecting the public, it was only after a tragic propane explosion in August 2008 that the ministry launched a comprehensive review of this area.

The auditor's report described the standing committee's submission, stating that "recommendations included improving communication with the public; evaluating stakeholder feedback; enhancing public education and awareness; establishing outcome-based performance measures; improving customer services; and better risk management."

However, sadly, the auditor went on to say that, "The ministry advised us that no further comprehensive reviews were undertaken as a result of the standing committee's 2004 recommendation."

We do not want to wait for another tragedy to happen before we do a long-needed review of the Consumer Protection Act. I commend the Minister of Government and Consumer Services for committing to this collaborative consultation approach.

By leaving consumer protection on the back burner, the Liberals eroded confidence in the government's ability to protect the consumers of the province. This was also noted in the 2009 Auditor General's report. In fact, the first recommendation regarding consumer protection called on the former government to take meaningful steps to increase public awareness of the ministry's responsibilities:

"Recommendation 1

"To ensure that there is adequate public awareness of the ministry's consumer protection mandate and complaint services, the ministry should:

"—consult with other jurisdictions that have significantly more activity and recognition by the public to see if there are any best consumer-protection practices that can be applied in Ontario;

"—assess its outreach and education programs with a view to identifying changes needed to make them more effective; and

"—establish mechanisms for regularly assessing the general public's awareness of consumer rights and the ministry's programs."

These recommendations stem from findings which found that when citizens thought about who to contact about consumer complaint issues, they seldom considered going to their provincial government for assistance. The report stated, "When asked who they would be most likely to contact if they could not resolve a consumer complaint

issue with a company, respondents cited the Better Business Bureau, the legal profession, and someone in the media before the government of Ontario.”

The failure by the Liberals had a real negative impact on consumers in Ontario. How did they specifically negatively impact consumers? In many cases, protections that are offered to Ontario’s consumers only work if citizens are aware of those protections. I’ll come back to this point later on in my remarks.

Speaker, I’d like to take a few moments now to describe the overarching framework of consumer protection in Ontario and how Bill 159 will strengthen these areas. Administrative authorities are responsible for ensuring that several laws that protect and serve Ontarians, including those that promote consumer protection, public safety and safe retirement homes, are applied and enforced, but because they are governed by different statutes that have not been updated uniformly, there are inconsistencies. Some of the authorities are subject to relatively more or, alternatively, fewer requirements.

In addition, some legislation governing these authorities has not kept pace with current accountability standards. In fact, one statute that governs five administrative authorities, the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act, 1996, has not been updated in over 20 years.

These inconsistencies were pointed out to the Liberal government by the Auditor General more than a decade ago, as I mentioned earlier in my remarks. Our government, however, knows the importance of improved oversight and more consistent requirements for administrative authorities to ensure they deliver critical programs and services in the best interest of our citizens. We’re doing that by proposing to harmonize certain key accountability, governance and other requirements for most administrative authorities to improve the current framework to rebuild trust and accountability for the people of Ontario.

I’m pleased that our government is serious about increasing transparency and accountability within administrative authorities. If passed, Bill 159 would strengthen accountability with—I’ll list them off here, Mr. Speaker—the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, the Electrical Safety Authority, the Bereavement Authority of Ontario, the Real Estate Council of Ontario, the Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council, the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, the Condominium Authority of Ontario, the Condominium Management Regulatory Authority of Ontario, the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority, and the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority. These administrative authorities are each accountable to one of three different ministers: the Minister of Government and Consumer Services; the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; as well as the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. Again, these are changes that are long overdue.

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This is another area that was highlighted by the Auditor General back in 2009 but ignored by the Liberals:

“Recommendation 8

“To better protect consumers and the public, the ministry should strengthen its oversight role and accountability arrangements with designated administrative authorities (delegated authorities) by:

“—establishing formal comprehensive accountability agreements with each delegated authority that cover financial and operational requirements and that would protect the public’s interests;

“—encouraging a more appropriate and fair balance of representation on boards of directors between governments, consumers, the public, and industry;...”

An additional recommendation called on the former government to ensure that changes were made to allow for a comprehensive and thorough assessment of their financial and operational performance.

Many of the elements this bill is responding to are issues that have been around for years, except now the difference is that we have a government that is willing to take action on them.

The Rebuilding Consumer Confidence Act would increase accountability, as the bill would create more consistency regarding the ability for the Auditor General to conduct value-for-money audits of most administrative authorities.

When it comes to encouraging a more appropriate and fair balance of representation on boards, that is exactly what our government is doing. One need look no further than recent changes to the board at Tarion, which is responsible for administering the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act. Critics have previously pointed out that they felt that developers had too much power on these boards, which is why our government has made changes to the board’s composition.

The parliamentary assistant for government and consumer services, my friend the member from Sarnia–Lambton, highlighted our balanced approach during his remarks in the chamber last week. I thank the member for Sarnia–Lambton for his leadership on this file. I’ll quote from his remarks: “We felt that builders need to have some presence on that board. If we’re going to hold them accountable and get them to co-operate, we need to have them on the board and have a presence there so that we can make them react to changes we want to make. We’ve changed the composition, so they will no longer have a majority on that board. I think that the new members will certainly get the message that this is what the minister wants—we want accountability.”

Additionally, the minister would be given the power to require the administrative authorities to publish compensation information on their website about board members, officers and employees.

We remain committed to the administrative authority model. However, unlike the Liberals, we will ensure that this is an accountable model.

We know that while most businesses follow the rules, there are bad actors out there who are not complying with all of them. That is why we are proposing to improve enforcement by enabling administrative monetary penalties under the act to help deal with non-compliant businesses. We want Ontarians to know that their government

is there for them. We will protect consumers and hold offenders accountable, which is a stark contrast to the previous government.

As I mentioned near the beginning of my remarks, the government has a responsibility to protect consumers, especially for large purchases. The government is currently consulting on changes under the Condominium Act, 1998, to help improve condo living and protect financial investments for people living in condos. More and more people are looking to condos as a housing option, and we must ensure that we protect these purchases. The consultation feedback will help with developing proposed regulatory changes to:

(1) Provide condo corporations with clear processes and rules for the procurement of services and goods and financial management of condo reserve funds;

(2) Increase the amount of interest that would be owed to a buyer by a developer on their deposit if their pre-construction condo project is cancelled and in other circumstances;

(3) Provide clearer processes for occupancy fees and chargebacks;

(4) Develop a condo guide for buyers and require developers to provide it at the point of purchase. This will better equip condo purchasers with information in an easy-to-understand format.

(5) Clarify the processes for mediation or arbitration between condo corporations and owners.

Speaker, we know that the province has an important role to play when it comes to consumer protection, and we will take on this role in a collaborative way. Consumers in Ontario rely on all levels of government to protect them, and that is why we will be engaging with people right across the province as we look at ways to further protect consumers.

We need to work collaboratively with our federal and municipal partners. Our constituents deserve clear consumer protection rules in each and every corner of this province, whether it's in my hometown of Ottawa, in Ottawa West–Nepean, or all the way down to Windsor, where my grandparents are—your wonderful riding—or right here in downtown Toronto. We want to pool great ideas from all over Ontario to ensure that we get consumer protection right. We must ensure that whatever laws we install are brought into place with all due diligence completed, which is why we will have thorough consultations to strengthen the Consumer Protection Act.

We can look to our municipal partners for positive examples of consumer protection. As an example, in 2017, Vaughan passed a bylaw to extend consumer protection coverage to include the following businesses: renovators, fence installers, pavers, landscapers and, finally, pool installers. This is all online. It is very accessible for the people of Vaughan, which is very important as well. It has been noted time and time again that consumer protection measures are only effective when the public knows about them.

On the same web page, under a section titled “Consumer and employee protection measures,” it states the following:

“Licensees are required to undertake several consumer and employee protection measures, such as:

“—providing services in compliance with all relevant city bylaws, regulations and related decisions;

“—carrying a minimum of \$2 million in commercial general liability insurance coverage for their work;

“—providing a list of all relevant city bylaws and required permits to a customer in writing prior to providing a written contract.”

This is just one positive example of making rules easy to find and easy to follow. Clearly, this was not a key priority for the previous government, but it is going to be a key priority for us. In the 21st century, where we are today, it is so critically important that we have those consumer protections that are easily accessible, that consumers can understand, so that they know about their rights and they know about their protections when they are making those critical purchases.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that I can speak to personally. As a young Ontarian, I'm hoping to be able to buy my first home in the next couple of years. That's a daunting prospect because it's a large investment; it's probably going to be one of the largest investments I make over the course of my life. I want to make sure that that purchase I'm making is governed by those consumer protections, so that when I get into that new home, finally, and when I have that chance to get those new keys and open that door, that new home is built to the highest standards and upholds the regulations that the people of Ontario expect us to defend here in this chamber.

As I begin to wrap up my remarks, I would like to reiterate my support for this bill. If passed, Bill 159, the Rebuilding Consumer Confidence Act, would take long-overdue steps to strengthen consumer protection measures in Ontario.

I once again applaud the Minister of Government and Consumer Services for her ongoing consultations with citizens and businesses across the province.

I look forward to the rest of this debate.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now it's time for questions.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank MPP Jeremy Roberts for his remarks. He is my neighbour. We share a boundary. I just want to extend an invitation to the member. As you mentioned, people need to know about consumer protections as they roll out. I would be more than willing to host a town hall with you on this particular matter with whatever legislation comes from this particular place because residents in your community, residents in our community, very much want to be informed. So that's an honest offer to you.

I was wondering if the member could elaborate, however, on an issue that I think concerns both of us, and that is the neglect of this particular matter by the previous set of Liberal governments. I note in particular MPP Oraziotti saying, “Wow, Justice Cunningham's report”—the ink was barely dry—saying that he predicted that that report would find Tarion's practices to be completely acceptable.

I was wondering if you thought MPP Oraziotti was acting in good faith on behalf of consumers then?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I appreciate the question from my friend and neighbour the member for Ottawa Centre. I think this is definitely an issue that we need to make sure we get right for the people of Ottawa, and I look forward to working with you to make sure that we get these consumer protections right.

I couldn't agree more. Again, as I noted in my remarks, 15 years ago is when this was last updated—15 years of neglect, of not bringing this up to the standards that the people of Ontario expect. And again, you need not look any further than the Auditor General's report back in 2009 where the Auditor General laid out some concrete steps and issues that they expected the government to take action on. I'm disappointed that it took so long for those recommendations to be acted upon, and I'm pleased that our government has had the chance to act on some of those recommendations here today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I'm tremendously blessed and fortunate. I have a number of contractors and builders in my region, in my area, that are just absolutely wonderful. They produce a fine, fine product. People are satisfied, knowing full well that they're buying and/or inhabiting the biggest purchase of their life, and it's tremendously important to them that it's done right.

Regrettably, in the industry, there are bad players. We have seen that. Unfortunately when that happens, it's not only a disappointment, but the heartache is just tremendous to all of the people who are adversely affected. Can the member tell us just how we are addressing some of those bad actors and the actions that this legislation is taking to prevent future malfeasance from taking place in the industry?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I appreciate the question from my friend and colleague. I agree completely with the member's comments. I know a lot of folks who work in the home building industry who are wonderful members of the community and who do a fantastic amount of work also in the community in charitable efforts—I know I've worked with some of them on fundraising efforts for our children's hospital in Ottawa, as just one example.

But you're right; we need to make sure that we get these consumer protections right so that people are protected when they are making some of those big, important purchases. That's why we are proposing to make the following changes to respond to consumer feedback: We are going to overhaul Ontario's new home warranty and protection program to make it more consumer focused and reduce the role of builders; we are going to support the new consumer protection priorities that the government committed to in spring 2019 as part of the overhauled program, including enhancing the dispute resolution process and delivering new measures to promote better-built homes. This is in addition to changes we have already made in the last year, such as board and executive compensation disclosure and enhancing the builder directory.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Unfortunately there isn't enough time for further questions and responses.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JOHN GAIDATSI

Mr. Stan Cho: It's my privilege to rise in the House today to recognize the work, passion and vision of a great community leader, a great friend who grew up in North York, John Gaidatsis. Johnny G, as his friends call him, is a passionate textile artist whose work highlights and pays homage to Ontario's history.

As part of the Canadian Tapestry and Texture Centre, Johnny G collaborates every day with Canadian artists and art professionals who share his vision of bringing Canadian stories to the forefront, at home and around the world. Through their work with tapestry, Johnny G and his colleagues create lasting memorials that connect community members from across Canada with each other and to our shared history. They remind us all of the importance of helping to tell Canada's magnificent story.

Through exhibitions and workshops, the Canadian Tapestry and Texture Centre inspires Canadians of all ages and works to attract international textile artists to help them develop the skills needed to create beautiful tapestry. These works of art can take over 450 hours to complete.

Here in Ontario, we're lucky to have talented and skilled individuals like Johnny G. This morning I want to congratulate Johnny G on his continued success and thank him for supporting Ontario's arts community. Sorry I missed the reveal of your latest piece. I'll be sure to be there next time. GG must be very proud of you. You the man, Johnny.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'm going to remind members that we are currently in members' statements. I realize people are coming and going and people are catching up with each other. Please keep the private conversations as low as possible so as to allow the member to make their statement and so that I can hear the member.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Jill Andrew: One of Canada's last standing independent children's bookstores, Mabel's Fables, an iconic landmark within our Mount Pleasant Village, is under attack by this government and the previous government's Eglinton Crosstown construction delays and by a new predatory landlord who increased rent by 70%.

Mabel's Fables owner Eleanor LeFave is a woman entrepreneur and the keeper of 32 years of beloved memories created in her small business, which doubles as

a community second home for everyone who has visited. Indie bookstores are the vibrant cultural DNA of our communities. They are a lifeline for local authors.

Eleanor and other small businesses fighting for their right to exist are exhausted. Their family savings and physical and mental health are depleted. In Eleanor's words, "\$3 million spent on marketing is misguided—this is too late. Reform the punishing Municipal Property Assessment Corp. ... help us with a refund on property taxes, what about rent control for small businesses ... provide us with mental health workers."

Eleanor is terrified of the looming retail apocalypse if this government doesn't stand up for small businesses, and I couldn't agree more. Conservatives, \$3 million is a band-aid solution. It is a day late and a dollar short.

In the meantime, though, we are all going to continue to shop on Eglinton and we're going to bring our friends from across Ontario to shop, drink, eat and do it all until we drop.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Good morning. This morning, I would like to acknowledge and share an announcement that was held in my great riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville. On March 5, a new child care centre, Caring for Kids, opened up to serve our local community in providing high-quality licensed child care services. Cooksville parents have spoken loud and clear that they want to see greater choice and affordability in our child care system.

This grand opening event was an opportunity for us to celebrate the collaborative effort and partnerships that have resulted in the opening of this wonderful centre that will offer quality, licensed child care for our families.

I would like to thank Caring for Kids and the region of Peel for your dedication to opening this new centre in our community and working alongside our government to make this a reality. Our government is committed to investing in quality child care and early learning for families. Caring for Kids is a start and will lead by example to other areas in the city of Mississauga on the vital importance of having high-quality, licensed child care services.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Ian Arthur: It's been a while since I've had to sit through that inane "promise made" seal talk from the other side. It's been nice, and there's a reason we haven't had to hear that orchestrated self-indulgent back-patting: because, well, they're having a hard time keeping any promise. Let's review:

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They set class sizes at 28, then 25, now 23.

They introduced mandatory e-learning; now there's an opt-out.

They cancelled the francophone university; now it's being built.

They destroyed supports for autistic children and are currently bungling the repair job.

They vowed to cut children's aid funding by \$28 million, but with pressure, they have still kept the old funding model.

They planned to stop the Transition Child Benefit for low-income families, but thankfully, were forced to keep it.

They cut funding to public health, then they reversed it—although it's worth noting that despite COVID-19, they have yet to make that reversal permanent.

They axed promised funding for rape crisis centres, then, faced with outrage, partially revoked that cut.

They made invisible licence plates, denied it for months, and now we have the old ones.

They tried to open the green belt for development twice, and—you can guess what I'm going to say here—backtracked on that too.

They brought back patronage appointments that had not been used in decades so the Premier's previous chief of staff could hand out jobs to his pals, and then they were forced to fire them.

With one failed project after another, how can Ontarians possibly trust this government to lead in a time of actual crisis? Between the unaddressed housing crisis, the coronavirus pandemic and the climate emergency, how can we have faith in a government that has bungled every single one of its decisions?

CORNERSTONE FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION CENTRE

Mr. David Piccini: I'm pleased to speak today to a truly remarkable organization in my riding, Cornerstone Family Violence Prevention Centre.

Cornerstone received funding last year from the government of Ontario to build an addition to help expand service delivery and supports for victims of family violence. I'm excited to be attending the ribbon-cutting on Friday to celebrate the opening of the space, which will be utilized as a counselling space to deliver one-on-one supports, including counselling, family court supports and housing support services. The space is a softer, more comforting place to experience these services and will help to increase Cornerstone's capacity, enabling 30% more people to receive support if needed. The space is a welcomed addition to the programs Cornerstone offers women and children in Northumberland county.

I would like to thank the truly remarkable staff and board at Cornerstone Family Violence Prevention Centre for their continued work and commitment to ending violence against women.

I would also like to acknowledge Cornerstone's International Women's Day lunch last week—unfortunately, I was unable to attend this year—which was a great success in our community, and thank everyone who attended.

In closing, we know that, far too often, gender-based violence targets Indigenous women, racialized women, new Canadians and women in rural and northern

communities like mine. Together, we must do better to end violence against women.

LEGAL AID

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I rise today in support of our local community legal clinics and to implore this government to stop the cuts to Legal Aid Ontario.

I've received dozens of letters from my constituents who access services at Scarborough Community Legal Services, our local community legal clinic. These letters are from the most vulnerable members of my community: from refugees, from new Canadians, ODSP recipients and low-income rental tenants.

The average household income in my riding is well below the city and the provincial average. The message from my constituents is clear: They would not be able to afford essential legal assistance had they not been able to receive the services provided by their local community legal aid clinic.

Earlier this week, the Neither Smarter nor Stronger report highlighted concerns with the government's proposal to cut services to Legal Aid Ontario, including the removal of language referring to low-income clients. Legal aid should focus on the needs of those who need to access justice.

We should not be cutting services to legal aid. We should not be putting this burden on the most vulnerable people in our communities. The government needs to look at the bigger picture and ensure fair and equal access to justice and legal services in our community, and stop these ridiculous cuts.

PHARMACARE

Ms. Jessica Bell: I want to talk about one of my constituents who is here with us today. Cullen Elijah McGrail is a playwright who lives in University-Rosedale. He just celebrated his 25th birthday. Cullen has type 1 diabetes. Before his birthday, the OHIP+ program covered the cost of his insulin and glucose-monitoring tests that Cullen needs to manage his diabetes. But now that he's 25, he no longer has any coverage. These costs now cost Cullen over \$300 a month. That's a lot of money.

Leading up to his birthday, Cullen reached out to my office with a series of letters. He sent me one every single day. He talked about his life, his goals and his plan to write a play about the discovery of insulin. I learned a lot while reading these letters. In one, Cullen wrote about the scientists who discovered insulin. He said, "The Hippocratic oath was clear that it would be wrong to make money off something that would help humankind." I agree.

Cullen should not have to pay out of pocket and risk financial uncertainty for the one thing that keeps him alive.

We need a universal pharmacare program—a program where insulin and medications would be available to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay.

I have made copies of Cullen's letters and will be giving them to the Minister of Health. I look forward to following up with the minister on this important issue.

Thank you for coming today, Cullen.

BLIND HOCKEY NIGHT

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: A week ago, I hosted the first ever Blind Hockey Night at the Port Credit arena in Mississauga-Lakeshore. It was great to see so many families attend this special event. Together, we raised over \$6,000 for the Canadian national blind hockey team and for the Mississauga Hockey League's Play-More Program, which helps support hockey families who need financial assistance.

Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank a few volunteers—Christine Scaini and Mark DeMontis, this evening could never have happened without you.

Thank you to the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility for joining us, along with my colleague at the Treasury Board and the member for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill.

Thank you to Nicholas Canade and the Mississauga Steelheads, who joined us and donated 500 tickets—one for everyone who attended this event.

Thank you to the Peel police for joining us, and to ParaSport TV for broadcasting this event.

And thank you to former Toronto Maple Leaf Brad Boyes for joining us and for playing on both Team Rudy and the national blind team, after a trade during the first intermission.

The blind team won 5-4. But we all win every time we demonstrate that sports are for everyone, and that's what we did on Wednesday night.

Thank you to everyone who attended this event.

HEALTH CARE IN BRAMPTON

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Brampton is the ninth-largest city in Canada. We are one of the fastest-growing cities. And we are facing a health care emergency. The situation is so bad that thousands of people are treated in the hallways in our hospital, which is already overcrowded and underfunded.

For 15 years, the Liberal government made a decision: They decided to not invest in our city's health care. And since getting elected, the Conservative government has taken this situation from bad to worse. The situation is so dire that the city of Brampton has declared a health care crisis.

The Conservatives can't ignore this issue any longer. People's lives are at risk.

