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(Hansard)**

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Monday
18 November 2019

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Lundi
18 novembre 2019

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 18 November 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 18 novembre 2019

The House met at 1030.

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

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

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

An Act to implement moderation measures in respect of compensation in Ontario's public sector / Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre des mesures de modération concernant la rémunération dans le secteur public de l'Ontario.

HAMILTON TIGER-CATS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm told that the member for Flamborough—Glanbrook has a point of order.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I do, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this time to congratulate my hometown Hamilton Tiger-Cats, who are heading to the Grey Cup after defeating the Edmonton Eskimos yesterday in an exciting game. The TiCats will be taking on the Winnipeg Blue Bombers in Calgary in this year's Grey Cup.

I know that not only the fans in Hamilton but the fans right across Ontario will be cheering them on. Oskee Wee Wee!

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I was going to do that at the top of my question period lineup. I want to join MPP Skelly in also congratulating the Tiger-Cats on their winning of the Eastern Final. I look forward to the game next weekend.

I also want to introduce the members of l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario—the francophone assembly of Ontario, AFO—to the Legislature today, including: Carol Jolin, le président de l'AFO; Peter Hominuk, le directeur exécutif de l'AFO; Gilles Fontaine, de la FARFO; Louise Choquette, de Nexus Santé; Magali Bouhours, de Nexus Santé; Daniel Giroux, du Collège Boréal; Marc Despatie, du Collège Boréal; Lise Béland, du Collège Boréal; Badrieh Kojok, de PPE; Jacinthe Desaulniers, du Réseau des services de santé en français de l'Est de l'Ontario; et Bradley Boileau, de la FESFO.

I also want to thank the members of the AFO executive board, whom I had the great pleasure of meeting with in Ottawa on Thursday last week.

Soyez les bienvenus à Queen's Park.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I would like to welcome a guest from Etobicoke Centre, Mr. Rick Drescher, who is visiting Queen's Park today on behalf of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario.

I also want to welcome a new page from Etobicoke Centre, who is starting his duties today, by the name of Filip Matevski. I look forward to getting to know him better and taking him out for lunch.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'd like to acknowledge the presence of members of the Ontario Real Estate Association; members of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario; and, of course, my amazing OLIP intern, Vanessa Groves. We're so honoured you chose our office.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Today is the 19th annual Environment Industry Day here at Queen's Park. The Ontario Environment Industry Association is here today. I'd like to recognize the chair of ONEIA, Terry Obal, and the association's executive director, Alex Gill, and invite all members of the House to Hart House tonight for the ONEIA reception.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to introduce and welcome to Queen's Park a constituent of mine, Joseph Carnevale, who is also a member of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario. Thank you.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to welcome Rick Orr from my riding of Perth—Wellington to the Legislature. Rick is here with the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario. Welcome.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to welcome Bob Pfaff and Karen Hill from the Ontario Real Estate Association, who are from Thunder Bay, and my constituency assistant from Thunder Bay, Karli Brotchie.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je veux aussi donner un très grand bienvenue à tous les visiteurs de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. On a le président, Carol Jolin; le directeur général, Peter Hominuk; son assistant, Bryan Michaud, et tous les autres dont la chef de l'opposition a déjà lu les noms. Merci et bienvenue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to welcome Katlyn Kotila. She is the vice-president of the Students' General Association at Laurentian University. She is here with OUSA.

I'd also like to welcome Jennifer Savage. She works at Cambrian Insurance and is here with the brokers' association.

Et j'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à M. Daniel Giroux, le président de Boréal, et à toute son équipe.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to welcome Brian Erwin from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry from the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario to Queen’s Park. Welcome.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I’d like to welcome Chris Floyd and Kim Silva from the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario, as well as, from the Ontario Real Estate Association, William Duce, Tania Benninger, Brian Santos and Tony Schmidt. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I’d like to welcome a new constituent to Barrie, Sergeant Stephen O’Reilly, who is posted to CFB Borden from Garrison Petawawa. Thank you for your service.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would also like to join in congratulating the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. Yesterday was a fantastic day at Tim Hortons Field. It truly is the heart of Hamilton, being right there in the district of Ticat city.

I’d also like to welcome some guests to the House this morning: our autism parents and advocates. We have Esther Tang, Amy Moledzki, Michau van Speyk and Amanda Mooyer. Welcome back to Queen’s Park.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I’d like to introduce Greg Kruk from the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario. Thanks for coming down from HKLB today.

Mr. Paul Miller: Being a sports critic and from Hamilton and with a long family tradition in the team—my dad’s cousin and his best friend were the trainers for the Cats for 25 years in the old Bernie Faloney days—congratulations to the Cats. Bring it home. It’s been 20 years. Go, Cats, go!

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I’d like to introduce in the visitors’ gallery today MBA students from the Ryerson University’s Women in Leadership association. I look forward to connecting with you all following question period today. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to welcome a very important person into this Legislature today: my mother, Kathy Stiles.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I don’t see him here yet, but I just wanted to welcome my dear friend Mark Preston from the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario, who has run many campaigns, starting out with Cam Jackson and myself in 2011. Have a great day here today, Mark.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to extend a warm welcome to the insurance brokers of Ontario. From London specifically, we have with us this morning Traci Boland, Casandra Haas and Suzanne Pountney. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I would like to take the opportunity to introduce some guests in the press gallery: Kuwarjeet Arora from Brampton, Maha Abbasi, and Mariya Salhia, who are visiting today.

I would also like to take the opportunity to introduce members visiting from Amritsar today, in the state of Punjab, India, from the International Fateh Academy.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Today I’m on grandfather day. I have two of our grandkids with us, Nathaniel and Victoria Gardner, who are here for the day, followed by—

Applause.

1040

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And I’d like all of us to wish our granddaughter Eva Wakeford, who is now at SickKids hospital recovering from orthopaedic surgery, a get well. Her bigger sister Elissa, who is back home, is really missing her.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: I’d like to welcome page Julian Bal from the great riding of Cambridge. Enjoy the next four weeks. I look forward to our lunch together.

M. Guy Bourgouin: J’aimerais aussi souhaiter la bienvenue aux membres de l’Assemblée de la francophonie de l’Ontario qui sont ici aujourd’hui avec nous : de la FESFO, Natasha Pelletier et Mélina Leroux; de l’AEFO, Rémi Sabourin et Émile Maheu; de l’Alliance culturelle de l’Ontario, Denis Bertrand; de la Société Économique de l’Ontario, Denis Laframboise; et de l’AFO, Bryan Michaud, Ngoné Diagne, Stewart Kiff et Danielle Roy. Soyez les bienvenus à Queen’s Park.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I would like to introduce Mr. Barry Strader, a former Queen’s Park staffer who is familiar to many of you as he worked for three former Ontario Premiers. Barry is here today to visit his good friend, and my executive assistant, Maxine McGuigan. Please join me to welcome Barry back to the Ontario Legislature.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, I would like to introduce to you, and through you to members of the Legislative Assembly, three constituents from my riding of Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes who are here advocating on behalf of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario. Please welcome Jeff Gatcke, Brian Purcell and Dan Cook. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I, too, would like to add my welcome to Tim Wylie, who is also here from the amazing riding of Huron–Bruce, representing the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario.

Hon. Todd Smith: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. There are a lot of insurance brokers here today.

I’d like to welcome a former hockey teammate of mine. His name is Brian “Twinner” Erwin. He’s here with Currey Insurance and Investments. It was Hockey Hall of Fame last weekend; we’re both still waiting for the call from the hall, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Don’t hold your breath.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would also like to welcome people from the real estate association from Timmins: Anne Marie Vaillancourt and others who are here today as well.

Hon. Ross Romano: I would also like to welcome members from the Sault Ste. Marie Real Estate Board: Andrea Gagne and president Tiffany Rogers. As well, I would also like to welcome Daniel Giroux, president of Collège Boréal, and all of his team from Collège Boréal who are here today.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I, too, would like to welcome everyone here from OREA; I will be meeting with them later today.

I also want to wish our granddaughter Adelaide a happy sixth birthday, which was on Saturday; and happy birthday to our granddaughter May, who is 12 today.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'd like to welcome Mr. Joseph Carnevale to the Legislature this morning. Mr. Carnevale is here this morning in his role as the incoming president of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario, and he is also a well-respected constituent in my riding of Vaughan–Woodbridge. Mr. Carnevale, welcome to Queen's Park.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following document was tabled: a report, entitled Expenditure Estimates 2019-2020: Ministry of Transportation, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

I also beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following document was also tabled: a report, entitled Expenditure Estimates 2019-2020: Ministry of Transportation, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education. Parents and students are anxiously watching the news about Ontario schools this week and looking for a government that's ready to work with educators in our classrooms. Yet for the last year, the Premier has relentlessly attacked teachers, even referring to them as "union thugs."

The government refused to apologize for those remarks when given a chance earlier this year, so I'm asking the minister now: Does he think that the Premier's comments were acceptable?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Indeed, it is the Premier and every member of this team that values our front-line workers: our teachers, our nurses, our doctors—those who add value, that improve the quality of life of every citizen in this country. It's why, today, as part of an announcement I made this morning—to encourage all parties to turn to mediation so we can ensure we get a deal for the children of this province, so we can ensure that kids remain in class.

Under the CUPE deal, we turned to mediation. It was a prudent tool. It was an independent point of contact that helped bring the parties together, bridge the gap, and get a good deal for all parties. We seek to replicate that with our teachers, because at the end of the day, our focus for this government is keeping kids in class.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I dare say, if the minister were serious, he would actually be offering mediation straight to the unions and not through the media. That would be the respectful thing to do.

Most Ontarians respect the work done by teachers in the classroom, but for the last year, the Premier of Ontario has really only been insulting them. He's blamed them for the failures of his own policies. Last spring, when students across the province walked out of classrooms to protest the government's education cuts, the Premier claimed that they were ordered to do so by their teachers. He stuck by that claim, even when students came out here to Queen's Park to tell him that he was wrong.

Does the minister think this is the way to build a respectful relationship? If not, will he apologize on behalf of the government that he serves under for the Premier's comments and his actions?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The objective of this government since day one has been to land voluntary settlements with all unions to ensure that the children of this province remain in class. Today we offered mediation, both to the unions but also to the public, because we want families to know that it is our government that is going to going to be constructive and remain mission-focused on getting deals.

Mr. Speaker, when we faced an impasse with CUPE, it was the government and the parties that turned to a mediator, an independent third party, that was able to bring the parties together and get a good settlement—a settlement that helped us achieve the objectives we sought, as well as ensuring we reinvested more monies in the front line, which had over 1,000 front-line workers hired in this province.

We're going to continue to negotiate in good faith with all unions to get deals for the children of this province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, something about negotiating through the media—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Something about negotiating through the media actually belies this minister's assertion that he is respectfully negotiating, Speaker.

For over a year, the Premier has made it clear that he was spoiling for a fight with the women and men who teach our kids. He called them "union thugs." He claimed they secretly ordered the high school student walkouts across Ontario last spring. He even blamed them when he was booed at public events.

These aren't the actions of a leader or a government who want to work productively with teachers in the classroom. So can the minister tell us: Why has the Premier worked so hard to pick a fight with our educators?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: To the member opposite: In fact, the Premier and every member of the government is working hard to get deals for the children of this province. The reason why today we've turned to mediation is because

we've accepted that for the critical few issues that remain at the table, we want to utilize the talents of a mediator, a third party, who can help bring the parties together to get a voluntary settlement.

Every objective we have achieved so far through this process has been focused on good-faith bargaining. One union, in specific, has actually opted to publicize the offers tabled. That has been the decision of OSSTF, not the government. But obviously, our commitment is to negotiate in good faith, with one mission in mind: a good deal that keeps children in this province in class.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the education minister: It's not just the Premier's words that are concerning parents and students; it's his actions. One of his first acts as Premier was to put a plan in place to fire 10,000 teachers. Despite months of denial, that plan is actually still in place.
1050

The Premier claimed that he consulted thousands of educators and students about their hopes for education. So my question is: How many teachers were consulted about the Ford government's plan to take 10,000 jobs away, and how many parents asked for more crowded classrooms?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Parents of this province have asked us overwhelmingly to do everything we can to keep children in class. That is the issue that the member opposite chooses to avoid. Mr. Speaker, 100% of families want this government to be constructive, student-centric and to get deals. We adopted that approach with CUPE, where we worked in good faith. Notwithstanding the deadline bargaining and notwithstanding the natural ebb and flow and the frustrations of those observing, we got a deal, and we seek to do that with our teachers.

What is frustrating for families is that every three years they have to face the cyclical and omnipresent reality of labour strife, where their children may not be in class on Monday. That is unacceptable. We want a deal that provides predictability to the people of this province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If the minister were actually listening to the advice of parents, as he claims, he wouldn't be negotiating through the media by suggesting to the public that mediation should happen as opposed to talking to the unions directly.

Students and parents are looking to government to support excellent public schools that will allow kids to thrive, but for the last year, the Premier has been tearing down the people who make those schools work while making deep cuts in the classroom. After unilaterally imposing classroom cuts that no one asked for, the government unilaterally and unconstitutionally imposed a salary cap.

How can the Ford government make unilateral classroom cuts, unconstitutional intrusions into bargaining, call teachers names and bargain through the media and have the brass to claim that they're not looking for a fight with teachers?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We seek a resolution with our teachers because we value their work.

It was this government that opted, in the last budget, to allocate over \$1.5 billion to ensure that teachers remained in class.

It was this government that announced, in this most recent economic statement, another \$200 million, the highest investment ever recorded in the history of this province, under this Progressive Conservative government.

It was this government that more than doubled the funding envelope for mental health.

It is this government that hired nearly 200 psychologists and psychotherapists for secondary schools.

It's this government that is revamping our math curriculum and going back to basics.

We're focused on student success, and we're not going to be deterred. We're going to focus on keeping kids in class. We hope that every member of this Legislature will stand with the government and stand with parents in achieving that objective.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This minister knows very well that, taking into consideration student population growth and inflation, his raw numbers really mean nothing.

The last year has been tough for parents and students, however. They've already seen layoffs for teachers and education workers. Expanded class sizes are a reality. The elimination of thousands of high school classes has taken place, and programs like full-day kindergarten are put at risk.

Instead of working with the teachers and education workers who make our schools work, the Premier has called them names. Parents and students across Ontario deserve so much better than that.

Is the government going to start undoing the damage, or are they going to continue with the Premier's agenda of cuts in the classroom and picking fights with the educators who make our schools work?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: This government is going to invest in the students of this province. We are on track this year to spend more than \$1.2 billion more than we did last year. We're investing \$200 million more in this economic statement, announced by the Minister of Finance.

We're doing all of this—more expenditure for health and education, the services that are so consequential to the lives of our families—while keeping taxes low, and we're on track to return to balance. This is a plan for every person in this province, for the next generation, who won't have to be burdened by the last generation's transfer of debt.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that by investing in children, by investing in education, we build a society where everyone can achieve their potential, get access to a good job and be able to contribute to this country's development.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: This morning, parents heard more concerning news about talks with teachers and disruption in our schools. My question is to the Minister of Education.

For months, the Premier has done his utmost to pick a fight with teachers in the classroom. Today, instead of backing down from their cuts, the minister goes to a press conference and tries to blame anyone but the Premier himself, who started this fight. Bargaining with OSSTF was literally delayed today because the minister had to hold yet another press conference.

Why is the government more focused on escalating tensions and trying to avoid blame, instead of working toward a solution?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite. Mr. Speaker, I often reflect, as a student of history, on what is the common denominator in this experience. What unites Premiers Bob Rae, Mike Harris, Ernie Eves, Kathleen Wynne, Dalton McGuinty and now Doug Ford? Is the commonality the ideology or the values statement or the party, or the fact that in each and every example, unions have opted to escalate?

The fact is that our mission, our practice, is to focus on getting deals. We have seen this story before, and the objective of the government is to say to families that we will do everything within our tool kit to get deals.

Mr. Speaker, today I opted to turn to mediation, encouraging the members of the union and the trustees to consider it as a viable path to get deals. It is a constructive option, it is a third-party option, and it has worked for CUPE just weeks ago.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the minister to go back to history class, but it has probably been cut under his government.

Our teachers, students and families all deserve better than the cuts and the chaos that this government is serving up. Their cuts have rolled back opportunities for our students to succeed and created a crisis in our schools. Catholic teachers today described chaos at the bargaining table, with the government changing teams and proposals mid-negotiation. Instead of working with teachers in good faith to fix this mess, they're going to the press, trying to avoid blame.

When will the government reverse their cuts to education and start fixing the damage, instead of exacerbating tensions?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: To the member opposite: What I will affirm to the member opposite is that since day one, we have done everything we can to get a deal. When we faced challenges with our partners in CUPE, we offered more dates. We turned to a mediator. We did everything we could to be constructive, because families in this province deserve to know that there are forces at the table that are going to fight to keep their kids in classrooms every day. Mr. Speaker, it is not an abstraction. It is not theory. It is a reality that we got a deal overwhelmingly ratified with CUPE by advancing that mission of keeping kids in class and investing in the front lines.

We seek to do that again with our teachers. We value their contributions. We know that they work hard, and we want to keep them in class, too, working. That's why we're

going to do everything that we can to work with our parties, including a mediator, to get a deal. I would hope that all parties would look to an independent third party, with the promise that it can help reach deals that keep all of our constituents' children in class.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is for the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. The people of Durham and all across Ontario expect us to work towards and take measures that ensure clean air, clean water and an environment that is protected across this province for future generations. I know that's one of the guiding principles the minister used in developing his proposal, the Better for People, Smarter for Business package. Would the minister please tell me how the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act is ensuring the environment is protected for future generations?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you to the member for Durham. I know the member for Durham cares deeply about the environment and is always looking for ways to work together with industry and others to ensure that our environment is protected for the future generations of this province. With the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, we're taking a thoughtful, sensible, targeted approach to fixing Ontario's broken regulatory framework.

One of the guiding principles of this government while easing regulatory burdens has been maintaining a clear focus on protecting and safeguarding Ontario's environment. Smarter regulation is not at odds with this priority. When operating properly, these principles go hand in hand.

That's why our package, for instance, proposes to expand the use of administrative monetary penalties for environmental violations in order to hold polluters accountable. The broader use of administrative monetary penalties will allow the government to take swift action against illegal activity.

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

Ms. Lindsey Park: I want to thank the minister for his work on this file. It's not good enough to just have laws on the books without any consequence for violations, and so I'm really pleased to hear that the minister has been thoughtful in his approach to protecting our environment for future generations.

I'd like to ask the minister to be a bit more specific. Can you tell me how you have proposed to hold those who commit environmental violations accountable?

1100

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Right now, only 140 facilities in this province can be fined for violations through administrative monetary penalties. The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, if passed, will increase that number to up to 150,000 facilities in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we're strengthening enforcement and adding new tools so that if a company is breaking the rules and benefiting financially from doing so, not only will

they be fined under this new system; they will be charged for the economic benefit as well and could be further referred for prosecution.

We've made it much tougher on environmental violators. What we're doing through this package is adding yet another tool for environmental officers to do the important work of safeguarding our environment on behalf of all Ontarians and protecting our future generations.

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS PROCESS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Attorney General. Speaker, as the Attorney General knows, or should know, judicial appointments are lifetime appointments, and keeping the appointments process fair and impartial is vitally important to the justice system. But last week, the Attorney General revealed that the Ford government is planning changes to the judicial appointments process and, to quote one legal expert, the reason is obvious. He said, "They want a bunch of names so they can look down and find a nice soulmate Tory."

Speaker, why is this government trying to change the appointments process to make it easier to hire their friends?

Hon. Doug Downey: I was expecting the question because I read the papers this morning, and the papers actually talked about the announcement that I made last week in a speech. So it's no shock at all.

I can tell you, I hear over and over again about our justice system and how we can always do better. This is not a notion that I came to in the last couple of months. Thirty years ago, I was working, training new judges on how to do paperwork. I've probably dealt with more judges than anybody else in this chamber. Then I did a master's in judicial administration, in public administration for courts; then I did a law degree; and then I worked in the judicial system for several years.

Mr., Speaker, I can tell you—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Legal aid.

Hon. Doug Downey: Legal aid: I took legal aid certificates. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Response?

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll have more to say in my supplementary.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: As we just saw with the minister's response, we've seen with the Ford government in action. We know they like to give jobs to their friends, relatives and insiders. Whether it's hiring a 26-year-old lacrosse-playing buddy of the Premier's chief of staff to a six-figure job in Manhattan or trying to install the Premier's friend as chief of the Ontario Provincial Police or firing the acting commissioner of the OPP when he had the courage to blow the whistle, we know that this government can't be trusted to run a fair appointments process.

Speaker, the judicial appointments process is working well. Why is the Attorney General trying to change that?

Hon. Doug Downey: There is so much more that we need to do. I'm drawing on my experience as an executive member of the Ontario Bar Association and on my volunteer time with the Law Society of Ontario. I'm consulting with former Attorneys General; I've talked to several former Attorneys General, both federally and provincially. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, there is so much more we can do to make our system even better.

The suggestion that we would not be able to improve the system, that we need what we need—Mr. Speaker, if you look at these young pages around us, that was me when this system was brought in. Things change. We need to modernize. We need to move forward. We need to attract the best.

FRANCOPHONE ISSUES

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Deputy Premier. For months and even years now, the husband of one of the government caucus members, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, has consistently been viciously attacking members of the francophone community, making hateful and racist comments.

Just recently, he targeted a francophone reporter, mocking his French nationality. I could reference so many examples, but here's just one: He posted online that the president of a leading organization had his nose up in a specific body part of the former French-language commissioner, a body part that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the member to take her seat. The question has to be about government policy. Could the member rephrase her question?

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: That's related to a caucus member's position—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Stop the clock. Will the member please take her seat? I have to be able to hear the member.

Once again, the question has to be about government policy. I'll give you a chance to rephrase your question to put it.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: No, I need an answer for that—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay, we're going to move on.

The next question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question is for the Minister of Health. Over the past 15 years in Ontario, we have seen the problem of hallway health care grow and grow. I'm proud of our government's plan to end hallway health care. The previous government, supported by the NDP, ignored the problems with our public health care system, and it was especially true of the problems faced by small and medium hospitals.

We recently announced increased funding for hospital operations across Ontario to help address these many years of neglect. Can the minister tell this House about the

investments our government is making to end hallway health care across this province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'd like to thank the member from Niagara West for the question. The member is quite right: The previous government failed to address changing demographics and prepare our hospitals for the pressures that they are currently facing. Ending hallway health care takes smart investments in our public health care system and a relentless focus on patient care. That's why our government made a \$68-million in-year investment for hospital stabilization and relief. This is in addition to the \$384 million more that Ontario hospitals have already received this year. This investment addresses problems with the funding formula that saw small and medium-sized hospitals shortchanged for years.

This government will continue on our path to end hallway health care and work with patients, families and front-line providers to build a sustainable public health care system for years to come.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I'd also like to thank the minister for her work for hospitals across Ontario, including in my riding of Niagara West. The previous government's funding formula saw small and medium hospitals lose out on the operational funding they needed, but our government invested \$68 million, and I know this will make a significant impact in small communities like Brockville, Owen Sound, Hawkesbury—communities across Ontario.

Hallway health care is a very complex issue and one that no one, single solution will fix. But it's why our government has a plan to tackle hallway health care that will encompass many different factors. Could the minister tell the House a little bit more about our government's plan to tackle hallway health care for my constituents and all citizens across Ontario?

Hon. Christine Elliott: As the member mentioned, hallway health care is a very complex issue and one that's going to take a comprehensive plan to fix. As part of our plan, we will place a focus on health promotion to keep Ontarians healthy and out of hospital. Understanding that hospitals aren't always the best place for people to receive care, we are also working to ensure that access to the right care is available in the right place to all Ontarians, regardless of where they live. We are also better integrating care to improve patient flow, and ensure patients who are ready to leave the hospital can return home with the supports and services that they need. Finally, by investing \$27 billion over 10 years in hospital infrastructure projects, we will build capacity throughout the system, including in our hospitals and other community-based care facilities.

We made a commitment to the people of Ontario that we would end hallway health care, and our plan is well on its way to doing that.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Ian Arthur: My question is for the Acting Premier. Today the Toronto Star is reporting something that

residents of Tottenham have known for years: Their tap water is contaminated with dangerous chemicals, including trihalomethanes, which are linked to pregnancy complications, cancers, and damage to the heart, liver and central nervous system.

What's worse, these documents show the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has known about this contamination for years. The Liberals knew about it, the Conservatives knew about it, and no one has done anything. How could the government let this happen?

1110

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I thank the member opposite for that question. Just to add to the record, the correspondence in 2017 between the MECP and the municipality showed the province advised the township to address its halomethane problem with additional treatment measures and operational practices. The letter was from district manager Cindy Hood. The proposed strategies from the ministry were considered but eliminated by the township for various reasons. The ministry provided recommendations, which are not a legal requirement. Hopefully the municipality has taken the proper actions going forward.

But, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you one thing: The water systems across this province are in good, excellent shape. We will continue to work with the town to ensure that the water is going forward. I'll have more to say in the supplemental further to what's going on in the area.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: For more than 15 years, politicians and health officials in Ontario have known that the tap water in Tottenham was unsafe, yet they didn't feel it was necessary to let people know. It's not just Tottenham; in 2016, more than 80 communities have exceeded the allowable guidelines for THM in Ontario, including North Bay, Innisfil, Kawartha Lakes and Timmins, among others.

The Liberals downloaded the cost of source-water protection onto the municipality. The Conservatives have followed the same pattern, further cutting municipal and conservation authority funding. Why does the Acting Premier believe saving a buck is worth getting people sick?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: The town will continue to monitor the THM levels in Tottenham drinking water by sampling in accordance with the requirements of the Tottenham drinking water licence. The town expects to begin construction in 2020 of a transmission main which will connect the Tottenham drinking water system to the Collingwood-Alliston pipeline. Construction is expected to be completed by 2022. In addition, the aeration system in the pipeline is also expected to help reduce THM formation in Tottenham's drinking water.

We are working with the township. I can't answer for the previous government's inaction, but we're putting

action in and working with the town to make sure we clean up the water systems here. We remain committed to ensuring Ontario has the highest standards of drinking water protection and will continue to work with all our partners across Ontario, with businesses, private owners, residences, schools and Indigenous communities. We will maintain Ontario's world-class drinking water system in this province.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Mike Harris: My question is for the Minister of Health. Last week, our government announced a Digital First for Health Strategy. Ontarians have been frustrated by a system that's incredibly outdated. We've had to tell our stories over and over again to different doctors. We've had to carry around paper files or send information by fax. It's time that we put an end to this kind of system. That's why our government is building comprehensive solutions to these problems and making a difference in the lives of patients.

Can the minister tell this House how our Digital First for Health Strategy will help Ontario access the care they need?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga for his question. Our government's Digital First for Health Strategy brings the patient experience into the 21st century and helps end hallway health care by offering more choices and making health care simpler, easier and more convenient for patients. This strategy will enable innovation in our health sector, so that front-line care providers are provided access to better and more connected tools.

Thanks to these changes, the new Ontario health teams will be able to use secure digital solutions to improve patient care. With the potential to reduce travel for patients in rural and remote communities, this phase of our strategy will also expand virtual-care options so that patients will have the option of video visits from their care providers. When it comes to bringing Ontario's health care system into the 21st century, our government is just getting started.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the minister. The Digital First for Health Strategy is addressing many long-standing issues with how care is delivered in this province. It is clear this plan will not only help achieve a modern and fully connected health care system but also help with reducing hallway health care.

I am pleased that our government is continuing to make investments to expand digital health solutions that will achieve the real results that Ontarians have needed for so long. With private sector data breaches becoming an increasingly common issue around the world, Ontarians are very concerned with the privacy of their information.

Can the minister tell this House how Digital First for Health strengthens protections for Ontarians' medical information?

Hon. Christine Elliott: As part of this strategy, our government is strengthening the Personal Health Information Protection Act so that Ontarians can be confident that their medical records are going to be protected. Our government did engage with the Information and Privacy Commissioner as we developed this strategy, and we are very pleased that the commissioner is supportive of the initial proposed changes.

We are also introducing stricter penalties for misuse of personal health information, including creating new offences for re-identifying a person using their health information. Our government believes patients must have control of their health information and private consent in how it is used and shared.