Now with the threat of COVID-19 spreading across the world—including cases here in the GTA, the region of Peel and the city of Brampton—people are really worried. They are worried about how our health care system, which is already suffering from the cuts made by this Conservative government, is going to handle the possibility of this virus spreading here in Ontario. Frankly, they shouldn't

have to worry, because the people of Ontario have a fundamental right to public health care that is adequately funded.

Cuts to health care hurt us all, especially at times like this. That's why we in the NDP will be fighting these cuts and working to make sure that the people of Ontario have access to the health care that they need and deserve.

CFB TRENTON

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Colleagues, in the global challenges of preventing, treating and working with COVID-19, we've heard many stories of angst, heartbreak, frustration and fear. Today, in contrast, I would like to commend the men and women of CFB Trenton and the people of an entire community and region for their collective response when confronted with receiving repatriated citizens from across Canada. I refer specifically to just under 200 Canadians repatriated from Wuhan, China, and now just over 200 more from the Diamond Princess.

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Upon their arrival at CFB Trenton, the air transport capital of Canada, they are processed and quarantined by a broad spectrum of health care professionals, military personnel and community volunteers. Not only are they cared for using strict medical protocols, but many members of the community have stepped forward with books, treats, videos, gifts and more during the entire quarantine period they spend there. This outpouring of generosity and concern, in my mind, truly reflects the caring nature of the Bay of Quinte communities surrounding the Trenton air base.

So to all involved, I say thank you for making the best of a difficult situation in the most Canadian way.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to welcome a very special guest to the Legislature, who served as the member of provincial Parliament in the riding of Scarborough—Ellesmere in the 30th, 31st, 33rd and 35th Parliaments, and who also served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in the 35th. He was here; I'm sure he'll be back. David Warner was here a minute ago.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: This morning I would like to welcome Jessica Bowprey. She's from Niagara Falls. She's a student from Brock University who's working in my constituency office and doing a wonderful job.

I would like to also welcome Paul Bachem and Kelsey Ewart from Metrolinx. Thank you for the informative visit this morning.

Mr. Billy Pang: I would like to welcome two of my new constituency staff, Kitty Huang and Dickson Mak.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to welcome two student leaders from Western University: Fatima Amir and Erin McAdam. They are spending the afternoon with me here today to learn about the great work that we do at Queen's Park. Welcome.

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to welcome Victoria Park LINC students and staff. They are somewhere around here in the House, and they will join us a little bit later.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome Michau van Speyk from the Ontario Autism Coalition. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Mr. Will Bouma: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for hosting the prayer breakfast this morning in the dining room.

I would like to welcome to the people's House representatives from Leading Influence: Larry Freeman, Tim Schindel and Charlie Lyons—and also my pastor Scott Dibbet and my beautiful and long-suffering wife, Joni.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I would like to recognize Paige Malcolm from my riding, who has done a fabulous job serving the Legislature as a legislative page. Her last day is tomorrow. Thank you, Paige.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It's my pleasure to welcome Alessandro Cunsolo to Queen's Park today. He's a Ryerson engineering student, and it's his first time here.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I would like to welcome Sarah Klein, the director of strategic initiatives at the town of Whitby, to the chamber.

Hon. Doug Ford: We have the Milone family. We have Tony, Maria, Stephanie, Grace, and Daniel is a page here. It was great to see them this morning. Thanks for coming down.

QUESTION PERIOD

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. As families anxiously watch the news of the spread of COVID-19, they're asking some serious questions about the government's contingency plans and about their own ability to take time away from work if sickness requires them to. The government has made it clear that they will not take the advice of doctors, nurses and health professionals who have implored them to reinstate paid sick days.

What measures is the government ready to put in place to help people and their employers if they're unable to work due to illness or quarantine?

Hon. Doug Ford: I can tell you the health and the well-being of Ontarians is our government's number one priority. Our government has taken a transparent approach, regularly updating to the media and the people of Ontario—via the media and online.

Our government is acting to ensure readiness and to respond to a range of outbreak scenarios. We're expanding our testing capacity and establishing dedicated assessment centres to ease pressures on hospitals. We've also enhanced screening at long-term-care homes.

Ontario has stood ready and assisted by the federal government—I want to thank the federal government for their announcement today. We look forward to going up

to Ottawa, starting tonight, to sit down with the rest of the Premiers and the federal government to discuss a further plan.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Indeed, the federal government did announce this morning measures to make it easier to access employment insurance, but thousands of working women and men in Ontario—nearly one in 10—don't qualify for employment insurance coverage.

Does the Ford government have a plan to protect these workers when they need to take time away from work?

Hon. Doug Ford: Ontario has stood ready, assisted, again, by the federal government in caring for and repatriating the Canadians who are overseas at CFB Trenton and also the Nav Canada centre. Our government will work with the federal government to ensure that our public health care system will respond appropriately.

We look forward to engaging with our provincial and federal partners at the First Ministers meeting.

We're implementing an enhanced paramedic response team that brings all the partners together.

I look forward to meeting the Leader of the Opposition after this session and the other leaders of the other parties to further discuss this.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I'm still not getting a response to the question—outside of the great work that's been done by our health professionals and public health in the province.

No one should ever have to be in a situation where they're having to choose between their ability to earn a living and being able to stay healthy or keeping other people healthy. But many working people feel that this is a choice they may be facing. Now, more than ever, they need a government that is ready to act to ensure they don't have to make that choice. Instead, they have a government that defends stripping working people of paid sick days and has ignored the advice of medical professionals to end mandatory sick notes.

What contingency plans does the government have in place, Speaker, to ensure that people will be able to take time off from work when they need it?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: We are encouraging people who feel ill to stay at home and we are encouraging employers to support that advice, and they are. We have a situation right now where notes are not mandatory. They can be asked for in some circumstances by employers, but employers in Ontario right now understand that we are dealing with a very unusual set of circumstances, and they're responding accordingly.

Employers now have the option to require reasonable proof of the circumstances that entitle that employee to leave. That is what is happening right now.

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People are being responsible, both employees and employers. We feel that no other steps are required at this point because people are acting in the way they should under these circumstances, where everyone is required to play their part and serve their role in making sure that they protect themselves and that they protect their co-workers and the people around them.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We feel that the government should be taking the advice of health professionals who say to get rid of this requirement for sick notes completely. Don't make it optional, and make sure people have paid sick days to rely on. That's what the professionals are suggesting that this government do, and we would agree with that advice. I wish the government agreed with that advice.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. This week, the Ford government has repeatedly stated that they have contingency plans in place to deal with everything from increased demands on our health system to disruptions to business to the ability to deliver public services. Will the government start laying out the details of their contingency plan?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Yes. Of course, there is a meeting that has been established following question period with the leader of the official opposition and the leaders of the other parties to provide, in greater detail, the enhanced measures that are being taken under the plan.

We can't sit back and just assume that things will continue to be the way they are right now. We know what's happening in other countries, that COVID-19 is escalating. We are preparing for that. We don't assume that what we're dealing with now will stay the same.

We are looking at assessment centres. For example, having people, in very short order, be able to be diagnosed at home—having the public health worker come to their home to diagnose them. We are putting all of these measures in place.

We're looking at large gatherings, and what we should do about large gatherings. Should we put protective measures in place and prevent them from happening? We are looking at the entire possibility of events. We plan for the worst-case scenario. Of course, we hope it doesn't happen but, if it does, we will be ready for it.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm certainly looking forward to this afternoon's meeting, but I believe that it's really important that the public is provided with information. I think the public having information is paramount to reducing their fears and worries about what's happening here in our province.

One of the specific areas where people have concerns is in our hospital sector. As the Premier knows, hospitals

across Ontario are routinely operating over 100% capacity. People were being treated in hallways and conference rooms before COVID-19 was even a factor here in Ontario. Ontario hospitals say they will need an investment of over \$900 million just to stay where they are, which is with the broken system that the Liberals left us with.

What is the government's contingency plan should a hospital go into a lockdown or quarantine?

Hon. Christine Elliott: There are several issues that were mentioned in the question from the Leader of the Opposition. First, with respect to making sure the public is aware of what is happening, we are doing that. We are being open and transparent with the people of Ontario. Dr. Williams, our Chief Medical Officer of Health in the province of Ontario, holds conferences twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays, with information that is immediately available to the public. We are also updating our website ontario.ca/coronavirus twice a day, at 10:30 in the morning and 5:30 in the afternoon, to give people the information they need on where we stand in Ontario with the number of coronavirus cases—of COVID-19—and also the personal precautions people can take. It is very important that people are aware of what they need to do.

Secondly, the leader of the official opposition asked about the preparedness of our hospitals. We have a plan in place that is being discussed on a daily basis at the command table and at the regional tables to make sure that if one hospital has to be shut down because of too many cases of coronavirus or if it's spreading within that hospital, there are plans for other hospitals to take over the work that's being done at that hospital. That is happening across the province of Ontario. We want to make sure that if we have a situation where one is in lockdown, others are there to take its place in reasonable proximity to that hospital.

The people of Ontario need not fear about whether the hospitals will be able to handle this situation. They will be, and the plan is set and ready to go.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When the vast majority of hospitals in Ontario are operating at over 100% capacity, that doesn't leave us with much comfort, unfortunately.

Ontario's homeless shelters are another situation that we're concerned about. The shelters and emergency services for people who are without a home are asking similar questions, Speaker. People who are homeless are already at an increased health risk, as we all know, and that's doubly true during communicable disease outbreaks.

Nurses and health professionals want to know what the government contingency plans are for this particularly vulnerable population. When can they expect to see some answers, Speaker?

Hon. Christine Elliott: First of all, with respect to our hospitals and the fact that many of them are over 100% capacity, that is true. Again, as I indicated the other day, this is not a situation that we created. That was created in

the 15 years before our party took government. But we have a plan in place that is going to reduce that capacity.

With all of that said, we know that there is a plan that will work in all of our hospitals. We are very fortunate in that, in the cases that have presented thus far, the vast majority of people are able to be self-isolated at home—those who have been confirmed with COVID-19—and that should we require more spaces in the future, those spaces can be created.

It is important to note that not every patient needs to be treated in a negative pressure room. That is where people are commonly diagnosed. If they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and need to be in hospital, they can remain in isolation. Isolation spots have been created in our existing hospitals to make sure that we can safely treat those patients who have been confirmed with COVID-19 and the rest of the patients who are there for other reasons.

In terms of people who are in homeless shelters and people who are living on the streets of Toronto, our public health units are working very carefully throughout our entire population to make sure that if people need to be diagnosed, there are places where they can be diagnosed as well as treated. We want to make sure that no person—no person—in Ontario who needs care will go without it. We have a situation set up where every person can receive care. We are working very carefully with our public health units, who are doing a tremendous job in all of our communities.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

M^{me} France G  linas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Sant  . Ontarians count on health care workers to care for them, to help them heal and to keep them safe, and health care workers count on things like infection control and protective equipment to keep them safe, and their patients. In the absence of clear, unequivocal scientific data, they are saying that the province should continue with the precautionary principle, which dictates higher standards of protection.

Will the minister listen to health care workers and provide them with the equipment they are asking for to protect themselves from possible airborne threats?

Hon. Christine Elliott: First, I want to thank all of the front-line personal health care workers who are dealing with COVID-19. They are doing a tremendous job, and they do need to be supported by appropriate personal protective equipment.

We have been following the advice that has been given to us by the medical and scientific community.

Presently, Ontario has been an outlier vis-  -vis other provinces and other countries in the sense that we have been assuming that there is airborne as well as droplet transmission of COVID-19. The medical evidence is telling us that it is not airborne but it is droplet-borne. Protection and therefore the personal protective equipment that is being recommended is what we are switching to now, and that is what we are going to be providing.

We did hear from a group of public health, community and chief nurse executive colleagues. We also heard from a number of leading experts in infectious diseases. Speaker, I would like to read what they have sent to us: “We commend and support efforts to expand Ontario’s stockpile of N95 respirators, but we also strongly believe that it is essential to change current recommendations to manage patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 in droplet or contact precautions and to recommend airborne precautions only for aerosol-generating medical procedures” such as bronchoscopies. “Making this change immediately is the best approach (for pandemic planning).”

This is the evidence and the advice that we have received from the medical experts and the scientific experts, and this is the advice that we are following.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, one of the important lessons Ontario Public Health learned from SARS was to ensure that health care workers have the protections that they and their patients need to stay safe, to be safe. As long as experts are sorting out the science and the science is starting to get disseminated, we all know that we should continue to use the precautionary principle, which means ensuring that there are more rather than fewer precautions for the people who keep our health care system functioning.

Until we get clear science, until we get clear data that shows that COVID-19 is not airborne, will the minister commit to the protection of Ontario patients and the protection of Ontario health care workers in the way front-line health care workers are calling on her to do?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The precautionary principle is very important when there is medical and scientific evidence to back it up. In this case, the World Health Organization, the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario and others have recommended to us that it is droplet transmission we need to be concerned about, not airborne transmission. That is what we are following.

We want to make sure that the people of Ontario are safe, that our health workers are kept safe, but the World Health Organization’s guidance for the rational, appropriate use of personal protective equipment in addressing COVID-19 says that “PPE should be used based on the risk of exposure, the type of activity, and the transmission dynamics of the pathogen, whether contact, droplet or aerosol. The overuse of PPE will have a further impact on supply shortages.

“Health care workers involved in the direct care of patients should use the following PPE: gowns, gloves, medical masks and eye protection (goggles or face shield)”—if needed for bronchoscopies. “Specifically for aerosol-generating procedures [such as intubation or ventilation], health care workers should use respirators, eye protection, gloves and gowns.”

We are following the medical advice that we have received from the World Health Organization, from the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario and from

numerous experts on COVID-19. We are following the medical and scientific advice that they are recommending for us, and that is what is going to continue to guide our decisions with respect to coverage and dealing with COVID-19.

COVID-19

Mr. Michael Parsa: My question is to the Premier. Premier, many individuals in my riding and throughout this province have seen continued coverage regarding the coronavirus. I want to take this opportunity to thank Dr. David Williams, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, for his leadership in providing a strong, reassuring presence during these times.

I know our government is actively engaging on this file, and the Minister of Health and all of her officials continue to provide strong leadership, with twice-weekly media briefings, frequent news releases and daily website updates.

Premier, would you please provide the Legislature with an update on Ontario’s efforts to address the coronavirus in this province?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank our member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for the question.

Mr. Speaker, I first want to acknowledge, as we all have, our dedicated health care professionals. We’ll leave no stone unturned to make sure our front-line health care workers are protected—the paramedics, nurses, doctors, long-term-care workers. It’s our top priority to make sure they’re taken care of so they’re able to take care of the other folks there.

Our government takes this issue very seriously, and that is why we have created a central command table headed up by our great Minister of Health. I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Health is working around the clock, seven days a week, 24 hours a day, making sure the ship is guided in the proper direction.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: Back to the Premier: Premier, I would also like to take the opportunity to thank all the front-line medical workers in my riding.

We realize this virus has caused concern throughout the world’s financial markets, and I know that my constituents are deeply concerned about the global economic uncertainty. The people of Ontario elected a government committed to fiscal prosperity and sound economic planning.

Would the Premier outline to the House the state of Ontario’s economy during this ongoing global uncertainty?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, I want to thank the member.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you we are committed to supporting and protecting the interests of all Ontarians, full stop. We will do whatever it takes to make sure we continue on with the economy moving forward, as we’ve seen.

The economic impacts of COVID-19 are concerning to our government and, I’m sure, governments around the world. But Mr. Speaker, you’ve seen us for the last 18 months in here, making sure that we are prudent with the

taxpayers' money. We're fiscally responsible. This is the reason you have to be fiscally responsible for situations that you face. As we say, we need the rainy day fund—and that's exactly what our government is doing.

Mr. Speaker, economically our government is so much further ahead than everyone else. But again, every decision we make, we have to make sure we're being prudent fiscal managers of the taxpayers' money, to make sure our economy continues to boom, as you've seen—

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

INDIGENOUS PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Oji-Cree.*

My question is to the Premier. Tomorrow, the Premier will be joining first ministers and the Prime Minister for the First Ministers meeting. On Monday, the Premier spoke about the issues he plans to raise, but I didn't hear the Premier mention any of the challenges facing First Nations, especially in light of COVID-19.

Will the Premier use his opportunity in Ottawa to address these issues with the Prime Minister?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: We of course look forward to this opportunity. The federal government has submitted a couple of items that they want to discuss, and we have a couple that we'd like to discuss. Frankly, in view of these ongoing circumstances with respect to COVID-19, it compels us to talk and ensure that there's a strategy in place for Indigenous communities particularly, and notably for isolated and remote Indigenous communities.

In the wake of conferences that members have travelled back and forth to, we want to ensure that we take, just as we have and will continue to do in any other community in Ontario, appropriate responses for those communities.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Back to the Premier: Infectious diseases can be especially devastating for First Nations communities. The government tells people to wash their hands, but that's hard to do when there's no clean running water. The government tells people to self-isolate, but how do you do that when you live in a house of 10 to 12 people in each home?

These are the issues that can't be ignored. Our communities deserve answers. Will the Premier commit to raising them at this meeting?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. They are serious, significant issues that you are raising. With the new response structure that we've set up, with the command table and the regional tables, I can tell you we also have sector or specific-issue tables where we can bring up issues such as repatriation issues, local case issues—but certainly dealing with First Nations partners to make sure that we can understand the

specific issues that are being faced and work through solutions.

That's something that we are working through provincially, but it's certainly something that I, as health minister, will be raising with the federal health minister as part of my discussions with her because, as I said previously, we want to make sure that everyone in Ontario, should they need assistance with COVID-19, will receive that assistance. Recognizing the unique circumstances that many First Nations partners are experiencing, we want to make sure that we deal with them appropriately and provide the necessary services and supplies.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

It's hard to believe we're still talking about licence plates some three weeks later. I do have to say that hearing the Premier say that he was heartbroken was hard to understand.

Speaker, here's what I know: Almost every day in this Legislature, right over here in the gallery, there are heartbroken families sitting here, and we all know why they're here. We know they're here because their children aren't getting the supports that they need. Up until now, the government has only spent about half the \$600 million they say they've allocated to the OAP. And families with children with autism in the north are not only heartbroken; they're devastated because the government has destroyed capacity in the north.

1100

Speaker, through you: What does the Premier have to say to these families?

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

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to this question.

Under the direction of this Premier, we have actually doubled the amount of funding in the Ontario Autism Program from \$300 million to \$600 million. With the advice of families and experts from the autism sector, we are developing a needs-based program that is going to meet the needs of far more children in the province than ever received support from that government.

Under the direction of Steven Del Duca and the previous Liberal government, there were 8,000 children in the province that were receiving service from the provincial government while thousands and thousands more waited. I can tell you that in the last several months, we have seen thousands more children than ever before receiving funding from the Ontario Autism Program, and we will continue to see that funding roll out over the coming months.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I thank the minister for his answer. I'm sure the families would have appreciated a response from the Premier. And I don't think that's what families are experiencing.

It's clear that the Premier and his ministers have made a mess of the OAP, which is something this government has a habit of doing. The problem is here—it's not us. It is children and their families that are paying the price for this.

Now we understand the government is offering interim services in four regions of this province. What about all the rest? What about all the rest?

Speaker, through you, I'll ask the Premier again: What do you have to say, as leader of this province, to those families who are falling between the cracks because of your mismanagement?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Premier to reply.

Hon. Doug Ford: It's pretty rich of this member to come out, when the first crisis that I faced as Premier was that you bankrupted the system. You bankrupted the system. We're \$100 million short. We had to put in emergency funds to help families with autism. I met a lady the other day who came up to me out of the blue and said, "Thank you for helping us. This is the first time we've seen funding."

We've actually doubled the funding to \$600 million—as they sat back and ignored these families for years. For 15 years, they were ignored. Thousands and thousands of families were struggling as they sat back and did absolutely nothing for these families. We're taking care of these families. We're putting \$600 million in. People are getting their cheques now, and they're 10 times better off than they were under the Liberal government.

COVID-19

Mr. Billy Pang: My question is for the Minister of Health. We have heard from many of our constituents about the risk of COVID-19. It is apparent that every member of this House is interested in making sure the people of Ontario are safe from this virus. That is why an open, transparent approach has been so important. I have directed my constituents to ontario.ca/coronavirus so that they can get the most up-to-date, accurate information and a fact sheet in a variety of languages. Ontario is continuing to monitor the situation closely as we prepare an enhanced response.

Speaker, I think it is important that we continue to make clear the actions that are being taken in response to COVID-19. Can the minister tell this House about the readiness of our province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member from Markham–Unionville for his question. I know this is very important to you and to your constituents.

Since we first heard of this virus, our government has been open and transparent with the actions that we've taken. We've offered media briefings twice a week, frequent news releases, twice-daily website updates, daily stakeholder briefings and a number of briefings offered to all parties in this House.

We are now implementing an enhanced response. This includes a new command table, five regional planning tables, implementation tables and a personal protective equipment table. We are ensuring Ontarians' readiness

should the situation escalate. For example, we are establishing dedicated assessment centres to ease pressures on hospitals and are also increasing our lab capacity.

Speaker, let me be clear: This is our top priority, and we have a plan that is going to work.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the Minister of Health for your response.

To the Minister of Finance: It is reassuring to hear that our government continues to follow this situation closely. Our government is aware of the uncertainty that currently exists but understands the importance of managing these risks. Could the Minister of Finance please explain what our government is doing to ensure we are prepared to respond to the economic impacts as this situation continues to unfold?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member from Markham–Unionville for that question. As always, as with all my colleagues, I appreciate his counsel and advice as we look at the economic impacts.

First and foremost, of course, is making sure that the health resources are in place. We've made it clear to our front-line workers as well as to Ontarians that the resources required to address this issue will be in place to support the health of Ontarians.

But we are also in the midst of a difficult economic situation internationally, and we continue to monitor that situation. I can say that it is in the best interests of Ontarians that this government has been focused on a prudent, responsible approach to finances.

As I mentioned in this Legislature last week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, an independent officer of the federal government, has indicated for the first time since they have been monitoring the fiscal stability of this province that Ontario is on a stable financial footing. This will serve us well as we deal with the uncertainties ahead. Your constituents and the rest of Ontarians can rely on us to manage the books financially in—

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

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier.

This morning, I announced that I'll be introducing a private member's bill that, if passed, would protect the independence of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. There's a need because, as we've seen with the Premier's attempt to appoint his buddy Ron Taverner to the top job in the OPP, this government cannot stop meddling in the independent appointments process. Despite over 300 applications to the commission made through the proper process and agreed-upon channels, this Premier went ahead and appointed his own picks for commissioners, including one who the Integrity Commissioner found would often be in a conflict of interest and therefore unable to do the job much of the time.

Does the Premier believe he should be meddling in the Ontario Human Rights Commission?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Attorney General to reply.

Hon. Doug Downey: I look forward to seeing the bill that she announced at 9:45 this morning on the off chance that there's something constructive in it. I'm looking forward to it, Mr. Speaker.

I am confident with the independence of the OHRC and the important work that they do—but here's the irony: The Leader of the Opposition would say, "We want to take the politics out of it, so we're going to politicize it." It makes no sense.

Mr. Arsenault's credentials are unparalleled. They are unparalleled. He is exactly the kind of person that you would want on the commission. He has 20 years of front-line experience. He was an Aboriginal liaison officer. He is so qualified. He was the first-ever holder of community engagement officer. He is so—it's unbelievable.

We know that the opposition has no use for our front-line police officers. They don't respect them, they don't want their input and they discount everything they have to say.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order. The House will come to order.

Start the clock. Supplementary question.

1110

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I've never seen such a shameful response from an Attorney General. We're talking about principles that were established in the 1990s by the United Nations when it comes to the independence of these very kinds of bodies, so shame on the Attorney General; shame on a member of this cabinet to behave in such an undignified way when this is an extremely important principle that we're trying to ensure is upheld in the province of Ontario.

What my bill does is take the memorandum of understanding, which provides a clear understanding of how the appointment process for the Ontario Human Rights Commission should work—the very MOU that this Attorney General refuses to sign—and actually enshrines it into law. I'd say that that's a huge improvement.

The Premier must stop trying to put his thumb on the scale to influence the appointments process. It has to stop. Will the Premier do the right thing—the thing that is a standard around the world, enshrined in the UN principles that were undertaken in Paris? Will he do the right thing, recognize the need for a Human Rights Commission that actually operates without government interference, and support this extremely important bill?

Hon. Doug Downey: It will come as no surprise to this House that the Leader of the Opposition is ill informed again. I signed that MOU in February, so we can put that to bed.

Mr. Speaker, the second part to this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. I'm listening to the Attorney General's answer; so far, he has said nothing that's unparliamentary.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The other irony here with the opposition is that they think that, by excluding perspectives and experience, they're being inclusive. That's how they think. Only in the NDP world do they think that we should shun the advice of front-line officers who have something to contribute to the welfare of this province.

The Human Rights Commission is independent. They operate independently, they will continue to operate independently, and they're doing a fantastic job.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Minister of Health and the Deputy Premier.

Minister, grocery shelves are losing stock of hand sanitizers. I believe that people are following yours and others' advice to wash their hands with soap and water, but, as concerns over COVID-19 grow, I believe that they need clarity from officials in terms of how to behave and how to act.

So far, I don't believe that your government is being clear. I've listened to you this morning—and the Premier—as you've answered questions around, for instance, employers and giving paid time off to employees who need to self-quarantine or who have contracted this virus.

The federal government has acted. Will the provincial government take clear and decisive action? We need to learn the lessons of 2003, from the SARS outbreak. That started in Scarborough; I paid close attention at that time.

Will you ensure that the government restricts access to long-term-care facilities in the event of a community-acquired—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I would certainly agree with the member that we did learn lessons from SARS. We carefully learned those lessons, and we put into place processes and protocols, including the public health agency of Ontario, to deal with situations such as the one that we are facing now. So we do have a plan in place; we do have people at all levels who are prepared to take action as they need to.

We are following this situation very, very closely. We are letting the public know about every step that we are taking. We are being open and transparent about it. Dr. Williams, our Chief Medical Officer of Health, is the one who is doing the daily briefings. I believe that is very important so the people of Ontario hear directly from him—not through me, not through what some might perceive to be a political lens; they're hearing directly from him about the steps that they need to take.

I will expand further in my supplemental.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the minister for her answer.

Minister, I believe that, at times like this, we need to take courageous action.

The public health units, as you know, are the heroes. They are the ones that protect our societies, our communities, from communicable diseases. Sudbury just received its first case of confirmed COVID-19, so it is now spreading to the north. Right now, under your ministry's expectations, there's a modernization effort: There are cuts that have been made to public health boards and public health units, and there's downloading to municipalities. It's not the time for that.

Will you suspend that action so that 100% of the resources available to our public health teams across this province can be put toward defending the public against this unknown virus and making sure that Ontarians are protected?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I will agree with the member that our public health units and people in public health, as well as front-line protective personal health workers, are the ones that we should be applauding and celebrating and giving all of the resources that they need in order to do their jobs.

I actually spoke with Ms. Blair, who's working with Mr. Pine, this morning with respect to the consultation efforts that are being done by Mr. Pine and his group with respect to municipalities and the work that the public health units are doing. They have put their consultations in abeyance because they know that the public health units have to put all of their resources right now into dealing with COVID-19. That is the appropriate use. We need to make sure that we respond to the absolute priorities in public health. That is what they are now doing, and that's what we would expect them to do. I thank them for their continued efforts.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is for the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. The members involved in developing the anti-human trafficking strategy have spoken of consultations, round tables and insights they have received from those on the front lines who have devoted their time to support the survivors of trafficking. We know that there is no better measure of success than that of feedback from those who work directly on such challenging issues, and as such, we understand how impactful their opinions are.

Can the minister please tell the House what kind of response they have received from these front-line care providers following the launch of the anti-human trafficking strategy?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville for that question.

Our government worked to ensure that our new anti-human trafficking strategy was designed with the input of those who spend every day on the front lines, who helped

us create a strategy that would truly serve the survivors of this heinous crime.

Following our announcement, we were encouraged by the tremendously positive responses from these community leaders across Ontario. These are people like Karyn Kennedy, president and CEO of Boost Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, who said, "I commend the provincial government for recognizing the serious issue of trafficking of girls and women in Ontario. They are taking bold steps to implement a comprehensive strategy that supports and enhances the work of community stakeholders, law enforcement and criminal justice across sectors to prevent and hopefully bring an end to this terrible crime."

We have listened to stakeholders and brought in a real plan that will make a difference.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the minister for that response.

Human trafficking is a completely unacceptable and disgusting crime, and the victims deserve the appropriate supports to heal.

A large part of the new anti-human trafficking strategy is focused on First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. We all know too well that Indigenous women and girls are at a higher risk of being assaulted and trafficked. We also know that they need Indigenous-led and Indigenous-specific supports to help them heal from the trauma of being sex-trafficked. This requires working with Indigenous partners and organizations to provide the most appropriate supports.

1120

Can the minister explain how this strategy addresses the specific needs of Indigenous communities across Ontario?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for the question.

It has been an honour to have been able to speak with experts from across Ontario who work first-hand with survivors of trafficking. This includes Indigenous partners such as the Chiefs of Ontario, native friendship centres and more. They have worked tirelessly to support victims across Ontario. We are determined to ensure that the strategies we implement not only support their work, but are well aligned with the principles of trauma-informed, culturally appropriate care.

We made it a focus to have not just Indigenous-informed but Indigenous-led supports that met the needs of the organizations providing service and, more importantly, of the survivors who are healing from their trauma.

I want to personally thank the Ontario Native Women's Association for their advocacy and work on this with our government—and thank you to Cora-Lee McGuire-Cyrette for her passion on this issue. I am truly honoured to have your support as we work to fight against the exploitation of Ontario's women and girls. We intend to work with you every step of the way to ensure that those who are victimized in trafficking have the care—

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

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is for the Premier. Today, we are joined by Rakesh Tiwari, who has been waiting nearly a decade for justice. His son Prashant passed away at Brampton Civic Hospital in 2014 while he was on a 24-hour suicide watch. He was left unsupervised for nearly three hours—a clear break from protocol.

Speaker, I knew Prashant personally. He was my brother's closest friend, a vibrant young man who reached out to the system for help. The mental health system failed him, as it continues to fail so many young people across this province.

The Tiwari family has been seeking justice, and hoping for answers to prevent future tragedies here in our hospitals, but have been unable to get a court date due to a backlog of cases in our courthouse in Brampton and across the GTA.

Does the Premier understand what it means to families like Prashant's to wait for years and years to access justice?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Attorney General to reply.

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you to the member from Brampton Centre for highlighting this challenge. The member from Mississauga Centre had previously brought it to my attention as well. It is a troubling situation. Obviously, I can't comment on individual situations.

But I can comment on the state of the courts as we inherited them from the previous government. It is a terrible situation, and we are working hard every day to fix it. The Brampton courthouse is a good example, where we are close to finishing the construction to open up more courtrooms to create more capacity.

I talk every day with justice stakeholders, and I'm meeting with the Chief Justice again tomorrow to talk about a variety of issues just like this. Victims and families and those who are impacted by our system need to get the service that they deserve, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to speaking more with you in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary? The member for Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Back to the Premier: Nearly seven years ago, Prashant Tiwari was taken from us. He was under suicide watch at Brampton Civic when he took his life. He was only 20 years old.

For nearly seven years, his family has been asking, "How could this happen?" How could he take his life when he was at a hospital, when he was supposed to be safe and protected? To get the answers and justice they deserve, the Prashant family has taken the matter to court.

Prashant was my friend. He was a special young man. He was an amazing athlete and a passionate artist who was wise beyond his years.

All the family wants is to have their day in court. But because of the backlog in our justice system, there are literally no days available. They are waiting and waiting,

to no end. Prashant's family is here today in the assembly. They deserve to have their case heard.

Premier, justice delayed is justice denied. Will you act now to address the backlog in our justice system so that this family and the many other families that are waiting don't have to wait any longer?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: I'd like to thank the member for the question, the comment and the background.

It is true that justice delayed is justice denied. It is something that troubles me. It's something that we've been working on from the moment we got elected, and it's something we know impacts every member of society, especially in a situation like this, a very tragic situation, and we know we can do better.

We know the system needs to be modernized, needs to be updated. We need more capacity. We need to use the resources we have properly. I'm open to any ideas that members may have or the public may have. We're working every day to make the system work better and fix what was left behind to just decay, quite frankly, and it's shameful that the previous government let that happen.

ONTARIO FILM AND
TELEVISION INDUSTRY

INDUSTRIE ONTARIENNE DU FILM
ET DE LA TÉLÉVISION

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines and Indigenous Affairs. The film and television industry knows the north is a prime destination for productions, making significant contributions to Ontario's economy. We are increasingly recognized as a destination of choice because we have the infrastructure needed for high-quality film and television productions.

Can the minister tell us about the significant investment he made in the Sudbury film industry just last week?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I was so excited to be back in Sudbury last week, and especially at Science North. I want a shout-out for Guy Labine and the extraordinary work he does at Science North. It's no longer Sudbury north—as we had made a pact a number of years ago to ensure that the amazing things that go on there tweak the curiosity of kids all across northern Ontario, and they've done that.

We were there on that day to announce more than \$8.5 million in 12 local productions—season 5 of Letterkenny; the children's very popular French television series *Amélie et Compagnie*; and Science North's production of Jane Goodall's *Reasons for Hope* IMAX film.

Ontario is home to Hollywood blockbusters and Oscar and Emmy award-winning films. We especially appreciate the great work that's being done in Sudbury, North Bay and Canadore College, producing an amazing platform to celebrate northern Ontario's heritage in film and television production. Way to go, Sudbury, North Bay and Canadore College.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you, Minister, for the answer.

Included in the \$8.5-million investment was \$1.6 million for TFO and Carte Blanche Films to produce seasons 3 and 4 of the French-language children's television series *Amélie et Compagnie*.

It also included an investment in Cinéfest, the Sudbury film festival, for the 32nd Cinéfest Sudbury International Film Festival in September of this year.

Can the minister tell us the importance of these French-language investments?

L'hon. Greg Rickford: J'apprécie cette question. Appuyer les industries des arts et de la culture dans le Nord s'inscrit dans le cadre du plan du gouvernement visant à bâtir l'Ontario ensemble. Ce plan permet déjà de créer un plus grand nombre d'emplois bien rémunérés et de débouchés dans la production et la postproduction au cinéma et à la télévision et d'attirer des investissements nouveaux et accrus pour que les collectivités du Nord puissent croître et prospérer, notamment pour Sudbury et North Bay, où ce secteur est en plein essor.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: My question's to the Premier. This government wants to pretend that their cuts to education this year had no impact on the classroom. Well, try to tell that to Lauren, a student in my riding who, thanks to Conservative cuts, had her grade 12 biology class, a class that she needs to graduate and get into university, become unavailable this year. When she asked her school what she should do, the options were night school or drop out.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely appalling that students have had courses that they need to graduate cancelled, and this is the state of affairs that the government wants to continue going forward.

When will this government apologize for using students like Lauren as pawns in their war against our public school system?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The aim of the government continues to be to get a deal. It is why, today, we're before three of our labour partners to drive finality to over 300 days of negotiating so that students can stay in class. That's our obligation to every student in this province, and our hope, in this negotiation, is to advance a good deal for students, one that ensures that classroom sizes remain effectively frozen in both elementary and in high school; a plan that will see more monies flowing for special education—100%—to support those with the greatest needs in our schools. It is a plan that ensures that merit guides hiring in Ontario. Overall, we believe this is a plan that will ensure students succeed, get ahead and get access to good jobs in the future.

1130

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

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: The Conservatives think that their plan to kick kids out of the classroom and onto the Internet will replace the teachers that have been fired so far. But again, students like Lauren have found exactly the opposite has happened.

She tried to sign up for an online course to replace her biology class, despite biology labs being almost impossible to complete online, but it turns out that even those online classes were unavailable, thanks to course cancellations and class-size changes.

Again to the Premier: When gifted students like Lauren are struggling with online learning, why did this government ever think that forcing these programs onto every student was a good idea?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. If I may provide an update on the Toronto District School Board: They provided their staffing information just two days ago based on the new provincialized average of 23. What Toronto District School Board said is that staffing decisions will have no fiscal impact to the board at 23, there will be a projected increase of 21 secondary teaching positions as a consequence, and there is not expected to be losses of secondary school programs and course offerings for students. So I just want to make sure that that part makes it into the debate.

What I would also assert to the member opposite—that's for 2021—the bottom line is our aim remains today with three of our federation partners to get a deal to keep kids in class and advance a program that works well for parents, that freezes classroom sizes, that gives an opt-out for online learning, that ensures special-ed funding continues to flow for those with the greatest needs. It is a good plan, and the time is now to get it done.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Norman Miller: My question is for the Minister of Finance.

Many families are worried about the high cost of child care, especially through the summer. My riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka is home to many great summer camps where kids have the chance to explore and enjoy the outdoors. For example, for 90 years now, the YWCA's Camp Tapawingo near Parry Sound has been providing enriching and rewarding camping experiences for young girls.

For many parents, camps are more than just learning experiences for their kids; they are also necessary forms of child care that allow parents to continue to work while school is out.

Can the minister inform the House how our plan to build Ontario together is working to make child care, including summer camps, in Ontario more affordable?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member: Thank you to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for that question.

Our plan to build Ontario together is making life more affordable to the tune of \$3 billion of relief this year.

We're providing relief to those who need it most, including 300,000 low- and middle-income families who will be eligible for up to \$1,250 per child, on average, in terms of relief for child care expenses.

By doing so, we're letting those parents make the choice about the best child care option for their family. That does include, as the member pointed out, summer camps and other very, very effective means for parents to seek child care.

In addition, we're also investing \$1 billion over the next five years to create 30,000 new child care spaces. It's all part of our government's pragmatic plan to make Ontarian families have a more affordable life and to build Ontario together.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I'm happy to hear that our government is providing relief in the form of the child care tax credit for parents across the province. I'm proud our government is focused on putting more money back into the pockets of Ontario's hard-working families.

I'm also pleased to hear that summer camp costs are eligible for the CARE tax credit. Summer camps provide not only great experience for campers, but good summer jobs for young people.

Can the minister please elaborate on how our government is making it easier for parents to afford child care?

Hon. Rod Phillips: The member is absolutely right. We are leaving more money in the pockets of Ontarians every day because it's the right thing to do. As a result of our balanced and prudent approach to managing the public's finances, we're able to do that while we still invest in vital services like health care, education, transit and roads.

We're also keeping more money in the pockets of low-income Ontarians, saving them up to \$850, for 1.1 million Ontarians starting this year. We're helping entrepreneurs grow the economy, with \$5.4 billion for those job creators, so that they can grow this economy and keep it going. Our plan is already making a difference. As I mentioned already, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that Ontario is now on a fiscally sustainable course. This is what our plan to build Ontario together is all about.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the city of Ottawa said that the P3 private consortium operating its failing LRT system deserves a "kick in the pants." That's because, after opening only six months ago, Ottawa's new LRT has been saddled with problem after problem after problem.

Ottawa city council is sending a notice of default to the P3 group because, unlike what Ottawa was promised, the LRT wasn't built on time and certainly hasn't been built on budget. The city has spent countless dollars to bring in relief buses while transit users struggle to get where they're going on time.

Why, given all the evidence that the P3 is a substantial failure, would this government continue to ignore our call for a moratorium on P3s until the Auditor General has done a review?

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

Hon. Laurie Scott: I thank the member opposite for the question.

As I've said in the Legislature many times, Ontario is making the largest investment in infrastructure that has ever occurred before: \$144 billion over 10 years. Using P3s enables us to build the critical infrastructure that our municipalities and everyone in our province wants. I've said before, since 2005, Infrastructure Ontario has built 125 projects worth over \$100 billion.

So I say to the member opposite: Does she not want roads? Does she not want transit? Does she not want schools? Does she not want correctional facilities? Does she not want justice systems built? Does she not want subways built? Because we're about building them.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes question period for this morning.

I understand the member for Timmins has a point of order. I would ask the House to come to order so I can hear it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise on a point of order under standing order section 25. In response to the Leader of the Opposition, the Attorney General rose today and claimed that a memorandum of understanding with the Human Rights Commission was signed in February. We have checked with the Human Rights Commission. That is not the case. There has been no signed document, and the member should withdraw his comment and apologize.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Could I please have an opportunity to respond? It's not a valid point of order in this case.

Do you have another point of order?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I have a second point of order—but I know I can't challenge you. We'll leave it at that at this point.

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN HOUSE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I stand in regard to standing order 22. Standing order 22 says, "The use of laptops, tablets and smart phones is permitted in the chamber and committee rooms provided they are operated silently, do not impair decorum"—and it goes on to say—"and are not used as a telephone, recording device, camera or prop." Earlier today, during question period, the member from Brantford-Brant was recording members of my caucus or filming with his camera or recording with his telephone what was going on on this side of the House. I ask you to bring this member under control and that he delete whatever he's done over here.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins is absolutely correct in his contention that standing order 22—and I'll repeat it for all members: "The use of laptops, tablets and smart phones is permitted in the chamber and committee rooms provided they are operated silently, do not impair decorum and are not used as a telephone, recording device, camera or prop." That's a new standing order that the House has adopted.

There has been a suggestion made that the member for Brantford–Brant has used his phone inappropriately. I'm going to ask him if he wishes to comment on the point of order.

Mr. Will Bouma: Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the standing orders. I would not do that with my mobile device, and if I left anyone with that impression, I apologize profusely.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The member for Hamilton Mountain must withdraw her unparliamentary comment.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Chair has to assume that all members are honourable. But I hope I've made myself abundantly clear reading the standing order and that all members understand it for future reference.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 75, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 156, An Act to protect Ontario's farms and farm animals from trespassers and other forms of interference and to prevent contamination of Ontario's food supply.

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

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1146.

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

On March 10, 2020, Mr. Calandra moved government notice of motion number 75, relating to allocation of time on Bill 156, An Act to protect Ontario's farms and farm animals from trespassers and other forms of interference and to prevent contamination of Ontario's food supply.