Our Digital First for Health Strategy is about harnessing the imagination and capabilities of Ontario's digital health innovators while, of course, protecting the privacy of Ontarians.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last week, Ontario's Financial Accountability Office published its analysis of the Ministry of Transportation's spending plan. The FAO found the government is planning a massive 40% cut to transit spending. How can this government keep its transit promises when this government is cutting funding for the province's transit capital plan by a massive 40%?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: We thank the Financial Accountability Officer for his report. As outlined in our budget in 2019, our government plans to spend \$67 billion on transit over the next 10 years. This is a 10-year plan that reflects a realistic forecast of construction timelines for major projects planned or under way, in keeping with actual expenditure patterns. The FAO report only focuses on a five-year time frame.

I think everyone in this House knows that our government is making significant investments in transit infrastructure, like our multi-billion-dollar commitment to get subways built in Toronto, and we have a realistic plan to deliver.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the Minister of Transportation: The FAO found that not only did this government cut transit spending by 40%, but it's cutting funding for Metrolinx by 36% as well. Metrolinx has already made drastic cuts to GO bus service because of the government's funding cuts. This has left riders from Bolton to Oshawa stranded. Metrolinx has also hiked fares on the Union Pearson Express, and they plan to eliminate the GO-TTC fare discount next month.

On paper, this government likes to make a lot of big-ticket promises, but in reality this government is making congestion worse by cutting service and hiking fares. How can this government say it's helping commutes when transit cuts are making congestion worse?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: The Associate Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member for the question, and thank you to the minister for letting me address this.

I think our government has been very clear over the last year and a half that we are committed to getting Ontarians moving. We have made historic investments in public transit in the city of Toronto and in York region, spending \$28.5 billion, forming a partnership with the city of Toronto, getting this city moving again.

We have spent \$30 billion across this province in infrastructure projects so that we can reach our two-way, all-day GO service. We have improved all of the lines in our core key segments, including Niagara, Lakeshore East and the Kitchener line, where we've increased service by 48%, which I know my colleagues in this House are very happy about—not to mention children, 12 and under, don't pay fees, and, of course, bringing WiFi to the GO network next year.

Public transit is a priority for this government, and we've made it very clear in this House.

NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Norman Miller: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Minister, in my past role as critic for northern development and mines, I travelled around northern Ontario and saw the infrastructure needs across the region. I trust our government is working with the federal government, municipalities, community groups, Indigenous groups and businesses to ensure that important infrastructure projects move forward for the benefit of northern Ontarians.

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I recently noticed that our government is investing over \$33 million in transit infrastructure for the city of Sudbury. Can the minister provide the House with details on these important investments for the people of Sudbury?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'd like to thank the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for his great advocacy for the north, because he's quite right: Our government is investing more than \$33 million for transit infrastructure in cities like Sudbury. Sudbury asked for funding for their accelerated bus fleet replacement program, so Ontario is investing more than \$11.5 million. In addition, we have committed more than \$9 million for the design and construction of a major mobility hub for Greater Sudbury Transit. We're also putting more than \$8.7 million toward the design of bus rapid transit corridors in the city, which, together with additional investments in various technological improvements and traffic signal renewal, will result in improved transit for the people of Sudbury.

Sudbury officials told us these were their priority projects, and we listened. That's why we're committing to more than \$33 million in total transit infrastructure investment.

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

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you to the minister for confirming our government's commitment to investing in priority infrastructure for the people of Sudbury. Those are the kinds of investments that can really have a positive impact on the daily lives of families.

But most of northern Ontario doesn't have access to public transit. These areas need investments in roads and bridges to ensure that people and products can travel safely around the north. Aside from transit in the city of Sudbury, can the minister tell this House if there have been investments made in other northern Ontario communities?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right: Our government is investing nearly \$31 million in communities across northern Ontario, from Timmins to Algoma to Cochrane to James Bay, for roads and for transit infrastructure projects.

In Timmins, Ontario is investing close to \$1 million for improved transit infrastructure, including improved accessibility and the purchase of two new low-floor accessibility paratransit mobility buses. In Red Lake, we're investing more than \$1.6 million for the rehabilitation of priority roadways. In Pickle Lake, we are committing more than \$1 million for the reconstruction of Pickle Lake Road. And across Algoma–Manitoulin, we're putting more than \$13.5 million in road, bridge and airport infrastructure, which is crucial to northern Ontario.

Municipal officials told us that these were priority projects, and our government listened. I hope the official opposition supports us in this.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Minister of Education. Incidents of racism in Ontario's schools continue to be a growing concern for students, their families and teachers. Students deserve answers, and we know that empty words won't help students and families feel safe, welcome and respected in their schools.

Recently, the Minister of Education announced a review of the Peel District School Board in light of reports of anti-Black racism that existed under the Liberals and persists under the Conservatives. The previous Liberal government spoke a lot of pretty words after hearing from concerned communities and took no concrete action, and this government has already cut funding from anti-racism initiatives that should fund initiatives just like this.

Can the minister please provide details today outlining how students', teachers' and families' concerns will be taken seriously this time?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to express my gratitude to the member opposite for the question. Indeed, in this province, there is no tolerance for racism, for prejudice against any child. In the case of the Peel District School Board, as I've communicated with her over the weekend and with various members of the chamber in the opposition, I take this seriously. I find it unacceptable when serious allegations emerge of anti-Black racism or racism that is targeting children of visible minorities or racialized students. That is unacceptable in this province and in this country.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, almost immediately after finding out about these allegations being raised by the chair and the vice-chair, as well as one of the directors of education, I immediately took action by calling in two reviewers, who will be bringing forth recommendations to me in the coming weeks, on an expedited basis. Those reviewers will be in the schools and the board in a matter of days and weeks.

More importantly, it gives me the ability, under the act, to impose recommendations to improve equity and improve the experience of every child in a classroom in Peel and across the province.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Back to the Minister of Education: Since the ministry announced their review of the Peel District School Board due to reports of anti-Black racism, we've been hearing concerns from parents and students in Peel that this government will just file another report that will be swept under the rug.

Racism in our schools cannot be tolerated. We all have a responsibility to ensure that racialized students feel safe and welcome at their schools and in our communities.

The minister promised that this review would be transparent, but after promising no teacher would lose their job, this feels like cold comfort. Will the minister ensure that the review has the resources to fully investigate the culture of racism at the Peel District School Board and that a concrete plan of action and those recommendations will be made public?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to express my gratitude to the member for Brampton Centre for the question.

At the end of the day, it is very clear, I think, that every member of this chamber does not accept any form of racism or discrimination for any reason. The anti-Black racism and the allegations that have emerged in Peel—I've spoken to both members on this side of the chamber from Brampton, all members from Mississauga and the members opposite. In each and every communication, I have made clear that we have called in the reviewers with one mission, which is to investigate the systemic allegations and circumstances of bias and prejudice, and to root it out, with recommendations that will be made public and will come to my table this year, that I will impose on the board this year to ensure that every child feels more safe, more welcome and included in the classrooms of this province.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Donna Skelly: This is also to the Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, bullying is a painful reality for the majority of Canadian children and youth. Whether they are the ones that are being bullied or the ones being aggressive towards others, students may find talking to adults about bullying difficult, even though adult intervention is the key to bullying prevention.

In 2001, Ontario designated the week beginning the third Sunday of November as Bullying Awareness and

Prevention Week. Eighteen years later, the goal of promoting safe schools and a positive learning environment is more important than ever.

We know that the longer a child is bullied, the more likely they are to develop physical, emotional and psychological scars that can last a lifetime. Can the Minister of Education please tell the Legislature and the government what he's doing to address bullying in our schools?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member for her leadership in Hamilton and across the province in raising awareness to combat bullying in all of its forms.

Indeed, it is Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, and I think all members of this House speak with one voice in the denouncement of this form of increasing violence that can target young kids, an increasing form of hate and discrimination.

In this province, we have a zero-tolerance policy. I believe that there are too many examples and too many circumstances of young women and men emerging with stories, and their narratives being told, of them feeling like the system has not been responsive to their needs.

Today and in the coming days, I'll be making further steps, more announcements, that we can take to improve enforceability, improve training and supports for these children and victims of bullying, and ensure that there is accountability for those who perpetrate these types of heinous activities.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to work every single day, and work across party lines, to ensure that every student in this province is safe from bullying.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you, Minister, for your response. We know that bullying can have serious effects on kids' mental health. Tragically, as we have seen recently, it can have fatal consequences.

I was pleased to join you, Minister, on October 12 at CAMH, together with Natalie Pierre from my riding of Burlington, for your announcement on mental health education. That day, you provided Natalie the opportunity to share the story of her son, Mike, a grade 12 Corpus Christi high school student who, in 2017, sadly, took his own life.

Minister, can you please give this Legislature some concrete examples of the actions our government has taken to address bullying?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Burlington for her leadership and for introducing me to Natalie Pierre, who is an incredibly courageous woman who tragically lost her son.

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It is for Mike, for that young man, and it is for so many other victims of bullying and isolation that we speak, united, today to say that bullying must end in this province.

Our government announced a health and physical education curriculum that in the earliest years, grade 3, starts to remove the visible and invisible differences in the eyes of our young people. We are trying to change the culture in the classroom so people appreciate the inherent dignity

of every person, irrespective of faith, heritage, orientation or place of birth.

We've invested money to support our principals on de-escalation training, more resources for our teachers and more supports for our victims. There is more to do to strengthen enforcement and strengthen data collection to understand how pervasive the problem is. We're going to give additional support to support victims of these crimes.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre par intérim.

Once again, the flu season is upon us. Despite everyone's best efforts, many people are getting sick. This government's Bill 47 will allow employers to request sick notes before workers can go back to work. We've seen this movie before, Speaker. The majority of Ontarians feel forced to go to work sick rather than get a sick note.

Getting a sick note for a minor illness is not quality care—much the opposite. People going to work sick spread their disease. People getting a sick note will often be in a waiting room spreading their germs to often frail, sick people around them.

Will the Acting Premier reverse the decision regarding sick notes for minor illnesses?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud to stand up every day in the House to talk about our record in the last 16 months when it comes to standing shoulder to shoulder with workers right across this province. We've created, in 16 months, over a quarter of a million new jobs in the province of Ontario. We have the lowest unemployment rate in nearly three decades today, thanks to the measures that our government has put in place. Wages are going up in the province of Ontario. One thing that I've yet to hear the NDP compliment this government on, and the one policy that I'm most proud of as Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, is the fact that in 2019, people earning under \$30,000 per year in the province of Ontario will pay zero income tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question? The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This Premier promised to end hallway medicine, but first he cancelled the two-day sick leave. Now he's forcing people to get sick notes for minor illnesses, actions that are going in the opposite direction. They are making hallway medicine worse, when workers feel they have no choice but to go to work, potentially making others ill.

Will this government listen to health care professionals, who overwhelmingly agree that asking people to get a sick note for a minor illness is not only a waste of resources, but is dangerous? Will the Acting Premier reverse the provision of Bill 47?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: As the member opposite knows, this is not mandatory; it's optional.

We assumed office after 15 years of reckless decisions made by the Liberal government of the day, supported by

the NDP. Some 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs were obliterated—sent south of the border, sent to other places around the world—because of the decisions of the Liberal and the NDP parties in those 15 years.

As I said in the first question, in 16 months, Mr. Speaker, over a quarter of a million new jobs have been created in the province of Ontario. Wages are going up. Unemployment is at a 30-year low in the province of Ontario. And, again, those making \$30,000 a year or less will pay no income tax in Ontario.

LABOUR POLICY

Mrs. Daisy Wai: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. Since taking office, we have been working to make this province open for business while maintaining the rules that keep people healthy and safe. Our government has shown what it means to truly put the people at the centre of every decision that we have. It is in this spirit that the history of hard-working men and women in Ontario should be shared with everyone in our province.

Can the minister please tell us what the government is doing to promote the history of labour in Ontario?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you to the honourable member from Richmond Hill for that excellent and important question.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to share with the members in this House that Archives of Ontario has launched a new online exhibit titled Ontario at Work. This exhibit commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Since taking on this new portfolio in June, Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to meet now with over 150 labour leaders across the province, many business leaders and countless workers in Ontario. With every conversation, I learn something new about labour and the diverse workplaces we have right across Ontario.

As our government lays the groundwork for a safer, fairer and more harmonious future, I encourage everyone to visit this new exhibit. I encourage everyone to visit ontario.ca/archives.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Congratulations, Minister, on the launch of this new exhibit, and thank you for your answer.

Our government is making the province open for jobs. Businesses and labour in my riding of Richmond Hill have benefited a lot from it. Jobs in Ontario and around the world have certainly changed a lot over the past 100 years. I'm sure that the opportunity to look back at the past will be intriguing and insightful as we prepare for the future. This journey through history gives us knowledge we never had before.

Can the minister please tell us more about this exhibit and what it means for the people in Ontario?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you again to the member for Richmond Hill for that question.

Mr. Speaker, this exhibit shows three principles that I firmly believe. First, it demonstrates that a safety-first approach is both good for workers and good for the bottom line. Second, it makes clear that stable and constructive labour relations support a competitive and sustainable provincial economy. And third, it illustrates the role of the Minister of Labour, to be fair to workers and responsible to taxpayers.

I'm proud to note that 98% of labour negotiations are resolved without disruption, and Ontario is a leader in health and safety. Since we formed government, our province has 256,200 brand new jobs, unemployment is down and wages are up. Mr. Speaker, make no mistake: We're building Ontario together.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Acting Premier. In the Premier's very first budget, he cut \$1 billion from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. For people who depend on support from the ministry—particularly those with developmental disabilities such as autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder—this was devastating news after 15 years of underfunding and neglect by the Liberals.

Now we've learned that this Conservative government isn't listening to families, but they are willing to pay up to \$1 million for a consultant to tell them how to carry out these deep cuts to programs that support people with developmental disabilities.

Will the Acting Premier explain why they continue to purposefully force people with disabilities to bear the brunt of their short-sighted cuts?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Todd Smith: Everything about that question was counterfactual. It just was not true.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the minister to withdraw.

Hon. Todd Smith: I'll withdraw that, Mr. Speaker.

As the member knows, there is a growing demand for developmental services right across the province. I've actually sat at a table with the member opposite, in her own riding of Windsor West, meeting with families myself. Our ministry has taken to the streets, we have taken to every community across the province, and we will be continuing to meet with those who are involved in the sector. Families with children who are affected will be meeting with those who provide the services. It's the government that will be doing that.

Certainly we know we can do better in this sector after 10 years of zero investment in this sector by the previous Liberal government. She was right about that, Mr. Speaker. We've got a lot of work to do. We're going to work together with the member opposite to make—

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

1140

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Actually, the minister did come to Windsor, and he sat across the table from families and individuals with developmental disabilities as they cried and begged for help, and yet he still chooses to spend \$1 million on a consultant to cut the services and supports that they need.

People with development disabilities and their families are worried sick about these drastic cuts. The programs the Conservatives are looking to cut provide crucial supports like respite, day programs and in-home caregivers—programs that some families aren't even able to access because they've been on a wait-list for years. Agencies in the developmental services sector, who haven't seen a base funding increase in over a decade, still do not have their annualized budgets seven months after the fiscal year began. They're completely in the dark about the future of their funding.

The Acting Premier co-chaired a committee that determined five years ago that families were being “pushed to the brink of disaster.” How can she continue, five years later, to purposefully cause anxiety and chaos for Ontarians with disabilities and the people that support them?

Interjections.

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

To the minister to reply.

Hon. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that we are committed to working with all those in this sector to ensure that we're actually helping the families that need help. As I mentioned, I sat with the member in her own riding and talked to those families. I understand the challenges that they are facing. They are the same challenges that they have been facing in this sector for the last 10 to 15 years, and the previous Liberal government did nothing when it came to this file, Mr. Speaker.

We recognize the challenges. We are spending \$2.6 billion in this sector now in Ontario, but we know we can do so much better. That's why we have hired the services of an outside firm while at the same time meeting with those who are providing the services in Ontario to ensure that we are going to get the investment and the better outcomes that these individuals deserve.

The wait-list has grown and grown and grown under the leadership of the previous Liberal government, Mr. Speaker. We're going to do something about it to make it better, to help these families get the services that they need.

PROVINCIAL DATA STRATEGY

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Two weeks ago the minister stood in this House and explained the ways in which data has the potential to be a limitless resource for jobs and economic growth in this province. Mr. Speaker, the minister was absolutely right. The minister was also right to point out that the massive potential of the data economy needs to be nurtured and that we need to ensure that the personal information of Ontarians is protected.

Minister, can you explain how Ontarians have had the opportunity to have their say in the provincial data strategy through your consultations? And can you tell us more about what our government has been doing to ensure that the people and business owners of this province are having their voices heard on this important issue?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I want to thank the member from Niagara West for his thoughtful question. Everyone needs to be assured in this province that our government is focused on creating jobs and growing businesses. The data economy is an industry where we can expect massive growth. That's why our government is well on its way to launching a first-of-its-kind provincial data strategy that will help foster economic growth, protect the data of Ontarians, and enable smarter, more accessible government.

We know that business leaders and community members across this province know best. That's why I'm very pleased at the results of the consultations that we've had across Ontario. We've consulted with people and business leaders in Toronto, Stratford, Ottawa, Peterborough, and most recently in Sarnia and Sault Ste. Marie as well. I want to thank my colleagues for helping out with those consultations, and I'd like to give a shout-out to my parliamentary assistant, Bob Bailey, for the great work he's done as well.

I'd like to assure everyone that they can also participate in—

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you very much, Minister, for the response. I want to thank the minister for her answer and also for giving Ontarians the opportunity to have their voices heard when it comes to the development of the first-ever provincial data strategy in Canada—truly groundbreaking. I know many Ontarians were glad to have been given the chance to meet with you and your staff and other members of this government to discuss how our government can ensure economic growth in the data economy is also keeping their personal data safe.

Minister, you've spoken in this House about some of the elements that will form the basis of the provincial data strategy, including things like the minister's task force. Could you please provide an update to this House about the work that has been undertaken by the Minister's Digital and Data Task Force thus far, and can you tell us more about the next steps for this task force?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to share with everyone that the appointment of my Minister's Digital and Data Task Force is a critical part in the development of our overall provincial data strategy.

The task force is another way in which our government is listening to people. Our government is giving business leaders, academic experts and world-class practitioners the opportunity to bring their experience and their valuable insight to the policy-making process. Since meeting for the first time in July, our task force has been meeting regularly. We're going to be assessing and making concrete recommendations in response to the consultations that we've had.

I look forward to reporting back on this very important initiative.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to welcome to the House my mother-in-law, Nashi Dervishi. It's her first time here. Welcome.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to ask the member why she's not introducing us to the adorable bundle she's holding. She'll have to get up and do another introduction because we want to know the name and the weight.

I want to introduce my former legislative assistant, Emily Kirby, and her mother, Karen Hunter, who are here for my statement today. Thank you very much for being here.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to introduce my friend Roberta Scott, who is from Cardiac Arrest Response and Education.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POVERTY

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Dear government:

Every year winter comes, and this year is no exception.

The official opposition has stood in this House fighting for a real poverty reduction strategy, telling you stories of people living rough, needing homes, needing help, or being left in the cold—literally.

Last week in Kitchener Centre, the Working Centre, the House of Friendship, and St. Mary's Church came together to ensure that shelter was available for those who needed it when the cold snap hit.

What were you doing? Where were you when the cold hit?

My community ensured that 100 people had shelter from the cold every night last week because the region of Waterloo's overflow shelter spaces were not available until November 25. And with this government's cuts to municipalities, my community is in crisis, and will remain in crisis after that date.

I love and appreciate the community members who came together to address this crisis, but relying on municipalities to fund overflow shelters is not a solution.

The people of Kitchener Centre need an affordable and supportive housing strategy. We need a poverty reduction strategy. We need a government that does more than make superficial announcements.

Like your gas pump stickers, your band-aid solutions aren't sticking.

Do better. Ontario is watching.

WOMEN'S HABITAT

Ms. Christine Hogarth: On November 14, I was pleased to be part of a special fundraising event in my riding put on by our local riding association.

The Women's Habitat is a 25-bed shelter for women who are fleeing violence. It has been in operation since 1978. They are leaders in making sure that women and children fleeing domestic violence or the fear of violence have a safe place to stay. The work they do in the community, providing support, counselling and advocacy for women, is second to none. They offer a wide variety of programming for both women and children, including shelter services and outreach services, and have many other resources. Collectively, shelter staff speak 18 different languages to ensure that language is not a barrier for anyone receiving services.

Over 50 people participated in this event, where they were asked to bring bedding and other brand new linens to help decorate the bedrooms of our local shelter. The event was held at Cool Beer brewery, and we want to say a special thank you to Bobby Crecouzos from Cool Beer Brewing Co. and all those who worked hard and volunteered to make this event such a success.

November is domestic violence prevention month. Violence against women transcends class, culture, race and ethnicity.

I would like to commend Women's Habitat for the work they do and encourage all members to reach out and offer to help shelters in their ridings. They do life-saving work, and they all need our support.

AUDREY McKAY

Mr. Jeff Burch: This past summer, the labour movement lost a dedicated teacher, mentor and advocate in Audrey McKay. A journalism graduate of Conestoga College, Waterloo, Audrey began her professional life as an intern for the Creative Arts Festival in Hamilton, where she developed her skills in organization, promotion and communication. In keeping with her labour sensibilities, Audrey moved on to a lifelong career in the labour movement. For many years, she worked for the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, where she developed many bonds of friendship with colleagues and routed her future path.

Her subsequent years working for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Healthcare, where I met her 20 years ago, allowed her to follow her calling: to stand up for the rights and protection of people. Always the activist, Audrey's passion for education and women's rights drew the gratitude and admiration of many. A fearless fighter, Audrey was the best advocate to have by your side, whether professionally or personally, to which many of those who grieve her passing can attest. Audrey taught leadership and steward training to health care workers and had a profound impact on the workers she came in contact with. She loved empowering young women.

As a sister, aunt, sister-in-law, cousin, niece, colleague and friend, Audrey will be deeply missed. She had a distinctive style, an intelligence, an optimism and a raw sense of humour that always put things into perspective.

Audrey was a colleague, a campaign manager and a friend of mine.

Those who knew her will have the privilege of feeling her impact on their lives for years to come. May she rest in peace.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, you'll know that many seniors face challenges accessing programs and services that support their safety, mental and physical health, and overall well-being. That's why I'm pleased that the government is investing more than \$77,000 to help seniors in Durham region stay active and socially connected. Of the total funding, \$25,000 is part of the Seniors Community Grant Program, which is providing \$3 million to support more than 260 projects to benefit seniors in communities across the province. More than \$52,000 is being provided to the Whitby Seniors' Activity Centre, as part of a \$14.1-million investment to support more than 300 Seniors Active Living Centre programs in Ontario.

Speaker, these investments are great news for seniors and their families in the Durham region. The support will go a long way in helping to keep seniors in Whitby active and socially connected, which has tremendous health benefits. Seniors will also have an opportunity to take part in activities and to build social connections that they may not otherwise be able to do without this government support.

Ontario remains committed—absolutely committed—to protecting what matters most to seniors and their families.

MOOSE TAGS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Last week, I had the opportunity to meet with a group of outfitters from my riding. Times are tough for these small businesses.

Outfitters offer lodging, food, boats and all the necessities for anglers and hunters. In my riding, many are water-access only. They love what they do. They choose to live and do business in the bush with all the creatures that live out their way. But this government's decisions are putting their survival at risk. If you look at the moose population, it seems that all the government can do when the population declines is to cut the tag allocation. Everyone knows that the tag allocation is what makes or breaks an outfitter.

There are other ways to protect these beautiful animals. For instance, last year 14 moose were killed on a stretch of a few kilometres of railroad tracks. Is the government doing anything to protect them? Nothing. We already have quite a bit of snow in my riding. How long before the carnage starts again this year?

I can tell you that 14 moose tag allocations would make a lot of outfitters very happy.

Why not look at the length of the season? Other provinces do it—not Ontario. Promote the outfitters? The Ontario government won't do that either. But what they do do is increase the price of a road sign from \$153 to \$480. This is a 300% increase.

When the government makes decisions that put people out of business, they should take some responsibility and offer compensation. Or, as one outfitter said, "Who gave them the right to take our tags away? We should be compensated." I agree, Speaker.

YOUTHLINK

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's a privilege to rise in the House today and to recognize the important work that YouthLink does to support at-risk youth in Scarborough.

This past June, I had the honour of attending the grand opening of the new YouthLink shelter on Warden Avenue. It is the first and only youth shelter of its kind in Toronto—I am thrilled that it is accessible in Scarborough—providing both emergency beds and long-term beds for youth transitioning out of the foster care system.

YouthLink is helping young adults prepare for the next phase of their lives by providing counselling and teaching; skills like cooking, baking and budgeting; helping youth access education and training opportunities; and providing assistance for finding permanent housing. These supports are unique to YouthLink's shelter and advance the long-term well-being of their clients so that they can get a good start in life.

The city of Toronto has reported an average of 2.2 deaths per week of people experiencing homelessness in 2019. While the city is in the midst of a homelessness crisis, it is a real shame that, under this government, we have stopped counting the number of homeless people on our streets in this province. This data is needed and required.

YouthLink is providing 10 emergency beds and 41 transitional beds along with resources to help break the cycle of poverty and homelessness. As our temperatures drop, up to 51 young people will have a safe and healthy place to sleep this winter.

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Speaker, I want to thank Janice Hayes, Evan Back, the entire YouthLink team, and the volunteers and donors who have made a real difference in the lives of so many young people.

IN OUR FATHERS' FOOTSTEPS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm pleased to rise and make a statement about an inspiring journey to keep the thoughts and stories of our Canadian veterans alive.

Karen Hunter from Guelph is here today. She's the daughter of a Canadian World War II veteran who served in the Netherlands. Inspired by her father's war memoir that he gave her on his 80th birthday, Karen hopes to rally 200 descendants of these Dutch liberators, like herself, to walk in their fathers' footsteps in May 2020. The event

will commemorate Canada's liberation of the Netherlands 75 years ago. The group will walk 60 kilometres of the researched routes of the Canadian troops, in what they're calling "platoons," with professional guides. They will hold candlelight vigils and flower ceremonies at Canadian war cemeteries and monuments. They will also celebrate the veterans' legacy of freedom and friendship with the Dutch at liberation festivals. They will eat from mess kits, plant maple seedlings and dedicate a memory box. The highlight will be their walk into Het Loo palace in Apeldoorn, where they will be met by Princess Margriet of the Netherlands. Karen believes that it's now up to these veterans' descendants, the next generation, to carry the torch of remembrance for them.

Information about the event can be found on the website inourfathersfootsteps.com. They can also be found on Facebook, "In Our Fathers' Footsteps—Join our WWII Dutch Pilgrimage," and Twitter, @WWII_Liberation.

I wish them luck.

MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I rise today, as a mother of a newborn, to discuss a topic that is all too often overlooked: maternal mental health.

The physical recovery from childbirth is already difficult, but the process of postpartum mental health recovery is equally harrowing. Mothers must try to heal physically and mentally from the childbirth experience, while enduring sleepless nights and managing the exhausting day-to-day of newborn care. But there is so much more pressure than that.

Somewhere right now, a mother is feeling a deep sense of failure as someone admonishes her for feeding her baby from a bottle. What they don't know is that she already wept at the checkout line when she bought formula for her hungry baby, after struggling and failing to breastfeed.

Somewhere right now, a mother is desperately trying to keep up with the mental load of her household, ensuring the safety and wellness of her family, remembering birthdays, school events, dentist appointments, helping aging family members, maybe while working a full-time job. Those around her don't realize she has been ignoring her own health issues for months.

Mothers often bear the judgment from others for every choice they make for their child.

It takes a village to raise a child, yet in today's world, we often find ourselves parenting in isolation. Community can be a luxury that many mothers don't have the time or resources to seek. What community we do find may be cruel and judgmental. Maternal mental health cannot be a luxury.

To all mothers out there, I want to say, I know you're doing your best. Remind yourself of what your children already know: You're the best mama in the whole world.

DIABETES

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: November 14 of each year is marked as World Diabetes Day, which is the primary

global awareness campaign focusing on diabetes mellitus worldwide.

Diabetes is a major cause of blindness, kidney failure, heart attack, stroke and lower-limb amputation. Over 425 million people are currently living with diabetes, and most of these cases are type 2 diabetes, which is largely preventable through regular physical activity, a healthy and balanced diet, and the promotion of healthy living environments.

It is important to note that one in two people currently living with diabetes are undiagnosed. Therefore, early diagnosis through regular screening and treatment for complications are key to prevent the complications of diabetes and achieve healthy outcomes.