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

Ayes

Baber, Roman	Hogarth, Christine	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Jones, Sylvia	Rickford, Greg
Bailey, Robert	Kanapathi, Logan	Roberts, Jeremy
Barrett, Toby	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Romano, Ross
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Ke, Vincent	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Kramp, Daryl	Sandhu, Amarjot
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova, Natalia	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Stan	Lece, Stephen	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Skelly, Donna
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave
Crawford, Stephen	McDonnell, Jim	Smith, Todd

Cuzzetto, Rudy	McKenna, Jane	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	Miller, Norman	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	Nicholls, Rick	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Elliott, Christine	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Pang, Billy	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fee, Amy	Park, Lindsey	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Parsa, Michael	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Pettapiece, Randy	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Phillips, Rod	Yakubuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Piccini, David	

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

Nays

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	Hunter, Mitzie	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bisson, Gilles	Karpoche, Bhutla	Tabuns, Peter
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Fraser, John	Miller, Paul	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gates, Wayne	Morrison, Suze	Yarde, Kevin
Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 62; the nays are 38.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1500.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I invite members to introduce their guests, I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: a report entitled Long-Term Budget Outlook: 2020-2050, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to welcome two students from Western University, in London, to the House this afternoon. I had the pleasure of visiting with Lily Yuan, a second-year medical student, and Tamsen Long, a second-year international relations and women's studies student. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I again would like to introduce and welcome two students from Western University: Fatima Amir and Erin McAdam. They're here today visiting with us around what women do here at Queen's Park and the great work that we contribute to. Welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STRENGTHENING HUMAN RIGHTS IN ONTARIO ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 RENFORÇANT LE CODE DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE EN ONTARIO

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 183, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to measures to strengthen the Ontario Human Rights Commission's independence / Projet de loi 183, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui concerne des mesures visant à renforcer l'indépendance de la Commission ontarienne des droits de la personne.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would like to invite the Leader of the Opposition to briefly explain her bill.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you kindly, Speaker. The private member's bill I'm introducing strengthens the independence of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

The commission is there to protect people's rights and prevent discrimination. The legislation affirms that the Ontario Human Rights Commission is independent and free from government interference, in keeping with the Paris Principles adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993.

It also embeds the memorandum of understanding between the Attorney General and the Ontario Human Rights Commission within the Human Rights Code so that the OHRC does not have to rely on the will of any government to function independently and impartially.

CHERRY HILL ORCHARDS PELHAM LIMITED ACT, 2020

Mr. Oosterhoff moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr23, An Act to revive Cherry Hill Orchards Pelham Limited.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Claude Duguay from Val Caron in my riding for this petition, "Till Death Do Us Part.

"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;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To direct the Minister of Long-Term Care to pass Bill 153 and provide seniors with the right to live together as they age."

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

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the good people of White River for the following petition.

"Fix the Northern Health Travel Grant.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Northern Health Travel Grant is supposed to even the playing field so all Ontarians can get the medical care they need, but is failing too many northern families;

"Whereas successive Conservative and Liberal governments have let northerners down by failing to make health care accessible in the north;

"Whereas not all costs are covered, and reimbursement amounts are small compared to the actual costs, northern families are forced to pay out of pocket to access health care, which is a barrier for seniors and low-income working families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fix the Northern Health Travel Grant so we can ensure more people get the care they need, when they need it."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and present it to page Paige to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: This petition is "Fix the Northern Health Travel Grant," from the good people of Atikokan and Kakabeka.

"Whereas the Northern Health Travel Grant is supposed to even the playing field so all Ontarians can get the medical care they need, but is failing too many northern families;

"Whereas successive Conservative and Liberal governments have let northerners down by failing to make health care accessible in the north;

"Whereas not all costs are covered, and reimbursement amounts are small compared to the actual costs, northern families are forced to pay out of pocket to access health

care, which is a barrier for seniors and low-income working families;”

Therefore, “We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fix the Northern Health Travel Grant so we can ensure more people get the care they need, when they need it.”

I will sign this petition and give it to page Hamza to bring to the Clerks’ desk.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

“Get Transit Projects Done Petition....

“Whereas many Ontarians are looking to their government to demonstrate a real commitment to delivering transit faster for the people in the greater Toronto area, reducing congestion, and connecting people to places and jobs; and

“Whereas everyone can recognize that there is an increasing demand for safe and reliable transportation options; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto has agreed to partner with Ontario to remain committed to removing roadblocks, engage local residents and businesses, as well as Indigenous communities; and

“Whereas Ontario deserves public transit that is more attractive, safe, affordable, and low-stress;

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

“Help deliver Ontario’s four priority subway projects on time and on budget by proceeding as expediently as possible to pass Bill 171, Building Transit Faster Act, 2020, so that:

“(1) hearings of necessity for expropriations of property along the transit corridors if the expropriations are for the purpose of the transit are eliminated;

“(2) a mechanism is created by which utility companies may be required to remove utility infrastructure, if necessary for the transit;

“(3) municipal service and right-of-way access may be required to be provided for the transit, with the process being based around negotiation, with the possibility for an order if negotiation fails.”

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I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker. I will be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Finnegan to pass to the table.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition entitled “Support the Nancy Rose Act—Paediatric Hospice Palliative Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for children with serious or life-limiting illness, a palliative approach to care can increase quality of life and decrease their pain and suffering;

“Whereas there is currently no comprehensive, coordinated and funded provincial strategy to address paediatric palliative and hospice care;

“Whereas the Nancy Rose Act would require the province to develop a strategy with the goal of increasing access to paediatric palliative and hospice care across Ontario;

“Whereas the strategy contained in the Nancy Rose Act would include targeted supports for families of children receiving palliative care, including mental health supports and respite;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Nancy Rose Act and call for all-party support.”

I fully endorse the petition, will affix my name and will be giving to page Paige to take to the table.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Billy Pang: This petition is named “Get Transit Projects Done.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many Ontarians are looking to their government to demonstrate a real commitment to delivering transit faster for the people in the greater Toronto area, reducing congestion, and connecting people to places and jobs; and

“Whereas everyone can recognize that there is an increasing demand for safe and reliable transportation options; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto has agreed to partner with Ontario to remain committed to removing roadblocks, engage local residents and businesses, as well as Indigenous communities; and

“Whereas Ontario deserves public transit that is more attractive, safe, affordable, and low-stress;

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

“Help deliver Ontario’s four priority subway projects on time and on budget by proceeding as expediently as possible to pass Bill 171, Building Transit Faster Act, 2020, so that:

“(1) Hearings of necessity for expropriations of property along the transit corridors if the expropriations are for the purpose of the transit are eliminated;

“(2) A mechanism is created by which utility companies may be required to remove utility infrastructure, if necessary for the transit;

“(3) Municipal service and right of way access may be required to be provided for the transit, with the process being based around negotiation, with the possibility for an order if negotiation fails.”

I support this petition, I affix my name to it and give it to page Abbey.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to present this petition on behalf of the Domander family, including Andrea, Erik and their son, Henrik. It reads:

“Support Ontario Families with Autism.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and give it to page Giselle to deliver to the Clerks.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to present this petition on behalf of Progress Toronto. I have signatures here from all across the GTA, and especially a lot from Etobicoke. It reads as follows:

“Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly: Invest in the Schools Our Students Deserve. Stop the Cuts!

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government has announced over \$1 billion in funding cuts to our schools, which will result in bigger class sizes in grades 4 to 12; significantly less support for the most vulnerable students, including those with disabilities, special needs, and English-language learners; mandatory e-learning for high school students; and cuts to badly needed school repairs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose these damaging cuts and implement:

“(1) Full funding to our public education system at existing levels, and no mandatory e-learning for any students;

“(2) An education funding formula that (a) increases support for special education; (b) reduces class sizes in kindergarten and grades 4 to 12; and (c) increases capacity to deliver front-line services by paraprofessionals;

“(3) An Ontario-wide state of good repair standard for all public schools so they are safe, healthy, well-maintained buildings that provide environments conducive to learning and working;

“(4) An evidence-based review of the education funding formula every five years to determine its effectiveness in supporting high-quality public education.”

I couldn’t be happier to affix my signature to this petition. I’ll hand it to page Nathan to table with the Clerks.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’d like to read this petition. Its subject is post-secondary education.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly” as follows:

“—provide more grants, not loans;

“—eliminate tuition fees for all students;

“—increase public funding for public education;

“—protect students’ independent voices; and

“—defend the right to organize.”

I fully support this petition, sign it and give it to page Paige to deliver to the table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition from the ODSP Action Coalition.

“Petition on Proposed Changes to Social Assistance from ODSP Action Coalition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas on November 22, 2018, Minister MacLeod announced proposed reforms to Ontario’s social assistance programs, including changing the ODSP definition of ‘disability’ to align ‘more closely with federal government guidelines’;

“Whereas federal definitions of disability as outlined in the Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD) and the disability tax credit (DTC), have a much narrower definition of disability than the current ODSP definition, with more than five in 10 first-time CPP disability applicants being denied;

“Whereas aligning the ODSP definition with federal guidelines will mean that many more Ontarians with episodic or periodic disabilities, such as certain cancer treatments or mental illnesses, will be denied crucial supports and forced onto Ontario Works, which provides a maximum of only \$733 per month;

“Whereas Minister MacLeod also proposed on November 22, 2018, to increase the clawback rates on earned income in ODSP and OW from 50% to 75%, once exemption thresholds are met;

“Whereas the proposed increase to clawback rates from 50% to 75%, once income exemption thresholds have been met, will only serve to discourage recipients from seeking earnings beyond the exemption threshold, irrespective of the threshold amount;

“Whereas a \$14 minimum wage job with a 75% clawback on earnings effectively translates to working for \$3.50 per hour, which is hardly an incentive and grossly undervalues the labour of recipients;

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

“Keep the current definition of disability in ODSP. Keep the clawback rates for ODSP and OW at 50% maximum once income thresholds have been met, irrespective of the threshold amount.”

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

AUTISM TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Gwen and Ben Levac from my riding for those petitions. It reads as follows:

“Whereas every autistic child in Ontario deserves access to evidence-based therapy so that they can meet their” full “potential;

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“Whereas the capped funding system is based on age and not the clinical needs of the child;

“Whereas the program does not ensure access to services for rural and francophone children;

“Whereas the new Ontario Autism Program does not provide additional funding for travel costs;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows: “to direct the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to ensure access to ... equitable, needs-based autism services for all children who need them.”

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLY ACT, 2020

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2020

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 181, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020 / Projet de loi 181, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2020.

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, as President of the Treasury Board, I rise today to talk about the Supply Act for the 2019-20 fiscal year. This discussion and the vote that will follow are critical steps to approve spending

for the year, which ends in just three weeks, on March 31. While the Supply Act is a procedural step in the province's annual fiscal cycle, I want to use this opportunity to take stock of what we've done, where we are and what we are going to do.

Before anything else, though, I want to remind members that this bill does not propose any new spending; it merely approves spending that has already occurred and that was already outlined in the expenditure estimates. Members will recall that the Legislature gave its concurrence to the 2019-20 estimates on March 5 of this year, and that allowed us to move on to the Supply Act, where we find ourselves today. Passage of the Supply Act signifies the final agreement of the House with the expenditure estimates proposed by the government, including the supplementary estimates tabled in December 2019.

That's not all that it signifies, Mr. Speaker. This Supply Act authorizes nearly \$150 billion in spending. It is, in the truest sense, 150 billion reasons we need to do better. That's why I want to bring some facts to the Legislature, and that requires our attention. It is still the largest subsovereign debt load in the entire world, and both our provincial debt and the deficit divert resources away from the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, you may not be surprised to realize that we're spending \$400 a second on interest payments to our creditors on this debt. That's \$1 billion a month that could be spent elsewhere.

Here's a question that you should ask yourself: Although the previous Liberal government doubled the debt over the last 15 years in power, did they double the quality of health care in their system? Did they cut your daily commute in half? Did they make life more affordable for you? The answer is no, Mr. Speaker—not even close. What a shameful legacy.

The good news is that our government has a plan, and our plan is working. Through discipline and perseverance, we've reduced the \$15-billion deficit we inherited from the Liberals to a \$9-billion deficit in 2019. While bringing down deficits or paying off debt are not just ends unto themselves, they are necessary to ensure that the people of Ontario have access to the front-line services that they deserve.

Bien que la réduction du déficit ou le remboursement de la dette ne soient pas seulement une fin en soi, ces mesures sont nécessaires pour s'assurer que la population de l'Ontario a accès aux services de première ligne dont elle a besoin et qu'elle mérite.

Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard, and that hard work is getting noticed. Two weeks ago, the Parliamentary Budget Officer released his report on fiscal sustainability across the country, and for the first time since the PBO started monitoring Ontario's fiscal situation, the province's finances are now sustainable for the long term. What's more, according to the PBO, this comes as a result of changes that started in 2018. That means, Mr. Speaker, that our government is directly responsible for Ontario's improved fiscal outlook.

Also, the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario today released a forward-looking assessment of the province's

fiscal sustainability, and wouldn't you know it, they too are telling the people of Ontario that the province is now financially sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition has consistently maligned our government's concern with the fiscal health of our province, but again, here are the facts. Both the federal, non-partisan Parliamentary Budget Officer as well as the independent Financial Accountability Office of Ontario have confirmed what our government and the people have known all along: Ontario's finances were a mess under the previous Liberal government, and their spending was unsustainable. Our government, a responsible fiscal steward, is busy at work fixing the mistakes.

But these accomplishments are only as good as they last. Governments and politicians come and go; our dedication to build a strong fiscal foundation for our children and their children will not. It should endure the test of time. That is why we are changing the culture of government for now and the future. This will guarantee that our successes become long-lasting practices that benefit the people of Ontario for generations to come, and we are changing that culture through smarter spending and smarter government.

Mr. Speaker, in the past year, we've introduced a number of measures that change the way the government thinks and acts. Since it's March, I'd like to highlight one of those that is my favourite. As many of you know, for years government ministries practised wasteful spending at the end of the fiscal year. It's what I like to call March madness, and it's a bad practice. As I announced last June, by limiting this and other end-of-year discretionary spending, we generated \$153 million in savings. That's why again I'm reminding ministries to limit end-of-year spending this year. What's more, we put these limits in place earlier than usual so that March madness doesn't turn into free-for-all February. By staying on top of these measures, we are creating positive changes in the culture of government that directly benefit the people of Ontario.

But it doesn't end there. I recently announced the creation of the Office of the Comptroller General and the formalization of an enterprise-wide risk management directive. Across my 30-year career in banking and the financial sector, enterprise risk management has always been a best practice in the private sector. It is a process that strengthens an organization's ability to forecast and mitigate risk by improving the internal oversight of all decision-making. It also helps the many departments within an organization. In our case, ministries coordinate their activities to ensure the best possible outcomes.

Imagine my surprise when I became President of the Treasury Board and realized just how far behind the times the government of Ontario was: outdated, rigid and short-sighted. That's the system, Mr. Speaker, we inherited, and that's simply unacceptable. Sadly, it's just another glaring example of Liberal mismanagement. This is why our government is so busy and why this work is so important. As a result, the people of Ontario can expect improved services, better value for their money and smarter government.

C'est la raison pour laquelle notre gouvernement s'est occupé de ce travail si important. La population de l'Ontario peut donc s'attendre à des services améliorés, à l'optimisation des ressources et à un gouvernement plus efficace.

Shortly after our government was elected, we commissioned EY Canada to conduct a line-by-line review across the whole of government to see what was really going on. That report highlighted a number of areas where Ontario lagged behind comparable jurisdictions, and they provided suggestions to tackle those issues. We've also invested significant time listening to the people of Ontario, and we continue to do so.

Both the EY report and the feedback we heard served as the foundation for our plan for smarter government, which is being implemented through our smart initiatives.

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I'm immensely proud to tell the Legislature that there are simply too many initiatives to list them all here today, but, Mr. Speaker, let me highlight two of them. I'll start with what we're calling Digital First. No matter what community you visit in our province, you'll find that we live online. We think our government should live there too. It's time to embrace technology to make life easier while protecting jobs and creating new ones. By improving our government's digital platforms, we will ensure Ontarians can do everything—from renewing their driver's licence online to using an up-to-date payroll calculator to speaking with a doctor—quickly, error-free, with ease, and all from the comfort of your home, because we know that every transaction online means one less person in line. But these changes don't mean digital only. We are keeping in-person services available for those who want them or those who need them.

This morning, I met with stakeholders to discuss another one of our smart initiatives: centralized procurement. The Ontario government spends approximately \$29 billion every year to buy goods and services from thousands of providers, and yet every week, Ontario families buy in bulk to save money. Why can't government do the same thing? From pencils to pacemakers, a modern and fully integrated procurement system will help drive savings of an estimated \$1 billion a year.

This isn't difficult to do, Mr. Speaker. For example, the Ontario public service is on track to save an estimated \$80 million over a decade by purchasing mobile phones across all ministries. In addition to savings, these changes foster innovation by creating new points of access to government procurement for all businesses in the province. Whether you are a large Toronto manufacturer or a small start-up in northern Ontario, our government is open for business.

In conclusion, today's Supply Act represents nearly \$150 billion in expenditures. Remember, this is money that the government has already spent. We are not debating new spending. But that \$150 billion was 150 billion opportunities for smarter spending and smarter government. While our government made good use of those opportunities, there is always more to be done.

Ces 150 milliards de dollars représentent 150 milliards de possibilités pour dépenser de façon stratégique et obtenir un gouvernement plus efficace. Bien que le gouvernement ait fait bon usage de ces possibilités, il est toujours possible d'en faire plus.

That is why we need a change to the culture of government and why we are changing that culture of government.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thanks to the President of the Treasury Board for his report.

I would like to say, though, with all due respect, your plan is not working. It is not working. It's not working for working people. It's not working for low-income families. It's certainly not working for women in the province of Ontario. With all due respect, you need to look closely at your plan.

While the President of the Treasury Board likes to say that there is no new spending, I think what we are going to focus on in this report is the \$6.5 billion that this government is spending to prop up the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan despite the fact that hydro rates are going up in this province. The other thing that we want to make sure that we look at is the increased amount of tax breaks that this government is spending on. Despite what they're saying—that they are not spending—they're spending big, just not on the things that matter to the people of Ontario.

I will just tell you that while they want to pretend that their budget is not having impacts on everyday families, we see time and time again—we hear the stories in this House, in our constituency offices—that these cuts that this government has imposed are hurting families. We don't need a parliamentary budget officer, with all due respect, and we don't need the President of the Treasury Board to tell us that life is getting harder and more expensive. People know it. They just know it. They don't need to look at the numbers.

But I will say, thanks to the FAO and thanks to the third-quarter expenditures, we have now the numbers, the facts, that verify people's lived experience that things are getting tougher for them and are getting more difficult.

Under the third-quarter expenses, we see, despite a budget that focused on austerity and cuts, that you're spending half of what is already budgeted. You're underspending in almost all the programs and services that matter to the people of Ontario, including shamefully spending 50% less than what is being budgeted for the autism file. Make no mistake: The impacts that your cuts are having are hurting people in the province of Ontario.

I mentioned tax breaks. I would like to just first say that we see, time and time again, whether it's the Liberals or the Conservatives—I think they had this anticipation that we were just going to sign off on their spending bill without providing any real details. That has been my experience as the finance critic: It's really difficult to get hard numbers to really do our job as legislators, to be the keepers or the overseers of the public purse. It has been a very difficult experience.

I hear from people that have been in the House for a long time that it has been even more difficult with the Ford

Conservative government to try to get straight answers. We don't get to see the tax breaks of this government's spending very clearly. But it needs to be perfectly, clearly stated to the people of the province of Ontario that this government is spending \$44.5 billion on tax deductions, on tax relief. That's \$44.5 billion. That's a lot of money. That would be something that you would think that, as legislators, we should have some oversight on to understand if they are efficient and who these tax benefits are going to. To put it in perspective, compared to spending on programs like health, tax breaks are the second-highest expenditure. It comes right after health. So this is a huge file. As legislators, we have a responsibility to understand the impact of this huge amount of spending.

Despite having such a huge budget line and having such a big impact on the programming and money being taken away that is now not able to be spent on programs that people depend on, through the supply bill that is before us today we only get to look at 3% of those expenditures. When we look at those 3%, maybe it does give us an opportunity to understand precisely where that other 97%, or \$43 billion, in spending goes to. Because we don't get clear oversight, we need to rely on some of the independent officers of the Legislature. I guess we do have the Financial Accountability Officer to thank for an analysis that helps us to understand where these tax breaks are going and how they are impacting the budget of the province of Ontario. The numbers tell the story. They're an independent officer, and the numbers show very clearly who this Ford government is really working for, because their big tax spending cuts are not benefiting everyone.

Not only are they not benefiting everybody; these tax breaks are actually growing faster than any other program. They're growing at 4.8%—that's, in many cases, double or triple the growth in any other program—when we are in the House daily hearing about having to cap the wages of public sector workers at 1%, we know that the health care sector is so underfunded, we know that we have underfunded the health care sector to a rate of less than inflation, and we know from the budget that the per-student funding in our public education system is going down, and all of this at a time where what is going up is spending on tax benefits.

I wish I could tell you that the tax benefits that we are spending all of our hard-earned tax dollars on are benefiting everyone, but that is not the case. The evidence is quite clear that these tax benefits benefit the highest income earners in the province of Ontario the most. The top 20% of Ontario families receive over 75% of these tax benefits. The \$45 billion that we're spending on tax breaks: 75% of those benefits are going to the top 20% of households in the province of Ontario. That's not, in any regard, an equal distribution of our tax dollars. If we compare the numbers to what I would call middle income earners, which would be most of the people of the province of Ontario—middle income earners are getting 14% of the benefits. So 14% of that \$45 billion is going to us middle-class people, the working people of Ontario, but 75% are going to the highest income earners in the province of Ontario. It really is

something that is remarkable, in that, when you look at the numbers, it's a stark reminder of who this government is working for. When we look at the highest income earners in the province of Ontario, on average, their tax relief is \$5,660. But if you compare that to a middle income earner, they'll get \$1,823. It's almost three times more compared to what working-class people in Ontario are receiving from this government.

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A question I have—and I'm sure it's a question that most people in Ontario have—is, how is this acceptable? How is this acceptable that average everyday families are struggling to pay their increasing hydro bill, struggling with a housing crisis in the province of Ontario and struggling to access health care—particularly now with the COVID-19, there's a concern that our hallways are crowded. Everyday Ontarians are struggling, and how is it acceptable that those on lower incomes and middle-class incomes are paying the tax breaks for the highest income earners in the province of Ontario? My answer is that it's not acceptable; it's not acceptable.

We know that people are paying for these tax cuts with cuts to the services they rely on. We know. The numbers tell us. Education, health care, long-term care, child care—this is how we're paying for these tax cuts, and it's the people who most rely on it, the hard-working Ontarians who are being disproportionately damaged by this government's focus on making sure that tax breaks go to the wealthiest.

We have seen a Premier and a government that clearly wants to make sure that life is easier for friends and acquaintances and connections. We've seen cushy appointments time and time again, and that galls the people of Ontario. But when they see this, when they see how their tax dollars are also accruing to the highest income earners of the province, I can imagine that their dissatisfaction with this government will only continue to grow. As I said, the people of Ontario are struggling, and it's disproportionately the working-class, low-income earners who are struggling with the policy decisions and the fiscal decisions of this government.

But I would like to say that it's not only the middle-class folks or low-income earners who are not benefiting from the decisions of the government, the people who are really struggling; I would have to say that this government's record when it comes to women in the province of Ontario is shameful. There's really no other word to describe it.

Women in this province, since this government has taken office, have really taken a direct hit. I would like to believe that it's unintentional, that it's just really an unintentional consequence of this government not listening to other people, not taking gender analysis into account, but the spending decisions that are reflected in this supply bill that's before us, the spending decisions in this supply bill, have had a direct impact on women.

We've seen cuts, through the supply bill, to sexual assault centres. We've seen millions and millions of dollars taken from sexual assault centres. We have seen significant cuts

to legal aid so women who are looking for access to housing tribunals and women who have violence against women issues are now finding it even more difficult to access services because of the cuts that are reflected in the supply bill that's before us right now.

This government has attacked key legislation for women, like back-to-work legislation, which predominantly impacts women. Bill 47, this government's first act, was an end to the minimum wage increase. Women are predominantly low-income workers or minimum wage earners. This government put an end to equal pay for equal work. For precarious workers, again, we know from the evidence that women are predominantly in precarious work or sessional work. We also know that it's not just women. We know that racialized women, newcomer women and immigrant women will be directly impacted by this.

We've seen 15 years of Liberal government with no real or meaningful laws on pay equity. They had every chance—15 years—to implement meaningful pay equity legislation, and they did nothing. Near the end of their term, they came up with the Pay Transparency Act. Feeble as this was, this government even scrapped that. The first thing you did was scrap the Pay Transparency Act. Even the smallest, weakest protection that women could expect from this government was one of the first things that you decided to scrap.

Bill 124, which is now being challenged in court as being unconstitutional, was an attack on public sector workers. This government wants all public sector workers to take a 1% wage cap at a time when their tax breaks are 4.8%. At a time when we see all the government spending on things that matter to them, they want to cap public sector workers at 1%. But who are our public sector workers?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Women.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Our public sector workers are women. Some 70% of our public sector workers, our education workers, are women. So this bill, Bill 124, is a direct hit on women who are working full-time, full-year, trying to look after their families, to put food on the table for their families, and whether this government understood it or not, I'm here to tell you—you're hearing it from me—that this bill is a setback. It's a significant attack on women's ability to make a living and to build a decent life in the province of Ontario.

This government needs to take a gendered analysis to the legislation that they put forward. I cannot believe—and I would like to give them the benefit of the doubt—that if the government understood how negatively, how disproportionately this impacts women in the province, that you wouldn't take a second crack at it.

So let me implore you that when the spring budget comes up, I'm hoping to see that some of the policy changes, the cuts, the legislation that you've introduced that has made life more difficult for women—I'm hoping that you are going to roll some of that back. It's something that we're going to be looking for on this side of the House, and believe me, women in the province of Ontario do not look favourably on this government and on the things that you have done to make their life more difficult.

I would have to say that the pay gap in Ontario is one of the reasons that women struggle in this province. We have seen no meaningful progress in closing the pay gap in the province of Ontario. I mean, 30 years of us looking at this, and we're not even coming close. In fact, in the last 10 years, the ability to close the pay gap has stagnated.

For those of you that may not understand what we're talking about, we're talking about women that work full-time, full-year, in the exact same position as men who are earning on average 70 cents less than men in this province. How is that fair? How is this not something that this government would like to take into account?

Whether the government wants to do this because they think it's the right thing to do—I would also just like to suggest that it's something that would be good for the economy. There are billions of dollars in GDP that are being lost, because women's work is undervalued and because women's work is underpaid. So if you are looking to grow your revenue, which I would suggest you might want to do, there is a place you might want to start.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It worked in Quebec.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It worked in Quebec, apparently. See? And their economy is actually on fire, despite what the Premier might say.

The Attorney General today had some interesting things to say about the Human Rights Tribunal. We have seen this government scrap the pay transparency legislation, but what we have also seen is this government's lack of support, shall I put it, for the midwives of the province of Ontario. The previous Liberal government also undervalued the midwives in the province of Ontario.

The College of Midwives's funding is cut, as reflected in the supply bill here. You cut the funding to the College of Midwives. But finally, the Association of Ontario Midwives had an overwhelming, clear ruling from the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario. That is an order that asks the government to end the gender pay gap for midwives. It's quite clear. There was a landmark decision from the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, and the Ford government was ordered to take concrete actions to end the gender pay gap that midwives are experiencing as a result of the Ministry of Health's discriminatory actions. These are midwives, people who bring our children into the world—predominantly women—yet, when that ruling came down from the Human Rights Tribunal, this government didn't immediately accept it.

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It is my understanding, from the Attorney General, that they are reviewing, considering, taking midwives—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Appealing.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Are they actually appealing? That they are considering an appeal. They're considering not respecting the work that women have done in the College of Midwives to get this ruling, not understanding that they should be paid for the work that they do, which is bringing life into the world. Instead, the government is wanting to take midwives back to court. It's a government that seems to like to be in court. I would be interested to see, in fact, the billions of dollars that this government is spending

challenging decisions that are popular with the people of Ontario, but this government wants to take to court.

So I would just say that, when we look at the supply bill and we look at how people are experiencing it in the province, the actions of the Attorney General are really shameful in the province of Ontario. Some of the despicable cuts that have been made from the Attorney General to rape crisis centres; they've disbanded the panel on the violence against women—these are things that the people of Ontario weren't asking for, and there is absolutely, absolutely no call for that from this Attorney General.

In fact, it's so disastrous that we now have a private member's bill that is looking to strengthen the independence of the Ontario Human Rights Commission because the people of Ontario now feel, under this Attorney General, that they can't count on the independence of the Attorney General meddling in the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Finally, this morning, we heard from the Minister of Finance, who had some things to say. When questions were asked about the concerns of the people of Ontario about how the budget cuts in the health care sector are going to impact our ability to respond to not just hallway health care but to COVID-19, the minister said, "We are leaving more money in the pockets of Ontarians every day because it's the right thing to do." But we have seen, quite clearly from the evidence, that they are not leaving more money in the pockets of everyday Ontarians, they are actually taking it out with their cuts, with their increased costs in housing and with their increased costs in energy.

So my advice for the Minister of Finance would be that, when his upcoming budget is released, I'm really hoping that he will take into account the fact that the decisions that they have made have impacted women, women who are struggling to get by in the province, who have contributed to building this province and who are expecting so much more from this government than a continued legacy of cuts and tax hikes that have eroded the services that they most depend on.

I'm looking forward to the spring budget. Hopefully we will have some better news than we have had in the first two years of this government. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for listening this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Parsa: I can't stress what an honour it is every time to have the opportunity to participate in this debate here in this House. I'm pleased to rise today to talk about the Supply Act for the 2019-20 fiscal year. As my colleague and the President of the Treasury Board mentioned earlier, the Supply Act is a procedural but key step in the province's annual fiscal cycle. Today's discussion and vote are critical steps in approving spending for this fiscal year, which ends March 31, 2020. I would also like to highlight that the bill does not propose any new spending; it is simply a step in approving the spending already outlined in the expenditure estimates.

The President of the Treasury Board spoke about some of the great progress our government has made so far, and

it's an important start. That's why I want to take a few moments to talk about some of the priorities and how they're helping Ontarians get ahead every single day.

The minister spoke about how the government is spending smarter and making smarter decisions, and, as a result, the people of Ontario can expect a government that works better for them—one that is effective, responsive and helpful to them.

I've said this before: One thing that we have learned from the people of Ontario is that they expect their government to be there for them when they need them, but they don't want them to be in their way. This expectation means that we need to think about the experiences Ontarians have with their government and how we can work to improve it, because we were elected to be the government for the people. So how can we ensure that those interactions tangibly improve people's lives? How can we streamline services and fix inefficiencies and, as a government, how can we create a modern and efficient public sector that the people expect and that they deserve?

Last October, Minister Bethlenfalvy announced that our government was undertaking a series of initiatives to help us build a better, more responsive government for Ontarians. This announcement came as a result of the recommendations from the EY Canada line-by-line review and the Planning for Prosperity consultations. From those studies, we discovered many important ways to make a real difference in the lives of the 14 million people who call this province home, Speaker. As a result, we developed our plan for smarter government, which is being implemented through a series of smart initiatives. These initiatives will transform how government operates to achieve key outcomes, deliver services more efficiently, and ensure the sustainability of public services, because building a smarter government is a critical part of our bold agenda to do government differently.

Let me also tell you about some of the progress we're making. As Minister Bethlenfalvy explained, our government has adopted what we're calling a Digital First plan. The people of Ontario work hard and have busy lives. They use technology to do just about everything, because it's quick and it's convenient. Time and again, the private sector has demonstrated that digital services are both cost-effective and widely popular. That begs the question: Why should the government be any different? We believe that the government should be focusing on meeting Ontarians where it's convenient for them, and we believe that the government should have a digital system that works for everyone, one that's easy, intuitive, effective and can save taxpayers millions of dollars.

Putting digital access at the forefront of our government's plans means a few things. For one, it means creating a modern health care system that will connect Ontarians with more convenient and digitally enabled health care choices, like home video visits directly to patients or online appointment bookings. These changes will support safer, better and more efficient health care delivery, including the ability to better connect rural and remote communities to new and expanded care options to meet their unique needs.

Also, through our Digital First plan, we are working to put the most used transactions at ServiceOntario online, and we're already making good progress on that. Improving the government's digital platforms will ensure that Ontarians who need to renew their driver's licence, licence plate sticker or health card can do so quickly, easily and accurately.

In addition to Digital First government services, we're also making it easier for businesses to offer digital services. In September, we announced changes that allow drivers to carry electronic proof of insurance on their cell-phones. This means no more searching through your glove box for that crumpled and worn-out insurance pink slip, Speaker.

While I'm excited about how our government is making digital access work for everyone, I want to stress that Digital First does not mean digital only. Our plan protects in-person options for those Ontarians who still want or need to use them. We're giving people options and a more convenient government, Speaker.

Another example, and one I'm particularly focused on, is how our government is modernizing transfer payments. Speaker, I'd like to remind the Legislature that nearly all government spending is done through transfer payments, which makes this initiative especially significant. We're making life easier for Ontario's businesses and non-profits by modernizing a system that is outdated, costly and time-consuming.

Here's how the system had been working—or not really working, as we discovered. Imagine that you work in social services. That work puts in you contact with multiple ministries, and each ministry has multiple funding agreements. These duplicative and time-consuming processes make demands on your time and they get in the way of providing social services to those who need them.

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Ninety per cent of all government program spending is in the form of transfer payments to support programs and services. This includes health care, non-profits, education and social services. It also means that the government has to deal with almost 35,000 separate transfer payment arrangements.

Speaker, we could do better, and we are doing better. Take Transfer Payment Ontario, for example. It's a one-window access point for information about funding opportunities and how to apply for them, and serves as a place to check on the status of a submission. It's a way to make sure that all businesses, including non-profits, spend less time completing paperwork and more time delivering vital programs and services to Ontarians. We're already seeing the positive results by working with our partners, like the Ontario Nonprofit Network, to modernize funding agreements.

As a final example, I want to again underscore the President of the Treasury Board's remarks. Our government is tackling government purchasing. Estimates have shown that the government spends approximately \$29 billion every year to buy goods and services. Every week, Ontario families buy in bulk to save money because it's the smart thing to do. Why can't government do the same thing?

From pencils to pacemakers, computers and IT hardware, a modern and fully integrated procurement system will help drive savings of an estimated \$1 billion each year. Other jurisdictions have already implemented similar initiatives with incredible success. Why should Ontario be any different? Our goal is to create a best-in-class supply chain right here in Ontario. We need to break down silos and create a more streamlined and collaborative supply chain system that maximizes taxpayer dollars, slashes red tape for businesses and fosters innovation. I'm happy to report that our government is well on its way to implementing these changes. Through these and many more of our smart initiatives, we're building a smarter government.

The passing of this supply bill is a recognition of the hard and necessary work we have already done to build Ontario together. It signifies nearly \$150 billion in spending, and, as Minister Bethlenfalvy noted, that represents 150 billion opportunities for smarter government. Again, this bill is not about approving new spending; it's about providing legislative approvals for the spending to which government has already committed.

But there's more work to be done. Ontario needs further fiscal transformations and innovations. The people of this province expect the best from us, and we're delivering for them every single day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to stand on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West to speak to the government supply bill that's before us. I think it's important to note that we just got through debating the estimates. Unfortunately, we didn't have an opportunity to look at every single area where the government spends money and to scrutinize formally at estimates. The time had run out to do that. The government didn't really give us an awful lot of time to talk about the estimates here in the House, either.

But now we are talking about the supply bill. For the people at home who may not be familiar with what the supply bill is, basically it shows the spending of various ministries in accordance with the estimates that I had referred to. So what the government says that they are likely going to spend on certain areas is in estimates, and now we're looking at how they're going to spend that money, here in the House.

I've got a lot in my head about the supply bill. When this passes—the Conservatives have a majority government, so it will pass whether we support it or not—they'll be able to move forward with financing the programs that they've brought forward or the programs that are already available. But it won't just fund what's already there; it actually will also move forward with the cuts that this government has planned. Those cuts are pretty deep, and they disproportionately affect—and I'm going to get into that later on—women and children, young girls, specifically. All we have to do is look at the cuts. Like I said, I'll come back to that.

We just have to look at the lack of funding that this government is putting into health care and the fact that they talked about hallway medicine and how terrible it was

under the Liberals—it was terrible under the Liberals, don't get me wrong—and how this government, the Conservatives were going to do better, and they're not. The problem, the crisis, is only growing. It's not getting better, because they are not putting the funding into the system that needs to go into the system. They're not keeping up with an aging population. They're not keeping up with, basically, the cost of living. The fact that everything a hospital does, whether it's the cost of hydro or whether it's the cost of supplies, is going up—any money that they're putting into the system is not keeping up with the demand.

Education: We see that what they are systemically doing in education is defunding our public education system and moving more and more services towards the private sector. We've seen proof that the Minister of Education is looking at taking supports and services for the most vulnerable students, those with special-education needs, and he wants to move those services into the private sector, take them out of the education system. When I go back to talking about how disproportionately this affects women, in the education sector, largely, the services are delivered by women, so it's kind of a double hit in the education system.

Social services: Broad-brush, huge, deep cuts to social services, where people are already struggling to get by, and this government is going to make it even harder. They are looking at, really, holding people further and deeper into poverty, while they talk about helping lift them up and, my gosh, that the best social program is a job. I don't know how many times they've been told how incredibly insulting that is to the people in the province who have disabilities and are completely unable to work or can only work intermittently. I really wish the government would listen to not just this side of the House when I and my colleagues have said it, but to the actual people in the province with disabilities and the agencies that help support them—stop saying that the best social program is a job. Especially when we find that many workers are making minimum wage—minimum wage—and this government has gotten rid of rent control; rents are skyrocketing and people are struggling to even put a roof over their head.

I think that when we look at what's before us with this supply bill and when we look at estimates and when we look at the budget, and there's a new budget coming out soon, at the end of this month, what it really demonstrates is that the spending, or the lack of spending, frankly, demonstrates their priorities. That's really what I want to focus on today.

These are the highlights from the Financial Accountability Officer. This is not us on this side of the House; this is an independent person, a non-partisan person who looks at the books and talks pretty frankly about the good, the bad and the ugly. Unfortunately, there's a lot of bad and a lot of ugly that the FAO brought forward.

Within the Q3 review—we're talking about within the first three quarters of a budget year—the amount that this government has underspent—which, on the surface sounds fantastic, Speaker, but when you look at what they're spending money on and the things they don't want us to know about: so they sign non-disclosure agreements;

when we're talking about the priorities of a buck-a-beer; stickers that don't stick on gas pumps; when you talk about licence plates that nobody can read; and billboards on highways that have also been shown to be not an effective revenue stream for the government—when you look at that, that's where their priorities are. Also, appointing their friends and their PC colleagues to various positions and increasing, in some cases, their wages—like the EQAO—went from someone who made, at most, \$5,000 a year to—how many times—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Now it's \$140,000.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's \$140,000 a year.

When you look at the priorities, it's not that the government is—when I say they're underspending, it's not that they're doing well or being efficient, in Conservative terms; it's that they're choosing to spend the money in areas that the majority of people in this province would not find to be a priority. What they're doing is they're promising to spend money. All we have to do is look at the children with autism and their families. This government promised to spend, and they still talk about how they doubled the funding. But within the first three quarters of the year, they had actually held back—so had not spent—half of that money, while children are languishing on lists for therapy and for supports and families are struggling to get by.

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We look at supports to individuals with developmental disabilities, adults with developmental disabilities. We don't see this government actually investing in supportive housing, where a wait-list is estimated to be at least 25 years long—although it's not a true list, because it's not a matter of first come, first served. It's a moving target, and many people will never get supportive housing. This government is not investing in these adults or their families—their aging caregivers, their parents—who disproportionately, surprisingly, are women. They actually spent 10.6% below what they said they were going to spend within residential services, supportive housing for those people with developmental disabilities; autism; and children and youth community supports. They actually spent 10.6% less. That's not because they delivered the services and did it so well that they saved money; it's because they chose not to invest in these people.

Again, within the first three quarters of 2019-20, 11 major programs have spent less than 70% of their revised budgets. In residential services, they spent 68%; in supportive services, 68%; and autism, 50%. This is not because this government was able to provide the services and the supports in a way that actually cost less money; it's because they chose not to provide those services and not to spend that money.

The social services cuts are very worrisome: \$1 billion from social services across the board. These are people that have disabilities, people who rely on the Ontario Disability Support Program or Ontario Works. Many people apply for Ontario Works first while they're getting approved for ODSP. These are the very people with disabilities that this government is saying, "Get off your lazy butts and go get a job."

They scrapped the Basic Income Pilot project. They cancelled a \$1-an-hour increase to the minimum wage, while not implementing rent control. They cut in half a planned increase to ODSP and OW—the most vulnerable people in the province. They ended the Roundtable on Violence Against Women. They slashed \$84.5 million in funding for children and at-risk youth, including children's aid societies.

In the justice budget, they reduced legal aid by 30%. Again, the most vulnerable people in our province rely on having access to justice through legal aid, and this government has decided that they don't deserve to have that access to justice. They disbanded the Anti-Racism Directorate. They withheld \$14.8 million in promised funding from existing and new sexual assault centres.

In education, they removed \$100 million of the budget for school repairs. They dropped financial assistance for college and university students by more than \$300 million. So while this government is saying, "We want you to go back to school. We want you to get a post-secondary education," maybe they just want everybody to do it online.

While the Minister of Labour talks about skilled trades, they're making it harder for students to get into the trades because they can't afford to go to school. They can't afford to do it. They removed free tuition for low-income students. They scrapped over \$300 million in funding for three satellite university campuses. They increased class sizes, resulting in thousands of job losses for teachers and education workers—again, largely women who work within that sector. They scrapped the Ontario College of Trades. They talk about wanting people to get into the trades, but they scrapped the Ontario College of Trades.