All families are potentially affected by diabetes, and so awareness of the signs, symptoms and risk factors for all types of diabetes are vital to help detect it early. However, some statistics show that less than one in four family members have access to diabetes education programs. It is important that families be provided with the education, resources and environments to live a healthy lifestyle, because family support in diabetes care has been shown to have a substantial effect in improving health outcomes for people with diabetes. This could reduce the emotional impact of the disease that can result in a negative quality of life.

Let's spread the awareness of diabetes to combat this silent killer.

VETERANS

Ms. Jane McKenna: November 11, 2019, marked the 100th anniversary of the first Remembrance Day across the Commonwealth. Today, Remembrance Day provides an opportunity to honour and remember veterans from the First and Second World Wars, the wars in the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo, and more recent conflicts like the war in Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom, the Libyan civil war and the ongoing battle against ISIS.

In Burlington, the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 60 led a unique project that honoured our local veterans by placing banners with the names and pictures of veterans on the light standards along Brant Street.

On Saturday, Remembrance Day ceremonies were held for veterans at Billings Court and the Brant long-term-care facility. This tradition began 25 years ago in partnership between Burlington MPP Cam Jackson and Bill Reid, fondly known as the singing veteran. For the last 31 years, commuters from Appleby GO station have heard Bill singing wartime songs while pinning on their poppies.

On Sunday, the Burlington cadets began their overnight vigil at the Burlington Cenotaph to remember the men and women who fought for the values and freedoms we enjoy today. Thank you, Shawn Fowler, second lieutenant of the Burlington Army Cadets, for inviting me.

On Remembrance Day, the Burl-Oak Naval Veterans held their sunrise ceremony at the Naval Ships Memorial

Monument at Spencer Smith Park. Thank you to Fred Norman, chair of the Burl-Oak Naval Veterans, for his continued leadership.

Up next was the Remembrance Day parade, which wove its way through downtown Burlington. This was followed by a touching ceremony led by our branch 60 Legion at the cenotaph at Burlington city hall. It was heartwarming to see so many people out to remember the sacrifices that our veterans made in service to our country. The Halton Naval Veterans Association held a lunch that was absolutely delicious as well.

To me, veterans are our heroes. They're the ordinary people who do extraordinary things to protect the freedoms that we have often taken for granted. We have a responsibility to keep the conversation going so that we always remember the dedication, bravery and sacrifice made by both those in active duty and our veterans.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DEFIBRILLATOR REGISTRY ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉFIBRILLATEURS

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to enact the Defibrillator Registry Act, 2019 / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2019 sur le registre des défibrillateurs.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Nickel Belt care to explain her bill?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely. A quick thank you to Liz Scanlon from Heart and Stroke, Dr. Robert Ohle and Dr. Sarah McIsaac, as well as the Chase McEachern Memorial Fund for funding AEDs to not-for-profits, such as the daycare at Laurentian University.

The bill enacts the Defibrillator Registry Act. The act provides for the creation of a registry of the location of defibrillators installed in premises that are accessible to members of the public, and for the appointment of a registrar to maintain the registry. The registry is to be made available to 911 call-takers and dispatchers in Ontario.

Persons responsible for premises that are accessible to members of the public are required to notify the registrar when installing a defibrillator or when removing or re-locating it. The act also sets out certain requirements related to the maintenance of the defibrillators. The minister responsible for the administration of the act may develop programs and services that aim to assist in identifying where to install defibrillators and in appropriately maintaining the defibrillators. The minister is required to develop a complaints mechanism for use by members of the public respecting contraventions of the act.

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

Mrs. Martin moved first 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Eglinton–Lawrence care to explain her bill?

Mrs. Robin Martin: The Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act, 2019, will provide requirements respecting installation, maintenance, testing and availability of defibrillators on designated premises or public premises.

The act also requires defibrillators at such premises to be registered with the registrar within specified periods of time, and for the prescribed persons to be notified of the registrations.

We look forward to debating this.

PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED TO DOGS
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2019

Mr. Nicholls moved first reading of the following bill:
Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2019.

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

Would the member for Chatham–Kent–Leamington like to explain his bill?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The bill actually repeals provisions in the Animals for Research Act relating to the disposition of pit bulls under the act.

The bill also repeals provisions in the Dog Owners' Liability Act that prohibit restricted pit bulls and provide for controls on pit bulls.

The act is also amended to provide that if a court finds that a dog, in an unprovoked attack, has inflicted a severe physical injury on a person or has killed a person, the court shall declare that the dog is a vicious dog and may order the dog to be destroyed, and shall order that the owner be prohibited from owning another dog for a period of at least 10 years.

An attack is not considered unprovoked if the person attacked was wilfully trespassing or committing another wilful tort on the premises occupied by the dog's owner, was committing or attempting to commit a crime, or was teasing, tormenting, abusing or assaulting the dog, or if the dog was protecting or defending a person within the

immediate vicinity of the dog from an unjustified attack or assault.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(AIR BRAKE ENDORSEMENTS), 2019
LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(INSCRIPTIONS AUTORISANT
L'UTILISATION DES FREINS
À AIR COMPRIMÉ)

Mr. Sandhu moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 142, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to air brake endorsements / Projet de loi 142, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les inscriptions autorisant l'utilisation des freins à air comprimé.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the member for Brampton West to briefly explain his bill.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Section 32 of the Highway Traffic Act is amended to provide that a person who holds a driver's licence with an air brake endorsement is not required, upon renewal of the driver's licence, to retake any examinations with respect to the endorsement.

In addition, a person who applies for an air brake endorsement must take the examinations with respect to the endorsement, unless the person held a driver's licence with an air brake endorsement that was valid at any time within the three years before making the application.

HEALTH AND SAFETY
AT WORK DAY ACT, 2019
LOI DE 2019 SUR LA JOURNÉE
DE LA SANTÉ ET DE LA SÉCURITÉ
AU TRAVAIL

Ms. McKenna moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 143, An Act to proclaim Health and Safety at Work Day / Projet de loi 143, Loi proclamant la Journée de la santé et de la sécurité au travail.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Burlington care to explain her bill?

Ms. Jane McKenna: Yes, I would, Speaker. The bill I am introducing today proclaims April 28 in each year Health and Safety at Work Day. In doing so, we'll be bringing Ontario in line with World Day for Safety and Health at Work, established by the International Labour Organization, an agency of the United Nations, established in 1919.

On April 28, Ontario will join 187 member states of the ILO to raise awareness of the importance of a health and safety culture in every workplace. This is recognized as

fundamental to a prosperous Ontario economy and essential to the well-being of our people.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HOLODOMOR

Hon. Todd Smith: I rise in the House today to acknowledge National Holodomor Awareness Week, as set by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. This year marks the 86th anniversary of the Holodomor, which took place from 1932 to 1933.

Holodomor was a genocide. Entire families were torn apart, villages were wiped out, and millions of ethnic Ukrainians died from starvation at the order of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin. And Ukraine was forcibly brought under the control of the Soviet Union, which wanted to eliminate the Ukrainian independence movement.

Ontario's Ukrainian community has worked hard to educate us about these atrocities and ensure that they are never forgotten. We have vibrant Ukrainian communities right across the province, in Toronto, Hamilton, St. Catharines, Ottawa, Thunder Bay and Niagara.

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress has an Ontario Provincial Council, with branches across the province that are creating opportunities for public dialogue, and working to engage the next generation of youth and young leaders.

Speaker, in April 2009, this House unanimously passed the Holodomor Memorial Day Act. It was sponsored by my former Progressive Conservative colleague Frank Klees; the former member from Parkdale–High Park, Cheri DiNovo; and a former Speaker of the Legislature, the member from Brant, David Levac. This private members' bill of the Ontario Legislative Assembly was sponsored by all three political parties.

I am proud that Ontario and the rest of Canada has embraced our Ukrainian friends and neighbours. Canada has welcomed them.

Ontario's history includes a long timeline of immigration success. We would be nowhere without it. It's the foundation of our towns and cities, a demonstration of our shared compassion, and the cornerstone of who we are and what we are as a province. Our province's diversity stems from the fact that each year, thousands of people from around the world choose to make Ontario their new home. We'll continue to welcome those from around the world who have felt the effects of oppression, dictatorship and communism and continue to live in fear of persecution.

The Holodomor left a devastating mark on generations of Ukrainians around the world and especially in the Ukraine. We stand with those innocent victims and families of survivors of this forced starvation and remember their strength and resilience in the face of an unthinkable tragedy. Mr. Speaker, today we stand with the Ukrainian community.

1330

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: It's a privilege to rise in the House today, on behalf of our leader of the Ontario NDP, my fellow caucus colleagues and the constituents of Parkdale–High Park, to join Ontarians in recognizing National Holodomor Awareness Week. I'm privileged and proud to represent many Ukrainian Canadians from my riding in this Legislature.

This week, November 18 to 24, we commemorate the victims and honour the survivors of one of the most heinous crimes, the man-made famine, a genocide known as Holodomor. With National Holodomor Awareness Week, we raise awareness of the 10 million innocent Ukrainians—men, women and children—who, from 1932 to 1933, died from forced famine under the Soviet dictatorship of Joseph Stalin. We raise awareness that this was an act of genocide, an act that attacked Ukrainians through deportations, forced labour and other abhorrent treatment as a means of establishing control over Ukraine and to destroy the Ukrainian people.

Holodomor devastated the country and an entire generation. People's lands were seized, grain and livestock were confiscated, and borders were closed to prevent Ukrainians from escaping this famine that was imposed on them. In little more than a year, a quarter of the population died by forced starvation.

Sadly, the West was complicit. Journalists who were toured around by Soviet public relations officials returned reporting that there was no issue, that there was no forced starvation, and so aid was not forthcoming. When we think about this almost incomprehensible atrocity, the absolute horror which we memorialize today, we must raise awareness of our complicity. We raise awareness to ensure that the facts and the victims who were subjected to the deliberate, catastrophic famine are remembered by all Ontarians and Canadians. However, Speaker, it was only recently that Ontario joined the world in November to mourn the victims and acknowledge the Holodomor as an act of genocide. It was only recently that officially in this province we started to collectively remember the crimes committed against the Ukrainian people and celebrate the strength and resilience of the people of Ukraine here in our Legislature, in our schools and in our communities.

I see the resilience and spirit of the Ukrainian people every day in my riding. It was an honour to have worked beside Ukrainian Canadians who pushed the government to recognize this act of genocide that for far too long in this province was not regarded as the genocide that it was. I want to take a moment to appreciate the Ukrainian community, particularly the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the League of Ukrainian Canadians, the Taras Shevchenko Museum in my riding, and all of my Ukrainian Canadian constituents who worked tirelessly so that now in Ontario, we commemorate Holodomor and raise awareness. Thank you for your ongoing advocacy, for your efforts to ensure that in this province we continue to raise awareness of Holodomor as a genocide.

In addition, I'd like to acknowledge my predecessor MPP for Parkdale–High Park, Cheri DiNovo, who was a co-sponsor of a tri-party bill—the first tri-party bill of the

Ontario Legislature—to have the Ontario government recognize Holodomor as genocide. Because of your work, we raise awareness about Holodomor by supporting the teaching of Holodomor in our schools. I have had the opportunity to visit various Toronto stops of the Holodomor mobile classroom as part of the Holodomor National Awareness Tour. As a result of the determination of the Ukrainian community, students across the province are engaged and educated about this genocide so that we can remember it for generations to come.

For National Holodomor Awareness Week, I ask that everyone in this House and all Ontarians take the time to learn about Holodomor, take time to remember the victims.

This coming Saturday, the fourth Saturday of November, is national Holodomor Memorial Day. I invite everyone to join the Ukrainian community and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Toronto branch, at the commemorative service at the Holodomor Memorial located at Exhibition Place at 3 p.m. For members back in their home ridings this weekend, attend your local memorial services, and this week visit the memorial at the Princes' Gates on the Exhibition grounds. The statue serves as a permanent memorial for the victims of Holodomor.

I had the honour of joining the Ukrainian community for the unveiling of the Toronto Holodomor Memorial Parkette. I was moved to hear the experience of survivors and will forever remember their stories.

Speaker, Holodomor was a political choice. As legislators, we must be acutely aware of this and honour our duty to be vigilant and to stand up against hate every time. With National Holodomor Awareness Week, we raise awareness of the horrific genocides of the past by commemorating the victims so that we do not turn away from tyranny—and by raising awareness of genocides of our past, we hope to ensure that similar acts never happen again.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It is my honour to stand in the House today, on behalf of the members of the Liberal caucus, to talk about the national Holodomor memorial week. I know that my former colleague Yvan Baker, who fought in this House for recognition in so many ways—I'm thinking of him today. He's now the MP for Etobicoke Centre.

Close to 400,000 Ontarians can trace their Ukrainian heritage. They make invaluable contributions to the fabric of our province and make Ontario a better place to live. This week, we join with them and Ukrainians around the world in remembering the catastrophic effects of the Holodomor genocide, where millions of Ukrainians lost their lives in a deliberate, sustained and avoidable man-made famine. Today we honour their memory, Speaker.

This year marks the 86th anniversary of the Holodomor, but references to the famine were suppressed in Ukraine and in the USSR until decades later. I'd like to thank the Ukrainian Canadian Congress for their tireless efforts to keep this history alive—and making sure that all Canadians know and remember the Holodomor.

Today, in our schools, we teach about the Holodomor and many other atrocities so that students can learn about the history.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, from his letter in a Birmingham prison, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." This is something that we have to keep in mind, Speaker, when we remember the past.

Most Ontarians have never lived through and will never live through an experience like the Holodomor. It is by listening to the stories of survivors and their descendants that we keep their memories alive and that we remember the Holodomor so that we will never again allow this to happen. Memorials that have been set up here in Toronto, like the Holodomor Memorial Parkette, are places where the community can go to reflect and to remember that this will never happen again—not on our watch.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding notice for private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice regarding notice for private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Once again, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that notice for ballot item number 85, standing in the name of Mr. Sandhu; ballot item number 86, standing in the name of Mrs. Martin; ballot item number 87, standing in the name of Mr. Nicholls; ballot item number 88, standing in the name of Mrs. Wai; ballot item number 89, standing in the name of Ms. McKenna; and ballot item number 90, standing in the name of Ms. Singh, be waived, on the list drawn on July 11, 2018.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved that notice for ballot item number 85, standing in the name of Mr. Sandhu; ballot item number 86—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Dispense.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to table a petition here in the Legislature entitled "Ontario, Let's Stop Declawing Now."

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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“Whereas the surgical procedure known as declawing (onychectomy) is actually a partial digital amputation (PDA) that is the equivalent of cutting off the tip of a human finger at the first knuckle (cutting through the joint below the nail); and

“Whereas Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) and the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA) oppose the declawing of domestic cats unless there is a medical reason to do so; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) has advised against declawing of domestic cats to protect human health even for the animals of persons who are severely immunocompromised; and

“Whereas the procedure is considered inhumane and is already illegal or only performed under extreme circumstances in eight California cities and the city of Denver and in more than 40 developed countries such as: England, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, Portugal, Israel and Spain; and

“Whereas Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta and New Brunswick are the first provinces or states in North America to ban declawing of domestic cats; and

“Whereas scratching is normal cat behaviour and a cat’s primary defence, declawing a cat alters that normal behaviour, causes avoidable acute pain and has the potential of causing behavioural problems (such as biting and litter box avoidance) and chronic pain; and

“Whereas it is estimated that over 20 million domestic cats in North America are declawed every year...;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately enact legislation that bans declawing of cats in the province of Ontario.”

I’m going to hand these over—I’ve got quite a few of them here—to page Lennon to table with the Clerks.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr. Mike Harris: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the current law in the province of Ontario does not require amber warning lights on school buses as part of an eight-lamp system, despite every other province in Canada requiring their use by law;

“Whereas motorists are educated and experienced with the use of amber lights meaning ‘caution’ and red lights meaning ‘stop’;

“Whereas the current law makes the use of buses from Ontario less safe when travelling out of province or into the United States since motorists in those areas are familiar with amber warning lights;

“Whereas all buses manufactured since 1 January 2005 are equipped with an eight-lamp system which can transition to amber lenses with very little cost;

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

“That the Highway Traffic Act, section 175 and regulation 612, be amended to require the use of amber lights as part of an amber and red eight-lamp system in school buses in the province of Ontario and that the amber lenses must be installed in all school buses as soon as practical after coming into law.”

I’ve already affixed my signature to this, and pass it to page Julian to take to the table.

LIBRARY SERVICES

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I have a petition here:

“Support Ontario’s public libraries;

“Whereas Ontario Library Service—North and Southern Ontario Library Service provide the support for inter-library loans, staff and board training, bulk purchasing, collaborative programming, technological supports, a shared electronic book collection and other online resources, and a shared catalogue database used by many libraries;

“We, by signature, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“—for the reinstatement of funding to the Ontario Library Service (north and south) agencies to, at minimum, the 2017-18 funding levels, in order for these agencies to continue their day-to-day support of Ontario public library services; and

“—to continue to maintain base funding for Ontario public libraries.”

I will affix my signature to this and give it to page Lennon to bring to the Clerk.

MEMBER’S COMMENTS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition from B’nai Brith of Canada League for Human Rights.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), committed to the destruction of Israel, has been listed by the government of Canada as a terrorist group;

“Whereas the PFLP is responsible for the gruesome murders of Canadian Lonna Sabbah and Ontarian Howie Rothman, as well as the heinous murders of countless innocent civilians from various nationalities, including children;

“Whereas the member for Ottawa Centre recently demanded the release of senior PLFM member Khalida Jarrar, who was convicted in Israel in 2015 for incitement and promoting terrorist acts, and rearrested in October under suspicion of involvement in terrorist activity;

“Whereas the member for Ottawa Centre referred to Jarrar as his ‘parliamentary colleague,’ and refused requests by B’nai Brith Canada to disavow her role in this terrorist group;

“Whereas the Ontario NDP has stated that it ‘denounces terrorism in any form’;

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

“To demand that the member for Ottawa Centre publicly apologize for his statements, disavow Khalida Jarrar for her involvement in the terrorist group PFLP, and denounce terrorism as a legitimate means of negotiation.”

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to page Filip.

DOCUMENTS GOUVERNEMENTAUX

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier M. Réal Audet de mon comté, qui est bien tanné de se faire appeler « Real » et qui aimerait bien ça avoir un « é » sur son nom.

« Pétition—Accents en français sur les cartes de santé de l'Ontario et les permis de conduire en Ontario.

« Alors qu'il est important d'avoir le nom exact des personnes sur les cartes émises par le gouvernement, tels la carte santé ou le permis de conduire;

« Alors que plusieurs personnes francophones ont des accents dans l'épellation de leur nom;

« Alors que le ministère des Transports et le ministère de la Santé ont » tous deux « confirmé que le système informatique de l'Ontario ne permet pas l'enregistrement des lettres avec des accents; »

Ils demandent à « l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario ... qu'elle s'assure que les accents de la langue française soient inclus sur tous les documents et cartes émis par le gouvernement de l'Ontario avant le 31 décembre 2020. »

J'appuie cette pétition, monsieur le Président. Je vais la signer, et je vais demander à Clara de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

ACCESS TO PERSONAL HEALTH RECORDS

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

“Whereas the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, currently allows health information custodians to charge a fee that does not exceed the prescribed amount or the amount of reasonable cost recovery, where no amount is prescribed; and

“Whereas given no amount has been prescribed, the amount of ‘reasonable cost recovery’ has been left to the discretion of health information custodians; and

“Whereas in 2006 the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care proposed a regulation for fee enforcement under subsection 54(11) of the act; and

“Whereas in 2008 the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario submitted a recommendation for amendment of the act to include enactment of a fee regulation that is substantially similar to the regulation drafted by the ministry in 2006; and

“Whereas the IPCO’s recommendation is based on the numerous complaints from members of the public about fees charged by health information custodians for access to personal health records; and

“Whereas health information custodians continue to charge exorbitant fees for access to personal health records, against the recommendation of the IPCO; and

“Whereas the Center for Patient Protection recently cited this as one of the most common public complaints; and

“Whereas inaccessible fees continue to (1) be widespread barriers to access of personal health records; (2) cause undue hardship and stress to the public; and (3), inundate a tribunal that could otherwise allocate its resources to other matters.

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

“That the government of Ontario enact the ministry’s 2006 fee regulation so as to enable hassle-free access to personal health records, as well as transparency and accountability at health care institutions.”

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to page Alexandra.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Suze Morrison: I have a petition entitled “Don’t Take Away Social and Economic Rights for Women and Marginalized People.” It reads:

“Whereas Bill 47 erased many of the legislative gains achieved through Bill 148, the fairer labour laws and working conditions that had a particularly positive impact on women and marginalized people;

“Whereas statistics show that women, particularly women of colour, are most likely to be employed in precarious work, and the Bill 47 amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and Labour Relations Act, 1995 create conditions that lead to a growth in precarious employment while also eliminating protections for millions of Ontario workers;

“Whereas Bill 66 further erodes women’s and marginalized people’s social and economic rights; and

“Whereas the” Conservative “government continues to remove, cancel or freeze funding for other supports, programs and regulations that would increase women’s equality in the workforce and beyond;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to, at the very least:

“—reinstate paid sick days,” and the scheduled \$15 minimum wage;

“—reverse changes to daycare regulations that allow more children per caregiver;

“—reverse the retroactive cuts to funding for the Ontario College of Midwives;

“—reinstate funding increases to sexual assault centres;

“—restore the round table on violence against women; and

“—restore the child and youth advocate commissioner’s office.”

I fully endorse this petition which was shared with us by the Ontario Federation of Labour. I will be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Luba to deliver to the table.

1350

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Will Bouma: I'm going to read in a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the ban on hunting and trapping in sections of Ontario to protect the eastern hybrid wolf was put in place without regard for the overall ecosystem;

"Whereas this ban has adversely affected the ability of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR), hunters and trappers to properly manage animal populations and Ontario's ecosystem;

"Whereas this ban is no longer needed and is in fact causing more damage to Ontario's ecosystem and increasing unnecessary encounters between wildlife and Ontarians;

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

"That the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry immediately lift the ban on hunting and trapping set in place to protect the eastern hybrid wolf."

I fully support this petition and will be signing my name to it and giving it to page Laura.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition on affordable housing signed by hundreds of residents of London West. It reads:

"Whereas for families throughout much of Ontario, owning a home they can afford remains a dream, while renting is painfully expensive;

"Whereas consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have sat idle, while housing costs spiralled out of control, speculators made fortunes, and too many families had to put their hopes on hold;

"Whereas every Ontarian should have access to safe, affordable housing. Whether a family wants to rent or own, live in a house, an apartment, a condominium or a co-op, they should have affordable options;"

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately prioritize the repair of Ontario's social housing stock, commit to building new affordable homes, crack down on housing speculators, and make rentals more affordable through rent controls and updated legislation."

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

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Dave Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas currently Peterborough city and county has seen a major increase in the amount of opioid-related overdoses, poisonings, and deaths;

"Whereas in Ontario and across the country it has been deemed that there is a current opioid crisis; and

"Whereas Peterborough currently does not have a consumption and treatment site to help in the reduction of overdoses and deaths in the area;

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

"Work to put forward an application for a treatment and consumption services site to follow the mandatory services, such as:

"a) supervised drug consumption (injection, intranasal, oral) and overdose prevention services;

"b) on-site or defined pathways to addiction treatment services;

"c) on-site or defined pathways to wraparound services: primary care, mental health, housing, other social supports;

"d) provide proper harm reduction services such as education, first aid/wound care, distribution and safe disposal of needles, and provision of naloxone and oxygen;

"e) removal of any discarded harm reduction supplies around the consumption and treatment area;

"f) support ongoing discussions to address local community and neighbourhood concerns on an ongoing basis."

I'll sign my name to this petition and give it to page Suhani.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: "Ontario Must Cease the Appeal of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act Immediately.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas climate change is a public health emergency requiring action from all levels of government;

"Whereas Premier Ford and the Conservative government are not taking sufficient measures to address greenhouse gas pollution;

"Whereas a legal challenge to the federal carbon pricing scheme is a wasteful use of taxpayer dollars;

"Whereas Ontarian voters elected a federal government that supports climate pricing;

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

"That the Premier of Ontario and the Attorney General of Ontario cease their pursuit of a Supreme Court appeal of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act."

I will sign the petition and give it to page Laura.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROVINCIAL ANIMAL WELFARE
SERVICES ACT, 2019LOI DE 2019 SUR LES SERVICES
PROVINCIAUX VISANT LE BIEN-ÊTRE
DES ANIMAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 7, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to enact the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019 and make consequential amendments with respect to animal protection / Projet de loi 136, Loi édictant la Loi de 2019 sur les services provinciaux visant le bien-être des animaux et apportant des modifications corrélatives concernant la protection des animaux.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm always very pleased any time I get to stand up in the House. I'll just jump back in from where we finished up a couple of weeks ago.

In January, key provisions of the OSPCA Act were struck down by the Superior Court. Passing this proposed legislation is critical—

Interruption.

Mr. Mike Harris: I'm going to be doing debate for the next 13 minutes. You probably don't want to stand there.

Passing this proposed legislation, which is the PAWS Act, is a critical first step in meeting the January 2020 deadline required by the courts. Rather than adding a new coat of paint to the OSPCA Act, our government took action to make overdue changes to the broken animal welfare system. This new model would clearly address the concerns brought forward by the court and establish an animal welfare system that is accountable and, above all else, focused on the protection of our animals.

This is an issue of great interest to the people of this province and to myself, Madam Speaker. Our government has been forced to move quickly on this issue, and credit is due to the Solicitor General. When the OSPCA announced they would no longer be enforcing animal welfare in Ontario, the Solicitor General took action to design an interim system with the assistance of our humane societies. Eleven humane societies in total stepped up to the task of providing animal welfare enforcement.

The Solicitor General also put the question out to the public to get a sense of what they want animal welfare legislation to look like. The ask from the public was fairly straightforward: They want a system they can trust to protect animals across this province. I'm happy to stand here today and tell them that Bill 136 delivers just that. The proposed legislation outlines a model that will see consistency across the province.

While our humane societies did a tremendous job of filling the void left by the OSPCA, they only cover one third of the province. Ontarians care about the protection of our animals, and no matter where they are in the province, they are horrified to witness neglect or abuse of any animal. Every summer we hear about dogs being left in cars with the windows up and the AC off on hot days. Whether you're travelling or close to home, you should be able to know who to call to report an animal in distress.

This legislation is giving first responders the authority to be able to break the window of a vehicle and rescue an animal. It is also establishing a consistent system across the province for reporting neglect, abuse or animal harm in multiple ways. We will have inspectors who are public

sector employees and accountable to the chief animal welfare inspector. The chief inspector will be responsible for training all animal welfare inspectors and ensuring that they are adequately prepared to take on their prescribed duties.

As we heard from the Solicitor General, one of the challenges under the previous system is that individuals would be charged with committing an offence, but due to an error of an enforcement agent, the charges would be dropped. This is an absolute disservice to the people of Ontario. As the Solicitor General stated, we can lay as many charges as we like, but without any convictions, we have a problem. We are proposing to have our animal welfare inspectors train with our crown attorneys so that if someone is proven to have committed an offence, they will be held responsible. We are also proposing to expand the number of provincial inspectors, improve the training process and clarify their powers and duties.

We need an animal welfare system that the people of Ontario can trust to be tough on offenders but also transparent. Part of this involves making the process for reporting animal cruelty straightforward and consistent across the board. Anyone across the province, from Kenora to Kingston to Windsor, can call 1-833-9ANIMAL and trust that their concerns will be taken seriously.

I am sure we have all heard at one time or another how our constituents have grown tired of and frustrated with overly complicated government services, of being put on hold and transferred countless times to try and resolve an issue. When the process is too complicated, Madam Speaker, they simply give up. When it is a matter as serious as reporting animal abuse, we need to make sure the process is simple and easy to understand.

1400

Not only have we improved the system for reporting animal abuses; we are also proposing a one-stop shop where anyone can go to report concerns about provincial inspectors. If an inspector is found to violate the code of conduct, the chief animal welfare inspector and the Solicitor General would have the authority to reprimand that inspector accordingly under this proposed legislation—a straightforward, simple, transparent system that the people of Ontario will be able to have confidence in. However, I would like to remind members of this House, just as the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore has, that while these fines are proposed in legislation, they are of course subject to the court's discretion. For minor, non-ticketable offences, an individual may face a fine of up to \$75,000 or six months in jail for their first offence. For more serious infractions, a first offence would be increased to \$130,000 and a year in jail. We are also proposing stronger fines and jail sentences for repeat offenders. We are suggesting a 116% increase in penalties, and that would bring them to be the highest in Canada. We are also going to be exploring ticketing for certain offences, which would see minor cases addressed more quickly.

The message is clear: Animal mistreatment is absolutely unacceptable in Ontario and offenders must be held accountable.

I'm also very happy to see that the government is proposing to establish multidisciplinary advisory tables with a wide range of experts to provide advice to the ministry.

For the longest time, our farmers had their concerns about the previous OSPCA Act ignored. I'm a strong supporter of our agricultural sector, one of the primary industries in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. Animals are their livelihood, and of course they want to be included in these discussions.

There are two important exceptions laid out in part IV of this act that I wish to highlight—one as it relates to agriculture. Farmers who are following generally accepted agricultural practices will continue to be exempt from certain prohibitions for the time being. The vast, overwhelming majority of men and women who live and work on the land, whether on a farm or in the bush, employ the highest standards of animal care, which is reflected in the highest quality of product they deliver to Ontarians on a daily basis. From Conestoga Meats in Breslau to Mountainoak Cheese in New Hamburg and the many food production facilities and farms I have visited throughout my riding, I know they work hard to ensure animal care, food safety and biosecurity.

To that point, it is really upsetting to hear about family farms being broken into, private property violated and, really, the health and well-being of these animals and the food supply being jeopardized by radical activists. These people don't really understand the great lengths taken by our farmers and fur producers to ensure animal welfare while contributing to our economy.

I am also happy to see that there is a commitment to ensuring any inspector performing inspections on farms will have expertise to carry forth that work.

This proposed legislation would also see us consult with the agricultural sector to develop new agriculture-specific standards of care.

As a further measure of oversight for our inspectors, we will also be keeping the Animal Care Review Board in place. Any inspector order of animal seizure, statement of account or orders for a farmer to take specific action can be reviewed by the board.

Farmers have our full support, and I look forward to continuing to engage with local farmers in my riding and across this province.

The second exception is for those who engage in any activity permitted under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997, in relation to wildlife in the wild and in relation to fish. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and as a passionate outdoorsman coming from northern Ontario, I know that those engaged lawfully in these activities do so with the greatest respect for animal welfare as stewards of our environment. In my official capacity, I've had the opportunity to join conservation officers on patrol and witness first-hand the steps taken willingly by hunters, trappers and fishermen to comply with the guidelines laid out by the MNRF to promote the responsible and sustainable use of wildlife.

Of course, the MNRF is consistently monitoring and managing wildlife diseases, such as chronic wasting

disease and rabies. In August, for example, I was out flying with the MNRF rabies team to drop vaccine baits, packets that help to inoculate animals like raccoons, foxes and skunks from the rabies virus.

Madam Speaker, all working together, we can protect animal welfare in this province.

I am glad the PAWS Act has some reasonable exceptions recognizing the agricultural, fish and wildlife sectors, which have their own high standards on this worthy objective.

It is about time we took stronger action to hold offenders accountable and ensure that there is appropriate oversight and transparency within our animal wildlife system. What we have before us is a piece of legislation that proposes a strong, reliable system that will send a strong message that cruelty to animals is absolutely, unequivocally unacceptable.

We heard the Solicitor General speak about dog fighting. It's appalling that, to this day, there are still people out there who would train animals to do this. Even worse are those who would use this for financial gain. I'm very happy to see that the prohibitions on animal fighting from the OSPCA Act are included in the bill, and they have even been expanded to include those promoting, arranging, assisting in or receiving a financial or material benefit of animal fighting.

This proposed legislation has been well received by stakeholders across the province. Cindy Ross, shelter manager at the Sault Ste. Marie Humane Society, said it was as good for animals as, and much stronger than, the OSPCA Act.

Really, that's what it's all about, Madam Speaker—making sure that we are setting a framework so that animals in this province are protected, and that we are doing what we can to combat animal cruelty: making it easy to report acts of cruelty; holding offenders accountable and sending a clear message that cruelty against animals is absolutely not tolerated; ensuring our inspectors have the tools and training they need to properly enforce; and engaging with our agricultural and wildlife sectors to ensure legislation is appropriate for them. There is no doubt that Bill 136 delivers on all these things, and that's why it has my full support.

I know the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore has been very passionate about this bill. She speaks so eloquently in the House any time she gets a chance. I know she has worked hard to craft a lot of things that have gone into this.

I have had the chance to sit down myself with the Kitchener Waterloo Humane Society. I had an opportunity when we debated this, I guess it's a couple of weeks ago now, to read a letter of support from them that had come out as well. I know that the 11 humane societies that also took part in picking up the slack in enforcement over the last little while have also been very supportive of this.

I look forward to continuing down my path and listening to our humane society. I know the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore will be moving forward down her path and still consulting with many different authorities around the province. Of course, the other parliamentary

assistant, the member for Cambridge, in the Solicitor General's office, and of course the Solicitor General herself, have also been very active on this. I'd like to again commend them. I would like to thank all the members who have taken part in debate on this. I know that this is something that we can all get behind.

It's always really nice when we are able to come together—like we heard earlier, having a private member's bill put forward where we had three-party agreement. It's not something that we have very often.

Madam Speaker, with that, thank you very much. It's always a pleasure to take part in debate on these subjects.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments? The member for Kingston.

Mr. Ian Arthur: And the islands, Speaker. We can't forget the islands.

Thank you so much, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and contribute to this debate. And thank you to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for the debate today.

It's a very, very important piece of legislation. I'm happy, on this side, to see the government taking action on this and bringing this piece of legislation forward.

There are a couple of things I just want to flag, not as concerns with the intent of the legislation, but with how it will be carried out once it's through this Legislature.

We do need a comprehensive framework—but as Animal Justice flags, they are encouraged by this framework and they support it, but they need the model that is public and well funded. We need to see the funding mechanisms put in place for this particular piece of legislation.

There is a whole lot of it that's currently being left up to regulation. I know that there is a significant delay in when those regulations are actually done and available for the public—it's the purview of cabinet to actually write those and to make sure those are out there.

1410

There are huge sections of this bill that—I look forward to seeing the regulations, and I hope that they support the full intent of this bill and that they really do give municipalities both the funding mechanisms and the ability to enforce this piece of legislation to its full effectiveness, because how effective it actually will be, what kind of tools this gives municipalities, is all going to come out in the regulations.

Thank you very much for the contributions to the debate so far. I look forward to seeing it progress. I look forward to seeing this bill in committee and very much to seeing how the government is going to provide the ability to enforce it on a local level and how it works with municipalities to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I just want to thank the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for his remarks today and for his passion for animals in the wild, animals in our homes and animals on our farms.

We have to look after all animals, and that's really what this bill touches on. We touch on farm animals and we

touch on our animals that we consider part of our family. This is why this act is so important. It was a 100-year-old act that really did need to be revised, so I'm glad that we started fresh and, under the Solicitor General's direction, looked at something new and better for our animals.

Everybody out there has a story of a problem with an animal in distress, an animal that needs our help, and the frustrations of going through the system. This is a system that is going to help out animals. It doesn't matter where you live. If you live in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Ottawa or Toronto, this will help out all of the animals. That's what this is about: protecting those animals, because they can't speak.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga talked about, "Let's make sure this passes, with three-party support." Wouldn't that be nice, to see that we can get together on this to protect our animals?

Animals don't have any political stripe. We always talk about them. It's one of those issues that we can get together and rally behind. One thing that we're really proud of is that, if this bill passes, we are going to have the strongest penalties for animal cruelty in all of Canada, and then Ontario can be that province that everybody looks upon to maybe change their laws in other provinces. But let's start with Ontario. Let's be the leaders on this.

I'm really proud to say that this is good work. I'm hoping that we can get all-party support and get this through and get through committee.

I just want to thank you very much for your time and for your support on this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I am pleased to rise today to speak on this bill. I'd like to thank the members from Kitchener–Conestoga, Kingston and the Islands, and Etobicoke–Lakeshore for their comments.

I have a concern. I'm cautiously optimistic about this bill. Similar to my colleague from Kingston and the Islands, I know that the proof is in the pudding and in the regulations. A stakeholder, Animal Justice, said, "We're still only seeing a partial picture at this stage; a lot is still to come via the regulations that the government is promising. So exactly how effective the laws will be—including their enforcement—that remains to be seen."

I also know that there have been significant cutbacks in the public service, so the hiring of more public sector workers is always welcome news. But we've had cutbacks in the number of conservation officers. The members spoke about MNRF. There have been cuts to MNRF. So there are situations where a deer is potentially hit on the highway, is not killed, and there are very little resources for anyone to respond to try to put that animal out of its misery. People witness that suffering and are saying, "What about the wild animals?" I know that there are some programs in place, but wild animals also have to be taken care of.

Conservation officers are always vigilant, but you need enough of them because, as the members know, northern Ontario is a vast geographical area. We need those

conservation officers in place to ensure that our wild animals are also being managed and maintained.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: We made a commitment to take action and develop a modern animal welfare enforcement system to keep animals safe. I am proud to say that we are delivering on that commitment with new legislation that includes the toughest penalties in Canada.

Anyone with a concern about the welfare of an animal should call the toll-free line at 1-833-9ANIMAL. The staff at the call centre will then route the call to a provincially employed inspector, who will enforce animal welfare laws across Ontario effective January 1, 2020. In the short term, some calls may still be routed to police until provincial inspectors can be hired for all areas of the province.

This proposed new animal welfare system was developed based on input from municipalities, police, industry, technical experts, veterinarian organizations, animal sheltering and advocacy organizations, and of course, the public.

If the bill is passed, the government would continue to work with partners to ensure the best protection and support for animals.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: It's great to be able to wrap things up here today. I just wanted to thank all the members who took part in questions and comments: the member for Kingston and the Islands, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park and—my critic, if you will—the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

I just wanted to go back to some comments that she made. When we talk about conservation officers in the province of Ontario, I think she and I see eye to eye on that. We definitely need to have more conservation officers, not only out there enforcing legislation, but also being able to help local police departments. In northern Ontario the OPP have to deal with a lot of animal- or wildlife-related issues, and often they're not equipped to do that. It is good to have our COs out there being able to provide guidance and help with those kinds of situations.

The member for Kingston and the Islands I guess is using the adage “the devil is in the details.” We look forward to seeing that regulation come out. As he knows, through the legislative process, the overarching framework of the bill is introduced and then we have our great public servants and ministry staff help backfill some of that regulation. I think we're all looking forward to something that is going to benefit the people of Ontario—not only the people, but the animals that this legislation is designed to protect.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I'm really glad that we've had consultations from our humane societies, our animal welfare groups and farmers. Like I said, it's a big one in my riding. I've had an opportunity to get out and see some really, really great operators over this past year and a half, and I look forward to being able to continue to do that in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak about Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, PAWS—one of the more appropriate titles that this government has come up with for a bill.

I'm very pleased to speak about this bill because I think, as others in our caucus have noted already, we are cautiously optimistic about this legislation. We see this as a really important opportunity in debate to raise what we think are very important concerns regarding the legislation and give the government, frankly, an opportunity to do something that we haven't seen, unfortunately, very often under this government, which is to come together and try to work together across the aisle, across parties, to make legislation better, stronger and more enforceable. I think this is one of those excellent opportunities where we can work together, because I think it is probably fair to say that everyone in this House cares about animals and wants to prevent abuse of animals.

Now, some of my colleagues have already mentioned some of these points, but I want to go back over a few things, and then I have a couple of issues that I want to raise that may not have been previously mentioned.

First of all, let's just set a little bit of context here. This government came to this legislation—and I'm glad they did—only after the animal protection system in this province really completely crumbled and was in crisis. It was only after that that this government decided to take action. Under the previous Liberal government we saw the animal protection system crumble, and then when the other side—the current government—took control, we saw things just go from bad to worse; and Ontario was left with no animal protection service in place for months and months.

1420

I have to say, Madam Speaker, that I met over those months with many very, very concerned individuals from across this province who were up in arms about this, who were saying, “Please somebody listen to us. We've been waving our hands around in the air.” I actually have a statement here from an organization that came together around this issue called Animal Welfare Watch Ontario, and I want to shout out to Mike Zimmerman, somebody I've been speaking with quite a lot over the last few months, who has worked very hard on this issue. He said, “We banged at the door and we got nowhere. The government kept declining the level of service and were not responding to the crisis.” I think that's a very fair comment from Animal Welfare Watch Ontario.

This has been a long time coming—too long. I think it's fair to say that we don't really know how many cases of animal abuse did not get followed up on in that period. So I'm glad to see us here. I hope we can move this forward in a way that actually protects animals as they should be protected.

As has been mentioned as well, we do generally support this bill. We have, as I mentioned, said that we are cautiously optimistic. We do have some concerns, particularly around areas where we think the government needs

to think more specifically about both sentencing provisions and funding, and also some areas that I think were left out of this legislation that need to be addressed. Addressing them in the regulations is, frankly, not going to do it. I think that is a major concern for many Ontarians who care about these issues—that some of the things that should have been included in this legislation are being left to regulation, and I'm sad to say that that sometimes just never comes to pass. So I would prefer, and I think the many Ontarians who care about these issues would prefer, to see some of these issues addressed in the legislation, not in regulation.

I'm going to take us through a few of the issues, and just to also note again that one of the things that happened here was that we had a situation in Ontario where private charities—well-meaning private charities—were enforcing publicly enacted laws in this province. I can't think of other examples like that, where we really allowed that to happen. So it is really important that we are considering bringing the enforcement of these laws back under the umbrella of government, because it makes sense; and as we've seen, if we leave it to work its way out in other ways, we have a system that simply doesn't respond effectively.

I also want to note that while the government was getting to this point and while—as I mentioned earlier, under the previous government and as this government came into power we saw a number of very high-profile, very terrible and sometimes contested instances of animal abuse and mistreatment in this province that really put the work of animal welfare enforcement under the spotlight. I want to raise a couple of examples.

One of my colleagues, the member—I'm going to forget his riding now, so I have to look it up here quickly. The member for Niagara Falls was very public in his outrage after cruelty charges were dropped against veterinarian Dr. Mahavir Rekhi, who was suspended after a video was leaked in 2015 of the doctor appearing to abuse animals in his care. And in May 2018, we saw OSPCA inspectors who investigated and laid charges against a farm in Stouffville after 15 horses that had been starved were found. Madam Speaker, it was actually a lot of those folks who were involved in that case, in making sure that that case was investigated and that charges were laid, and others who were raising the alarm bells about the lack of enforcement in that period when the OSPCA had stepped aside and there was nobody really enforcing the legislation, who were behind Animal Welfare Watch. I again want to shout out to those folks for doing great work in trying to raise this issue.

But that's what it kind of took. It took legal cases. It took a judge ruling that the OSPCA, as a private charity, should not be tasked with enforcement. The province was instructed to come up with an enforcement regime. We know that the government was given a year to come up with a plan, and that's why we're here. I'm glad we're here and we're talking about this, but let's just be clear that this didn't come about just out of the goodness of their heart, but in fact there was some pressure here, perhaps, to get this moving. So that's why we're here today.

I want to mention as well Dr. Kendra Coulter, who has done a lot of work in this area. In light of the court decision, she undertook an online survey polling Ontarians for their views on the future of animal welfare in this province. I want to shout out to Dr. Coulter for the work she has done in this area, because her conclusions that were released in a report in March 2019, again, really reinforced that call, the need to reform and effectively end the OSPCA's role in enforcement.

I want to turn to some of the other, more specific issues that we have had with some of this legislation, or that I personally have been concerned about.

One of the things that we're most concerned about, I think it's fair to say, is funding. We're here talking about some really important new legislation, but unless that new system has stable, dedicated funding, it's only as good as the paper on which it is written.

The minister has, I know, said that she foresees hiring about 100 inspectors. I think that's an admirable number. I'm not an expert. I haven't seen anybody really be critical of that. But what I know that doesn't include, or I haven't seen any mention of it thus far—is there also going to be funding for things like infrastructure, facilities, equipment, vehicles, training? Are we going to see funding investment in those areas as well, along with the hiring of these officers or these inspectors? And how are we going to get those inspectors hired and online and ready to go and trained in time for January? How is this going to happen? What the new system really needs, again, is sufficient and dedicated funding, and it needs that not a year down the road; it needs that from day one. It needs that from day one.

There have been many other suggestions for funding which I'm happy to talk about with members on the opposite side. But again, we think that the law—and I have spoken to many of the animal welfare folks who think that this law—is a step in the right direction. But again, we need the government to ensure that the new system is adequately and securely financed.

I also want to raise another point that has been made to me, which is the protection of exotic and vulnerable animals. We appreciate that there is a special section in the law on orcas, but there are many more animals that, for their own welfare, should not be kept by private individuals. Ontario is now the only province—the only province, Madam Speaker—that does not have a provincial law that restricts the ownership of certain types of animals, either for their own good or for—and I want to give an example there. Let's think about the Ikea monkey, for goodness' sake. We shouldn't leave these kinds of restrictions up to municipalities. It's not fair to municipalities. We need to make sure that those are all provincially enforceable. We urge the government to catch up with the rest of the country and implement restrictions and prohibitions on both vulnerable and dangerous types of animals.

Madam Speaker, I also want to talk a little bit about some of the sentencing provisions in this legislation, because it has been brought to my attention that there are some flaws in the bill and I'm hoping the government is willing to consider these when we get to committee, if not

sooner. The new law does not specify that orders of the court, which could include a ban against a private individual owning a particular pet, made under the new law—they must be carried on under this new law and they must be enforced under this new law. One of Animal Welfare Watch Ontario's major concerns is that the law should but does not currently specify that those court orders, especially where we're talking about individuals who have been found guilty of certain kinds of offences to animals and have ownership bans against them under the previous law—they need to be monitored and they need to be enforced by the new inspectors. That really needs to be clarified in this legislation. It is probably the most effective tool we have for dealing with repeat animal abusers and also for preventing future animal cruelty. So, that needs to be enforced under this legislation.

1430

I actually read, earlier today, a petition into the record from an organization called the Paw Project. This organization is specifically individuals who are concerned with and trying to move forward the issue of stopping medically unnecessary declawing of felines, of domestic cats. When I tabled that petition today, there were hundreds and hundreds of names on that petition. I know that's just what they have collected in a matter of weeks or months. They are still sending those petitions in to us. They are collecting those names at veterinarians' offices across the province.

I really want to shout out to Paw Project for the amazing work they are doing there, because I want to talk for a moment about medically unnecessary procedures around domestic pets—cats and dogs.

The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association sent a letter to the minister when this legislation was first being discussed, as part of the consultation on this potential legislation. They had a number of recommendations, and one of the things that, I have to say, I was really, really pleased to see was this, and I'm going to read it out here, because it was a bullet point in their submission: "The development of a new animal welfare act provides opportunity for Ontario to join the growing list of Canadian provinces that have enacted a ban on unnecessary surgeries. The province is strongly encouraged to include a ban on elective and non-therapeutic canine ear-cropping and tail-docking and feline declawing in any new or amended legislation."

I want to say that this is from the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association. These are the veterinarians, who, arguably, are the ones who, in the past, have actually undertaken these procedures. It's quite a significant change in last few years, that we have seen a major shift in veterinary medicine where they are now pretty much unilaterally calling on government to do the right thing and ban this practice.

I'll make a full disclosure here. My own sister is now the president-elect of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association: Dr. Enid Stiles, out of Quebec. I have been talking to her about this over the years, because this is something that we have seen play out across the country.

For those who are not already currently aware of this—I mentioned it when I tabled the petition earlier—the declawing of felines, partial digital amputation, is really the equivalent of removing the tip of a finger at the first knuckle on a person. It really wasn't considered that way for a long time. I knew lots of people who declawed their cats. It was not seen to be something that was painful, and veterinarians would do it quite regularly.

But this is shifting. It is now considered to be quite a painful process, a very unnecessary process, and the healing can result in a lot of damage and infection. So the entire veterinary profession has really moved against this now. Most veterinarians will not undertake that kind of procedure unless it is absolutely medically necessary for some reason. This is a major shift happening.

I was really hoping, I have to say, Madam Speaker, that this legislation would reflect the change in that practice. I thought this was an amazing opportunity. I couldn't imagine a better timing. But, unfortunately, we didn't see that here. I've been told that's because the government is telling people they may include that in regulation. But I would again urge the government to take the step to amend the legislation to include these practices and ban them outright. We don't get many opportunities like this. I have to say that we are at a perfect moment where it is really almost universally accepted in that profession.

I want to also point out that specifically declawing but also, in some cases, tail-docking and ear-cropping procedures have been already declared inhumane and illegal in many other jurisdictions and in 40 countries so far—countries like the UK, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and in provinces like Nova Scotia, British Columbia, PEI, Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta, New Brunswick and recently Quebec. Those what they call cosmetic veterinary procedures have been ruled illegal because they are inhumane. What's really important here is that veterinarians are deciding not to perform these procedures—but it's everybody else. I know there are some really fantastic breeders out there, but there are folks who will do this in unsafe circumstances, and we need to be able to include these medically unnecessary procedures in the legislation so that can be prevented.

I want to, again, really encourage the government to take that step. Why not? We're talking about keeping our dogs in the breweries—an awesome idea. I love bringing my dog into Henderson brewery. It's great. But let's take that extra step and actually move forward with the times and ban some of these procedures that really have become dated, that we know now are unsafe and not good for animals. Let's take that extra step.

Just as I close here, I wanted to turn to an interview I read recently that was conducted with Camille Labchuk, whom I know, and who is the executive director of Animal Justice; others here have already mentioned some of her comments. She did a great interview recently on TVOntario that I was enjoying listening to, and I want to just go back again to one of the critical points about this legislation—why it is important and why I think we're all happy to see it here. She says that private charities

enforcing publicly enacted laws doesn't really happen in any other area of the law. So when you force a charity to fundraise for that work, and you force members of the public who care enough about it to pay for it, to support it, it's the animals themselves that are done a disservice. The OSPCA did the best they could with what they had, but there was always a need to move this toward a public system.

This legislation goes some of that way, but we need the government to ensure that the funding is there, that the training is there—also, by the way, training for the crowns and OPP officers who will be involved. We need training at all levels to ensure that this legislation actually accomplishes what it's supposed to do.

Again, I just want to conclude by urging the government to take that next step when it comes to those cosmetic procedures that are, frankly, inflicted on our domestic animals right now and to actually include the banning of declawing, ear-cropping and tail-docking in the PAWS legislation. Let's get that done. Let's not be the last province in Canada to take that step.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Donna Skelly: I rise today to speak, obviously, in support of this proposed legislation, and I want to challenge one of the points that was made by the member opposite, the member from Davenport.

The member suggested that this legislation was brought about due to external pressure from stakeholders. And while, yes, our government is a government that listens to the people—when there are concerns or there are issues raised or there are perhaps even better ways of addressing some of the issues that we as a government are looking at, we listen—but I would suggest to the member that the reason we brought this legislation forward is because the members of our government want to do what's best for animals, be they domestic pets or agricultural livestock. We believe that the system that was in place was deeply flawed, and the proposed legislation will address a number of issues.

Our government, through this proposed legislation, will be modernizing the animal welfare system. We will be introducing provincial inspectors who will ensure that animal welfare laws are enacted. This proposed legislation introduces some of the toughest penalties anywhere in Canada. We will increase the maximums—we will have new maximums, and we will have new mandatory minimum fines. And we are also moving quickly. Why? Because we believe that it is important to care for animals and that we must move forward. Our target is 2020, the new year, January 2020, to have this legislation passed.

1440

Madam Speaker, as I said, our government is a government that recognizes that, yes, sometimes we haven't perhaps thought about something that is raised within the general public. When it is raised, we listen. But we have put forward legislation that we believe is right. It will protect animals. It will protect domestic animals, and it will protect agricultural livestock.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions or comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to commend my colleague the member for Davenport on her very thoughtful comments on Bill 136, which is known as the PAWS Act.

I wanted to share with this House another PAWS that's located in London. That is Progressive Animal Welfare Services. This is one of several non-profit charities that partners with the East Village Animal Hospital, which has two locations: one in London and one in Kitchener.

Just like the member for Davenport pointed out a missed opportunity to address unnecessary surgeries of animals, the PAWS charity in my community, the East Village Animal Hospital, is currently engaged in providing veterinary care and spaying/neutering for low-income people. This is a change that needs to be made so that veterinarians like Dr. Martha Harding, who runs EVAH, the East Village Animal Hospital, can provide that care without having to be incorporated as a business corporation, which is currently a requirement of Ontario's Business Corporations Act.

Dr. Harding has completed over 24,000 spay/neuter surgeries, served 15,000 new patients and has had 50,000 appointments and consultations for pet owners who don't have the resources to appropriately care for their pets. Veterinarians have pointed out the money gulf that exists between pet owners who have the resources to get the highest-quality veterinary care and those who don't. Low-income people should have the same access to pets. They deserve the same kinds of benefits—health and social and other benefits—that all of us who have pets also benefit from.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I just wanted to comment on the debate going. Thank you to colleagues from both sides and to the member from Davenport for your comments.

Back in May, I hosted a round table at my office and I had great representation. I had Liz White from the Animal Alliance, Barbara MacLeod from the Comfie Cat Shelter and Nicole Tryon from Hanks Haven and dog shelter. I also had a good friend, Kristin Sowerby, who is a volunteer with the Midland SPCA, and Curtis Shelswell, who is an Oro-Medonte bylaw officer.

It was very interesting to hear from the bylaw officer about the lack of training at the time. I know in my riding, in some municipalities, the OSCPA was looking after that. In other areas, it was the local bylaw officers. Curtis was telling us about his experience and lack of training to be doing enforcement. Bylaw officers are there to enforce municipal laws—things like parking and noise infractions—not to be looking out for animals' well-being.

In the new legislation, the new enforcement model would establish a provincial enforcement team made up of a chief inspector, locally deployed provincial inspectors and specialized inspectors for agriculture, zoos, aquariums and equines.

Inspectors would conduct outreach and education on animal best-care practices and how to be compliant with

the legislation; proactive, risk-based inspections, including, for example, zoos and aquariums; and reactive inspections. These will be well-trained inspectors and officers who are out there on the front lines and not leaving this work to our bylaw officers.

I appreciated all of the information that we gathered that day and relayed that back to the ministry in moving forward in developing this legislation. I'm very proud of it. I know, as all us here do, that animals are just as much our family as our family is. It's of great importance to all of our constituents.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions or comments?

Mr. Ian Arthur: It's a pleasure to once again rise and contribute to this debate. Thank you to the member from Davenport for making such excellent points in her speech and to the members from Flamborough–Glanbrook, London West and Simcoe North for their comments.

There are a couple of things I do want to touch on in this bill. One of them, brought up by the member from Simcoe North, was this issue of training. Training is one of those things that is left up to regulation in the bill. It appears that many of the current inspectors are going to carry over and continue in those positions, and then the government is going to add more. But what isn't very clear is the depth of the training that those former officers are going to receive, what that training looks like and how we're going to equip those officers to be better able to do their jobs under this new regime. It would be very nice to see some sort of outline from the government as to what that's going to look like and how these people are going to be able to be better going into the future.

I know that this is a bill that has a lot of broad support. The humane society of Kingston is one of the organizations that came out in support of this piece of legislation, and I thank them very much for their contribution.

As a small aside, my MPP calendar for this year is the pets of Kingston. We got everyone to send in hundreds and hundreds of photos of their rather adorable pets, and as part of it we have put out the information for the humane society urging people to adopt whenever possible and to try and look after some of those pets in the future. That goes in hand with this approach to treating animals across the province well and giving them the best homes that they deserve.

I'm almost out of time, but I think we do need to see the rest of this bill. I brought this up earlier. In particular, I would say that I have some concern about the review procedure for tickets; there is no appeal. I think we need to look into that further, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook, the member from London West, the member from Simcoe North and the member from Kingston and the Islands for their responses to my comments.

Again, we generally are cautiously optimistic about the legislation, but I was disappointed that I didn't hear the

government members opposite respond to some of the specific suggestions and concerns that we are raising; for example, the commitment to funding, as the member from Kingston and the Islands mentioned; the training issues and wanting to see that outlined and to understand what the training component is going to be; that we really need to see the rest of the bill; that we need to see what's going to be in the regulations; and that there are so many unanswered questions.

Specifically, I spoke at pretty great length about medically unnecessary and cosmetic procedures that the veterinary associations have all finally come around to and are asking the government to ban. I was not really very happy to see that the government members didn't respond to that. We had been led to believe that that might be in the regulations, and I certainly would want to see that addressed there.