In the budget, they cancelled free prescription medication given to those under 25, disproportionately affecting low-income people in the province. They cancelled the opening of new overdose prevention sites and put a cap on new sites. Speaker, I cannot tell you how harmful—that's the only word I can think of that would be parliamentary—how detrimental that is to communities across the province, especially mine, that this government is not allowing municipalities that are struggling to help people who are struggling with mental health and addictions to open up safe consumption sites.

These safe consumption sites save lives. I would encourage every single member—I've done it—in this Legislature to go do a tour of a safe consumption site. You will see the incredibly valuable work that those front-line workers do. Maybe this Conservative government, if they did these tours, would actually understand the value of investing in people when they are struggling with addictions. They would understand the value of saving somebody's life in order to get them into treatment. We hear a lot about getting people into treatment, and that's so important, but you have to save their life first. These are people's family members. They're their sons, their daughters, their mothers, their fathers, their cousins, their friends. These are human beings, and they deserve to have those services. The front-line workers and our first responders

deserve to have the services in place to be able to provide that to the communities they care so much about.

They have decided that instead of going with the Liberal plan—which is not the best plan; it could have used more investment. The Liberals had promised \$2.1 billion over four years for new mental health funding. The Conservatives decided that \$1.9 billion over 10 years was enough. They won't be here as government in 10 years, I'm fairly confident, but that's what they've decided to do.

They've revoked current and future funding for the College of Midwives of Ontario. Surprise, surprise: It's women who are midwives. Not only are they midwives; not only do they provide these essential services; it's women that they provide care for and support for. This government has revoked the current and the future funding to the College of Midwives of Ontario.

They slashed the number of paramedic service providers from 59 to 10 to service an entire province, where we have a population of about 14 million people.

They proposed ending OHIP's medical emergency coverage for Ontarians travelling outside the country. Imagine what that would be like—well, right now we are in a pandemic with COVID-19. They plan to cut \$200 million from public health services, impacting 35 health units. How on earth are we supposed to contain something like COVID-19 when this government is pulling funding out of public health? It's unreasonable.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: We warned them.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: And we warned them.

Then there are the reversals, which might sound like a good thing because if you're doing something that is detrimental to the people of the province and you do a reversal, most people would applaud you for acknowledging that you've made a wrong decision and that you're reversing course. This government, on the other hand—it's not always a good thing.

The government is spending at least \$778 million to make up for programs it cut in the 2019 budget. We talk about how this government acts first and thinks later: That's the case here. They decided they weren't going to spend. Under a budget, they cut services. Then, when there was public outcry and pressure from us in the NDP caucus, they went, "Whoa, wait a minute. We're going to put money back in, and we're going to make some investments and try to make everybody happy, and maybe they'll just forget that. It will go away." Maybe it will just disappear like the PC blue licence plates.

These are other reinstated expenses the PCs previously said they'd eliminate:

- \$41 million for public health units;
- \$26 million for land ambulance operations;
- \$122 million for municipalities to use for child care, another direct attack on the women in this province;
- \$310 million to fund the Transition Child Benefit and for people on social assistance, again disproportionately affecting women, another attack on women in Ontario; and
- an additional \$279 million on the Ontario Autism Program after they cut the program down already.

In my last few minutes, I just want to reiterate the theme. Aside from government cuts and messed-up priorities, there was a theme. My colleague from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas began that theme. I've continued that theme. I think you'll hear others mention it too. It's very clear, the theme, which is that this government not only goes after the most vulnerable people in this province, the people who really need the support the most, but it's pretty clear that it's the women in this province who are bearing the largest brunt for the bad decisions made by this government. I'm going to highlight some of them.

1620

We just had International Women's Day on Sunday, just three days ago, and many of the Conservative members, if not all, were tweeting out how much they support women, how important the women are in their lives, and how important it is that women are included. So I just want to point out that what they're saying and what's actually happening—how ridiculous it is that the government members would be tweeting out about how they support women and "Happy International Women's Day," when this is what they are doing.

They cut \$1 billion from social services across the board. Workers in the social services sector are predominantly women, as are their clients. Cuts to developmental services; the lack of supportive housing; underfunding the autism program—aging parents and single mothers are generally the ones raising the children and being the caregivers for adult children with disabilities.

They ended the Roundtable on Violence Against Women. On the panel were representatives made up of organizations that addressed issues related to violence against women, but also those who had experience with specific populations, like Indigenous women, immigrants, older women, LGBTQ people and sex workers—again, a direct attack on women.

They reduced legal aid by 30%. So now not only is it harder for a woman fleeing domestic violence, not only is it harder for a woman who is trying to escape sex trafficking—that's already very difficult; this government has made it even harder for them to access legal representation while they are trying to get out of those situations.

They disbanded the Anti-Racism Directorate. It's no surprise to the folks on this side of the House—apparently, it's not clear to the folks on the other side of the House. When we talk about the barriers that women face—whether it is in a place like where I stand now or whether it is around board tables or CEOs or presidents of companies or just everyday life, there are barriers for women. But those barriers are increased exponentially when you are talking about a woman of colour or when you are talking about a woman who comes from the LGBTQ community, specifically trans women. This government either doesn't get it or doesn't care.

Feminism should always be intersectional. Racialized women experience greater discrimination than non-racialized women. I recognize my privilege; don't get me wrong. It hasn't been easy to be a woman, period, right?

There are many barriers, but I recognize that I have privilege because of the colour of my skin, privilege that many of my sisters in this caucus—not enough of them, frankly; there’s not enough women of colour in our caucus or in this chamber. But I have privileges that they will never have unless all of us, on every side of this House, fight like hell to make sure they have them. It’s our duty.

They revoked current and future funding for the College of Midwives of Ontario. As I said, not only is it largely women that deliver the services, that provide this health care as a midwife, but it is women who are affected when those services are not available. I also want to point out that midwives took the government to court over pay equity, and they won. And now? This government is going to fight it in court again.

They increased class sizes, resulting in thousands of job losses for teachers and education workers. As I said, those are largely positions held by women.

They cut and then reversed \$122 million for municipalities for child care; \$310 million to cancel the Transition Child Benefit—again, that directly affects women and children; and they withheld \$14.8 million in promised funding from sexual assault centres.

So Speaker, while the government wants to tweet out their support for women on International Women’s Day—and we are soon going to have Equal Pay Day. April 4 is Equal Pay Day, when women get to celebrate—what an odd thing to say—the fact that we will largely, the majority, have finally made the same income, the same amount of money as a man did by January. It takes women that long, generally, to catch up—about four months longer.

So while we as women are celebrating Equal Pay Day, I would say to this government: Shame on you. Shame on you for standing up and saying that you support women. Shame on you for talking about how you support women who are trying to flee—

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I’m sorry; I know I’m going over time here and my colleague would like to say something, but this really got under my skin the other day.

The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education stood up and asked a question about sex trafficking, because they made an announcement about putting funding into eliminating sex trafficking, battling sex trafficking and helping women. What I would like to say to that member specifically is—and I know there are others in that caucus who hold the same views—that you cannot say that you support women and that you stand with women in trying to end sex trafficking when you oppose a woman’s right to choose, because those women will have to face an option, at some point, likely, where they become pregnant because they are being trafficked. You have no place—no place—telling a woman that she does not have the right to make a choice when it comes to her own body and her own health care. That was the member for Niagara West.

I’m going to turn it over to my colleague. I know we have to go in a rotation. But it really is disheartening that this government wants to talk about how much they’re supporting women, yet every step of the way when we

look at their budget, when we look at estimates, when we look at the supply bill, when we look at their behaviour, their actual actions and the things they say in private and publicly, what they are doing is attacking the most vulnerable people in this province, and they are attacking women.

We have just as much right to be here. Our voice is just as big as yours. We will take up our space. The women on this side of the House—and the men, frankly, who are our allies—will fight you every step of the way as you make these cuts.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I’m very pleased to rise here today in my role as parliamentary assistant to the President of the Treasury Board, Internal Audit, to talk about the Supply Act for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

Before I begin, I want to thank my colleagues the President of the Treasury Board and the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for their work on this act and their remarks today.

Mr. Speaker, our government has demonstrated that we will do what’s right for the people of Ontario by delivering on the five core commitments we were elected on:

- restoring accountability and trust in the province’s finances;
- ending the culture of waste and mismanagement in government;
- making Ontario open for business and open for jobs;
- cutting hospital wait times and ending hallway health care; and
- putting more money back in the taxpayers’ pockets, where it belongs.

Taking the first point, for example, the decisions we made and continue to make ensure that oversight on spending is strengthened to restore trust and accountability to our finances. But these decisions take work. Our government has already taken several steps to control unnecessary expenses and to ensure our tax dollars are treated with respect. This includes important oversight committees, like the Audit and Accountability Committee and the Ontario Internal Audit Committee, to direct internal audits into priority areas across the government.

This committee, which I’m proud to be a member of, is the only one of its kind in Canada, and it’s already helping to bring a new level of accountability to ensure we receive the best value for our money. We have already seen significant cost savings because of these measures. By implementing year-end budget management, spending controls and targeted measures to end March madness, the government saved \$153 million in the last fiscal year. We are taking every opportunity to embed greater accountability and transparency right across our government. We are working hard to build a foundation for our long-term prosperity.

To achieve that, it is also essential that we work cooperatively with our partners. That’s why we established the Audit and Accountability Fund to provide over \$8 million to ensure municipalities have the tools they need to conduct reviews of their books, because, as we learned in 2018 from

EY Canada, line-by-line reviews can help improve outcomes and increase value for the people of Ontario.

These reviews can highlight how to modernize public services, how to make better use of digital and shared service models and how to find better, more effective ways to administer programs and services, and they can help ensure government funding is directed to those who need it the most and maximize the value and productive use of our government's assets.

1630

It doesn't end there. A smart and more effective government also means doing government differently. Doing government differently means making a culture shift. It means changing the culture and making smarter decisions. This will embed respect for the taxpayer's dollar within the government itself. That's why our government is taking further steps to bring the rigour of business into the government by implementing a new system of enterprise risk management.

Enterprise risk management is recognized as a best practice in the private sector. In the 2019 budget, we recognized it as an important enabler in our government's efforts to ensure improved services and outcomes for Ontarians. The need for effective enterprise risk management was also reinforced by EY Canada's 2018 line-by-line review. This review called for the commitment to evidence-based decision-making, including the consideration of business risk and the implementation of enterprise risk management across ministries and provincial agencies. As we know, this is the practice of identifying, assessing, prioritizing and managing the unknown in an organization. In other words, this process helps organizations deploy limited resources to the greatest effect and, at the same time, identify problems before they can take root. Enterprise risk management helps to forecast and manage risk by enhancing internal oversight, improving coordination between departments and ensuring robust decision-making processes across the entire organization.

I'm pleased to report that last month we announced the creation of the Office of the Comptroller General. This will be the first Comptroller General among Canadian provinces to be a deputy-minister-level position. The Comptroller General will be responsible for working with ministries and provincial agencies to provide advice, sharing information on effective enterprise risk management and ensuring risks are properly identified and managed before public money is spent, providing greater value and accountability for the people of Ontario. The Comptroller General will lead internal audit controllership and risk management across the entire government, which will include analyzing fiscal impacts and overall vulnerabilities of the policy decisions. The creation of the Office of the Comptroller General and the enterprise risk management office are examples of our ongoing work to transform and modernize government and bring the rigour of business into the business of government. Our ambitious new approach will strengthen the government's ability to forecast and mitigate risks by improving internal oversight of all decision-making.

I will conclude by saying that the passage of the supply bill would set the stage for further fiscal transformations, including those of upcoming budgets. But as my colleague has already said, this supply bill is not about approving new spending; it's about providing legislative approval for spending that the government has already committed to.

I'm proud that the Premier, the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board continue to follow the balanced, prudent and deliberate approach to manage the deficit and the debt. It's worth repeating one more time that the interest on the debt alone costs us over \$13 billion every year, or \$36 million every day, or \$1.5 million every hour, or \$400 every second. The previous government and the previous finance minister were spending \$40 million a day more than they collected in revenue, every single day. Between 2003 and 2018, Ontario's debt nearly tripled, and our debt-to-GDP ratio grew from 27% to 40%, a number never seen before in Ontario's history. This was reckless and was unsustainable. At nearly \$360 billion, we now have the world's largest subnational debt, larger than any other province, state or city in the world. Without fiscal sustainability we'll continue to pay billions of dollars in interest alone.

I'm proud that this government has taken a new approach. By putting structures in place to end the culture of waste and mismanagement and to create a new culture of efficiency in our government, our approach is helping to bring the deficit under control in a way that protects what matters most: our core services, including health care and education, and all the other programs that the people of Ontario depend on.

Therefore, I urge all members to join me in supporting the Supply Act so that spending on these critical public services can be authorized for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's a pleasure to stand here, on behalf of my constituents of Davenport and the official opposition, to speak in opposition to the supply bill that the government is looking to pass. For those who aren't really aware, the supply bill is basically what the government wants to spend your money on.

I appreciate the comments of the President of the Treasury Board, the others on the government side, the member from Windsor West, and the member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, who's seated here next to me today.

I thought it was interesting to hear, at the very beginning, the first comments of the President of the Treasury Board. He started off by saying that this represents \$150 billion in spending, and then he summed it up in saying this is a sign that this government has more work to do. I thought that was a very interesting signal to Ontarians—that this government isn't done yet with their cuts. When I heard it, a shiver went down my spine, because I think we've already seen plenty, and many Ontarians are suffering already because of this government's cuts to spending. They always talk about changing the culture of government, and what that has meant for most Ontarians is that

things have gotten worse. We've seen that in the Financial Accountability Officer's own reports. When you break down the spending in the supply bill, where we are seeing those cuts—the President of the Treasury Board talked about ending the discretionary spending at the end of the year, the “March madness” he called it. My response to the President of the Treasury Board would be: How about just funding things properly? How about taking an approach that not spending is not good management? I know that on the boards of non-profits I've been on, that would be considered bad management, actually, and it would definitely not be considered good governance. So I would question the whole premise of the President of the Treasury Board's comments.

I also want to say that I think these cuts and this emphasis on not spending what has even been allocated—and I'm going to go through that a bit in a little while—is not smart government. It is very much a choice that this government has made—a choice not to spend in areas where it affects the people who are most in need, the people who are the most vulnerable, the people who are most at risk. I know my colleagues have talked about this already—I'm going to go through a few of those examples. What we've seen is that this government is not spending what they even allocated, which wasn't enough. For example, they've only spent about 50% of what they were supposed to spend on autism services—on residential services, my colleague from Windsor West mentioned, 68% of what should have been spent. Overall, and we know this from the last budget, a billion dollars cut not from—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Stickers. Licence plates.

Ms. Marit Stiles: —stickers or from licence plates or buck-a-beer or from all kinds of high-paid positions that the government members friends' are getting—but no, from social services, the services that are there to be the safety net. It's really fundamental in our democracy. It's a fundamental piece of who we are. It is something that we as Canadians have agreed to: that we contribute as working people to ensure that when we can't work for some reason, or somebody in our family is sick, there are those service that exist there to care for them.

1640

This government is doing away with those supports. We've seen it again and again—and, more recently, the reduction of legal aid by, I think, 30%: This is, once again, not even trying to keep up with the need that exists out there.

I think many of us have worked in the community sector at various points, and certainly what I'm hearing from my constituents and what we are dealing with in my community office, day after day after day—my goodness. The need was so great already. But it's just getting worse every day.

I guess what I wanted to weigh that against and to talk about a little bit is that this is a choice; that this isn't just about some different vision of government. This is a choice not to spend in certain areas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's a value.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It is a value question. As the Financial Accountability Office pointed out not very long ago,

what this government is choosing to spend our money on is tax giveaways, but not tax giveaways to just anyone—no, no; tax giveaways to the most wealthy Ontarians: the rich. Of \$45.5 billion, 75% is going to the top 20% of earners. These are the richest people in our province.

So this is not about equity. This is not about dividing that up equally, by any means. What we know is that middle-income earners are only getting about 14% of those tax giveaways. When you're somebody in that middle-income range and you know you can't get child care—that there are no child care spaces—or you know that your kid is not getting the autism therapies that they need, then you would rather that those dollars—you don't want them in your pocket; you want them going into the services because that's where they need to be so then you could access them. So this to me is this government really not understanding the reality, or choosing not to accept the reality, that most Ontarians live in.

The other thing I would say is, again, it's not just about who they're not supporting; it's who they are working for, and we know that again that is the wealthiest. That's the largest corporations, the ones that are making the most money. It's not the people in my community who are losing the place they live; who are seeing their rent go up to such a height that they can no longer afford to live in their homes; who are ending up homeless.

They aren't supporting middle-class families. They aren't supporting low-income families. They aren't supporting newcomer families. They aren't supporting seniors. They aren't supporting tenants. They aren't supporting young people. They weren't supporting post-secondary students when they did away with those grants. Then they took away what I thought was the most cruel piece: the six-month grace period that post-secondary students had before they had to pay back their loans. That was just cruel.

I'm going to talk quite a bit about the cuts that affect our children, particularly our children who are in school. I'm not going to go at great length on this but, as my colleagues have said—and it's interesting that we all had a similar idea about talking a little bit today about what the impact has been on women particularly, and indeed disproportionately racialized women and trans women—cuts to sexual assault centres, ending the Roundtable on Violence Against Women, and cuts to legal aid.

Let's talk about the pink elephant in the room, which is the public sector workers. It is okay to talk about private sector wage increases that go above 2% or 3%—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: In male-dominated.

Ms. Marit Stiles: —in male-dominated industries or male-dominated elements of the public service. But when we talk about nurses and we talk about midwives and we talk about all those other public sector workers, and then we talk about education workers, who are still overwhelmingly women—all of these professions, all of these areas of the public service, are largely women. What we know is that the public sector restraint act, Bill 124, an egregious piece of legislation, disproportionately affects women. It targets women, and government should be ashamed, deeply

ashamed of that fact—as does, by the way, the minimum wage rollback, which this government brought in.

My colleagues have already talked quite a bit about issues around equal pay for equal work and all of that. I just want to say for the record: I liked the Pay Transparency Act idea. I wish the Liberals had moved on this, oh, I don't know, sometime earlier in their 15 years, where they did nothing. But I've got to say, as a woman who worked for many years—and 10 years for a pretty progressive employer—can I tell you how many times I had to ask my colleagues, my male colleagues, “What do you earn? What do you earn?” And nobody will share that information. Nobody will share that information because it's embarrassing to talk about the dollars. But you know, and you find out later on that you're making 30% less than they are, doing exactly the same job. How does that make you feel, as a woman who has worked so hard? Women are experiencing that every single day, and it's shameful that we have not figured—and not just this government; past governments have not addressed that issue of the pay gap.

I want to talk a little bit about education. I have only about five minutes left, and I want to talk a bit about that. I want to talk, again, about the Financial Accountability Office and what they've managed to do in terms of really providing—I am so pleased with the work they're doing providing transparency and accountability, and being that independent voice, saying some of the things that, as others have noticed, we often don't get a chance to, to dig deep into the numbers and ask these questions, because the government doesn't allow enough time at committees, like the estimates committee, for us to do so.

The FAO, when they were looking at the education estimates, the education spending, made it clear that to achieve the spending plan outlined in the 2019 budget, the government would have to do two things. They'd have to increase class sizes, and we know that's what they did, and they'd have to limit public sector compensation through their unconstitutional Bill 124. I'm going to give a lot of credit here to everybody in the Ontario Federation of Labour, the coalition of workers and labour unions, but also, particularly, the parents, the students and the community members who raised their voices so passionately and stood so solidly with education workers in this province against these cuts. Despite this government's repeated claims of some kind of historic investment in education, we know that their entire plan relies on cuts to classrooms and cuts to jobs, and that is what we have seen.

The impact of those cuts today in our classrooms—I want to be very clear: the loss of courses, which we are still seeing; students who don't have courses that they may need to graduate; students who cannot access that course that made them happy to go to school, and that was maybe sometimes the only reason they went to school; and the supports that those students need. We're seeing the erosion of the supports for students who are struggling—not just students with special needs, because that's a whole other area where this government has failed and continues to cut, but also the supports that all students need.

The caring adults, the guidance counsellors, that this government is—by the way, I'll tell you, when they talk about this opt-out provision for mandatory e-learning, you'd better hire a whole lot of new guidance counsellors, because I can tell you right now that guidance counsellors in our province are so overwhelmed and overworked already. If they're going to be asked to have one-on-one meetings with parents, every parent in a school, to discuss whether or not their child should opt out of this absurd mandatory e-learning plan, well, you'd better be ready to invest big time. So maybe that's something you could throw into your next budget.

We've talked a lot about education. One of the members opposite—I think it was the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill—talked about the Ernst and Young report this government had completed early in their tenure. I want to just talk about that briefly. In that report, the government—when they talk proudly about this, looking for ways to reduce red tape and find savings, but one of the things that was buried in there was a real nugget of gold for me: a point where they urged the government to look at the greater involvement of the private sector in education. My colleagues have talked about this a little bit, but I want to quote what they said. They called for “alternate arrangements for funding, including ... providing funding to individuals, who can then choose their service providers through a form of market activity....” What is that code for? That is code for charter schools.