As the member from London West noted, there are some missed opportunities in this legislation. We have an opportunity here to get this right and to, frankly, right some historic wrongs. This is the moment to do that. We don't get these opportunities very often. I really hope that the government will reconsider some of what they've left out of the legislation and include it in the legislation and amend it. It has not happened so far; here's the opportunity to engage in an actual discussion and real debate in committee, where we can amend some of the legislation to make it stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm happy to rise today on Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act.

As a long-time advocate for stronger animal welfare protection in Ontario, I want to thank the Solicitor General for bringing this bill forward. I especially want to thank the many advocates from across the province who have worked every day and worked tirelessly every day to make Ontario a fairer, gentler and more humane province for animals.

When an Ontario court ruled on animal protection laws and the OSPCA said that they would withdraw on it, I had so many of my constituents in Guelph reach out to me, speaking out on the need for maintaining animal welfare protection. I especially want to acknowledge the role that the Guelph Humane Society played, and I want to thank the Solicitor General for listening to those concerns and responding relatively quickly, because there are some good things in this bill: ensuring that enforcement of animal cruelty laws under public jurisdiction, new offences to combat dogfighting, more enforcement powers to help animals in distress, empowering first responders to take action when animals are at imminent risk, and increasing penalties for serious repeat and corporate offenders.

1450

Animal advocates want animal protection models that are tough in penalties, broad in investigative powers and do a better job of prosecuting cruelty and neglect, and so while the government has made some steps forward in this

direction, I hope they listen to some opposition concerns so we can improve this bill at committee.

In particular, this bill lacks information about the licensing and regulation of zoos and breeders, and the government needs to have a plan for this. I encourage the government to develop regulations to cover zoos and breeders in this legislation.

We should be following the lead of other provinces to ban cosmetic mutilations that do harm to animals for no other reason than aesthetics. I know the member from Davenport was just talking about this, as well. Practices like declawing, tail docking and ear cropping are inhumane and should be prohibited, and this bill provides us with an opportunity to make that explicit in legislation.

The Guelph Humane Society has largely been supportive of this bill and has appreciated the work the Solicitor General has provided in consultation on this bill. It has raised some concerns, though. Questions: What will happen to animals that are protected under the new act? Where will they go? Where will they be housed? Who will house them? Will there be enough budget to properly care for them? Will there be enough money available for training? These are serious questions that need to be answered and should be addressed at committee to amend this bill and improve it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jane McKenna: I'm thrilled to stand up and support Bill 136. It's interesting, because I'm listening to all the comments in here today and I was just talking to a few of my colleagues here on Sunday. A few times on Sunday when I've turned on—I'm not sure what exactly; none of us could remember if the name of it was W5 or not, but seeing all these animals that are abused, from bears to dogs to cats to domestic to farm animals—watching it is absolutely heart-wrenching. I apologize that I can't remember what channel that actually was that I watched that on. I've seen it numerous times.

We have a responsibility as a government to make sure that everybody's life is safe. Animals don't have the ability to vocalize what they're saying, and we have a responsibility to make sure that those animals are taken care of. It's heart-wrenching.

My identical twin sister, Anne—I don't know how many animals she has adopted in her time. One of her dogs, Dolores, who has passed away—that dog was on the street for years. It was so malnourished that by the time she got it—it was picked up at the humane society in Burlington, which does a phenomenal job. She nursed it back to health, and that dog had never been so happy than for the last four years of its life, living at my sister's house. She fed it everything under the sun, and it loved lying on the furniture—which my brother-in-law absolutely didn't like, but she always overrules the house when it comes to the animals.

But anyway, I'm just saying that the system that we have right now is deeply flawed. It has to be modernized, and we have to make sure that these things in the 21st century stop, because people will continue to abuse dogs.

I know Minister Jones was speaking about how most people who are like that with their animals—what a tragedy it is, but they also do that in other areas of their life, which is absolutely disgraceful. I can't imagine ever being in that situation, but I want to have a voice in our government to make sure that we do modernize it and make it better.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to thank the member for Guelph for his comments on this legislation. I think we agree on those points that he raised. I just want to go back to the comment that he made about some of the inhumane practices that this government could include in this legislation but have chosen not to for some reason. That includes tail docking, ear cropping and declawing of felines, because these are practices that are now really universally accepted as being cruel and inhumane. There's a lot of education that needs to be done with respect to those practices in the general public, but veterinarians are in a great position to be able to provide that education when people approach them to undertake some of these procedures, and most of them are doing that now.

The problem is the irresponsible breeders—not the breeders that are responsible and that care about the animals, but the irresponsible breeders who will crop those ears and dock those tails just because they want to be able to sell it to some people. But at the end of the day, they are not actually treating the animals well. What we've seen happen is that veterinarians have told me that they are often dealing with dogs and cats who are very unwell because these procedures are not being done in a safe way. They are inhumane practices; we know that. We need to go to that next step. We need to ban those practices. I was very pleased to hear the member from Guelph also speak passionately about that issue, urging the government to please consider including that in the legislation. Let's not leave it to regulations. Let's do the right thing now.

We heard one of the members opposite talk about modernizing the legislation. This is the opportunity. We don't get these opportunities very often. Let's take that additional step.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise and make a few comments on what we are discussing today, which is Bill 136, an act to enact the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act—which actually stands for PAWS. So we're calling it the PAWS bill here in the Legislature today.

This is why we debate bills. We're hearing from opposition and independent members that they support the bill. They agree with the premise of the bill, that we need to change the way we report animal abuse, partly because the SPCA relinquished their authority over investigating. We're following some of the procedures that the OPP does with reporting abuse of human beings in Ontario, and we are going to be ensuring that everyone has the ability to easily report abuse. It shouldn't be that you have to call and call and leave messages and write letters; it should be easy to report any kind of abuse.

We already have an emergency hotline number. I had suggested that perhaps we could have, through the government of Ontario—that people could purchase or get from pet food stores or their vets—those vinyl stick-ons to put on their wall that lets firefighters and emergency personnel know if there is a cat or dog or other in the house, that that could have the hotline right on there to report. That was my suggestion.

This is why we are here: We're here to make suggestions for improvements. I know that there are people from the ministry watching and listening and taking notes, and looking into what they can do to widen the scope of this bill, possibly now or in the future at a later date, because we need to pass something quite quickly to deal with abuse of animals in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions or comments?

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I thank the member from Guelph and my other colleagues for their comments on the PAWS Act.

I'd like to bring to mind the people that really stepped up when we did not have a lot in place to protect animals in this province: the humane societies, the SPCA, who continue work in education and advocacy, and the many rescue organizations we have in northern Ontario. These organizations have to be commended, because what they do is they raise money and then take animals out of northern fly-in communities that are in danger or are in threat. Often, they're puppies. My constituency assistant, Micaela, presently has two of those puppies, and I was fortunate enough to get some puppy time this weekend.

I think what's important, like what the member said, is that we're looking at this legislation and hopefully in committee we can include the northern lens. Because what the humane societies and organizations brought to my attention are the tremendous transportation costs associated with trying to enforce animal welfare in the north, not only the fly-in costs but the costs of having people travel. The officers who are going to be implementing these things travel hundreds of kilometres to try to enforce, or, if they get a call, to try to charge people.

Again, often I believe that northern lens is lost, and so it is something that I hope, when we get to committee, will be considered, and when we're considering financing this bill, that we know there are sufficient funds to make it effective.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to thank my colleagues from Burlington, Davenport, Thornhill and Thunder Bay–Atikokan for participating in the debate.

One thing that has been commented on a lot in the last weeks is a new tone at Queen's Park. I think there's an opportunity for the government to deliver on a real new tone with this particular Bill 136, because it seems like most members of this Legislature support the general thrust of this bill, but there are some concerns that I've

mentioned, and I know the member from Davenport reiterated once again as well, that need to be addressed at committee with this bill. This is an opportunity for the government to really, truly show that there's a new tone at Queen's Park, that we can work across party lines at committee to improve a bill. This is a perfect opportunity to do that.

I appreciate my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for just the importance of putting a northern lens, because we know that one-size-fits-all rules don't necessarily work in Ontario. We have a very large and diverse province.

The member from Thornhill did talk about the possibility of widening the scope of the bill. One of the things which I hope we can consider at committee is that at the federal level legislation has passed that bans breeding whales and dolphins in captivity. We have an opportunity with this bill to close the potential of any loopholes like that happening here in Ontario, because we know that's a big issue here in Ontario. It's that type of conversation at committee—I think, with some of the inhumane practices that those of us on the opposition benches have raised here in today's debate, at committee we have an opportunity to address those concerns. My hope is that the government has listened to the opposition and advocates and will continue to do so as we move this to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I am pleased to be able to participate in this debate on Bill 136. For those just joining us this afternoon, that's the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019.

For over 100 years, the enforcement of animal welfare laws in the province was the responsibility of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The OSPCA, a private charity, was the agency responsible for appointing a chief inspector for animal welfare and the inspectors who would enforce those laws. The OSPCA's announced withdrawal of its enforcement responsibilities, quite frankly, on short notice, came at a critical time. In January this year, a Supreme Court justice struck down key provisions of the OSPCA Act, ruling that giving police powers to the OSPCA without appropriate oversight was unconstitutional. The court decision, combined with the OSPCA's sudden withdrawal, left our animals vulnerable to abuse.

Bill 136 is a first for Ontario and, in fact, a first for Canada. The Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act proposes that Ontario's animal welfare system be placed under the direct control of the province, with its own chief governance and oversight framework.

Now, in developing this revolutionary approach to animal welfare, we consulted with over 50 groups and organizations, including technical experts, academics, the agricultural community, veterinary experts, shelter organizations and advocacy groups. We received input from 155 municipalities and 45 police services, and received feedback from more than 16,000 members of the public who responded thoughtfully to an online survey.

I would like to thank the SPCAs and humane societies who supported our government's leadership and are

helping with the transition to a new animal welfare enforcement model by providing animal welfare enforcement during the interim period.

I have a humane society in the region of Durham. What's clear is that these outstanding women and men allowed the government to build a more robust, transparent and accountable animal protection system in the province, and we owe them a show of sincere gratitude.

Speaker, the OSPCA is out of the enforcement business, and there is no turning back the clock. Bill 136, if passed, is the next step in our work to renew and modernize the animal welfare system here in Ontario. It will allow us to establish a provincial animal welfare system under the Ministry of the Solicitor General that will enable the appointment of provincially employed inspectors to enforce animal welfare laws across Ontario.

But what's clear, though—and we need to be clear about this—is that it is not an SPCA enforcement model such as still exists in three Canadian provinces and used to exist in Ontario. It is not a police enforcement model, which would have put the burden of animal welfare enforcement on already stretched municipalities. It is not a hybrid model where enforcement is delivered by a combination of government-employed inspectors, police services or charitable organizations, as exists in a majority of Canadian provinces and jurisdictions such as the UK and New Zealand.

Speaker, this is a made-in-Ontario, fully provincially led model that demonstrates that our government understands how significant the well-being of animals is to the people of this great province.

The proposed model, Speaker, to give you some of the highlights:

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

You might ask, Speaker, what the main differences are between enforcement under the OSPCA Act and the proposed Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019. The previous framework was independent from government and offered the least amount of control, oversight and priority-setting. The old model consisted of affiliates that were subject to OSPCA bylaws and requirements that resulted in enforcement gaps and a lack of coverage in parts of the province.

Under the proposed in-house model, the province will have the highest degree of direct oversight of and direct accountability for animal enforcement and investigation, and the greatest flexibility to rapidly respond to operational uncertainties such as a surge in call volume. Funding is a set provincial responsibility, versus the charitable OSPCA model that had to rely heavily on fundraising. The proposed model will enable better coverage across the province.

Speaker, animal welfare inspectors, as you know, serve on the front line in the prevention of animal cruelty. They care deeply about their work and making a real difference to the well-being of animals, and in educating the owners who care for them.

But what was clear in my discussion with some of those men and women was that it is an extremely demanding job and specialized work. Recently, the numbers have just not been there to support the job they do.

What we heard, anecdotally and through the consultations which were conducted broadly throughout the province, was that a lack of inspectors also had a significant impact on response times, calls going unaddressed, greater reliance on local police services attending calls and little or no human resources for follow-ups on compliance or proactive inspections. That has been one of the government's biggest concerns during this transition period.

1510

If Bill 136 is passed, the government will be adding more inspectors, including inspectors who will specialize in agriculture, zoos, aquariums. More inspectors will result in better response times compared to the previous OSPCA enforcement; increased coverage province-wide; less reliance on already stretched front-line police officers to attend animal welfare calls; and reduced reliance on overtime by overworked inspectors, which will also result in lower rates of occupational stress and burnout. These provincial welfare inspectors will be required to undergo training and comply with a mandatory code of conduct.

Animal welfare inspectors will also be subject to a robust public complaints process. Let me talk a little bit about that process, Speaker. For the first time, the public will have access to a one-window complaints process to review an animal welfare inspector's conduct—no more confusion about where to call to register a complaint. For each complaint, a review will be conducted to determine if there is cause for investigation; and the complainant will be provided with the outcome of the review, such as an update on the investigation and steps to resolve the complaint or reasons as to why the complaint is not moving forward. When a complaint is found to be valid, the chief animal welfare inspector or the Solicitor General may reprimand, suspend, impose conditions or revoke the appointment of an inspector who is found to have violated the code of conduct.

What's clear here is that we firmly believe that clear oversight and a one-window public complaints process are the best way to build public trust in the animal welfare system—a trust that has already been tested, with a court ruling challenging the constitutionality of animal welfare inspector powers without appropriate oversight, and then the sudden withdrawal of the OSPCA from enforcement.

Speaker, causing animal distress takes on many forms, and it's not always obvious. According to the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, all vets will encounter animal abuse in their careers, including physical abuse such as inflicting injuries, causing unnecessary pain and cruelty, and inappropriate methods of training such as taping a dog's mouth shut to prevent it from barking.

Every year in North America, pets die from heat exhaustion because they were left in parked vehicles while the owner popped into the store—we've all heard those stories in all of our ridings—or left the car for longer periods with the windows opened just a crack. Dog-fighting—I shake my head every time I come to this—is a vicious blood sport where a fight can last between one and two hours, exposing dogs to severe injury and prolonged and painful death. There are puppy and kitten mills, where dogs and cats are mass-produced, often in the cruelest of conditions.

I want to turn for a moment—because earlier I was talking about inspectors, and I think I want to spend a little bit of time talking about the chief animal welfare inspector responsibilities, because I think it's a strong contextual aspect that adds to our conversation here this afternoon.

Some of those responsibilities will include the following:

- appointing animal welfare inspectors;
- ensuring the necessities of care for any animal that is in the chief animal welfare inspector's care;
- ensuring that inspectors receive appropriate training regarding their power and duties. I think that's a key distinguisher as we move forward with this legislation, appropriate training, because part of what they will be doing is so complex and varied—varied in circumstance and variability across the province. Inspectors will not be permitted to enforce unless they've completed the prescribed training;
- handling complaints about animal welfare inspectors; and
- being able to reprimand, suspend, impose conditions on or revoke the appointment of an inspector who is found to have violated the code of conduct and notify the complainant about the results of the complaint against the inspector.

The chief animal welfare inspector will also be subject to the same code-of-conduct compliance training requirements as any other animal welfare inspector, and I think that would be our expectation; it's a reasonable one. The Solicitor General will review and address any complaints regarding the chief animal welfare inspector.

The government is proposing to maintain the provincial hotline that was launched in June, which is 1-833-9ANIMAL, the toll-free line for members of the public with a concern about the welfare of an animal to call at any time. I think that's a feature we don't want to lose sight of. You've got 60% of people who are living in our great province who own pets, including myself, with my own two small dogs. The call centre will gather relevant information about alleged incidents where an animal may be in distress and then route the call to a provincially employed inspector or local police service, who are empowered to enforce animal welfare laws across the province.

Under the new animal welfare enforcement model, yes, we're going to expand the inspectors, but I think that what that's going to allow us to do overall—and this is what we heard during the consultation process, including consultations that took place in the riding of Whitby and other

ridings in the region of Durham. This will result in better response times—that's what people wanted—and better coverage across the province, because there were gaps. We all know there were gaps.

What I think is important when we talk about the inspectors, also, is the effect on them, and the occupational stress going forward. The inspectors are going to be directly employed by the province and, as a consequence, they'll have the appropriate specific powers to immediately relieve animals' distress and inspect and follow up on the owners' compliance. That was another gap previously, but this proposed legislation addresses that, as it should. It's one thing to undertake the inspection, to provide the conditions under which you can retain your pet, if that's an outcome, but you also need to be able to ensure the owners' compliance, and this legislation will allow that.

Turning quickly—I know I'm running out of time; I've got about three minutes—to inspection of certain businesses, including where animals are kept for exhibition or entertainment: An inspector will be able to enter the premises, other than a dwelling, without a warrant. That said, inspectors will only be able to enter a dwelling without a warrant under very specific circumstances. I don't want to take up time going through those specific circumstances, but they are very specific, as they should be.

Inspectors will be allowed to make orders regarding the care of an animal for an owner to follow, such as supplying food and water and ensuring medical treatment. Yes, they're the basic necessities of an animal's life, but unfortunately, there are owners across this province who have not attended to those necessities. This legislation will certainly look after that particular aspect.

1520

I want to turn to Durham region. I've referenced it a couple of times, but in Durham region and in municipalities across our province, humane societies are great resources, dedicated to protecting and providing temporary shelter and comfort to all companion animals in need. At the same time, they promote adoptions for unwanted, abandoned, neglected or even abused pets.

These organizations rely on their donors and supporters in local communities to enable them to function as well as they do. The Durham humane society is really quite supportive of this legislation and welcomes the more stringent enforcement process, which will help it and all such organizations across Ontario to do their jobs more effectively going forward.

The proposed legislation will enable the development of future regulations that can prohibit possession of certain animals or will require a licence to possess or breed others. These future regulations will be developed after consultation with our community stakeholders.

We return to that special word, "trust." When we speak about oversight, it's essential that we build public trust in the animal welfare enforcement system here in the province. The government's proposed legislation, I believe, provides a foundation on which that trust can be built. When the public complaints process is too complex or too

difficult to navigate, the complainant gets frustrated and most likely simply gives up the fight. Nothing is served when complaints go unheard, least of all confidence in our system. I believe that the legislative framework exists to provide that one-window-in and provides the type of robust framework that we've all been looking for, going forward.

I'm going to conclude now with just a couple of final comments overall. I offer my congratulations to the Solicitor General and certainly to her parliamentary assistant, who have worked so hard on this particular legislation, working across party lines and ensuring in turn that we have the strongest penalties for animal cruelty in Ontario.

I believe a better animal welfare enforcement model is within our reach. It's what our stakeholders asked for and what the public wants, so I hope that, across the aisle—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise to offer some thoughts on the comments from the member for Whitby. I want to assure the member that the official opposition will be supporting this legislation. It is long past time that we create a publicly funded mechanism to enforce animal welfare laws in the province of Ontario.

We do have some concerns, however, around the resources that are going to be allocated to training and to the enforcement of this legislation. We are also concerned about the fact that much of the enforcement regime in this legislation is left to regulations. Until we see what is in those regulations we are going to be reserving judgment, because it is critical that there be proper enforcement and that there be necessary resources allocated to the hiring and the training of the animal inspectors who will be necessary to implement this legislation.

Certainly we on this side of the Legislature have been strong advocates for animal protection laws in this province. We recognize the benefits that pets bring to us as individuals and to society as a whole. Companion animals contribute to better health and social well-being and make many other positive contributions that every Ontario citizen should be able to benefit from.

Protecting animals is our obligation. It is something that the people of Ontario are looking to us to set the bar for.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions or comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm pleased to rise to the comments given by our chief government whip and the well respected member for Whitby.

This Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019—PAWS in its short form—will in fact improve animal welfare. One of the things that really struck a chord with me is that it's introducing new offences to combat activities such as dogfighting. Back in my riding, about three years ago, there was a dogfighting ring that was broken up. Of course, I stood in support of the releasing of those dogs, because they capture them and then they ship them off because it was a criminal offence—and the fact is that criminals, if they knew the location of these dogs, would have put not only the dogs in danger but also the

employees of the OSPCA in danger as well. I remember being out on a front lawn at the court hearings in support of dog owners who not necessarily owned those dogs but were dog owners saying that these dogfighting rings should be wiped out.

Something else, though, that also struck a chord with me was the ability to empower others beyond inspectors to take action when an animal is at imminent risk of serious injury or death, or when a pet is left in a hot car. My little dog was a rescue. He was left in the freezing rain, tied to a tree in the middle of January, and would have died except that someone saw him, brought him in, rescued him. My daughter took him in and she said, "Dad, can you find him a good home?" Well, guess what? We found him a good home.

So I'm very pleased that this bill is being introduced, and those are just a couple of the aspects that I am very happy to certainly support.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sara Singh: It's an honour to rise here, and I'm sure the member from Whitby will be very pleased to know that we are supporting the bill. We will be working with you on it. I think it's one of those things that we can all agree is something that we need to work on. But there's always room for improvement on anything that is put forward here in the House.

As an animal lover myself, I've got a few furry friends at home, so I think that it is absolutely important that we protect them. One of my youngest pets was actually a rescue. Unfortunately, she's no longer with us; she succumbed to some of her illnesses. But I understand the importance of taking care of animals and making sure that they have a safe space to just be themselves and live.

I think, as we've heard throughout the debate, much in this bill has been left up to regulations, and there is a lot that we need to figure out before we move this bill forward. So I would encourage the members to put those pieces into the legislation as we work this through committee, through some amendments. I think that can absolutely be done.

We've heard from a few members here, like the member from London West, with regard to resources. It's wonderful to create a framework for enforcement, but if we don't have the resources to actually get officers out there, to get those animals out of the difficult and traumatic situations that they're in, this is really just another piece of paper.

I would just urge members to really consider the resources that are actually needed to make a difference in the lives of the animals when we're going in to rescue them from those situations—not only when we're rescuing them, but the care that they will need after the fact. That includes those shelters. They will need to be properly resourced as well, and I don't know if this legislation is fully taking all of that into consideration just yet.

So I would definitely encourage the members to think of the problem a little bit more inclusively, in terms of all of the supports that will be needed for those animals once

they are taken out of those situations. They need to be supported in an adoptive family or in that shelter. That's all my time, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'm happy to join in, and I just want to thank the member from Whitby for his comments today.

I want to let you know that part of this legislation is going to be continuing our ongoing relationship with our humane societies with regard to sheltering animals. That's an important relationship we have, and local humane societies do a lot of really good work advocating on behalf of animals and educating the public.

I think the education piece is very key to animal cruelty because people need to know what is cruel to an animal and what's not. One of the things in this legislation which I'm really excited about is, we've added the definition of "distress." Everyone talks about animals in cars or animals—what is an animal in distress? It's psychological harm to that animal. Many years ago, we didn't really think of these animals having that type of harm to them, but we know better now, and that is actually included in this legislation.

1530

The other piece is, when we start talking about regulations, that the Solicitor General is going to be putting together, if this legislation is passed, a multidisciplinary advisory table. That's going to have experts—academics, industry, advocacy and veterinarians—and they're going to be part of the consultation to put these regulations together. It is part of a consultation. It's really important, I agree, that we get this right, that we make sure these regulations are the right fit for our animals, and that we are doing the best we can for all of our animals.

As we talk about all these stories about pets in distress—we all have one—we just want to remind people that if you do see a pet in distress, there is that 1-800 number. It's actually 1-833-9ANIMAL, or 1-833-926-4625. Please share that with your constituents or anyone out there. That is the number, and it is answered 24 hours a day. We want to make sure that there is no pet in distress.

I just want to thank the opposition. I understand you're going to be supporting this legislation. Let's do this for our animals.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to my colleagues from my caucus, as well as the members opposite, for your comments on my presentation today.

When we step back and listen to the presentations, fundamentally, it comes down to the protection of animals and how important that is to the people we have the privilege of representing.

But it's also important to all of us as legislators. That's why the Solicitor General and the parliamentary assistant have been working so hard towards an animal protection system that will be more robust.

I talked about transparency and I talked about accountability in my presentation. All of those features are

evidenced in the legislation and the underpinning regulations that will flow from that, going forward.

I talked about the importance of modernizing the framework as well, with updated prohibitions and obligations, modernized compliance tools, and the strongest penalties that you can find in Canada—long overdue. We all know that.

But taken together—Mr. Speaker, I rushed this because I ran out time, and I see I am again—what we have before us is a better welfare enforcement model that is within our reach. It's what our stakeholders have asked for, and it's what the public wants. We have the opportunity to deliver that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's always a pleasure to rise in the House. Today, I'm happy to speak to this government bill that's looking to establish some basic and, hopefully, long-lasting standards regarding the care of animals, and enforcement measures that are needed when animals in this province are not cared for properly.

My family home is filled with the love, and a lot of fur, of three animal companions that we have in our little family. My husband, Trevor, and I are proud parents to a Husky mix named Nova, and we also have two cats, Navi and Neechie, all three of which were rescued from different parts of Ontario in different ways. So I thought I'd tell a little bit of a story today about how I came to have all of these beautiful little rescue animals in my life.

Navi is our youngest cat. She's a little calico. She came to us in a really interesting way. I was up at a sweat lodge one day in a community north of Fergus, Ontario, just outside of Guelph. We had parked on the road at this farmer's field and hiked into the land that we were using for ceremony land. When we came out of the lodge and we'd finished the ceremony, I was hiking back through this farmer's land to get back to where I'd parked my car, and this little itty-bitty baby kitten came pittering out of the forest and followed me all the way back to my car—it had to have been at least a kilometre—pittering and crying behind us.

She was clearly quite sick. As soon as I get to my car, I open up the car door and this little itty-bitty baby kitten—who we thought at the time was only about six weeks old, she was so small—hops up into my car, gets into the passenger seat, curls up into a little ball and goes right to sleep. I go, "I guess this is how you get a cat"—which went over fairly well when I got home. Really, the true hero of the story is my husband, Trevor, who didn't turn me away at the door when I showed up with this little sick baby kitten.

Nonetheless, we called the vet the next day and got the vet to come over and check her out. She was very sick. She had really bad worms in her belly, and her ears were just caked black with ear mites. She has been a bit of a sickly cat over the years. She doesn't breathe quite properly because of how sick she was when we found her. But nonetheless, that's how we came to get her.

We named her—it's a bit of a nerdy reference—we called her Navi. I don't know if anyone ever played Zelda.

There was that little forest fairy named Navi that would follow you around. She'd go, "Hey! Listen!" So we always joked that that's how she followed us out of the forest, going "Hey! Listen! Take me home!" So that's how we ended up with Navi.

Then a few years later, along came Neechie—not the philosopher. Neechie's name is actually the Anishnaabemowin word for "friend," so it's not the philosopher. Neechie came along a few years later. Again, it was just one of those situations: He showed up in our lives and never left, and picked us. I said to my husband, "I guess this is how you get a cat" again.

I came out in the backyard one day when we were living in London, the few years that we were out there. I look out and I see my race car in the backyard, and I see this cat curled up on the trunk of my race car. He's made a little nest there. I go, "Huh, look at that." And every day for the next couple of weeks, this little cat—well, not a little cat; he's actually quite large—was curled up on the trunk of my race car. So of course, he starts coming to hang out with us every single day. I'd come home from work and I'd sit on the patio chair out back, and he'd come pittering from the car, hop up into my lap, start purring up a storm and just start cuddling with us. This went on for weeks. Finally, we realized he was definitely a stray—he didn't belong to anyone—and we took him in.

Actually, I want to give a shout-out to my colleagues in the London ridings. There are some amazing animal organizations out that way that were very helpful to us when we were taking him in as a stray. The city of London operates, like many municipalities, a trap-neuter-release program. If you're adopting or taking in a stray, there are really great resources through London that will do your spaying or your neutering as part of the trap-neuter-release program. But you can also adopt animals back out through that program as well, which I thought was really interesting, at the time.

Then we have Nova, our sassy little Husky, whose hair I'm often wearing in the Legislature despite all of my best efforts at lint removal. She also came to us as a bit of a rescue, through a friend of a friend who had a neighbour who was very low-income and whose dog had accidentally gotten pregnant and had all these puppies they were trying to find good homes for.