1650

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Vouchers.

Ms. Marit Stiles: That is code for vouchers. Everything that we've seen this government do so far as well: all their cuts to classrooms; the increase in class sizes, and, by the way, we don't talk about it a lot, but those classes increased in size from grade 4 on; the loss of course options—what we've seen happening at the same time is this massive increase in advertising by the private school sector. We've seen private schools advertising 14:1 ratios.

This is where this government's cuts are leading us: into a system where we are going to tear down one of the great pillars of our democracy and our society, which is our public education system. Like a lot of Ontarians, I question this government's choices, the choices they're making, who it's going to impact, and, again, the fact that it's ultimately going to impact the lowest-income people, the middle class and the most vulnerable and at-risk Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved second reading of Bill 181, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020. Pursuant to standing order 67, I'm now required to put the question. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

“Pursuant to standing order 30(h), I respectfully request that the vote on second reading of Bill 181, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, be deferred until deferred votes on Thursday, March 12, 2020.”

Signed by the chief government whip.

Second reading vote deferred.

DEFIBRILLATOR REGISTRATION
AND PUBLIC ACCESS ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020 SUR L'ACCÈS PUBLIC
AUX DÉFIBRILLATEURS
ET LEUR ENREGISTREMENT

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 10, 2020, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to rise today and add my comments to Bill 141, the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act—try to say that late in the afternoon.

I want to commend the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for tabling this very important piece of legislation in the House. The awareness of the need for public access to defibrillators has been growing for many years, and that's a good thing.

In fact, I was looking through my meeting notes when I was preparing for today's debate, and I found the minutes of a meeting that I had about the need for more public access to defibrillators from way back in June 2011. The meeting I had that day in my riding office was with Mr. Jon Cann, operations supervisor for the Lambton Emergency Medical Services and the public access defibrillator coordinator for the county of Lambton. I remember that we had a really good discussion that day about the need to make more businesses and organizations aware of just how real a necessity defibrillators can be in a community.

At that time, in 2011, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Lambton county estimated that if a business or organization has about 250 people per week pass through their doors, there's a significant chance that at least once in five years someone will collapse and require the use of a defibrillator. That is a very startling statistic, Mr. Speaker. When you stop and think about the places that you frequent, whether it be Queen's Park, the grocery store, an arena or the gym, all would see many, many more visitors than that every day.

At almost all of the places we visit on a daily basis, there is a very real possibility that someone will experience cardiac issues and need emergency medical assistance. As legislators, we are doing everything we can to make sure people can receive assistance in those critical moments before the first responders arrive. I believe that passing Bill 141 is one way we can take action.

When a person is in cardiac arrest, seconds count. I have seen statistics that say that when CPR is combined with the use of a defibrillator in those early minutes, an individual's chance of surviving a cardiac arrest can increase by 75%. Without CPR and defibrillation, fewer than 5% of people who have a cardiac arrest outside of a hospital survive. The fact is, equipping public and private spaces with defibrillators will save lives. That is why I am very supportive of this bill and what it will achieve if it is passed into law.

Mr. Speaker, I have three quick examples of how access to defibrillators saved the lives of constituents in Sarnia–Lambton. First, on September 28 of 2012, a constituent slumped to the floor while attending an event at Bluewater Country Adult Leisure Living community in Sarnia. Three guests at the event were quick to respond. The first two began to apply CPR, something we should all be prepared to do, and the third individual retrieved the defibrillator. After only one shock with the defibrillator, the constituent regained consciousness and was conversing by the time the Lambton EMS arrived.

Second, in February 2017, a Sarnia resident was participating in old-timers' hockey, in the hockey league just outside of London. During the second period, after a shift change, he sat on the bench momentarily before slumping to his knees and falling down. Alert teammates immediately called 911 for help. The 911 dispatcher began providing instructions on how to begin CPR. They also let those assisting know where the public arena defibrillator was located. When the teammates returned with the defibrillator, dispatchers walked them through how to use the life-saving device. By the time the first responders had arrived, a pulse had been restored, allowing the first responders to immediately transfer the individual to hospital where he could make a full recovery.

Finally, just this past December, a gentleman was working out at a gym in Sarnia when he fell to the floor. As a fellow gym member and the gym manager approached the individual, they quickly realized that he had gone into cardiac arrest. Immediately, the gym member started CPR. At the same time, the gym manager retrieved the gym's defibrillator. After two shocks, the individual regained consciousness. Within minutes, he was speaking and was able to answer questions being asked by the first responders.

Mr. Speaker, those were just three examples of the life-saving impact of making defibrillators available in public and high-traffic spaces. Defibrillators are not currently required in public spaces, but with just a small investment, there is the potential to save lives.

As I mentioned earlier, the Lambton county medical services has run, for a number of years, a very successful public access defibrillator program. Many public buildings in the county of Lambton have defibrillators available for use. All schools in Sarnia–Lambton have defibrillators available. Most often, they are located near gyms so that community users have access, or they're near the front door or office. There are many more in the community, and Lambton county EMS does make the effort to track them

through their public access defibrillator program. However, we cannot be certain that the location of every one of these devices is known, or that they're actually being maintained. That is why the immediate passage of Bill 141, the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act, is so important.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue on with more about what is in Bill 141 and what it will accomplish, but while I'm preparing to do that, I don't know how many people here in the chamber, yourself and others—I know the table staff probably know. I got this from the Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Speaker. I asked her how many defibrillators were available in the Queen's Park precinct and the chamber. She said, "Mr. Bailey, we have eight AEDs in the Legislature precinct: six in the legislative building itself, two in the Whitney Block, plus one additional AED on the fifth floor," which is up that way, I guess. "All Legislative Protective Service members," who do such a great job—I see a few of them here—are trained in how to rescue and use the AED and have first aid training and "have had several incidents where it has been deployed in the past." That's from our Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Speaker.

1700

It's nice to know that we have those kinds of assets available. It just proves the point that we need to make more of them available in other public buildings.

I want at this time to thank all of our colleagues who sat as members of the Standing Committee on Social Policy for their insightful questions and contributions as that committee reviewed, studied and amended Bill 141 over the past few months. During the committee's deliberations, we heard from many stakeholders about the importance of moving forward with this legislation, and I'm glad we are moving forward with the next step in the legislative process today. I'm convinced this bill will make an important difference in the lives of Ontario's residents, and it will literally save lives.

In the province of Ontario, we know there are 7,000 cases of sudden cardiac arrest each year. In the city of Toronto alone, there are 500 more per year that occur in a public place. Overall, 85% of cardiac arrests happen outside a hospital setting. The only effective treatment is life-saving electrical shock from a defibrillator administered along with CPR. But for a defibrillator to be effective, it has to be located in the right place. It has to be accessible at a moment's notice, not locked behind a security desk or a cupboard in the office lunchroom. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, it has to be used.

For every minute lost without medical intervention, the survival rate for a sudden cardiac arrest drops 10%. In a typical case, when a sudden cardiac arrest occurs, 911 is called and the paramedics arrive on the scene. But, unfortunately, it sometimes takes those paramedics five to 10 minutes to arrive on the scene here in Toronto, and the wait can be much longer outside of this urban area, in the rural areas and especially in parts of the Far North.

During public hearings in Sudbury, the committee heard from a witness who lived in the Timiskaming district, an area of 13,000 square kilometres that's served by five

ambulances. This witness said that the ambulance response time in her community was anywhere between 45 seconds and 73 minutes. That's quite a range. The reality is that it is often too late to help someone or ensure a good outcome by the time the paramedics arrive. The survival rate, again, is less than 10%. But if a defibrillator is available nearby, if it's accessible and if a 911 dispatcher can direct a caller to send a bystander to obtain one and administer it, we can really make a difference.

Unfortunately, automated external defibrillators are seldom used—in about 3% of cases, to be exact—not only because there are not enough of them, but often because bystanders do not know where they are, cannot find them, or they're not easily accessible.

We're lucky, Mr. Speaker, that most defibrillator owners in the province of Ontario already understand this, and many are installed in prominent locations—as here at Queen's Park—with clear signage and easy instructions to be followed in the case of an emergency.

But some are kept behind a security desk or in a manager's office or somewhere else under lock and key. Many defibrillator owners who do this think they are doing the right thing, ensuring that they aren't vandalized or damaged so they're not available when they do need them.

To drive the point home to my fellow members in this House, how many of us can honestly name the locations of all of the defibrillators in this legislative building? Well, I already touched on that. This was written before I got that answer. They are around, if you're looking for them, but many of us never have. I was one of those people, Mr. Speaker. There's one on the wall in the basement hallway, one on the first floor next to the gift shop, and one just outside the doors of this chamber, under the portrait of the Honourable Robert Baldwin.

Now, we're all lucky enough that if the worst were to happen, the Legislative Protective Service, who do such a great job here, would respond quickly, and they would certainly know where the defibrillators are located and they would certainly know how to use them. But outside of these walls, we cannot say the same.

One of the best ways that we can fix that problem is to connect 911 dispatchers with a registry that would allow them to guide members of the public to the closest accessible defibrillator. Although there are an estimated 20,000 or more defibrillators in the greater Toronto area alone, only about 1,500 out of 20,000 are currently registered with the existing provincial registry of publicly funded defibrillators or with local paramedic services. Bill 141 would put in place a framework to do just that, largely based on the legislative framework currently used in the province of Manitoba, which was looked at as a model when they were preparing this legislation.

I should pay tribute to the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, whose legislation this is. I'm not sure I touched on that, but I commend her and her staff and others who worked with her.

Mr. Speaker, this is important, as many of these defibrillators are already out there—as I said, an estimated 20,000

in the Toronto area alone and even more across the province. During consultations on this bill, the author of the bill spoke with equipment vendors and with business owners that have installed defibrillators on their premises. Many of them had initial concerns about the use and implementation of a registry, and particularly about exposure to potential fines for lack of registration or maintenance.

But I think one thing we can all agree on is that business owners don't purchase defibrillators because they make nice decorations on their walls; they purchase them out of a social conscience, because they want to save lives. They want them to be used in the event of an emergency. So your committee took steps to address some of these concerns, adjusting the enforcement mechanism to ensure that any penalties will be proportionate to the offence.

All of the stakeholders that we spoke with ended up being broadly supportive of a registry, with information available to 911 dispatchers to be used in the event of an emergency. Your committee picked up some valuable feedback from committee about what type of data that the registry should or should not contain, which I believe will greatly inform the development of regulations by the minister, should this bill become law, because we ultimately want to promote the installation and use of defibrillators across the province. For that reason, this bill also sets out clear signage requirements and ensures defibrillators are installed in accessible locations so they can be quickly accessed in an emergency.

It's also true that there are some places in this province that probably should have defibrillators installed that do not currently have them. We heard as much from witnesses at committee. Some suggested specific types of locations to install them, while others suggested more systemic ways of determining locations. We want to make sure that's an option, at the end of the day. So this legislation would give the minister authority to designate types of public premises where the owner of the facility will be required to install an automated external defibrillator. Mr. Speaker, I don't want to make any assumptions on what decisions the government, current or future, would make with that authority, but I do think it's an important tool to have, particularly for locations where sudden cardiac arrest are known, from experience, to occur.

Speaker, of course, in many conversations about sudden cardiac arrest, we always talk about education, so for the benefit of all members in this House and for everyone watching at home in TV land, I want to take a few moments in my remarks today to discuss a concept that was brought to our attention during the committee hearings. It's called the chain of survival. Mr. Speaker, the chain of survival refers to the chain of events that must occur in rapid succession to maximize the chances of survival from sudden cardiac arrest.

The metaphor is a simple way to educate the public about its vital role in helping sudden cardiac arrest victims. It suggests that each link is critical and interdependent, and the chain of survival is only as strong as its weakest link. Bystanders can help save lives by addressing the first four links in the chain of survival.

The links in the chain of survival are:

(1) Recognize sudden cardiac arrest: If a person is unresponsive and not breathing normally, call 911.

(2) Call 911: Call 911 to get help. Follow the emergency dispatcher's instructions.

(3) Start CPR: Start CPR to triple the chance of survival. Push hard and fast in the centre of the chest, 100 to 120 pumps a minute. You can't hurt the individual; they're already suffering a heart attack. We had CPR training. We had a reception here the other night, and the Heart and Stroke people were here. I even had the opportunity to try one out, Mr. Speaker, and it's very useful. It's the first time I've had that training for a long time.

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(4) Use the AED—the automated external defibrillator: Use an AED to restart the heart. Follow the step-by-step audio/visual instructions.

(5) EMS response: Transfer care to emergency medical service professionals, who will provide advanced life support.

(6) Hospital care: Hospital professionals will continue integrated post-cardiac arrest care, including mild therapeutic hypothermia, in some cases.

Speaker, it really is that simple.

Just a few days ago, the Heart and Stroke Foundation had their annual Heart at the Park lobby day. I was at their reception in the dining room, as I said earlier, where they were offering drop-in CPR training. I also recall Cardiac Arrest Response and Education, or CARE, coming to Queen's Park in December to teach members how to perform CPR and use an AED. If you haven't had the opportunity to participate in one of these sessions to date, I strongly encourage you to do so. You could save a life—it could be a family member, a good friend, or even a child.

As was demonstrated to us at the committee hearings, it is just as simple to administer a defibrillator. The machine guides you right through the process. You turn it on, you apply the pads, and it will advise whether or not a shock can be delivered. It's especially important to remember that you cannot possibly harm someone by administering a defibrillator. If the defibrillator does not recognize a shockable rhythm, it will not shock—it's simple as ABC, as they say. If it does detect one, it is truly the only treatment that will be effective. And time is of the essence, as we always say.

Many people don't know this, but the province of Ontario also has protection from civil liability for those who own, operate or administer a defibrillator in an emergency. This is all contained in the Chase McEachern Act, which was passed into law by this Legislature in 2007.

Speaker, I want to conclude my remarks today by expressing my gratitude to a number of people.

I want to recognize the assistance and encouragement of Cardiac Arrest Response and Education, or CARE, and in particular Dr. Paul Dorian and Dr. Katherine Allan from St. Michael's Hospital; the Peel region paramedics; as well as Tiffany Jenkins, Dr. Mali Worme and Dr. Mia Bertic.

I want to also recognize the invaluable assistance and encouragement provided by the Heart and Stroke Foundation; specifically, Liz Scanlon and Orli Joseph, as well as

Chris Tambakis. I attended the recent Heart and Stroke breakfast in my own riding. They do a great job there. It's always a pleasure to support them.

These people have all done a great deal to educate MPPs about this issue, including what some paramedic services in Ontario are currently doing, what other jurisdictions are doing, and the legislative frameworks used in other provinces.

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

As Dr. Graham, a cardiologist, said, “As a cardiologist, I have worked for many years to ensure AEDs are as publicly accessible as possible because the chances of survival double when an AED and CPR are used....”

I'm almost out of time, so I'll wrap up with that, Mr. Speaker.

I encourage all of the Legislature to support this bill. Let's put in AEDs and make them accessible to everybody across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Ottawa South on a point of order.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I'm seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding Bill 141.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Ottawa South is seeking unanimous consent to bring forth a motion regarding Bill 141. Agreed? Agreed.

Back to the member.

Mr. John Fraser: I move that the member for Ottawa South be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes on debate of third reading of Bill 141.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Ottawa South has moved to be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes on debate of third reading of Bill 141. Agreed? Agreed.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 141, and I want to thank and congratulate the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for bringing it forward. As she knows, our colleague from Nickel Belt had brought forward a similar bill, as had I, and it was a great opportunity for us in this Legislature to work together to bring something forward that I know that people have been asking for for a while, and that is a defibrillator registry.

A defibrillator registry will ensure that we'll be able to save lives, that there will be no tragedies where there's a defibrillator available but the people on the scene don't know there is one, and a life-saving device that could keep someone alive or healthier would not be not used during an emergency situation.

There were a number of other people who were critical in this. There's CARE, that group locally here that put forward a defibrillator registry as being critical to emergency care in this province. There's the ACT Foundation in Ottawa, Sandra Clark and her group, who have been advocating for this as well. As well, and most importantly, is the Heart and Stroke Foundation. They've been advocating for this for some while. My former colleague Ted McMeekin put forward a similar bill a number of years ago. So I'm glad that we're going to be able to—I believe—get this thing done.

I want to thank the government House leader for listening and bringing this forward and travelling the bill a little bit. Unfortunately, we weren't able to go to Ottawa—there wasn't enough time for uptake—but we did get to Sudbury, and some of the Ottawa deputants came through via telephone. There were a number of really good presentations that came forward.

Clause-by-clause went very well. I think there were amendments from all three parties that were accepted and voted on. I was very thankful that we put a preamble into the bill. I think it was really important to state the intent of the bill. I'm glad that everybody agreed on unanimous consent so that we could put that in.

Really, the next critical piece of this bill is making sure that we use the regulations to get it right, that we look at defining where defibrillators should be, very clearly defining about how that registry is going to be used—essentially who holds the key to that registry.

I know we had some debate over the penalties for persons and corporations in terms of the maintenance of defibrillators. I know we left that open. I think it was the right thing to do. I think we have to make sure that the fines are not overly punitive and not a disincentive to having a defibrillator present. I encourage, if we get this thing passed—I don't want to presuppose the passing of this bill—that we get those regulations right. There's a tremendous opportunity in there.

Normally in putting a bill forward, with regard to regulations, I'm always a bit hesitant to leave a lot of room in regulations because I believe that we should debate things in this House and that regulations don't always give permanency to some things that need permanency. In this case, I think the openness of the regulations—and I know there were some amendments made in that regard—will be of benefit to the bill and to expanding the scope of the bill a bit so that we can ensure we get this right and that we keep moving forward.

There are areas that we didn't get into this bill that I think are important. I'm not sure they can be dealt with in regulations. There's a really big education piece. There's hesitancy around using defibrillators in applying CPR. I think there's a lot that can be done in terms of public education. There's a lot that can be done in our public schools to ensure that CPR training and mandatory defibrillator training are actually physically done in schools, not just simply showing a video or checking a box. I think there are a number of things that we can do—all of those things

that were brought up very thoughtfully by the deputants at committee.

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I just want to conclude my remarks by again thanking the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and my colleague from Nickel Belt for the collaborative approach to getting a defibrillator registry here in Ontario. I look forward to further debate and the passage of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I've listened intently for the past day or so to the comments and discussions around Bill 141. I wanted to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for bringing this important bill to the Legislature. She has talked a lot about how this impacts people in Toronto. However, this is also a really big issue in Ottawa.

Before I begin, I would like to share a personal story. A couple of years ago, a close family member of mine—I'm not going to say who, for privacy reasons—they were having a cardiac arrest. You don't really understand the impact of the life-saving treatments that our first responders provide unless you've been in that situation. I'm so thankful and I'm so grateful to our first responders, who were able to respond in an appropriate amount of time. The difference between saving a life and an unbearable tragedy—it's seconds sometimes. They made it there right in time to provide the proper treatment, and we'll be forever grateful for that, because if that wasn't the case, it would have been a very different situation and story and outcome—unfortunately, a tragic outcome for my family member. So thank you to first responders. I'm very pleased to speak to this bill because of its importance.

I just want to talk a little bit about Ottawa. According to the city of Ottawa, there are over 800 AEDs that have been placed in the hands of trained citizens in the city, of which over 350 are privately owned and operated organizations.

The city of Ottawa currently uses the Zoll AED Plus for the public system, the AED Pro for our fire and police services and the M Series for our paramedic service. The Ottawa Paramedic Public Access Defibrillation Program is attempting to assist non-city facilities with the development and operation of their PPAD Program by offering the following: help choose, locate within the facility, maintain and download of an appropriate AED; and develop a response plan, training plan, equipment restocking, pad replacement, and coordinate an after-event debriefing for staff. On the city of Ottawa website, it says that if your organization chooses an AED similar to what the Ottawa Paramedic Service is using, then the city can offer more of the above-mentioned services for free or at a reduced cost, due to economy of scale and standardization of equipment and services.

There's a difference between a sudden cardiac arrest and a heart attack. On the city of Ottawa website, it says that a heart attack is a condition in which a blood clot suddenly blocks a coronary artery, resulting in the death of heart muscle supplied by that artery. Heart attack patients usually experience chest pain and usually remain conscious.

Heart attacks are serious and sometimes lead to sudden cardiac arrest. However, sudden cardiac arrest may occur independently from a heart attack and without any warning signs. Sudden cardiac arrest results in death if not treated immediately.

That is why I am so pleased to stand today and speak in support of Bill 141: because again, this is a life-or-death situation within a matter of seconds. According to the city of Ottawa website—there is an FAQ, and it says, “Who is at risk for sudden cardiac arrest?” The response is, “While the average age of sudden cardiac arrest patients is about 65, sudden cardiac arrest is unpredictable and can strike anyone, anywhere, anytime.” I think this is something that, if we have not experienced it personally, we have heard of it in the news, in the media or anywhere else people have looked online or on social media.

The important thing about having access to an AED is that you don't have to be a doctor, nurse or paramedic to use an AED. Non-medical people can use AEDs successfully after a few hours of training. Again, that's the difference between life and death. It's so critical that not only are people aware of this, but that we have institutional and systemic knowledge of where these AEDs are located, how people can access them and what they can do if, God forbid, there is an emergency situation.

Other than administering CPR, the only treatment for cardiac arrest or sudden arrest is a life-saving shock from a defibrillator. When 911 is called, because time is of the essence, generally help arrives too late for survival or to ensure a good outcome. This is even more poignant in rural areas and rural communities, like my riding of Carleton, which, geographically, is larger than the city of Toronto. It takes me one hour to drive from one corner to the other. Imagine if someone in a rural community, like North Gower or Richmond or wherever, is dealing with this situation. If you don't know where that defibrillator is, again, that could be a life-saving versus life-changing situation.

If there was a registry or if there was a resource that someone on 911 or paramedics could access—as a regular citizen, if you're experiencing or witnessing a situation where you call 911 and you know paramedics are on the way, but you need assistance right away, could you imagine how positive or beneficial it could be for that 911 operator to say, “Help is on the way, but in the meantime, here's the closest defibrillator that you can access to use”? Again, Mr. Speaker, it's life-changing, because if a bystander uses an AED within a few minutes, that victim can be saved in more than 50% of the cases. This is why I'm so in support of this bill, especially because I do represent a rural area where, oftentimes, it takes longer for paramedics to respond just by virtue of the fact that they're so far away from the city centre.

I've read through Bill 141, and I'm pleased to talk a little bit about the objectives of the bill. One of the objectives is the registration of AEDs, including privately owned AEDs, in order to improve availability in the event of cardiac incidents for all 911 dispatchers to guide members of the public. There's also the objective of mandatory installation of AEDs in high-traffic public places, such as

gyms, arenas, community centres, golf courses, schools and airports. Again, when it comes to rural ridings and rural areas, this is actually very, very beneficial, because this will ensure that there is an AED nearby, whether it's in the local school or the community centre or the golf course. All those rural areas have at least one of these.

Furthermore, I also support the objective of mandatory installation of all AEDs, both existing and new, in a location that facilitates easy, rapid public access and with appropriate signage because, oftentimes, we don't know where they are, we don't know what they look like and you don't really think about where these things are located until you actually need one. So that easy signage is very important.

It was interesting because, currently and ever since I've been elected, I've never really thought about the locations of the AEDs in the Legislature. When the member from Eglinton–Lawrence was speaking to the fact yesterday—and I was listening intently to her comments—she mentioned that there is a defibrillator right outside these chamber doors. It came as a shock to me, because I have been coming here for almost two years, and I've never really noticed it. It has never caught my eye.

But when she mentioned that yesterday, after debate was closed and the House rose for the evening, I went outside and, yes, literally right outside the doors to the side of the wall, there's a defibrillator. However, prior to the member saying that, if I hadn't heard that and, God forbid, an incident had happened, I would have had no clue that this was located there. So I think it's really important not just to have the signage but to have that registry so that if, let's say, someone is calling 911, whoever the dispatcher is can go through the registry, immediately locate it, and tell the person who's calling where that AED is located. Given the fact that sometimes it's seconds between life and death, I think that's how important this registry is and how helpful it would be.

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The nice thing about Bill 141 is that it talks about a concept overall and it talks about protecting Ontarians overall; however, it still leaves the details to be decided in regulation. The available technology is changing so rapidly—for example, chips in defibrillator cases, outside heated and ventilated defibrillators, drones delivering defibrillators—and regulation in that sense will allow adaptation to the best available means. So we're not imposing a rigid, mandatory scheme. What we're providing is a framework that is adaptable. It's able to be modernized and it's able to move forward with the times, as the minister sees fit. That's why it's so important to leave some of those details to regulations. The overall idea is amazing. As legislators, we do have a responsibility to ensure that we're bringing forward lasting, positive change, and I think this bill does that because it does give us the ability to move forward with technology as innovations come into play.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that oftentimes these events will happen in private places, whether it's a golf course or a business facility or places where large crowds gather. Currently, in Ontario, there is no authority to require

private owners of AEDs to register or otherwise disclose the location of their AEDs so this information can be provided to anyone calling 911, including paramedics. What this legislation will do is—anyone who has an AED is required to register that AED. This isn't a very stringent requirement. It's not going to take a lot of time or money or effort. Initially, it's saying, "If you already have an AED, let us know. Include it in the registry, because if something happens on your premises, at least our first responders will have the tools and the resources they need to respond efficiently and effectively." Again, it's the difference between a life lost and a life saved.

I'm pleased to reiterate what the member from Eglinton–Lawrence said with respect to how to approach this issue. She said that one potential approach is to give paramedic services the authority to collect this information in their area and provide it to 911 dispatchers or the Ontario AED registry, which already exists on the Ministry of Health website. It's an alphabetical list of mostly government buildings, city halls, schools, community centres, municipal stadiums, and every subway station and TTC building. Many paramedic services are already attempting to collect this information. However, they've had very limited success, because registration is voluntary. What this bill will do is make that registration mandatory, which, again, will give our first responders the tools they need to help save lives in Ontario.

The other concern and issue, Mr. Speaker, is that many buildings will keep these AEDs under lock and key, whether it's in a security desk or office, where it cannot be accessed in a timely way. This bill will reduce those barriers. That is why I'm very pleased to support this bill.

Furthermore, this idea isn't a new idea. Some of the best ideas have been taken from other jurisdictions or other places, because there's no need to reinvent the wheel when you have a system that already works. It's very obvious that the member from Eglinton–Lawrence has done her due diligence. She has done her research. She has looked to other jurisdictions to see what has been going on, and I'm pleased to speak to that.

In Ontario, there was a private member's bill introduced on April 21, 2010, which proposed a Defibrillator Access Act. It passed first and second readings, and it was referred to the standing committee on social justice. However, it was not reviewed at committee and did not receive third reading. I'm very pleased that today that is not the case, and I'm so pleased that we're speaking to this at third reading.

There have been other jurisdictions, however, where this bill has been discussed and spoken about. In Nova Scotia, for example, a private member's bill, Bill 89, was introduced on March 5, 2019, proposing the Defibrillator Public Access Act. In British Columbia, a private member's bill, also proposed as the Defibrillator Public Access Act, was introduced on May 13, 2019. Manitoba has had the Defibrillator Public Access Act since 2013, with regulations in place since 2014.

These bills and Manitoba's act address the following key topics related to AEDs:

First, it makes it mandatory to install AEDs in designated premises, which are defined in regulation, to make them available for public use and to post appropriate signage. In Manitoba, these designated premises include gyms, arenas, community centres, golf courses, schools and airports, among others.

Second, it requires owners of the premises to ensure training on the use of AEDs and to conduct regular maintenance of AEDs.

Third, it sets out an inspection and compliance regime for AED installation and registration, including penalties, because ultimately, Mr. Speaker, if you have a life-saving defibrillator on your premises and it's not working, again that's a difference between life and death. So the very least we can do is to ensure that the AEDs and the defibrillators there are in proper working order.

It also makes it mandatory to register AEDs with an AED registry—for example, an organization like the Heart and Stroke Foundation or a provincial emergency health organization like the BC Emergency Health Services. These regulations and the Manitoba act also set out the duties and obligations of an AED registry, registrar or organization. It provides liability protection for owners of premises making AEDs available for use and for users of the AEDs.

I think this is really important because, oftentimes, as an average citizen, if something is happening and you want to help, that limitation of liability and liability protection will assist, because you're trying your best and you shouldn't be penalized for trying to help someone who is already in a state of dying. This allows for people to be able to help and assist as best they can without fearing the consequences because they're not a trained doctor, nurse or paramedic. Again, as the studies have shown, if there's a situation occurring and a bystander accesses and uses an AED, that will increase the chance of survival by almost 50%.

The very nice thing about our bill, Bill 141, and why I'm very pleased to support it is that it also sets out what details can be prescribed in regulation. Again, that goes to the idea, Mr. Speaker, that this is a bill that is meant to protect Ontarians; it's meant to save lives. But it also recognizes that there are changing factors—technology, location, various things. By giving the ministry the opportunity to regulate those details, it gives them the freedom to change and upgrade and improve as necessary without impacting the overall essence and purpose of the bill, which is to have a registry and have accessible defibrillators so that people can access them when they need to.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will also improve Ontario's AED registry. The AED registry was initiated in 2014, and it contains the location of over 3,000 AEDs across the province. It is held by the Ministry of Health, but it's not current and it only contains information on publicly funded AEDs. AEDs are not required in public facilities under current provincial legislation, nor is participation in the AED registry mandated by law. Municipalities are encouraged to voluntarily participate in the registry and provide additional information about AED locations in their communities.

As demonstrated through Manitoba's act and draft private members' bills that I've mentioned prior, it is possible to

mandate the installation and registration of AEDs. Several policy and implementation considerations can shape the approach for Ontario. These policy objectives are presumed to be making AEDs available and accessible for use by the public and emergency responders; making information on the location of AEDs available to emergency responders, especially our hard-working paramedics, and others responding to cardiac arrests; and finally, it aims to improve survival rates and avoid unnecessary deaths from cardiac arrest.

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I'm pleased to stand and speak in support of this bill today. I want to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for all her hard work, and I look forward to supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Thank you, Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

It's my pleasure today to speak in support of Bill 141, the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act. This proposed legislation has as its aim the capacity to save the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of Ontarians. Automated external—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I erred. In rotation, it should have gone over to the official opposition. Therefore, I acknowledge—and please accept my apologies. I didn't see you standing quick enough.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): You are now. That's okay. So it's—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):—Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for further debate.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Did you avoid me because you have trouble with the riding? I'm not sure.

I would like to say to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook that I look forward to hearing what you have to say in a few minutes.

It does give me great pleasure to rise to speak in support of Bill 141, not the least of which is because it gives me a chance to talk about my good friend Dan Achen. Dan Achen actually passed on March 15, 2010, so it was about 10 years ago that we lost Dan. He was a good friend to all of us in Hamilton, in the music community, and he made his mark in the Canadian music industry, absolutely.

Dan was a member of a band called Junkhouse in the 1990s, and, along with Ray Farrugia, Tom Wilson, Russ Wilson and Colin Cripps, who all continue to be Juno award winners and Juno award participants in the Canadian music industry, they made their mark in Hamilton and in Canada. Dan went on to found Catherine North, which was a recording studio. He recorded some wonderful artists, like Leslie Feist, who was actually Dan's niece, and Alexisonfire. Dallas Green recorded there. So Dan really did make an important mark in the music industry.

There's a real love between rock 'n' roll musicians and hockey players. Musicians often like to play hockey and vice versa. Dan was playing a pick-up game at Oakville's Glen Abbey arena when he fell to the ice. Paramedics were called. They were on the scene right away, but they were unable to revive Dan.

This bill provides the notion that when people suffer a tragedy like that, when there is a crisis like that, that there is help there; that there is the idea of access to defibrillators; the fact that there's a registry, that people know where they can access this defibrillator; that they are trained to use it; the idea that there's easy signage. I mean, it's one thing to have one there, but the other problem is that if people don't know where it is or don't know how to use it, it doesn't really serve much point.

It really is an important bill, and we understand that on this side of the House. We have had our member the MPP from Nickel Belt move similar legislation. I understand the idea of a registry, knowing where these devices are, is critically important. We did just hear from the MPP for Ottawa South about the work he has done on this bill.

So many of us, during the course of this debate, have shared stories about how we've lost loved ones, how we have lost family members in what is perceived to be a preventable tragedy. If there's nothing else that we can do in this House—that we work together on this bill, this bill that is about saving lives—I can't imagine what's more important. This is the most important work that we can do for the people of the province of Ontario.

I think we know that we have our first responders—they're invaluable. We support our first responders. We know that when we need assistance, they are there. But in the interim, if we can use these devices to allow people to be revived in time so that first responders can get them to hospital, I think this is a contribution that's invaluable for our communities.

For Dan's family and his friends, it's hard for us to believe that it has been 10 years ago that we lost Dan. He had red hair, and he was fiery; I just have to say that. He was a fantastic guitar player. He also mentored young people. In his studio, Catherine North, he had young folks, women and men, to teach them the skill of recording. He really did nurture talent. In Canada, we know we have quite a vibrant music industry, and Dan certainly played an important role in that regard.

I would like to say that I have had some experience—not in the music industry, but my first husband was a member of the music industry. He was in the band Junkhouse. When they were recording in New Orleans, Dan Lanois, who was a very famous record producer—from Hamilton, I might add. When Junkhouse was recording in Dan Lanois's studio in New Orleans, a studio where he recorded Emmylou Harris, Bob Dylan, Brian Eno, all of the—U2, in fact; U2 is another band, so a very famous—

Ms. Donna Skelly: Joshua Tree.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Joshua Tree. Thanks. The member from Flamborough–Glanbrook knows all too well. Exactly. Joshua Tree, a famous album, was recorded in this record studio.

But the point I'm trying to make is, in fact, I was married in this record studio, funnily enough, in New Orleans. My best man, the person that stood up for me, was Dan Achen, and Dan Achen's partner, Judy Donnelly, at the time.

I would just like to say that for all of Dan's friends, for all of Hamilton, the music industry in Hamilton, his loss was a huge loss to the Canadian music industry. To Judy Donnelly, my friend, who is now in Australia—she was here visiting us last month. To Judy Donnelly and her son Riley Achen, we share with you the loss of Dan Achen. We mourn this loss, and he will not be forgotten. The fact that we have a bill before us that could have been a bill that would, perhaps, have prevented this tragedy is something that we certainly support.

I commend the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for working collaboratively with the House to bring this forward. We are pleased to support this and hope to see it pass in the name of Dan Achen and all of the loved ones that we have lost so tragically.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Donna Skelly: I will be sharing my time with the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, but I want to acknowledge the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for her heartfelt comments in support of this bill. I agree with everything that she said.

This proposed legislation has at its aim the capacity to save the lives of hundreds, if not thousands and thousands, of Ontarians. Automated external defibrillators—or AEDs, as I will now refer to them—are a life-saving tool, and that is just a simple fact. They are devices that restore a normal heartbeat by sending an electric pulse or shock to the heart. They are used to prevent or correct an arrhythmia, a heartbeat that is uneven or that is too slow or simply too fast. Defibrillators can also restore the heart's beating if the heart suddenly stops. They were developed to save the lives of people who experience sudden cardiac arrest. Even untrained bystanders can use these devices in an emergency.

How effective are they? Extremely effective, especially when you compare them with CPR. Depending on which statistics you read and whether the person receiving treatment is in a hospital or not, CPR is only about 2% to 18% effective. Perhaps this is because ventricular fibrillation, a particularly deadly form of heart arrhythmia, is at the root of almost 90% of instances of cardiac arrest in adults. The only way to halt ventricular fibrillation is by using a defibrillator.

It's not hard to use an AED, even for people with no prior medical training. If you own or work at a facility with an AED, or anywhere someone might experience cardiac arrest, it's absolutely worth it to have an AED on the premises, as well as people who know how to use it. AEDs are most effective within the first three minutes of a cardiac arrest, and it can take longer than that for bystanders to realize that something is wrong and to call an ambulance. In addition, AEDs improve recovery statistics for cardiac arrest victims from as low as 2% to upwards of 80%.

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There is no question that AEDs save lives and knowing how to use one is a useful skill. I think there's no doubt that having these devices in areas where people gather, whether for sporting events, meetings, places of employment or really anywhere that people might be when an unexpected cardiac event might occur, is an absolutely great thing.

Mr. Speaker, every year in this province, approximately 7,000 Ontarians will experience cardiac arrest. Up to 85% of these incidents occur at home or in public places. So almost half of cardiac arrests are witnessed by a family member or a friend. When used in conjunction with CPR in the first few minutes after a cardiac arrest, defibrillation can dramatically improve cardiac arrest survival rates by more than 50%.

Most of us know someone or have someone in our family who has a heart condition. It's an issue that touches most people one way or another. One of my constituency office staff members used to be an auxiliary police officer. A few years ago, while on duty at the rose parade in Welland, a bystander suffered a cardiac arrest. Other bystanders called out and she ran to the man to try to help. She had been trained in first aid procedures and began performing CPR on the man until paramedics arrived at the scene. As I said earlier, CPR is effective in less than 20% of the incidents—in fact, much less than that. Unfortunately, the man passed away while she was trying to save him. Ensuring that automated external defibrillators are available to members of the public may prevent tragedies like this from occurring.

Presently, there are an estimated 20,000 AEDs in Toronto, but only about 1,500 are registered. Province-wide, there are tens of thousands more AEDs located in arenas, community centres, government buildings, Legions, churches, libraries and other places with public access. The problem is that a great many of these locations are simply not known. Registration is voluntary, and that is why Bill 141 is so important and what Bill 141 seeks to address.

The mandatory registration of AEDs, including privately owned AEDs, in order to improve availability in the event of cardiac incidents for all 911 dispatchers to inform members of the public as to their locations is absolutely crucial; as well as mandatory installation of AEDs in high-traffic public places, such as gyms, arenas, community centres, golf courses, schools and airports.

Mr. Speaker, with this legislation, we have the power to change lives. We have the power to save lives and, I would add, a duty to do so. Just by making a life-saving technology—

Interjection.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Norm is not here, so I'm going to be continuing.

Just by making a life-saving technology mandatory, by having its location registered and by ensuring it is always

in good working order, we will make this province a safer place for everyone.

I want to provide a little bit of background on AEDs in Ontario. In April 2010, a private member's bill was introduced proposing the Defibrillator Access Act. It passed first reading and second reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Justice. but it was not reviewed at committee and did not receive third reading. In British Columbia, a private member's bill proposed as the Defibrillator Public Access Act was introduced May 13, 2019. And Manitoba had a Defibrillator Public Access Act passed in January 2013 with regulations put in place in 2014. These bills and Manitoba's act address the following key topics related to AEDs as the bills and act are very similar across the four provinces:

- making it mandatory to install AEDs in designated premises, which are defined in regulation, make them available for public use and post appropriate signage;

- in Manitoba, these designated premises include gyms, arenas, community centres, golf courses, schools and airports, among others;

- requiring owners of the premises to ensure training on the use of AEDs and conduct regular maintenance of AEDs;

- mandatory installation of all AEDs, existing and new, in a location that facilitates easy, rapid public access with appropriate signage, along with mandatory inspection and maintenance requirements;

- setting out an inspection and compliance regime for AED installation and registration, including penalties;

- making it mandatory to register AEDs with an AED registry, an organization like the heart and stroke association, or a provincial emergency health organization—for example, BC Emergency Health Services;

- setting out the duties and obligations of an AED registry registrar or organization;

- providing liability protection for owners of premises making AEDs available for use, and for users of the AEDs; and

- setting out what details can be prescribed in regulation.

It's not enough that AEDs be present; someone has to know how to use them, and, obviously, they must always be in working order.

Bill 141 leaves the details to be decided in regulation because the available technology is changing so rapidly; for example, chips in defibrillator cases, outside heated and ventilated defibrillators, and drones delivering defibrillators. So allowing regulation to permit easy adaptation to the best available means makes sense.

Currently, in Ontario, no one has the authority to require private owners of AEDs to register or otherwise disclose the location of their AEDs so this information can be provided to anyone calling 911, including paramedics. One potential approach to addressing this issue is to give paramedic services the authority to collect this information in their area and to provide it to 911 dispatchers or the

Ontario AED registry which already exists on the MOH website. This AED registry was initiated in 2014 and contains the location of over 3,000 AEDs across Ontario. It is held by the Ministry of Health, but it isn't always current. It contains information on publicly funded AEDs, in the form of an alphabetical list of mostly government buildings, city halls, schools, community centres, municipal stadiums, and every subway station and TTC building. Many paramedic services already attempt to collect this information, with limited success, because as this bill seeks to redress, registration is voluntary.

AEDs are not required in public facilities under current provincial legislation, nor is participation in the AED registry mandated by law. So what you have is, essentially, a patchwork of AED availability with no reasonable expectation of uniformity across the province. When you are talking about life-or-death situations, when moments count, it's just not good enough. Time is critical, especially in rural centres. It can take between eight to 12 minutes for EMS to get a helicopter ready to fly to far-out rural areas in the case of someone who has had a heart attack. But if there is somebody trying to help with an AED, that could buy critical time and more lives could be saved.

Right now, municipalities are encouraged to voluntarily participate in the registry and to provide additional information about AED locations in their communities.

Location information for AEDs funded and maintained by Ontario paramedic services is also collected in the central ambulance communication centre—CACC—computer-aided dispatch system. Approximately 4,000 AED locations are tracked within this system. Currently, this information is provided to the CACCs by the emergency medical services in their catchment area. Additionally, only AEDs that have confirmed maintenance schedules by the area EMS provider are added to the computer-aided dispatch system, or CAD. When someone calls 911 in response to a medical emergency pertaining to a cardiac event, the ambulance communications officer may direct someone at the scene to the location of a nearby AED based on the registry details. The CAD is updated as information is provided, and annually at a minimum. But, again—and this is the issue—it is not mandatory.

Mr. Speaker, with this legislation, we have the power to change lives, we have the power to save lives, and, I would add, we have a duty to do so, just by making a life-saving technology mandatory, by having its location registered, and by—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now 6 o'clock. Therefore, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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