That's how Nova came to be in our life. She's just over four now, and we love her quite a lot, and are maybe starting to have some conversations about getting a little furry brother or sister for her. We're looking into some different rescue organizations right now. Again, there are some great animal rescue organizations in all of our communities, not just the SPCA and the local humane societies.

We've recently become aware of an organization called Redemption Paws. They're really neat. They work in areas affected by climate change and the climate crisis, which is becoming increasingly more important when we talk about the intersection of animal rights with the climate crisis. They'll go down into communities that have been affected by climate disaster, places that have been affected by

floods and fires and tornadoes and hurricanes, and they'll rescue all of the stray animals out of those climate crisis zones. It's really commendable work, so just a shout-out to them. I know that they're an organization based here in Ontario as well.

Last but not least, I couldn't help but mention the first furry friend I ever had in my life, Merlin, who we adopted from the humane society when I was about 13 years old, here in Toronto. He was a tough guy who stayed with us right until he was about 17, and passed away just a few years ago.

Again, going to the humane society here in Toronto—they were absolutely fantastic. I don't know if they still do, but at the time they had special resources for low-income families to be able to afford sliding-scale veterinarian services, so that the joy and comfort of having a pet in the family wasn't exclusively reserved for folks in higher income brackets. Anyway, because I can tangentially tie it into this bill, I'm always happy to stand up and share a little bit about my home life, my family and all the wonderful furry folks I have in my life.

1540

Back to the bill: Every day, the Toronto Humane Society—which I've spoken about now already a few times. It's located in my riding of Toronto Centre, just on River Street there. More and more, they're seeing an increase in homeless animals. We need to be doing better, as a whole, to be taking care of these homeless animals. Whether they show up at the Toronto Humane Society because they've been surrendered, because they're strays that have been taken in, or perhaps because they're animals that have been removed from dangerous situations, there are so many loving, furry companions out there waiting for a family. Like I said, not just at the Toronto Humane Society—but there are many other rescue organizations across Toronto and across Ontario, some of them with really different and interesting mandates, that are rescuing organizations from the United States and all across the world.

All of our constituents deserve to know that as the province of Ontario, we're going to take care of not just people, but we're going to respect the rights and the humanity of animals. Whether they're pets or working animals or farm animals, they're all going to be treated humanely and safely in the province, and we're going to do our duty as a province to make sure that there are enforcement mechanisms when animals aren't being cared for appropriately.

I'm sure everyone in this Legislature has heard stories of dog owners who are negligent and leave their dogs in hot cars in the summer, often leaving passers-by to worry about their well-being. The Internet and social media is just littered with stories from around the world of people breaking car windows, calling for help when they witness hot pets that are in distress. Similarly, in the winter, we see animals that are left out in the cold, which is not only heartbreaking, but it underlines the critical issues that we're seeing with the current system as it's in place. These issues that are being raised are being raised by all of our constituents.

I have a few emails that I'm going to read into the record and share with you today. I received an email from one of my constituents named Ben. It reads, "Hot weather is extremely dangerous for dogs, and I am concerned that laws protecting dogs in Ontario are vague, insufficient and inadequately enforced. The provincial standards of care allow dogs to be chained outdoors indefinitely, requiring merely a three-metre tether, and a weather-proofed shelter.

"As a compassionate person, these conditions are unacceptable to me. The dogs chained are no different from the dogs with whom we share our homes, and they deserve the same love and respect. I know that you are currently revising Ontario provincial animal welfare legislation. I urge you to consider the disturbing conditions that sled dogs are often kept in, and take swift action to ban outdoor dog chaining in Ontario. It's the right thing to do."

I have another email from a constituent named Janine. It reads:

"The current animal welfare legislation in Ontario is severely outdated and has not kept pace with social values. It's time to update this legislation.

"Animal welfare is very important, and we need to take this opportunity to make it a priority. Please be a champion for animals and voice your opinion that we need stronger legislation; one that includes recognizing that animals can feel and suffer from pain.

"I encourage you to reach out to animal welfare experts who have direct knowledge of the changes that need to be made."

I have one more email from a constituent named Miranda. It reads: "Hello, I am a constituent living in Regent Park. Please look into the end of animal welfare enforcement by the SPCA and the importance of taking advantage of this juncture to build strong provincial legislation. As a member of provincial Parliament, you can help make a difference in the lives of animals."

I would certainly think that most of my colleagues here in this Legislature would agree with those sentiments.

Before I move on, I also want to talk a little bit about how we got here. At the end of the day, this is another example of the utter failure of the Liberal government to address what is truly a lack of compassion towards animals and a lack of a provincial framework and standards. The Liberal government had years, 15 years, to find a permanent solution. Instead, they let the animal protection system crumble right in front of our eyes, like so many of the other systems and services across our province and have been relying on a private charity to do the work that government itself should have been doing all of this time. It wasn't until an animal rights activist took the government to court that the current government decided to finally do something about this outdated structure.

There's a dire need for a robust and transparent publicly funded animal welfare enforcement structure. It's been unfortunate that we haven't seen a sense of urgency from this government in addressing the matter, ensuring that we have a strong animal welfare system in place.

Until the passing of Bill 117, this government's interim measure to see the enforcement of animal welfare, the

enforcement was done uniquely by the OSPCA. As we know, while the OSPCA does fantastic work and really should be commended for it, they're a private charity and they're simply not the equivalent of a publicly funded government organization.

There's no other law enforcement that's done this way. We rely on various levels of municipal, provincial and federal policing to enforce laws for humans, yet for animals we have no rightful equivalent. It's almost as though, as a society, as communities, we've agreed that standards for animals can slip indefinitely.

Again, I do want to recognize the work of the OSPCA, but still, OSPCA officers are simply not adequately equipped to deal with the sometimes violent and dangerous conditions that animals are put in, like puppy mills or fighting rings. On multiple occasions, we've seen that the OSPCA was not receiving adequate funding, nor did they have the tools to enforce regulations in a hostile environment.

Sorry to my colleague that I'm coughing on here. My apologies.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's all good here.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you. On multiple occasions, like I've said, we've seen the OSPCA not receiving adequate funding, and my colleague the member for Niagara Falls has extensively spoken in outrage about cruelty charges being dropped against a vet who was suspended in 2015 after a leaked video of him abusing animals in his care. I have a news article about that right here that I could read into the record. This is from the CBC in Hamilton from November 6, 2017.

We saw the "veterinarian was depicted on video striking, choking and slamming cats and dogs...."

"Rekhi drew widespread ire last year when videos taken by former employees were made public showing him with a number of animals...."

"He was suspended for 10 months and fined \$10,000."

Again, as I said, there were charges that were later dropped as well.

Of course, we can't forget about the multiple horses who were found buried on a property in Stouffville and seemed to have starved to death. I have another article here from CBC Toronto about the three family members who were sentenced to 45 days in jail for cruelty to horses. I'll read into the record a small piece from this article from June 25 of this year: "The Smalls were originally charged with a number of animal cruelty offences after an investigation by the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) in May 2018. The investigation involved the treatment of horses at a rented rural property in Whitchurch-Stouffville, Ont., north of Toronto...."

"According to an agreed statement of facts, the case involved the deaths of two horses and mistreatment of 14 others and a pony. The remains of 13 other horses were found on the property, but a vet could not determine exactly when the animals died...."

"Originally, neighbours discovered three dead horses in a trailer concealed by trees at the back of the farmland, which prompted the OSPCA investigation...."

“In May 2018, an OSPCA officer went to the rural property after receiving a complaint about the welfare of a herd of horses. The officer saw 14 horses and one pony living in unsanitary conditions.

“A veterinarian was brought in to examine the horses, which were found to be thin, with ribs, hips and spines visible on many. Their hooves were also severely neglected.

“Several dead horses were also found on the property....

“The OSPCA said it was continuing to monitor the care of the horses taken off the farm to ensure all veterinary recommendations are being followed in their new homes.”

This was a heartbreaking story of horses that were clearly being neglected and abused. It was great to see the OSPCA get involved in this case, but again, it highlights the need for greater provincial oversight and mechanisms.
1550

Speaker, it's obvious that this is something that should have been addressed a very long time ago. I do certainly wish that our Liberal colleagues, when they were in government, had taken the opportunity to do so.

I want to be clear today that while my colleagues and I are supporting this bill, we are concerned about making sure that adequate investments follow along with this bill. In general, we've seen this government talk a good talk but fail to deliver when it comes to properly funding the initiatives that they are putting forward. As an example, just a few weeks ago I spoke to a private member's motion in this House about CPR training for youth which, again, had great intentions, and to the member who put that forward, I thank them. But when it comes down to it, they put forward a motion about providing CPR training to youth and then didn't attach any adequate resources to it to actually implement that program.

Again, these are some of the concerns we have with this bill. It's a good framework, but the devil is going to be in the details. Are we ultimately going to see this be under-resourced to do the work that it needs to be doing?

This bill certainly creates a framework for establishing animal welfare inspectors as members of the public service who are accountable to a chief animal welfare inspector who will be appointed under the act.

Speaker, I do know I only have a few minutes left on the clock. There is one other piece I did want to speak to on this bill, and not just this bill, but I think it's an important thing to highlight in all of the pieces of legislation that come through this House. That's a piece around gender-inclusive language in how we actually write our bills. In the explanatory note of the bill, it says, “The minister has duties to monitor the chief animal welfare inspector and handle complaints about him or her.” We know that that's not gender-inclusive language for folks who are trans or non-binary, and I think that is an important lens that, as a Legislature in 2019 going into 2020, we need to be applying to all of our legislation as we're writing it so that we're not excluding folks who are gender non-binary or trans from the very language of our bills.

There's a really simple solution to this, Speaker. We can and should be using more inclusive language. We have

the pronoun “they” that's been recognized as a version of a single pronoun. In fact, the Merriam-Webster dictionary establishes that “they” is used to identify a single person who identifies as gender non-binary. A small word change could make it read that the chief animal welfare inspector can handle complaints about “them,” which would clarify the language of the bill. I think, you know, it would be one small step in terms of making this bill more inclusive to non-binary people. I think, as I said, that this is a lens we need to be continuing to apply to all of the legislation that comes through this House.

I only have a few seconds left on the clock but I do want to thank the government for bringing this bill forward. Again, it's something that should have been dealt with quite a long time ago. But again, we do have some concerns and some reservations about making sure that animal welfare in this province is properly resourced as this moves forward, and again, I do think there's an opportunity to become better legislators, particularly when it comes to gender-inclusive language in our drafting of our bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

M^{me} Gila Martow: J'aimerais parler un petit peu, quelques mots, sur le projet de loi 136. C'est une loi sur les services provinciaux visant le bien-être des animaux et apportant des modifications corrélatives concernant la protection des animaux.

On a discuté déjà que nous reconnaissons maintenant vraiment le mal psychologique quand les animaux sont maltraités ou négligés. On veut parler avec tous les experts. Une des choses qu'on a discutées, c'est que le gouvernement veut arranger une équipe consultative des experts.

Une des choses que moi, j'ai suggérées déjà, c'est que peut-être on peut avoir des autocollants en vinyle qu'on met sur les portes, sur les fenêtres de nos maisons. C'est avec—vous le savez; vous l'avez déjà vu, je suis certaine—une petite photo d'un chat ou d'un chien ou d'un autre ami à fourrure qu'on a dans nos maisons. On peut mettre sur ça le numéro 1-833-9-ANIMAL—c'est en anglais, mais ce sont les numéros qui correspondent. C'est 24 heures par jour qu'on peut appeler ce numéro si on pense qu'un animal est maltraité. Maintenant on comprend que c'est très important pour tous nos résidents ici en Ontario que les animaux sont bien traités comme il faut ici, et d'avoir des inspecteurs qui peuvent s'arranger pour que tout le monde qui a des animaux dans leurs maisons—que les animaux sont bien traités.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's always a pleasure to rise but particularly on Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act.

I want to say to all of my colleagues that—I don't think I've ever done this before, and I don't even know if it's legal, but I'm going to try. If I'm out of line, you can just tell me. How many in the House who are currently here own a pet of some kind? Put your hand up. Yes, take a

look at that. I would think that maybe 80% of us have pets. We all love our pets. I think that goes without saying.

We've got a minute and 30 seconds left. I'm sure I can get this out.

I'm pleased to say that we are going to support the bill. That's my understanding. I want my colleagues on the other side to know that. But what I don't want you to do when I go to question period for the next two and a half years is to say that we're supporting you guys 90% of the time. I want to make sure that that doesn't get confused as we go through this process, because I hear that almost every other day. So do you guys agree to that, that what we're doing is not 90% of the time? It's probably closer to a few percentages.

I'm not going to have a lot of time, because I've only got 50 seconds left. But this is an important bill, and I'll tell you why. In my community, in my area—it wasn't in my community; it was actually in St. Catharines—on September 14, 2016, we woke up to shocking clips being played on CTV regarding a local veterinarian named Dr. Rekhi.

I want you to listen to this. I'll have to do this over probably a couple of minutes—a couple of these. I'm here for a few hours.

On that day, we witnessed security camera footage of the way Dr. Rekhi was treating our community animals. I've got to say this quickly: He was beating cats, sedating them and swinging them into shelving units. He was punching the dogs over and over again. We saw him use his upper hands to beat animals that he was supposed to care for. I'll finish that story the next time I get two minutes, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments? The member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that.

It's good to hear that the opposition members are supporting the bill in principle. They have some concerns with it, and I understand that. Basically, this bill is coming forward with a really good framework. What we're doing is, we're going to take the regulations in it—and that's really where the modernization is.

Let's take a step back for a moment. The court decision struck down a process that had been in place for more than 100 years. When you think about that—we were doing something for 100 years and we hadn't actually modernized how that should be approached.

I'm a pet owner as well. I've had a number of different dogs. I have two border collies right now. One of them is very sucky. One of them is very sensitive. You can hurt their feelings by raising your voice or not treating them the way that they think that they should be. This is one of the things that this bill is actually going to recognize. It's going to recognize that some of those animals that we're talking about do need to be treated differently; do need to have—for lack of a better term—their feelings considered.

We've gone out and we've spoken to 155 municipalities. We have more than 40 police services that we've

talked to about this. I think that this bill finds a very good balance.

Our NDP colleague talked about different pets and some of the things that you have to have when you're looking after your pet. But I'd like to point out that you have to keep in mind, too, that a working animal is vastly different than the household pet.

I'll talk about one in particular. The dog has since passed away, but his name was Harris, and he was a police dog. When he retired, the biggest problem that his handler had was that he had been trained to climb fences. So although the owner had a 12-foot fence in the backyard, the dog could get free. You don't want to have a dog locked up all the time, because it was a working dog, so you had to find some kind of a balance. I think that this bill does that. It finds balance for those animals.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I rise in this House today to talk about Bill 136, a government bill on provincial animal welfare services. This bill adds tougher penalties. However, Madam Speaker, they are penalties for violating the standards of care or causing an animal to be in distress. There are exceptions made for animals involved in agriculture and husbandry.

Rather than creating standards of care specifically for agricultural animals, Bill 136 effectively leaves it up to the various industries to set up their own standards of care by saying activities must be “carried on in accordance with the reasonable and generally accepted practices of agricultural animal care, management or husbandry, unless the standards of care or administrative requirements”—Madam Speaker, it's my opinion that it is impossible that the standards of care could be improved. In Bill 136, the language around agriculture could impact their ability to do so in some cases.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd certainly like to thank the members from Thornhill, Niagara Falls, Peterborough—Kawartha and York South—Weston for their thoughtful replies. Special apologies to my good friend from Niagara Falls for coughing on you during my debate; I really hope you don't get the cold I've got going around.

That said, Speaker, I do want to reiterate that we are happy to support this bill today. Certainly we do need strong animal welfare protections in this province. Again, some of our concerns have to do with the amount of detail that will be left to regulation. I know that we certainly will be watchful of the government as they work through that process to develop those regulations, and also cautious of the fact that we want to see this work adequately resourced. We don't want to see a position where we have an animal welfare agency in this province not actually financially equipped to do the work that we need them to do.

All of my colleagues who have spoken to this bill today shared stories concerning issues of animal negligence and

abuse from their communities, and certainly their love for the animals and pets in their lives—particularly the member from Niagara Falls, who shared some of the heartbreaking stories of the vet from the St. Catharines area who was caught on video abusing animals. That's exactly the kind of thing that we need to be stopping and preventing in this province, and that work can't happen if animal protection services are not properly resourced.

So again, to the government members: We are going to be supporting this bill, but I really hope that this work is adequately resourced moving forward as this bill passes. Know that we'll be watching if it's not.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. David Piccini: I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak about steps our government is taking to improve Ontario's animal welfare system and the act to enact the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act.

Animal welfare is an area that's really close to my heart, Madam Speaker. I'd like to first lead by giving a local shout-out to the Northumberland Humane Society and the phenomenal work that they're doing there to protect and support the animals in our community each and every day. I've been by for a visit with Kate and seen the remarkable work she and staff are doing, often on a shoestring budget, to support animals in our community, and I'd be remiss without giving a special local shout-out to them and the phenomenal work they're doing.

Why I do so, Madam Speaker, is because I had the Solicitor General, Minister Jones, in my riding for an important animal welfare round table prior to introducing this legislation. I was very proud to do so and to involve many stakeholders around the table. We had members from almost every municipality in my riding. I'm from rural Ontario, so we have a number of municipalities. We had mayors. We had members of municipal staff. We had our local humane society there. We had members from local animal activist groups. We had members from, of course, our ag community—the important role that our ag community plays in rural Ontario. All of them said that we had a problem.

I would like to highlight comments made by the member opposite prior—she's very right. I think the NDP and our government can find commonality and common ground in what, it has to be said, is a profound rebuke of the last 15 years of neglect under the previous Liberal government, where they really failed to stand up for animals in Ontario. Madam Speaker, they failed to stand up for animals, and that deserves unanimous condemnation from not only members in this House but I heard it from Ontarians around this province.

Why that's so important is because, as the member opposite, whom I respect a great deal, said, when he asked members to put up their hands and say, "Who has pets in this chamber?"—we know that the vast majority of Ontarians have pets. They're beloved extensions of our family, as many in my community said.

There was a young girl who pulled on her mom's coattails the other day and pointed to me and said, "Hey,

it's Max." That's my dog; that's not me. But she knows me because of my dog, who is like an extension of our family. He's always in my constituency office. To be honest, in the next election I might run Max; he might very well get more votes. He's a phenomenal addition to my family, and I love my dog Max.

I think what that's grounded in is, when I was in university I volunteered for the local humane society. I also became a foster parent for dogs. I saw the abuse that so many dogs in the national capital region were subject to. It was an honour and a privilege to be a foster parent for a short period of time. That was really what spurred my interest in this file.

Again, back to the animal welfare round table that we had, and just to give you an overview of some of the things I want to touch on: There was some concern at that round table on how the province deals with this and how we standardize care for animals across this province. I'm pleased to see—as the member opposite from just north of me in Peterborough–Kawartha said—one of the big concerns that some of the members opposite touched on, I think we'll address in our regulations.

What this does, for the first time, after 15 years of Liberal neglect, is lay out the most comprehensive animal welfare system that this province has ever seen. Full kudos goes to our Solicitor General, Minister Jones, for leading that charge, and to this government for, in less than a year, doing what the previous Liberal government had 15 years to do.

This important framework, Madam Speaker, lays out a chief animal welfare inspector. Again, I think some of the feedback and concerns that we had were on the lack of a central role in this realm, and I think that chief animal welfare inspector will play that. Of course, they'll be subject to oversight from the Animal Care Review Board, and I think that's important.

The standards-of-care piece, which we talk about in this legislation: Again, it's so important that there needs to be some basic standards of care for animals in this province. Again, it's something that this legislation speaks to.

The standardization of inspectors—we spoke about enforcement. In my riding, we have the Northumberland Humane Society, which I already gave a shout-out to earlier. They have a phenomenal inspector there. Do you know what? I've got to say, he does yeoman's work and really travels our community to protect animals. What he does is, he travels. In many cases, it takes a day to go up to one complaint and a day just to come back home. That's the reality in rural Ontario. The feedback we heard from that round table and feedback I've heard in my community is that really having standardization and having standardized inspectors who are direct employees of the province of Ontario is long needed.

For those local inspectors, either under the OSPCA or other humane societies, again this government said, "We value the role they're doing." They're going to be doing it till the end of 2019. I look forward to working with those inspectors and, of course, to them applying to become provincial inspectors under a province-wide, regulated system.

1610

For those concerned, this legislation speaks potentially to a need to hire more inspectors. So I think we could see that across the province. But to have that standardization—again, these humane societies operate on shoestring budgets. If I think of Northumberland and the work that they're doing with their local inspector—we have a phenomenal one, but for many others, there has got to be a standard system in place for the education and training of these inspectors. We're blessed in our community to have one who understands the realities of rural Ontario, but one of the concerns expressed by our agriculture community was that we would have people going onto their farms with no knowledge of agriculture, with no knowledge of the important role that our ag community is doing not only in feeding our cities, but in looking after the animals on their farms. Madam Speaker, it's their business. It's in their best interests to look after their animals.

Of course, around the province, there are always going to be those who abuse the system and who don't treat their animals—whether they be on farms or whether they be in homes—with the respect and the dignity they deserve, but that's why we have standards of care. But I can't underestimate the importance for rural Ontario of having standardized inspectors across this province who will have expertise in agriculture. If I think of rural Ontario in my region, that's going to be so vital. I know it's something that the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture have long advocated for. I think back to meetings just two weeks ago that I had with the Chicken Farmers of Ontario and Tim Klompmaker, who's in Norwood in my community, who applauded the work that our government is doing.

Again, the devil is in the details. We look forward to contributions from members opposite. To the member who spoke, who boasts of her riding being the home of the Toronto Humane Society, another remarkable organization, we look forward to her feedback on those regulations. This is the framework that we have laid out—as I said, the most comprehensive framework in Ontario's history—to protect and look after our animals. We look forward to the opposition feeding in to the regulations that are going to support this comprehensive piece of legislation.

To our agriculture community, whom I have the distinct privilege of representing in this place—we're in conversation with them on a regular basis. I had Minister Hardeman in my riding for important round tables—two now—that we've had on agriculture. Unique round tables on animal welfare: I've had a number of them in my riding alone. We look forward to developing a robust system, and of course we'll be conducting ongoing negotiations and ongoing talks with our stakeholders, seeking their advice, because they're the experts every day—as I have done in my riding and as members and colleagues in our government have done in their own respective ridings.

The seamless standards that Ontarians can now come to expect, thanks to this government, thanks to this minister, are so important—standards to protect animals in this province.

Madam Speaker, just as I've touched on some of those broad strokes to this legislation—this is so vital. You know, I again have to draw this back to what we have come to see so often not only in Ontario but province-wide: virtue signalling from the Liberal Party. In the 15 years that the previous government had to address animal welfare in this province, not only did they let Ontarians down, not only did they let our next generation down with the debt they saddled them with, but they let our beloved animals down. I'm proud to be part of a government that, in just over a year here, has taken concrete action to address this.

Why are we doing this? Because it's important—because animal welfare is important to the people of this province and it's important to this government. If I think of some of the steps we've taken as a government more broadly speaking—allowing pooches on patios, as we've commonly and affectionately referred to it. This is going to be excellent in my community, when folks stop off the 401, perhaps along one of the many lakeshore communities in my riding, to be able to sit on the patio overlooking Lake Ontario, overlooking the Ganaraska River, and to be able to have their dogs there. I think that's widely and commonly accepted in many states; I think of New York State and I think of others. It again speaks to the steps this government is taking to bring this province into the 21st century. Not only are we modernizing a digital approach to government, not only are we using these phones in government now, not only are we saving money developing a robust infrastructure system and transit across this province, but this piece of animal welfare legislation speaks to bringing this government into the 21st century: allowing animals on patios and standing up for and supporting our animals.

Again, another area important to my heart which the member sitting beside me tabled today is the Dog Owners' Liability Act. We know that with a pet and with an animal comes responsibility, and that responsibility means looking after it, no different than you would look after your family members, members of your community or your own children. To see equitable legislation passed across Ontario, and what will hopefully soon be equitable legislation for all breeds of dogs in this province, is something that is long overdue. I commend him for his leadership on that and have so enjoyed working with him and the important stakeholders—too many to name, but we'll see them later this week. Thank you for the work that you're doing to stand up for dogs in this province. Thank you for the work you're doing showing that all animals deserve a shot and that we need to go after bad owners and not bad dogs. As I've so often said, we were going after the wrong end of the leash. With this piece of legislation, this government is taking a step in the right direction.

Now if I could go over aspects of this legislation important to rural Ontario and areas of our agriculture community. I've spoken to pieces of oversight, but I just wanted to talk about equine and livestock concerns. Provincial inspectors will have the authority to conduct investigations and perform enforcement activities related

to livestock and equine. This is important because this activism that we've seen and the trespassing on farms not only is a bio-security hazard, but we wouldn't tolerate that in our hospitals; we wouldn't tolerate that in your home, Madam Speaker, or mine. So why are we tolerating that on our farms? I stand firmly shoulder to shoulder with members of our agriculture community who have to adhere to some of the most robust regulations in the province, who have to deal with federal oversight and provincial oversight, who deal with oversight in their own industries and who are some of the most responsible stewards of their land and of their animals. I stand shoulder to shoulder with them in resolutely rebuking and standing against these egregious acts that we've seen on our farms.

I can't commend our ag community enough. As I said, I grew up in rural Ontario, and I think there's a disconnect between urban and rural Ontario. I'm part of a government that is trying to bridge that through sound pieces of legislation like this that are going to have responsible oversight across the province, that are going to have inspectors who are going to be provincially accountable and are going to be accountable no matter whether you're in Kenora–Rainy River, whether you're in downtown Toronto or whether you're in Northumberland–Peterborough South. That's responsible government. I'm pleased to see that that was in this legislation, the framework, and I look forward to working with the members opposite and with all Ontarians to ensure that the regulations also address this and that the regulations reflect the realities in Port Hope and in Cobourg but also the realities in Asphodel–Norwood, the realities in Otonabee–South Monaghan and in the farming communities of Northumberland county, and that we're standing up for our farmers, that we're respecting the work they do on a day-to-day basis. Members of our ag community can count on me to stand up, support them and respect them in doing the great work that they do, and can count on this government to stand up for our agriculture community, as we've so often done.

The OSPCA: I know when we look at what the specialized inspectors are doing with expertise not only, as I said, on agriculture, but with the inspectors that we have under the OSPCA or under our humane societies today, I think these inspectors will be integral parts of a province-wide system. As this minister said, in our consultations we've engaged in important conversations.

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I would say that in my community we don't have enough inspectors, so under this new system and as we work with all members of this House and important stakeholders around Ontario, we might very well see more inspectors in communities like mine because we need them. Having provincial oversight, having sound oversight, is critical to that. A robust oversight system was something that, whether you're a municipal stakeholder at my round table, members of the humane society or members of the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture—they all called for robust oversight, and that's exactly what this legislation is going to do: a seamless

province-wide system for animal welfare, which, as I said, was so desperately needed in this province.

Why, Madam Speaker? Because I think we've become far too used to seeing these horrible cases of animal abuse in our communities. Again, the Liberals had 15 years to address it, to stand up for our four-legged animals that can't stand up for themselves, that don't have those voices in this place, and they did nothing. Shame on them for doing nothing to stand up for animals that have no voice.

You know what, Madam Speaker? I'm proud to stand with all members of this government in saying that we've given them a voice in this legislation, with robust provincial oversight, with a seamless province-wide framework. We're doing just that, with something I haven't spoken to: the strongest penalties in Canada for offenders. No matter what stakeholders I've spoken to—members of our ag community who've said, "We do it in a responsible manner, but we recognize that there are members of our own community—dog owners, cat owners, pet owners alike—there are always bad apples."

Rather than going after animals, Madam Speaker, rather than doing nothing, as the previous government did, we are saying that we're going to go after bad animal owners, with some of the strongest penalties in Canada for offenders. That's good governance; that's leadership under Premier Ford and this government, going after bad animal owners, going after bad dog owners, bad pet owners. That's responsible governance, and that has been resoundingly argued for and advocated for over the last number of years. Why the previous government did nothing about it, I don't know; we'd have to ask the members opposite, of which there are very few to this day.

When we look at some of the offences that we're going to see here—ticketing and offences that could warrant jail time—when we look at animal welfare concerns in rural Ontario, this legislation is dealing with that. The standards of care will be updated as a part of the development of these regulations, and I look forward to working with important stakeholders in my community to do that.

But in this framework, Madam Speaker, we have comprehensive legislation to protect animals, to protect those beloved animals, those creatures that are now affectionately part of our families, that have no voice. They now have a voice, thanks to our provincial government. They now have a voice in this legislation, and they will have an even stronger voice as we stand shoulder to shoulder with members of the New Democratic Party who are supporting this piece of legislation, in developing a robust regulatory framework that will punish those who abuse animals. I'm proud to be part of a government that's standing up for our animals, introducing—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Questions or comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm just going to address the speaker's comment, and then I'll get back onto the story I want to tell. This bill—this is what it's about. I'd really like him to listen; maybe he'll answer in the rebuttal for me. This all comes back to one fundamental aspect of this bill, and that is completely missing from this bill: proper

funding for inspection and for inspectors. Maybe you can let me know what you think on that. This bill isn't worth the paper it's written on unless we fix those in the bill.

I want to get back to talking about Dr. Rekhi and what our community faced as he abused animals. You can imagine: You've got your pet, and it's sick and it's got whatever's wrong with it, and you put it in the hands of a vet. When you take it there, you're expecting to get the type of care he'd get at home or she'd get at home. That didn't happen in this case, and the community was outraged. They went to the college—and I want you to hear this. I know that the Conservatives—I know that the member from Burlington always likes to listen to me. He got fined \$10,000, with an eight-month suspension—no jail time. I think we can all agree that he shouldn't have gotten an eight-month suspension. He should have been fined probably a lot more than \$10,000, but he should never have been able to set up shop again anywhere in the province of Ontario, and that didn't happen. Once he served his suspension, he paid his fine and he opened up in the same place that he had the business before—the exact same place.

You talk about the Liberals falling asleep on this file. I went to the labour minister, and do you know what he said? That it wasn't his issue. I'll finish the rest of the story in my next two-minute hit.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions or comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I appreciate the items that were brought forward by my colleague from Northumberland–Peterborough South. He's very, very passionate; you can sense the passion in his voice. He's a dog lover; so am I.

Earlier I talked about the Chatham 21, a dogfighting ring, and I'm so glad to see that in this particular bill there are going to be new regulations put in place so that we can combat dogfighting rings across Ontario. The Chatham 21 was a pit bull ring that made the news about three years ago. A lot of those dogs—about 18 of them, of the 21—have now found new homes in the United States. The nice thing about that as well that I've just recently found out is that the offspring of some of those dogs are now service dogs in the United States. I received a picture from one of our animal advocates telling me that one of the dogs, Maurice, just recently celebrated his fourth birthday, and he was one of those 21 dogs. So it's heartwarming to see that this particular legislation is being put in place.

One of the other things that really concerned me—and I mentioned this earlier—was the fact that our government is giving the ability to empower others to take action for dogs that are at risk, for example, in hot cars. I can't talk about a hot car, but I can talk about a cold, freezing-rain day in the middle of January roughly about eight years ago, when the cutest little Yorkie you ever saw was tied to a tree and left out in that rain for over an hour. My daughter happened to rescue him. He now has a nice home. He's in Chatham and he's my little boy.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm honoured to stand in the House and speak about another piece of legislation as it passes. I just wanted to spend a little bit of time to explain why people are concerned because my hope is that, in time, legislation that does pass in this House will have all of the information people need to be able to feel secure in the decisions of this government.

Many have asked about how many people we are talking about. What is the actual plan when it comes to enforcing this piece of legislation? It's really, really important to know that the animals in our care are safe and secure. I totally agree with that. But what also makes me feel safe and secure is when the government that's putting legislation like this forward tells us things like what resources are going to go towards ensuring that we have the right number of inspectors and enforcement officers present. Unfortunately, there's sort of a history of not providing all of the information to the public, and that's where these concerns come.

I know that there has also been talk in the House that we don't want to support or perpetuate racism, and yet we see cuts to the anti-racism initiative. We get told that this House stands with all Indigenous people, that we are fighting for reconciliation, and then we see cuts to the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs. That's where some of those questions come from.

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So I am curious to know what the bigger plan is to make sure that this piece of legislation can actually work on the ground. That's one of the concerns that I know has come to me, and it's one of the concerns that I share, and I do hope that everybody in the House, given that this is an opportunity for us to work together, is able to provide that information. We can do that by making amendments to things so that we put all of the information in there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? I recognize the member from Burlington.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you, Speaker. It's always nice to get a warm welcome from you.

I first want to start off, actually, about the Speaker sitting there right now, from Chatham–Kent–Leamington—what a great story. We love stories and hear stories about wonderful things that people do, so I want to thank your daughter for rescuing that dog and you for having that dog as part of your life.

I next want to talk about the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South. I've seen many pictures of your dog, Max, and obviously, it is an extension of your life. You're a wonderful dog owner because you have that dog with you all the time. He's part of your life; he's not a dog that's sitting at home all day, waiting for you to come home nine hours later. It's wonderful to hear stories like that. Your speech for 20 minutes was inspirational, as always, and thank you so much for contributing to Bill 136.

I also want to reach out to the member from Niagara Falls, who says I listen intently to him here. Yes, I do. There are always great things that you bring forward in

this House, and that's what we're all here for. All of us were put in this House to be advocates for what we believe in—and our passion.

But I want to say this: I get the fact that we're in here and we debate things and that we say things because we all—the opposition, obviously, is to stand up and say some of the things we've done as government. But here's what I'm going to say: It's an absolute thrill to be here and to have this opportunity to sit in this House because we have to take that responsibility so seriously.

I also want to say that we have a voice. It has been 15 years. I was part of the opposition in 2011 to 2014, and I can tell you this: There wasn't anything done. We're in crisis mode about many different things, but listening to one of these bills today, Bill 136—it's a step in the right direction.

I just looked at my Instagram for the Burlington foundation, which is on a shoestring. We've already heard about other places that are. But they've got a little cat in there with part of his ear off. I don't know what happened. They just said, "Adopted Napoleon." I had goosebumps for how exciting that was.

Thank you, Speaker, for letting me have that time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South for his final comments.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

I'd like to thank the members opposite from Kitchener Centre and Niagara Falls for their comments, and of course the wonderful member from Burlington and that wonderful seatmate of mine—or right beside me—from Chatham-Kent–Leamington, who cares deeply about animals, with the Chatham 21, and whom I enjoyed working with on this, because we're actually working together. We're actually working to do something about this.

If I could just address quickly the points made by the member opposite about money and about the concerns that they have about adequate money and enforcement that's going to go towards this—I respect the member's concerns that he shared. But let me talk about the importance of the framework here. We talk about oversight. I think that if a member has taken the time to speak to any of the humane societies in his or her riding, in any of their own ridings, they would hear resounding concern over oversight and having standards of care across the province. Robust oversight so that members of the public can then appeal to a board that oversees the chief animal inspector: again, check. Toughest penalties in Canada: again, check.

So I think I would respectfully say that only the NDP would perpetuate throwing money at regs that haven't been actually developed yet, because so often they and the Liberal government prior did that. But we know that that has gotten us in the fiscal mess that we're in today. We're going to look at inspectors across this province, because what is needed in my riding may not be the same as is needed in downtown Toronto, which is why we can't commit a number to that today.

We're working with stakeholders. We're having round tables in my community that the Solicitor General was at.

We've had round tables around this province. So I encourage him to get to the table, bring good ideas, work with us, work with a government that's finally acting to stand up for animals in this province, that's introducing the toughest penalties across Canada, that's once and for all doing something for animals, after years of neglect under the previous Liberals.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: We are here debating and discussing Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act.

I will admit that in the years leading up to this, I have given various governments a hard time about their titles of bills, but this one, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, is abbreviated "PAWS," and I kind of like it.

I appreciate that the PAWS Act is cleverly named, but we are going to delve into it and make sure that, more than the title and more than the intent and the spirit of the legislation, it has the stuff to back it up so that we do indeed keep animals across the province safe and cared for—

Interjection: Something we can get our claws into.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm not going to make animal puns, to my fine colleague here beside me, but, yes, something we can get our claws into.

The PAWS Act will replace the OSPCA Amendment Act, which we know was implemented in June 2019. That was an interim act that allowed the appointment of a chief inspector for animal enforcement but was not the framework legislation. That is what we have before us now.

As we remember, back in January, the courts had decided that the OSPCA—which is a private charity that had significant powers but that didn't have the levels of public accountability that should have gone with those powers, as per the court decision—was deemed to be unconstitutional. So here we find ourselves. That January court decision made it clear that the government is responsible to restructure animal welfare protection in this province.

The act fundamentally implements a new provincial enforcement model with an oversight framework, a modernized legislative framework and a multidisciplinary advisory table. You can think of that table as being the experts and the stakeholders who, hopefully, we are well-connected with, to make sure we make the best decisions in the best interests of animals.

This is an important piece of legislation and an important discussion for us to be having, because we are part of a caring society and we do have a responsibility to ensure that all animals are treated properly and treated humanely. All Ontarians should have an understanding of their rights and their responsibilities, and of how they can best keep animals safe and protected. We need to also be clear on how that enforcement will work.

We know that this Premier has taken things from bad to worse a couple of times—in this specific time, leaving Ontario animals without a protection system in place for

months and months and months. We're concerned that those animals may be shortchanged if there isn't the appropriate funding and enforcement.

We do recognize that this bill is an important and good first step. Ultimately, though, the proof is in that proper and full implementation.

The government must ensure that we have a robust public and transparent animal welfare enforcement regime, because it is the responsibility of this government—it's court-ordered—to provide this. It sounds, though, when we hear the government members speaking, not just today but in this debate, like they are personally interested in this being a successful piece of legislation. It is heartening to hear everyone's stories of their loved ones, being pets—and recognizing the importance of keeping them safe and protected. Hopefully, as this process continues, all of those members who have put it on the record that they support this legislation will ensure that the legislation is appropriately supported with the dollars and the structure.

The government must fully realize its enforcement role and engage with stakeholders on the issue. Through my office, we have been hearing from animal advocates and from stakeholders who are doing a lot of the caring work in the community that they have yet to be consulted, that they have not been a part of this process. So we want to ensure that everyone who is wanting to come to the table has that opportunity.

The government must properly implement and fully fund the framework, including the development of the regulations that will follow.

Speaker, I will remind you—as you know, you have been here for many years—that we, now the official opposition, the Ontario New Democrats, have a long history of advocacy and caring when it comes to animals and being a strong voice for animals.

Cheri DiNovo, the former member from Parkdale–High Park, certainly was a brilliant voice in this space for many years on behalf of our voiceless animals in the province. Bill 222, the Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2009: The bill sought to repeal provisions in the Dog Owners' Liability Act that prohibit restricted pit bulls and provide for controls on pit bulls. The bill also sought to repeal provisions in the Animals for Research Act relating to the disposition of pit bulls under that act. That same bill was renumbered Bill 60, which she reintroduced. Bill 16 was its next incarnation—and, finally, Bill 40, which she brought before this House.

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Speaker, I think you and I have both in our time here served as critic for community safety and correctional services. Under that community safety umbrella certainly falls animal welfare, and it was my privilege to speak in that role. My very first bill in this House that I spoke to for an hour was Bill 80, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, which sought to strengthen the existing protections for marine animals in Ontario's marine parks and aquariums. During my time in that role, I met with many of the animal welfare advocates—very caring, passionate folks across the province.

It was during my time in that role that I had the opportunity to get up in this Legislature and ask the government of the day questions about how or if they would commit to saving the 21—and you remember Save the 21, certainly. In the fall of 2015, police and the OSPCA agents raided a compound in Tilbury, Ontario. Speaker, I know you know this story well, but for the folks at home, they seized 31 dogs, all pit bulls. It was a very long and involved emotional process that finally found a resolution. But I will actually read into the record, going back in time, what I had asked that government during question period:

“I called on the minister to intervene in the OSPCA's application to put down 21 dogs rescued from a dogfighting ring in Tilbury and to spare their lives ... the courts have denied the application of the dog rescue to rehabilitate these animals. Their lives remain in the minister's hands.” At that time I said, “These dogs should be going to a rescue organization, and the only barrier is the OSPCA court application and the breed-specific legislation that bans them. Will the minister commit to saving these dogs and end the breed-specific ban in Ontario?”

All of the dogs that had been found in that dogfighting ring were found attached to chains tied to metal stakes in the ground. Inspectors found anabolic steroids onsite and dogfighting contracts. It was a horrible situation. In a behavioural evaluation, the OSPCA said that 21 of the dogs were deemed a menace to society and could not be rehabilitated. When they did a second behavioural evaluation, many of them had improved.

I echoed what the public, what different organizations like Dog Tales in King City and Animal Justice, an animal rights organization, were saying. They really, really fought to have the courts listen to them, to hear them. They didn't want these dogs to be put to death. The OSPCA wanted that to happen, wanted them to be put to death. How it all turned out was that the court said, “No, they're not going to be euthanized, but they can't stay here because of the breed-specific legislation”—which is another conversation—“but we're on the record and maintain that that is an unfair situation.”

It was Rob Scheinberg, the owner of Dog Tales in King City—which, by the way, is a world-renowned dog rescue that provides care, rehabilitation, and adoption of abused, abandoned, neglected dogs. He actually drove them himself down to Florida in a modified bus, where there was the opportunity for the dogs to live out their stories away from this kind of tragedy and torment. But Speaker, one of the things that I learned during that process was that the public is a force to be reckoned with when it comes to animals, when it comes to how we treat animals.

I also had the opportunity to appreciate a film. Speaker, I don't know if you're familiar with the film *Saving Dinah*. *Saving Dinah* is a community based, all-volunteer feature film. *Saving Dinah* was produced by the Animal Alliance of Canada. I am well connected to it because some of the folks involved in that project, Project Jessie, which is the rescue and adoption program of Animal Alliance—it has been helping animals since 1991—but also the Humane Society of Durham and the Animal Guardian Society, or

TAGS, were involved in this really awesome project. It's a full, feature-length movie. I have a special place in my heart for it, and I had the opportunity to meet Sally. I couldn't get an autograph, though, from Sally, but Sally was the star of the show. She played Dinah. Dinah was a border collie mix. She was a dog that Project Jessie helped to rescue, but she was the star of this movie. Movies like this that engage the public, that help to raise awareness and funds to keep our animals safe—that's a part of the story, but fundamentally, we have a government responsible for the care and protection of animals. They have to fund, ultimately, the work. While I encourage all of you to watch Saving Dinah and to support our different animal rights and animal advocacy organizations, it does come down to this government.

Some of our concerns are that we don't have a full picture of what this is actually going to look like. The government is making regulations, an independent advisory body, tribunal-based appeals, standard of care, all of that. Actions speak louder than words. We're hearing that, but what will it look like? It's difficult to know how this framework will operate when there are so many pieces of it left to regulations. And while I'd love to trust the government, the "just trust us" thing doesn't fly. So let's make sure that we are forthcoming with that, because many of the stakeholders are, I think, in their own words, "cautiously optimistic." They're taking that wait-and-see approach, because so much is left to regulation. It is only going to work with the proper funding. I have to say, and I'm sure they don't want to hear it, we have seen very cruel cuts to date. I don't want to see that pattern leaking into this legislation and into this situation—because I don't know if we'll see the animals all coming here to protest and rally, but I would invite them if necessary.

A lot of work still needs to be done prior to the rollout of the new model on January 1, 2020. How is this going to be accomplished? What will that model look like? We saw with the interim legislation in 2019 that even that had problems. I know that it was limited and it wasn't the framework, but there were still problems, and I will—do you see all of my little Post-its here, colour-coordinated? There are so many things that I want to share, and I can't find what I'm looking for.

Here it is. So one of the very sad stories that happened during that time under the interim legislation was in June. Some of you may recall that up in Port Perry, Dog Tales and Lynn Perrier from RAAW, which is the Reform Advocates for Animal Welfare, were alerted to animals living under horrendous conditions at a farm in Scugog. This is this past summer. It's an awful story. Danielle Eden-Schienberg of Dog Tales shared with media about mud-covered pigs, tied-up cows, dead and fly-covered animals and bones all over the property. She said, "There was a huge field full of bones—the entire farm is full of cow bones. Every step you take, you're just stepping on bones. I've never seen anything like this."

So Dog Tales first alerted the OSPCA, but the agency redirected them to the provincial animal cruelty hotline, which was set up in June. That was until the new

legislation could be put into place. So that animal cruelty hotline—let's see where I've got this. So that was in June. This is from CP24: "Ontario's Solicitor General launched a 24-hour animal-cruelty hotline."

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However, Ferrante from Dog Tales Rescue and Sanctuary "said her group had called the number multiple times all day, but they did not get any response.

"It's really horrible that there's no one from animal cruelty ... to check the animals," she said.

"Ferrante said the interim measures put in place by the provincial government are not helping.

"This new process is definitely not working. We saw it first-hand today," she said."

While that was this past summer, and we hopefully have come further down the road from that point, it begs the question: If there was a measure put in place and that hotline was the solution, if there's no one there to answer the phones and we had a crisis, and we had a horrible story and situation and there was no one to answer the phones, why? Was that because it wasn't funded? Was that because you didn't pay the phone bill? I don't know. But it comes back to money, and we need to make sure there is that for the animals going forward.

There was no response. They went to the farm. And the story goes on.

Speaker, I'm running out of time so I'm going to rein it in a little bit. I'll say that old habits die hard, and I worry about that. The old system wasn't working. We do have a lot of those same people at the helm. There were many, many complaints, and we've been getting them at our office, about some of the folks who were at the helm of OSPCA who, it looks like, are making the jump to this new framework. That is a problem to the broader community that has been watching the OSPCA for years. They're very, very wary of a lot of those same folks coming over.

That will take me to the next part, which is about training and the inspectors. How many inspectors and enforcement officers will be hired? Will there be training for inspectors and those enforcement officers? With great power comes great responsibility, right? Can we trust the same people from the previously challenged system to carry out this new provincial enforcement model? What will that training look like?

In the legislation itself, you use the term, "To ensure that animal welfare inspectors receive appropriate training respecting their powers and duties." What is "appropriate"? Who decides what that looks like and who is re-evaluating that? Because when you hear about cases—again, "St. Catharines, Ontario Veterinarian Charged with 16 Counts of Animal Cruelty." All of those charges were withdrawn. Without getting into all of the specifics, the OSPCA didn't take any public responsibility for those charges being withdrawn.

Speaker, we do need to have fulsome investigations carried out by trained professionals. If we don't, we do run the risk of the courts not being able to move forward with those charges. We see that the police go through training on an ongoing basis, right? They are the individuals who

are laying charges, and they have constantly ongoing training. Will we see that with these inspectors, who are going into egregious situations sometimes and who should have the power and the support to be able to do the job properly, to ensure that animals are safe?

In my minute and 20 seconds left—look at all this that I have to skip. We want to make sure that the government will follow through with engaging with stakeholders—further engagement with stakeholders. There is a need for full and complete consultation, especially with regard to those permanent regulations; transparency and accountability; and publicly accountable animal welfare enforcement. We want that. I believe you want that as a government. But how will you ensure that that is the actual outcome and not just that thing we all talk about to make ourselves feel better? We want to make sure that we are accountable and that things are funded and properly enforced and that we are engaging properly with stakeholders.

We have a lot of work that needs to be done prior to the rollout of the new model on January 1. I don't know how that will be accomplished. We're looking to you, during this debate, to share those details with us. Certainly, as this bill moves forward to committee, we want to make sure that all of the folks who are sending us these emails about their concerns and previous challenges with the OSPCA—that those won't be repeated, and that the penalty structure is actually going to stick.

There is so much to discuss, Speaker. I'm out of time, but thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions or comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I am pleased to rise and make some comments on the member opposite, who is often in the Speaker's chair and today was speaking on Bill 136, An Act to enact the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019. It's basically that we want to amend the protections that are provided for animals in the province of Ontario.

It has been, I think, a tough time for people who are animal advocates, because they're concerned that we might not have moved fast enough. I think they are quite happy to see that we are moving forward on protecting animals in our homes.

This is not to deal with wild animals. There are going to be separate pieces of legislation. We're going to have a multidisciplinary panel of experts to make recommendations on the distinction between pets in the home and farm animals, working animals. We're going to have to have a lot of discussions about that.

There's a 1-833-9ANIMAL number that people can call to report abuse. It's available 24 hours a day. There will be inspectors who will be answering the calls. I actually asked if it's going to be possible for people to send in photos or videos of neglect or abuse of animals.

Basically, this piece of legislation is going to be following how the public reports, to the OPP, abuse or neglect of human beings. I think that that should reassure a lot of people that we're taking the issue very, very seriously.

I'm looking forward to hearing more comments from members across the Legislature and on our side in the government, and to hearing that there is full support for us to ensure that animals are protected. I think it shows a collaborative spirit, and I think we're going to get this done and get this done properly.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions or comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to thank my colleague from Oshawa for doing a good job on Bill 136.

But I've got to finish the story on Dr. Rekhi, and I want you guys to listen. I want to tell you that what happened here was awful, and the system failed them. Quite frankly, the Liberals failed them—we all know that—but all the other agencies failed them as well. If it wasn't for the staff—think about the staff; they had the guts to stand up to this veterinarian and release the videos; CHCH, I believe, was the first one they went to—we would never have known what he had done to those animals. It's so sad.

In case you're wondering, was he ever charged? The veterinarian was facing criminal charges—Madam Speaker, I know you'll like to listen to this—16 counts related to animal cruelty under the Criminal Code of Canada. That's how badly he abused the cats and the dogs, like family, that were given to him, given to that veterinarian. We all know how much we love our pets.

Listen to this. I think I've talked about this—this is my third time standing up, six minutes. I had 20 minutes, and it wasn't enough time in the afternoon for me getting it done. All charges were later dropped by the crown attorney's office in November 2017.

This is why I said earlier to my colleague from the Conservatives that it comes back to one fundamental aspect of this, and that is completely missing from this bill: We need proper funding. You don't have to say the amount, but you can say it will be properly funded for inspection—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'm happy to chime in on this debate today and talk a little bit about the clock. The clock is ticking on this legislation, and we want to make sure that we have everything ready for January 1, 2020. We have a robust piece of legislation that we are now debating in the House, and the piece that we keep talking about is the regulations.

I want to just assure the people who are listening that the Solicitor General, as part of this bill, is putting together an advisory committee, and that's going to be veterinarians. That's going to be academics. It's going to be people in all fields, to look at these regulations and make sure that they are set properly. So I want to make sure that people know that there will be a process in place to ensure that we have the right regulations to help these animals regardless of their situation.

1700

As we talk, everyone has their own animal story. I can even tell a story about finding a cat on the QEW. A sad story, this cat—it was actually my sister who found it. We

were driving by and someone had lit it on fire and threw it out their window, and there it was on the QEW. It was this little creature and we were able to get the humane society to get it off the road. Of course, we ended up adopting it. It was my father who ended up keeping the cat. We brought it to my dad. He kept the cat and he named him Buddy. He was this really pretty white cat, but you would never know.

So we have to stop people like that. We have to stop animal cruelty and we have to stop that. The only way you can do that is by having fines. You're right, these people have to be punished for what they do, and sometimes hitting them in the pocketbook is how you do it.

We can't be cruel to animals. Animals are helpless. We need to have a robust piece of legislation and we need to make sure it's enforced. And we need to make sure that the tools are in place. The Solicitor General has put together a strong piece of legislation so we can stop some of these people, so we can stop having to tell these sad tales and we can just get along with protecting these animals.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I rise today to speak on the new Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, Bill 136. I know that in this caring society, we all have a responsibility to ensure that animals are treated humanely. I know my grandparents and my great-grandparents grew up with animals. They grew up with dogs, using dogs to travel in the north and using dogsled teams.

But I can't help it when I get up here and speak—I know that we're talking about pets and animals. From where I come from, I have issues that I need to deal with. Our people need help. I'm talking about my bill, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. I wish we were debating that instead of this. Don't get me wrong; we all care about pets. I was just up in Bearskin Lake on Friday. There is a community evacuation and there are 250-plus dogs that are left in the community.

I know that when you look at the bill itself, section 51 talks about how subject to the regulations, a police officer or First Nations constable may exercise the power of an animal welfare inspector under sections 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 40, 41, 42, 43, up to 47. I'm assuming that's whether the jurisdiction is federal—meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to read into the record some of what has been emailed to my office on behalf of RAAW, the Reform Advocates for Animal Welfare, sent by Lynn Perrier. Talking about the PAWS Act, she said it "simply echoes the OSPCA Act.

"There is nothing about training and many of the points are left to the discretion of the investigators. That is exactly what OSPCA did. The decisions were often dependent on what side of the bed they got up on.

"The penalties now and prior to Bill 136 have always been pretty stiff. That has never been the problem. The

problem is OSPCA would never work with the crown attorney to ensure the penalties were enforced. A busy CA will not bother with cases when there is no attention paid to it."

She goes on to say, "I want to mention the most important aspect of the new system. For reasons which are unknown to me, the government, against expert advice, hired all ex-OSPCA employees." She has concerns about that, Speaker. As I said earlier, old habits die hard. We want reassurances that the training will be fulsome and that we can move forward in it in a new and better way.

She goes on to say, "The government needs to send all animal welfare investigators to be trained at an institution like Guelph or Seneca, and I think Sheridan also has courses in animal care. The training is the core that will determine how this system will be handled. The same training will lead to the same outcome." That was from her.

There was also another email that came from a community advocate who worked for years in the court system, which says that penalties like increasing maximum fines do not accurately reflect the sentencing from a judge in the Ontario Court of Justice on a conviction for animal abuse. So we can have, as the government keeps saying, the highest penalties in Canada, but as this person said, judges have too much wiggle room on sentencing provisions, such as "animal prohibitions" and "restitution." These should be mandatory at sentencing, as set out by the regulations.

The question about animal prohibition: Why should anyone convicted of animal abuse crimes be allowed to ever own an animal again? Speaker, we've heard horrible examples of people doing damage to animals. We want to make sure they can't go forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Parsa: It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to our government's proposed Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019, or PAWS Act. Speaker, what a great title for a very important piece of legislation.

As I sat here listening to my colleagues speak before me, if you've noticed, there's a pattern. Most people are running out of time when they're giving their 20-minute speeches, and that just goes to show how important it is for all of us in this House here. Everyone speaks with passion, and I'm so grateful and so happy to hear that my honourable colleagues across will be supporting this bill.

With the PAWS Act, our government is taking a strong stand against animal neglect and abuse in a way that's, frankly, long, long overdue in Ontario. I'll repeat a few key aspects of the act and what makes it so critical for Ontario, as well as discuss what animal welfare and prevention of animal cruelty means to me personally. But first, I'd like to go into some details regarding what we know about the current mood of Ontarians on the subject and why it was imperative that we take action as a government and as a society.

As many of you are aware, for almost 100 years, anti-cruelty investigations in our province had been mostly

handled by a charitable organization, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, or OSPCA. Earlier this year, Justice Timothy Minnema with the Ontario Superior Court of Justice said that the provincial government, back in 1919, had been wrong to grant police powers to the OSPCA without also imposing accountability and transparency standards on the agency. The OSPCA announced that it was no longer willing or able to provide enforcement services and ceased its law enforcement work on June 28. In June, the government passed the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, 2019, a temporary measure to keep animals safe during the transition into a new animal welfare model.

The PAWS Act, which our government is proposing and which would come into effect January 1 next year, is the result of extensive consultation with Ontarians, and was developed with input from municipalities, police, industry, technical experts, veterinary organizations, animal sheltering and advocacy organizations and the general public. Of course, if the PAWS Act is passed—and I'm happy to hear that my colleagues across will be supporting it—I hope it happens with unanimous support.

The government will continue to work with our partners, stakeholders and the public to ensure that Ontario is providing the best protection and support for our animals, as best as we can. The OSPCA will continue to provide an important supporting role relating to education, training, awareness etc.

The PAWS Act reflects the desire of Ontarians for a strong and effective approach to animal welfare and anti-cruelty enforcement. Earlier this year, Brock University Professor Kendra Coulter, one of Canada's foremost academics on anti-cruelty enforcement, launched a survey which was responded to by more than 20,000 people. As Professor Coulter stated, this is a "staggering number for an academic study, and a remarkable comment on the level of public interest in animal cruelty." Coulter said, "Crimes against animals have been sidelined and de-prioritized by successive governments, and charities have filled in the gap." She stated: "People in Ontario see animal cruelty investigations as a public responsibility and want better for animals."

1710

Our government conducted its own public consultations, which closed on June 6, asking how animal welfare in Ontario could be improved. We heard from thousands of Ontarians, who showed overwhelming support for a modern and comprehensive approach to animal welfare and anti-cruelty enforcement in our province. We're taking steps to ensure that the Ontario government is acting in accordance with the people's wishes. The PAWS Act proves that we are not just a government for the people, we're also a government for the animals and our pets.

The PAWS Act would ensure better protection for animals from abuse and neglect in Ontario by proposing the strongest penalties in Canada for offenders and effective enforcement systems. This system would be strengthened by hiring more provincial inspectors who

will be deployed locally across the province, including specialists in livestock, agriculture, horses, zoos and aquariums. Inspectors would conduct investigations to collect information and evidence and determine whether to lay charges. Resources would also be provided to support these investigations, including OPP specialized capacity for animal welfare, and resources to support successful animal welfare prosecutions.

The act would improve oversight and increase transparency and accountability, which were deemed lacking under the previous model. It would provide inspectors with specific powers they need to carry out their duties instead of the broad police-like powers that were provided under the OSPCA Act. The PAWS Act would introduce new tools for oversight, such as a complaint mechanism for inspectors' conduct, oversight by the Auditor General, Ombudsman and Privacy Commissioner, and a case management system enabling measurement of progress and outcomes. It will establish a one-window complaint mechanism for the public and an advisory table made up of experts, including veterinarians, agriculture representatives, academics, animal advocates and others. These experts would provide advice to the government to improve animal welfare on an ongoing basis.

The PAWS Act would also introduce new offences to combat activities such as dogfighting, and significantly increase fines and penalties for serious, repeat and corporate offenders. These new penalties would be the strongest in Canada and would act as a deterrent for those who can't understand the value and importance of animal life and well-being.

Studies have shown a great deal of overlap between bullying and animal cruelty, as well as between domestic and child abuse and animal abuse. These kinds of antisocial, violent behaviours often go hand in hand. Allowing those who are cruel to animals to go unpunished—or worse, unnoticed—can allow their behaviour to escalate to even worse offences. By ensuring that we investigate animal cruelty and punish animal abusers accordingly, we may even be able to mitigate future acts of violence.

The PAWS Act would give inspectors necessary powers to help animals in distress and hold owners accountable, as well as empower others to take action when a pet is at risk of serious injury or death.

The PAWS Act is just one step in our government's plan to strengthen animal welfare in Ontario. It would enable the government to develop regulations, like requiring a licence to possess or breed certain animals. The government intends to continue to develop long-term regulations through consultations and with the advice of experts.

It's important to mention that a great many of the animals owned in Ontario are not pets but livestock, and we know that livestock and horses are an integral part of our province's economy. Ensuring that they are protected and given the care they deserve is not just a moral imperative but an economic one as well. The PAWS Act would ensure that Ontario has the right inspectors in place

to make certain that corporations are doing their part to comply with legislation and act in a way that Ontarians expect.

While wilful animal cruelty is terrible, it is only part of the story. Studies across a wide range of jurisdictions have shown that just under half to a majority of animal welfare cases are the result of a lack of understanding of the welfare needs of animals. Having the inspectors of Ontario's new provincial enforcement team conduct outreach and education on animal care best practices and how to comply with the legislation will go a long way to mitigating these sad and unnecessary animal welfare cases. Again, this legislation doesn't just cover pets and livestock; it also deals with the animals in our zoos and our aquariums, and inspectors would conduct proactive risk-based inspections to ensure their welfare. These animals amuse, educate and delight us and our children, and they deserve our care and protection as well.

Animals and pets are an important part of our lives and our society in Ontario. They live among us, improve our lives in so many ways and are often seen as true family members. In our government's 2019 budget, Protecting What Matters Most Act, we promised to review existing legislation to ensure measures are in place to provide animals with the protection they deserve. Ontarians expect nothing less, Speaker. As the Solicitor General said, "We made a commitment to take action and develop a modern animal welfare enforcement system to keep animals safe. I am proud to say we are delivering on that commitment.... Ontarians can be confident the government is proposing a system that will better protect animals from" negligence and misuse.

In short, the PAWS Act will allow the government to establish a provincial animal welfare system under the Ministry of the Solicitor General that would add to the number of provincially employed inspectors who enforce our animal welfare laws across Ontario. Under the act, specialized provincial inspectors would have the authority to conduct investigations and enforce the law as it relates to livestock and horses. They will have the expertise required and can always consult veterinarians if the need arises. Our government will continue to consult with the agricultural sector to develop new agriculture-specific standards of care.

The new animal welfare system would be overseen by the province and under the direct oversight of the chief animal welfare inspector. A one-window complaint mechanism for inspector conduct would be made available. The PAWS Act would also ensure that the system is subject to freedom of information requirements, and the Animal Care Review Board will continue as the body to appeal orders to.

These measures will ensure that the new animal welfare system is accountable directly to the government and the people of Ontario. The system will be efficient, effective, adequately funded, financially transparent and sustainable in the long term.

Speaker, I guarantee that most members of this House have a cherished pet at home and that even the members

who don't have a soft spot for Ontario's furry friends. I know that in my House, my two little chihuahuas, Dora and Diego, are part of my family. And, believe me, they get treated just like family, Speaker. All of this is to say that we care for our loved ones and our pets, who are like family to us. They give us great joy every single day. They're there to offer us comfort and support and unconditional love when we need it. They're there through good times and bad times. That's why we in this government must do everything in our power to protect them. The PAWS Act is an important step towards providing proper safety and protection to animals and pets that we need—and they need us. We're going to be there for them, Speaker, the same way they're always there for us.

1720

Speaker, I'd like to end with a reminder that concerns about animal distress or abuse can be reported to the Ontario Animal Protection Call Centre. The number has been repeated by my colleagues multiple times, but it's important to reiterate that that number is 1-833-9-ANIMAL. All calls that come in are treated seriously and are tasked to local police services or inspectors when necessary.

Causing animal distress takes on many forms and is not always obvious. According to the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, all vets will encounter animal abuse in their careers, including physical abuse, such as inflicting injuries, causing unnecessary pain and cruelty, and inappropriate methods of training, such as taping a dog's mouth to shut it up and prevent it from barking.

Every year in North America, pets die from heat exhaustion because they were left in parked vehicles while owners popped into a store or were left in cars for long periods with the windows opened or cracked.

Dogfighting is a vicious blood sport where a fight can last between one or two hours, exposing dogs to severe injury and prolonged and painful deaths. There are puppies and kitten mills, where dogs and cats are mass-produced, often in the cruellest conditions.

It's sad to say, Speaker, that in too many cases the penalty does not fit the crime. We're proposing to change that and increase the penalties to the strongest in Canada to address these serious offences and these repeat offenders.

Speaker, one of my colleagues across, when she was speaking, mentioned Lynn Perrier from RAAW. Lynn Perrier is an absolute champion, and a very dear friend of mine, who does everything to protect animals in our province. Lynn Perrier and her group and her organization will drive on their own and provide funding if necessary to support even one animal in abuse. These individuals like Lynn Perrier, who do so much for our animals, need to be mentioned and need to be thanked on a regular basis.

My colleague Frank Klees, representing the riding that I represent now, was a champion when it came to championing this when supporting our animals. Frank was not afraid, and Frank didn't back down from anyone. He stood against anyone who did not mean well and did not want to support animals. For me, it was so great to have

learned so much from Frank, because in one instance—I remember this in our area, because he was our representative, Madam Speaker—Frank literally dropped everything and he said, “As long as I’m your representative, as long as I sit in this Legislature, and if I can help it, not a single animal will be abused by an individual or a group.” And he did that. For those of you who know the story in Newmarket, you know the fine work that Frank did.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank all of my colleagues who spoke in this House—so many passionate speeches about personal stories. I want to thank you, and I want to thank my honourable colleagues across, for having said that they will support this bill, because it is so important. We often talk about the fact that, as I mentioned, our pets are members of our families. We love them. They offer unconditional love to us, and they look to us, Madam Speaker. When you walk up to an animal, they look you in the eyes and they expect something from you, and that’s simply protection. You don’t need to do too much for them. You’re simply protecting them from abuse. That is our duty as individuals—forget about as lawmakers; it’s our duty to do everything we can to protect them.

I’m so thankful to be a member of our government. I’m so thankful to this minister and her hard-working parliamentary assistant for putting this bill forward to do everything they can to protect these loving animals. I really hope that every single member of this House supports them. Thank you so much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am glad to have a few more minutes on Bill 136, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, in response to the comments from the member opposite but generally in response to the debate on this topic. The member further acknowledged the work specifically of Ms. Perrier from RAAW, and we do want to acknowledge the important work done by advocates. We want to, as you said, recognize and appreciate, but I would further challenge the government to consult with them, as well, to tack that on there, that we need to make sure that they are inviting them to the table, because they do champion these causes, these issues, on behalf of animals. They do put money into this and they are oftentimes the front lines, so we can learn from them and I encourage the government to continue to do that.

Speaker, something that I didn’t have the chance to mention earlier is that I wanted to get more into the specifics around penalties. I had spoken about training to ensure that inspectors have the tools and resources that they need to do the job the best way they can, but when these cases come before the courts, it is one thing to have these high penalties, and that’s fine, but I don’t think the penalties and the fines or imprisonment should be the only thing that we see coming out of these court cases, and so this is a conversation for the government to have about the regulations, that in regulations they can focus in on restitution and animal prohibition that maybe should be mandatory at sentencing, as set out in regulations. We love

our pets and I think it offends us to think of them as property, but in the eyes of the law they are, and when someone has a vet bill due to abuse, that money should be repaid. We need to see restitution and animal prohibition in regulation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: It all begins with the provincially appointed chief animal welfare inspector. I want to highlight the responsibilities the chief animal welfare inspector will have in the proposed Bill 136. The responsibilities include appointing animal welfare inspectors, Madam Speaker, ensuring the necessities of care of any animal that is in the chief animal welfare inspector’s care, and ensuring inspectors receive appropriate training regarding their powers and duties. Inspectors will not be permitted to enforce unless they have completed prescribed training.

Other responsibilities include handling complaints about animal welfare inspectors themselves and be able to suspend, impose conditions or revoke the appointment of an inspector who is found to have violated the code of conduct, and notify the complainant about the results of the complaint against the inspector. The chief animal welfare inspector will also be subject to the same code of conduct compliance and training requirements of an animal welfare inspector. The minister will review and address any complaints regarding the chief animal welfare inspector.

Ontarians are passionate about the welfare of our animals, and I would like to restate in this House that you can count me as one of them. I’m more convinced than ever before that what Ontario needs is a single, direct-control animal welfare enforcement model. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Once again, I’m going to stand up and talk about this, but I’ll finish up on Dr. Rekhi. I want to thank the employees and I want to thank the community for standing up to the vet to protect our animals. I wanted to get that out.

I’m going to move on to something different, maybe something a little more light, which I know my colleagues the Conservatives will really enjoy.

When I was growing up, we had pets. I had a dog called Spot. Anybody can guess why he was called Spot. He had spots all over him. He was white. My mother—I don’t talk about my mother very often. She’s been gone for a long time. But my mom loved cats. At this time, we lived in St. Catharines, by the way, and my mom would pick up every stray cat there was, it seemed. Our house was always full of cats. Unfortunately for us as kids, the cats would then go out and get pregnant and then they’d have more cats, little kittens. I always thought—this is true. I always thought, for years—because I was seven, nine, in that area. I always thought my mom actually loved the cats more than she loved me, because she spent more time with the cats. I know she fed them better. I knew that for sure.

So I just wanted to say that, and as I grew into—I had my own kids. We had a hamster—we called him Hammy hamster—and goldfish, but we never did have cats.

The last thing I want to say: I want to give you credit where credit is due. The one portion of the bill that I like is the fact that if you have a dog or a cat or an animal in a hot car in the middle of summer, they would normally die before somebody could rescue them. You are now allowed, if this gets passed, which it sounds like it will, to actually break the window of the car to save the animal in the car. I think that's a good part of the bill.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I listened intently to my colleague from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill and his two little chihuahuas, Dora and Diego.

I have a rescue, as I've mentioned before. When we rescued him—actually, my daughter rescued him—he was about a year old. I had mentioned earlier that he had been left in the freezing cold in the middle of January, tied to a tree for over an hour. He would have obviously died, but someone showed compassion and brought him in. The rest of the story is that we've now had him for eight years. But one of the things that we noticed as well was little Sebastian was blind in one eye. And I thought to myself, "This poor little guy. His life didn't start off in a very good way: blind in one eye, left in freezing rain in the middle of January. But now he's got a home and we love him dearly."

The other thing that I wanted to mention, though, was that we talk about increasing the penalties for serious, repeat or corporate offenders, and I want to point something out here. I think it's rather interesting to note that there are two types of offences: There's minor offences and major offences. Let's talk about minor offences first of all. With this legislation, if passed, for minor offences, a penalty could be imposed of up to \$100,000 and up to one year in jail for an individual, including directors and corporations.

But let's talk about the major offences—Tilbury, Ontario, the Chatham 21, the dogfighting ring. For major offences, a higher penalty could be imposed of up to \$260,000 and up to two years in jail for an individual, including, again, directors and corporations, and up to a million dollars for corporations.

So, again, I support this bill and look forward to further debate. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I want to start off by thanking my honourable colleagues from Oshawa, from Scarborough–Rouge Park, from Niagara Falls and from Chatham–Kent–Leamington for their contributions.

Madam Speaker, I'm guessing that all of my colleagues here would agree that "I wish we didn't have to think about all these measures. I wish we didn't even have to put in all these measures," but the sad reality is, we do. There are so many people—I was reading, and my colleague was

mentioning, that more than 60% of Ontarians are pet owners. That's six out of 10 families, Madam Speaker, who have pets at home, have loving pets at home.

We're not talking about the people who love their pets, who understand their value and how much they bring to each family; we're talking about those individuals who don't. These measures are for people who, unfortunately, hurt our animals.

As I said in my speech earlier, Madam Speaker, animals come to you, when you go to them, simply out of love. When you walk over to an animal, they come to you because they expect love, because they mean no harm in most cases—unless they're out in the wild, and that's a different story, but in most cases they don't. It's so easy to be able to offer that in return. Most of us do, as I said; some don't. So I'm so glad and I'm so thankful that the minister and her awesome parliamentary assistant and the entire team put in this bill, through consultations, to be able to protect our pets better, so that we can always, always enjoy their love and friendship.

I want to end with a shout-out to both my pets, both Dora and Diego, and thank them for the love that they always show to my wife, Valerie, and I when we get home after a long day, because there is nothing like walking to Dora and Diego and being licked to death.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Doly Begum: It's a pleasure for me to stand and speak to this bill today. I do agree with the member from Newmarket, I believe, in the sense that I wish we didn't have to speak to this, and I wish we didn't even have to worry about these kinds of issues to begin with. However, it is on the table, and we have to, so here we are.

First, I want to thank the government for bringing this forward, because this was necessary. As much as the government would like to pat themselves and get up and applaud, I think it's necessary to point out that this legislation was put on the table after the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals said that it would no longer investigate and enforce animal cruelty laws. This was after a court ruling happened, and there were already problems, so it wasn't something where the government thought, "Hey, let's do something great for our animals in the province and come up with these laws." Before we do the self-congratulatory sort of thing, I think it's really necessary for us to point that out. It was something that was necessary, but it was done after a court case. It was a court order, and that's when this was brought forward.

The OSPCA was, I believe, implemented in 1919. That really brings back the legacy of the Liberals. I think it shows how much they slept through the last 15 years or longer—

Hon. Ross Romano: Hey, we agree on stuff.

Ms. Doly Begum: We do sometimes—in the sense that they did not care about animal protections, just like they did not worry about what was happening to our schools. Schools are crumbling. There are backlogs in funding when it comes to repairing our schools. There are backlogs in our hospitals. We have long wait times.

It's a similar case when it comes to our animal protections as well. The laws were put in place in 1919, and we needed to do a better job. Clearly, they were not redefined. We didn't go back; we didn't consult with people; we didn't find out what was happening. There were cases after cases that were coming, in the sense of cruelty, things that we should have been taking care of. So I'm really glad that this government finally decided to bring this forward.

As much as the bill is on the table, the devil is in the details, and I think it's really important for us to point out those details as well. Some of my colleagues have already pointed out—the member from Oshawa already pointed out—in terms of what we really need to do when these regulations come into effect and what these regulations will look like.

The minister pointed out a few weeks ago, when the bill was tabled, that about 9,000 calls were made. The member opposite just called out the number to call. But I want to ask about what happens after these people call. What are the procedures? What happens in terms of the types of laws that we're implementing, and how are we really upholding the rights of our animals?

1740

If we have a phone here with a number but no one is there to pick it up or do anything about it, it doesn't really do anything. I mean, we can talk about the Premier giving out his phone number, but if the Premier doesn't pick up his phone, then no one that needs legal aid is going to get the help. It's the same thing in this case. Then he had to go and change the number or tell people to stop calling because he wasn't actually doing what he was supposed to.

So let's be realistic, let's be practical and let's not be the Liberals, because they didn't do a good job. But I really hope this government will do a better job. I hope that you'll allow people to come forward and consult with you, because if there are public deputations, if there are committee hearings, if there is a chance for actual advocates to come forward to this House, to the Legislature when we have committee hearings, then they will share the real stories. They will share what really happens on the front line. They will share how they're advocating for the animals, for those that we consider our family members. Because as much as we as politicians—sometimes that seems like an insult these days—think that we might be doing the right thing, it's actually better to listen to the advocates who are doing the job. It's actually better to listen to people who are working in the field and know what's going on.

So if we had committees—and I really hope we don't speed through this. I really hope we get advocates to come in and to tell their stories, and also how we should regulate and what kind of regulations should be put in place. Then we would do a better job, whether it's talking about prohibition, whether it's talking about restitution, whether it's talking about the type of training that we need for our inspectors.

This goes to the minister as well. This bill also gives the minister a lot of power. That makes me think: I really hope

that the minister loves animals, because if they don't, then we might have a lot of problems. That goes for the next minister, whoever else is in place, because the last law that we had was there since 1919. So I really hope for the next so many years, whoever comes into play—if those people are in power, then they must have that good faith; and if not, are there accountability measures? Because we have to make sure that we keep ourselves accountable as well.

I want to share some of the concerns that I have from constituents who have written to us, because it's really important to share the personal side. I think a lot of people consider these animals, these pets, to be members of their families. Robin from Scarborough Southwest wrote to us when she talked about her pets. This is actually when she was writing to us regarding this bill, but also a previous bill that was put in place, which was Bill 65. She wrote:

“In 2017 alone, over 1,200 dogs and cats were removed from harmful environments by the OSPCA, and over 500 provincial charges were laid in relation to cruelty towards animals. Animals kept in puppy mills are neglected, put in unsafe, cruel and unsanitary conditions without adequate veterinary care, food, water, or socialization. The effects of this environment are devastating. The pets are prone to congenital and hereditary conditions, including heart disease and blood and respiratory disorders. They often arrive in pet stores or in their new homes with diseases ranging from parasites to pneumonia. Because they're removed from their litter mates and/or mother at a young age, they also often suffer from fear, anxiety and other behavioural problems.”

This is just her sharing in terms of what really goes on, and I think it's really important to understand the other side. It's one thing to have legislation put in place, but to understand what really goes on in someone's home, for example—that we can understand from looking at some of the cruelties, some of the situations that people have dealt with. This is visible from some of the cases that we have, and I want to share some of the cases that have come forward since 2001.

First, let me share one of the stories, and this will tell you why these regulations are so important. When we talk about something that has been done wrong, and if we have the proper regulations put in place, then we can actually protect future animals. This goes to any sort of animal prohibition laws.

For example, someone was convicted of wilfully causing pain to his guide dog, and had previously abused his dog in 1996. This is a case from 2001. The judge said that this person “Olendy's conduct was equivalent to the abuse of a family member.” This was a cruelty case. You would assume that this person would no longer be able to own an animal or have a pet. However, the animal prohibition was only for two years.

In 2010, another case came forward which was absolutely disgusting. This person was convicted of sexually abusing a lab/retriever mix, which resulted in the dog being euthanized. To me, that's just horrifying. That's absolutely horrifying. This person should never ever be able to have a pet. However, from the laws that we have in place, the animal prohibition was only for five years.

The next case is from 2012. Rodgers was convicted of cruelty to animals. While having an argument with his girlfriend, he picked up their puppy and threw it down the stairs, then chased the puppy and slammed it into the ground. The puppy died of severe injuries. I really hope this person never gets a pet. However, the animal prohibition was only for 10 years.

In 2013, two individuals were convicted of killing a dog that they drowned by throwing the dog into a water-filled quarry after lashing him to a cement cinder block. One of the individuals had an animal prohibition for 10 years and the other one for five years.

In 2014, another individual—this is very brutal—was convicted of maiming a dog. He kicked and hit the dog with a rake, beat the dog with a shovel, then hit her in the head and body with the shovel when the dog would get up, to the point that the dog eventually was motionless. Thankfully this prohibition was for 25 years, but to me that person should never be able to own a pet either. And the crown actually asked for life—wow. This dog was bleeding. He then took the dog in a wheelbarrow and dumped the dog in a dumpster. The dog was reported to be in shock, with traumatic wounds to the right side of the face, deep lacerations, muscles and nerves visible, heart sounds muffled, respiratory sounds absent on one side, gashes in mouth and muzzle and right eye extensively damaged.

The reason I'm sharing this is because we have to share because there are cases like these. There are really inhumane things that actually happen to the animals. It happens in our province. It happens in our cities. It's absolutely cruel. It's horrifying, but we have to have laws that protect our family members. These are our family members and we have to make sure that we have laws that protect them.

As much as we talk big about what kind of legislation we're putting in place, if we don't have the right regulations then it will be completely pointless. We cannot pat ourselves on the back without making sure that we actually look at the big picture and find out what's really happening and making sure that we have the right legislation put in place. The best way to do that is to make sure that we consult with the public. And the public will—if you just look at social media, if you look at some of the comments, if you look at all the emails we're getting, if you look at the emails I'm sure that the government side members are getting as well, I can guarantee that there are people who are dying to share their thoughts, their ideas. There are people who have already shared their thoughts in terms of what should be done and how they have dealt with cases, what kind of things are happening in our province.

The other thing I want to point out is the part about restitution, which the member from Oshawa already pointed out, but I want to go a little bit deeper and talk about how important it is that the laws also protect the owners of pets.

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There are loving people who, for example, get in a situation where their animals are in situations where—if

something happens to that animal and you take your pet to the vet, all the costs are covered by the owner. However, as the member from Oshawa pointed out, as much as we consider these to be our family members, these pets are considered by law as property. So when someone damages your property, what happens? If a neighbour damages your window, you ask your neighbour to pay for those damages. However, when it comes to our pets, it's the owner who actually takes care of those costs. So if we make sure that if anyone causes damage to a pet, they should be the one making—yes, they should be the one who's taking care of that cost as well. It's very simple, but it can go a long way in terms of making sure that we help people who have pets, especially people who are bringing in rescued animals and dogs and cats who have trauma. If they are going through suffering, if they need help, the people who are causing these damages should be the ones who are paying for that.

Wow, I'm running out of time now.

Like our members said, on this side, we will be supporting this bill. We're happy to support it because it is necessary, but we also want to be part of the dialogue in terms of putting in the right regulations. We also want to be in the dialogue in making sure that the people who are advocating for our fluffy friends, our family members, are part of this discussion as well, because so far, they haven't been. It's necessary that we make sure that the laws we put in place take care of that.

I have too many notes, so I'm going to try to figure out how I can wrap this up.

I will just end with this. If I could share pictures, I would share the cutest picture of this dog that one of my constituents owns. Lenny Chong, who I met recently, has the cutest dog named Bonnie. When I was door-knocking, I had the opportunity to meet Bonnie. I think it's only fitting that I end with sharing how wonderful it was to meet Bonnie, who is an orange-coloured dog. It was very fitting that I got to take a picture with Bonnie, and I did.

I just want to say thank you very much. I would love to be in the discussion in the committee room, making sure that we put in the right regulations.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions or comments?

Mr. Dave Smith: I appreciate that the member brought up some past horrific cases and how the previous legislation didn't actually deal with them appropriately.

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you for reminding me about my glasses.

What we're changing on this one, though, is something to actually address it. We know that a lot of the problem you have with enforcing animal welfare is that it's reactive; it can't be proactive. One of the changes we're making is that our inspectors will be able to be proactive after they've had a reactionary incident. So, when you call the inspector, and the inspector goes and examines and sees some of those problems, they can follow up and come back again and make sure that that pet owner, that animal owner, is doing what they're supposed to do.

I'd like to believe that most people involved with pets have a pet because they want a pet. I don't really want to

believe that we've got a lot of people who are going out there intentionally getting animals so that they can abuse them.

The previous member, the member of the NDP, did talk about some terrible cases. There's no legislation that would have prevented that. What we're trying to do now is modernize the system so that we have good governance in place so that we have something that is consistent across the entire province, so that we have the tools to punish people who do those horrific crimes—because we know that if you abuse animals, you have a high likelihood of abuse in other areas. We've strengthened it so that we actually have jail time that will be given to people, and significant fines—we're talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of fines that someone can receive when they're abusing an animal.

We can't stop that from happening to begin with, but we can put the tools in place to make sure that those who do those horrific things will be adequately punished. That's what this bill, if passed, will allow us to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: We've heard loving stories of our pets. We've heard today of horrific acts that can happen to our pets. I think every one of us can identify with the fact that we do need proper protection under the legislation, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019, because history shows that under the OSPCA—they were a charitable organization, and they couldn't function. There were a lot of laws that they were enforcing under different acts. So this is certainly something that is well needed in the Legislature.

There is a woman in St. Thomas, Colette Dodds. She is a fierce advocate and fighter for animal rights. Just recently, this November 15, the owner of a dog, Lady—she was found in a shallow grave with blunt trauma to her skull and liver. The lawyer asked that the judge find the owner of the dog not guilty. The judge said he could have been found guilty of a lesser charge of neglect because Lady was malnourished and had a broken leg that hadn't healed properly before her death. The reason that didn't happen was because the crown, if they'd put it forward—he wouldn't have had enough time to mount a defence.

Sometimes, when people go to court, with the rules the way things are, they slip through the cracks. In this case, Lady's owner was found not guilty of killing the dog, but could have been found guilty of neglect. It's a shame, because that would have been something that would have hopefully pushed the envelope further—so that when people do commit crimes and cruelty against animals, there is the right penalty for those acts.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I've listened to quite a bit of this debate today, and I haven't heard a lot about farm animals and how they will be affected by this legislation.

I'm going to tell you a little bit about a pet I had when I was growing up. If you know anything about dairy cattle, Jersey calves are probably the most affectionate that you can have, once they get used to you. I've heard about different members here with their dogs, coming home and the dogs licking them and all this stuff, and everybody has a good time. Well, you should get licked by a half-grown Jersey calf. It will take the whiskers off most men. Once they get used to you and once you get them trained, you can actually go out into the pasture field and they'll follow you around. It's kind of cute. So these are the pets that I grew up with. Like the members before me on both sides of the House have stated, you can't treat animals cruelly because they'd run away from you. That's what I grew up with: cattle. We trained them and we had a lot of fun with them.

I'll tell you right now, any farmer in business today who raises animals can't treat his animals cruelly because he won't make any money. It just doesn't work. You'll find that the family farms that we have in Ontario are second to none. These people take care of their animals and they raise them because they do want to make a living off them. They want to pass it on to their children. You'll find that some of the best advocates of animal welfare come from rural Ontario.

I just wanted to get that on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Questions and comments? Questions and comments?

Back to the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the members from Peterborough-Kawartha, London-Fanshawe and Perth-Wellington for your comments, and also in general all the members for their comments as well—especially the member from Perth-Wellington, who reminded me in the sense that growing up—we grew up in a household where we had dogs, goats and chickens, and that was basically part of the family. And it was very normal. I think I can share the sentiment that you have in terms of how important it is that we take care of our animals.

I'm really glad that this is going forward, and I'm really happy that we had a good discussion, but I'm looking forward to, like I said, the regulations, because I don't have a lot of trust—in the sense that we are not going to just plow through bills, because that has happened many, many times in this House with this government. My deepest wish is that with any bill going forward—I really hope that we are going to make sure that we listen to the public, we consult and we make sure that we do this in a way where we're actually listening to the public voice.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Jill Andrew, Toby Barrett
Stan Cho, Stephen Crawford
Catherine Fife, John Fraser
Goldie Ghamari, France Gélinas
Norman Miller, Michael Parsa
Nina Tangri
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Will Bouma, Stephen Crawford
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Gila Martow, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Dave Smith
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie