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8 mars 2022

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 March 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 8 mars 2022

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

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

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Good morning, colleagues. My wife is actually tuning in on TV right now, if you can believe it, Mr. Speaker, so hi, Kim, as well.

Hon. Todd Smith: Good morning, Kim.

Mr. Mike Harris: Good morning; yes, absolutely.

It's a pleasure to be here today to speak to the amendments to the standing orders changes that we have before us. While a few—and I'm going to try to keep everybody awake here, I promise, Speaker. But while a few—maybe more than a few, to be honest—may consider this subject to be a little bit of a dry one and these orders merely an administrative change, they, importantly, enable legislation to be passed and debated in an efficient and transparent manner here in the Ontario Legislature. Above all, they allow the opinions and the will of our constituents to be communicated in public and acted upon.

Looking back to the last few years, I am proud that our government has been one of action, voting in this chamber to deliver on the promises made to the great people of this province since 2018. These include:

—reducing taxes for small businesses, individuals and families;

—eliminating red tape and regulations to create a pro-growth environment once again here in the province of Ontario;

—thanks to the great Minister of Energy sitting in front of me here, stabilizing energy prices in this province; and

—increasing funding for health care, education and, of course, infrastructure.

I was happy last week to debate the Fewer Fees, Better Services Act, which will not only remove road tolls on the 412 and 418 but will also remove the need for validation stickers on licence plates, saving an Ontario driver \$120 a year per vehicle. Adding on top of that, you have 300,000 main street businesses receiving WSIB rebates, and thousands and thousands of families that will receive a 20% boost to their Ontario Child Care Tax Credit. I could

stand here all day listing off the measures that we have taken on this side of the House to put money back in people's pockets while spending money wisely on programs we all need.

I'm also happy to announce, in the last year, two new long-term-care homes in New Hamburg and St. Jacobs and two new recreation centres: one in Kitchener and the other in the township of Wellesley. Speaker, I could go on and on talking all day about the investments in my riding in Waterloo region. I know nobody here really wants to hear that—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Harris: —but the member from Oxford is pretty excited about it.

But Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, this is all possible because the government has remained flexible on standing orders and other measures to ensure our collective, positive response to a global pandemic—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Harris: Apologies, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I apologize to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga and his wife who is viewing at home. Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue. I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: We'll have debate continue, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The debate will continue. I'll return to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Mike Harris: Just to kind of recap, the collective response that we've had with the support of the people of Ontario has allowed this province to thankfully move forward with lifting vaccine certificate requirements and removing capacity limits for most public venues—all of this because we've been able to be nimble and flexible here in this House to move pandemic issues forward at an expedient rate.

I was very pleased at how my colleagues returned to the chamber this week in a more fulsome manner, and it really is a sign of things returning to normal here in the province. But we must not let up our guard, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, it is more important than ever to have an efficient and transparent legislative chamber that empowers members to represent their constituents.

On this goal and other priorities, all of us have always had the full support of our amazing government House

leader and my Minister of Legislative Affairs and his remarkable staff that work just down the hall.

Before we move into specific changes before us, I would like to take a few minutes to review the government's track record on strengthening the procedures of this chamber, Mr. Speaker. The original motion that was before us proceeds a series of changes that we have made since 2019 to enhance debate, improve democratic oversight and strengthen the institution of Ontario's Parliament.

In 2019, a modification to the daily order of business was made to increase the profile of members' statements by moving them from the afternoon session to the morning before question period, when more people are watching at home. In that year, we explicitly permitted the use of laptops, tablets and smartphones in a non-disruptive manner in the chamber, reflecting the realities of the 21st century. We also eliminated the need for a minister to verbally refer a question to a colleague during question period, while waiving the requirement for written authorization for a parliamentary assistant to answer a question during question period when their minister is absent. Lastly, 2019 saw the allowance of electronic distribution of background materials to reports and sessional papers tabled in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker—and again, a common-sense 21st-century solution that really mirrors our government's push to digitalize services across all ministries and provide convenient access to Ontarians.

In the fall of 2020, further changes to the standing orders strengthened private members' business by allowing one item per day on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday to be considered, while temporarily adding a fourth private member's bill each week on Monday morning. That year we gave more latitude to members again, by requiring all recorded divisions on PMBs to be deferred to the following day after question period so more members could have an opportunity to vote on those bills.

We also made debate time more equitable by adjusting the length of questions and answers to five minutes for any speeches shorter than 10 minutes. But we shall refer back to that position a little bit later, Mr. Speaker.

Next, we created a provision for take-note debates that will allow for longer discussions on issues of substantial importance. I know that we will all remember the great debate led by the member from Sarnia-Lambton on line 5, Mr. Speaker. I know that's of major importance to you and your region.

We also allowed the deferral of closure votes so the schedule of the House can be more predictable and so more members can have the opportunity to vote on those bills and motions as well, Mr. Speaker. Also, I should note that we have enhanced the role of the opposition to hold government to account by providing additional question period questions to independent members, and strengthening the role of independent members by making permanent the temporary provisions allowing independent members to substitute for each other on committee.

In spring 2021, we gave the ability for committees to recall themselves when the House stands adjourned, Mr.

Speaker, and instituted bipartisan leadership on committees by requiring that Vice-Chairs of committees be elected from a party other than the party which forms the Chair of the said committee.

I look forward to highlighting the motion's new changes to enhance committee work a little later on in this debate, Mr. Speaker, but I think it was important to review our government's positive track record on making this Legislature more efficient and transparent and that it has produced real benefits for people all across this province. It has allowed this government to vigorously accomplish its legislative agenda to build a stronger Ontario and to continue with a plan that says yes to building, yes to investing, yes to workers and, most importantly, yes to jobs.

Speaker, let's go over how the changes that were proposed in the original motion here will strengthen this chamber and help it bring greater value to Ontarians across the province. The changes proposed will mean more efficient oversight of government spending, enhance the ability for members to consider and act upon private members' bills and allow for more robust and focused committee work.

0910

First, let's talk a little bit about private members' bills. We all know they are such an important opportunity for individual members to deliver change for their local constituents and have a meaningful impact on significant issues across the province. I have been privileged to introduce three separate bills to this chamber in the last three years, the first being Bill 50, enabling digital dealer registration of plates and tags, which I am glad to see has been adopted into government legislation, is actively being developed and, I believe, is rolling out as we speak to car dealerships across the province.

Second, which I think we'll all remember, is Bill 246, the Safer School Buses Act, which received royal assent and of course will introduce an eight-lamp amber-red warning system on school buses all across Ontario starting this September.

And, just this month, Bill 78, the Police Services Amendment Act, which received unanimous support for second reading and, if passed, will extend the Queen's Commission to municipal and First Nations police officers for their exceptional service.

Our government's motion will further expand the ability of colleagues to study and respond to a bill by insisting that a member table their ballot item at least two weeks prior to their ballot date, and they must designate their ballot item to appear on the order paper two weeks prior to that time. Now, as we all know, this is just a minor adjustment, as members are already required to introduce a private member's public bill at least two weeks before it's debated, but this motion includes a very practical change that will ensure members have proper time to introduce and debate private members' bills.

At the start of every new Parliament or session, the first several PMB debate slots can never be used; there is simply not enough time for a member to give notice before

their actual debate occurs. The proposed change codifies what already occurs in practice, which is a deferral of the start of private members' public business by way of a unanimous consent motion. This change ensures our standing orders function properly by default.

In my relatively short time in this chamber, I have been honoured to serve on the Legislative Assembly committee, the general government committee, the private bills and regulations committee and the social policy committee, all doing important work with dedicated members who often work together and sometimes in a little bit less partisan spirit than we see sometimes here in the chamber.

I believe the changes introduced in this motion to come into force at the start of the 43rd Parliament will strengthen committees and allow members more opportunity to become experts in a particular policy field or area of government.

Let me provide two examples. First, in addition to the general government committee—to be renamed the heritage, infrastructure and cultural policy committee—social policy, justice policy and the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs would of course then become a policy field committee and a new Standing Committee on the Interior would be created. This new standing committee is a new policy field committee intended to study matters relating to agriculture, natural resource, Indigenous affairs, the environment and energy. The Legislative Assembly committee would be renamed the procedure and House affairs committee. With committees focused on a particular policy area, members will be able to better study and respond to specific pieces of government and private members' legislation. This could only strengthen Ontario's parliamentary democracy.

The next example is the proposed change on how government estimates are read. Currently there is a single estimates committee that meets in a narrow window and usually subs members in and out based on the specific ministry or policy area that is presenting that day. Our change would move the consideration of estimates from a single estimates committee to the various policy field committees. For example, justice policy would study estimates for the Ministry of the Attorney General, and so on. I think it stands to reason that a government minister could expect a more detailed interrogation, if you will, Mr. Speaker, from committee members who are knowledgeable on the specific policy matters that are before them.

The government motion before us also gives more latitude to committees on when and for how long to hear estimates and allows, in theory, more ministries the opportunity to present, as members of each committee would make their selections in rotations.

In addition, the introduction of a second Vice-Chair will allow the leadership of committees to be non-partisan and bipartisan, as is the case today with the Speaker and as you sit in the chair as a Deputy Speaker, Mr. Speaker. While the current requirement that committee Vice-Chairs be elected from the opposite party as the Chair is elected has already introduced more bipartisanship to these groups—I think it has worked out very well.

There is one more change to committees I wish to highlight because of its importance to this chamber here and Queen's Park itself. We are proposing that a new Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which is currently the Legislative Assembly committee, would be permanently chaired by an opposition member. In time, we expect this committee would be responsible for oversight of the project to rehabilitate and renovate the Legislative Assembly and precinct. We all know that Queen's Park is in dire need of repair and action is needed to be taken sooner rather than later. This project has been my focus as the new parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Legislative Affairs, and it is very important to me that the rehabbing of this provincial monument to democracy, pushing over a century and a quarter years, will receive all-party support.

Now, for those who are watching this debate—and hopefully Kim is still tuned in. I don't know, Speaker, but I don't blame her if she's left. I want to just quickly move over to talk a little bit about private bills. Private bills are not to be confused with private members' public business, and are often simple and non-contentious bills seeking to revive corporations to resolve outstanding tax and property matters.

The consideration of these bills is effectively a quasi-administrative and non-contentious process for 80% to 90% of those bills. As we all know in this chamber, it has become practice for all private bills to be passed after an extremely brief, usually less than six-minute pro forma committee study and then with an expedited unanimous consent motion here in the chamber. The current motion will simply formalize this practice for the next Parliament—being the 43rd Parliament—making it less time-consuming and burdensome for both members of the public, assembly staff and us MPPs.

Therefore, after the introduction of a private bill, it will no longer be deferred to committee automatically. They will remain on the order paper for four weeks. At that time, they can be called for second and third reading votes without debate or amendment, or, if necessary, they could then be referred to committee for further study, if circumstances allow. This change allows committee resources to be refocused and be more effectively used for substantive work and allows non-contentious bills to be passed more effectively, reducing waiting time for members of the public who need them, while still allowing fulsome oversight for more complex legislation.

To conclude, I believe the standing order changes introduced in this motion demonstrate that our government is continuing to improve the function of the Legislative Assembly here in Ontario. These measures will include changes to continue our previous efforts to allow more substantive debate on private members' business and within committees to empower members, while ensuring efficient operations and transparency remain in this House. It is my sincere hope that these standing order changes will receive the full support of the New Democrats and the independent members, who will, again, benefit from this government's effort to empower members in this chamber. As this government continues to

build a stronger province for all Ontarians, we need to ensure that their Legislative Assembly is up to the task and ready to act on this purpose.

Mr. Speaker, that's going to conclude my formal remarks for today, and I'm very much looking forward to hearing from, hopefully, some more members of the opposition. I know that I'm really looking forward to hearing from my colleague the member for Brantford—Brant, who always speaks so eloquently in this chamber—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Harris: He really does; he really does.

With that, thank you very much, Speaker. That will conclude my debate.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am glad to be able to rise in this fine Legislature this morning and add my remarks to this standing orders amendment motion before us. Last week, I had the privilege of sitting where you sit today, in the Speaker's chair, and I had the chance to listen to much debate on it and much discussion. Hopefully I retained some of that and I'm going to maybe add something new, although we have been discussing standing orders a lot since this Parliament began, since this government took the reins. In fact, this is the seventh permanent change to the standing orders since this government took office in 2018. That's kind of a rapid pace for legislative changes to the rule book.

0920

The government House leader has accused us of being stick-in-the-muds and maybe being afraid of change, but I do think that it is important that when we make changes to, in effect, the rule books, to the rules of this place, they should be thoughtful and careful and really made with an eye to the future. I think that this government—and it's probably not untrue of governments before them. The changes laid out often are self-serving, often serve the government of the day. We have seen that many changes seek to move things through more quickly, government initiatives through more rapidly, perhaps viewing the legislative process as an encumbrance. I think that's too bad, frankly.

This is a remarkable institution. It has interesting histories, but the parliamentary tradition in this place of debate and discourse, thoughtful research and thoughtful time in committees I think is being lost with great haste. As I said, there have been seven permanent changes. The proposed changes in front of us, the actual standing order changes, the amendments that the government has put forward, follow this government pattern of no consultation and putting forward amendments that do strengthen cabinet's control over process, at the expense of the opposition.

There are folks on those benches—and some of you know who you are—who have been on these benches. We have all lamented the fact that the government of the day was running roughshod over the, I'll say, rights of the opposition members, or making it harder and harder for opposition members to not only bring voice but bring

thoughtful comments to issues to, hopefully, make government bills the best versions they can be, to make laws strong and appropriate for the province. But anyway, here we are.

Why don't I get into the nitty-gritty, Speaker? There are some specifics that the government is proposing that, again, serve the interests only of the government. One of the specific pieces, the Monday morning sittings—this is about that Monday morning block: When I was first elected back in 2014, we didn't start first thing in the morning. There was that time to travel in. There was a later start on Mondays, which I think has been long-standing, to allow folks from Kiiwetinoong, to allow folks from Algoma—Manitoulin, St. Catharines or from anywhere—and on the government benches too—to be able to travel in safely and be able to get here and do their job at this Legislature.

We've had exceptions to that. We've had private members' bills that we had to make an allowance for to clear some of those when we had been away from this place during the pandemic. I understand that. It's appropriate for this building to be flexible. But it's just something of a travel challenge. I do remind the government that, while they only have a handful of members who are in the north, we have a lot more—and just from further areas—who appreciate being able to get here safely, especially with bad weather.

Introduction of bills: I thought this one was personally interesting. This new standing order change changes the bill introduction process. It adds a process that prioritizes the tabling of government bills or introduction of government bills in its own time before proceeding to the introduction of bills where both government and private members' bills can be introduced. Okay, it doesn't really matter, but I was a little bit amused because I realized that what that would do—as it stands now, we have a time for introduction of bills. Maybe parliamentary tradition is that we recognize the government first, but if they don't stand up first, then other members stand up and we allow folks to introduce private members' bills, government bills, and we have a time for that. Well, this is outlining a change for the government side to just have its own time.

Speaker, you will remember, was it just—it wasn't last week. Two weeks ago, I tabled Bill 83, which is a reintroduction of Bill 43. That was to remove the tolls from the 412 and 418, and then the government introduced their bill, Bill 84. I got the jump on them; I got it first, because we have the old process, which is where anyone can introduce bills. Anyway, I don't remember when the standing order changes hit the table, but I was amused. I wondered if it was just sour grapes that I got it in first. Under these changes, that couldn't have happened. It's neither here nor there, but I just thought it was fun to share.

Mr. Jamie West: It's Dr. Seuss.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes, I didn't mean to make that rhyme. That's the grade 7/8 teacher in me leaking out, sorry. The member from Sudbury caught that. He's name-calling, Speaker. He called me "Dr. Seuss."

Moving on to committees, I sat for four years, actually—I was looking at the member for Bruce—Grey—

Owen Sound. He and I both sat on the committee on regulations and private bills. Four years of that is a long time. I know that there are members who have been serving on that committee—I have joined it, I think, once or twice, by Zoom, and saw some things that I thought, “Wow, maybe it’s time for a revamp,” no disrespect to some of the members on the committee. This standing order change would merge the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, and then they’re going to basically revamp it and call it the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

There are some other things about the private bills. And understand my words, for the folks at home who are following along: Private bills are not private members’ bills. Private bills are from maybe a company—I’m blanking right now—that closed down and then needed to reopen because there was a finance matter. They’re really behind-the-scenes things that have to happen in the business world or in the non-profit world or just special permissions from the government that have gone through one heck of a process. The people engaged in that process—man, is that a long process. This outlines changes there.

Speaker, do you remember—was it before our time, before your time? Well, anyway, you and I have heard tell of committees that used to travel—while we’re talking about committees—if there was a big government initiative, a big government bill, and they wanted folks across the province to weigh in. They wanted to make sure that that legislation was all that it needed to be, that there wasn’t going to be some wonky mistake that tripped up either the government or the citizens of the province. They would travel that bill and have folks weigh in during the committee process.

There was a time when committees were allowed to make their own decisions, prioritize their own things. And then I remember the last government majority that I sat across from in our committee would try to prioritize bills or do things, and then the strong arm of the Premier’s office or the government would come in and whomp away our plans, because, of course, committees are controlled by the government majority. It isn’t this magical, everybody-gets-along committee process that is the stand-alone deciding body. Maybe it was back in the day.

They used to travel. They used to get input from communities across the province—probably a relatively costly process. But guess what, Speaker? There’s this new thing that we’ve been using called Zoom. We have been able to invite folks from across the province, provided they have decent Internet—that’s a whole other topic we’ll get into later this week. We were able to actually hear from folks and invite them into the Legislature, so to speak.

While we’re talking about committees, I would invite this government to reconsider how they utilize those committees, that government bills—rather than it being this unbelievable race to the finish, why shouldn’t it be a process to have the best legislation that would stand the test of the time? In my mind, that should be the goal of

government: good governance rather than hastily cobbled together nonsense on a napkin. But, whatever, call me old-fashioned.

The estimates process: I do want to ask the government a question, because I listened to the government House leader the other day, and he was really dismissive of one of our amendments, the point that we were trying to make about the estimates process. The government is taking the estimates committees and basically divvying it up across different policy committees. I don’t have a problem with that in concept. If different committees can handle the work of estimates, to break down different ministries and really look thoughtfully at the numbers and do that deep dive for public accountability, that’s great. But we’re talking about ensuring that there are at least a minimum number of hours that these things can be considered, right? Our concern is, the government House leader—and I am paraphrasing; you can go back to Hansard and direct-quote him if you want to. I don’t want to. He had talked about, “It’s up to the committees. Why would the NDP want to impose these time limits or whatever when the committees can decide?”

0930

Let me go back to what I said about how there’s a majority that controls the committee. A majority government controls committee. If there were estimates, for example, for the Ministry of Infrastructure, and we wanted to actually delve into what is or isn’t being spent on broadband, that committee is always controlled by the government—always, always, always, always. They have a majority right now. In a different Parliament, maybe there is some more give and take, but right now that’s not what we have. They can decide how long. Sitting on that committee, I could vote, “No, I don’t want it to only take 35 minutes. I want to give it three or five or 10 or 12 hours,” or whatever, and the committee is like, “I’m going to stare at my phone and not make eye contact because we’ve got marching orders and we’re just going to vote the way we were told and not think about it and then not give this some real thought about what is actually at stake in terms of public accountability.” Past behaviour is a good predictor of future behaviour, so that’s what I would anticipate. That was our concern.

We want actual standards and minimums, because the role of the opposition, the responsibility that we have to investigate and involve not just the committee but all members in looking at things—I’m proud of the work we do on the opposition benches. This government makes us fly by the seat of our pants half the time. They drop a bill; 30 seconds later you’re up on your feet debating it. Okay, fine, that was maybe hyperbole. But they can introduce a bill and the next day we’re up debating it. That isn’t a chance for us to communicate with communities. They certainly haven’t done it, especially the last couple of bills.

We don’t just think on our feet; we are ready to go because we do have those relationships in our communities. We can call someone in the middle of the night and say, “Guess what they’re pulling now. Can you weigh in on broadband? Can you weigh in on Laurentian?” That

was last week, right? So they've turned us into really organized, effective, efficient speakers and researchers. That will come back to bite them, I think, when we're government and they're not, and many of them haven't actually had to do that kind of work. It will be fun to watch.

Moving on into the private members' public business—I see that I am somehow almost out of time, but that surprises, again, no one. The ballot date and designation deadline for private members' bills and private members' public business—this is getting a bit, I'll say, into the weeds. This is kind of technical, but I would like to raise some things that fit with these standing order changes.

When I first got to this House, I was actually told that private members' public business, or private members' bills, as we call them affectionately—there are private members' motions and private members' bills, but they're kind of sacrosanct, right? The members have parliamentary privilege, and that means that we get to vote and you can't stop us and no one can stop us and don't block us. We have that as a right. I would have thought that we also had a protected right to debate our own private members' bills—choose them, debate them.

I will say that I've always been glad in this party that we discuss in caucus our ideas to make sure that if we have an idea in our community, it's not going to catch another member unawares who might have different regional opinions on these things. We make our bills better and stronger, and we have lots of different ideas. We table different ones.

We all know that sometimes we table a private member's bill—"table" meaning introduce it to the House—that we aren't going to be calling for debate right away, because it might be an issue that is an important one for a group but there's another issue that we have to debate. And we don't get to debate them all, right, Speaker? You've got to pick a favourite—well, that's the wrong way of putting it, but we have different pushes and pulls in our community, both political and personal. The families who we're working with, we want to bring their voices here, but also there may be an important issue that comes up. A major employer may pull out of a city and you've got to talk about workers' rights. Things come up—so allowing that flexibility.

Why I'm telling that story is because here we have these eight days that we have to give notice for private members' bills—eight sessional days, which in effect is two weeks, to let the government know what it is we're going to be debating and let each other know. Okay, fine. But Speaker, when we ask the government to give us any kind of heads-up on the bills, like to give eight sessional days for government legislation, they're like, "They want to hold up the world" and "They hate change" and all of the bluster and stomping and whatever.

Speaker, government bills involve money. They involve folks. They actually make a big difference in the province. Lord knows, eight sessional days' worth of notice so that we can talk to community members, so the government can do its homework, I don't think is too much to ask. Eight days, arguably, are not enough, depending on the bill—but rush, rush, rush.

It is interesting, though, that they give themselves the ability to start debate on complicated and involved omnibus legislation less than 24 hours after a bill is tabled. Last week, we had Bill—

Interjections: Eighty-eight?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: That wasn't the one I was going to say. They're saying Bill 88, which was also problematic—highly.

Interjections: Eighty-four?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Eighty-four—oh right, the one that involved my bill, where I beat them to the punch.

Bill 84 was introduced on a Tuesday afternoon, and then the Legislature has to print it, so most members can't even see it, can't lay eyes on it until the next day. But they sent around the compendium to the critics and our opposition House leader, so we got it late in the day. They offered a briefing while all of the cohort folks were actually in their seats debating things in the Legislature and so, oops, couldn't attend. Then our critic had to be up on her feet the next morning—without a paper copy of the bill, folks—to give a thoughtful and appropriate response to an 11-schedule piece of omnibus legislation. I was up the next day. She and I were emailing and sharing articles and thoughts, and the member from Sudbury and I were on the phone, because there was a thing about Laurentian. We were pulling the pieces together. We came at it and we did well. That bill was passed in a matter of days, because rush, rush, rush. How is that thoughtful legislation, Speaker?

My colleague from York South-Weston had a private member's bill, the London families act, which was done in concert with the families in his community and the other members from London, a very important piece of legislation. The government pulled this weird—I call shenanigans. They brought it forward and sort of skipped the debate step and went and said, "Let's go to committee." I think they were trying to wedge us so we would have to vote against the bill or something like that. I think the broader community understands that it wasn't what was in the best interests of the community. We would like to bring those voices to this House. That member lost his ability to debate his own private member's bill. When I chatted with folks, apparently that's because it was the will of the House. Well, "the will of the House" is a fancy term for "the most people." The will of the House on this side? We didn't vote for that. We don't want that. But might makes right: The government majority decided, and that constitutes the will of the House. So he lost his spot.

Then yesterday they pulled another sort of shenanigans to say, "Well, okay, since he lost that, let's put something else on the table, and we're going to tell him what he can debate." Then when we asked questions about it and were challenging them, they took their bat and ball and went home and withdrew that. It's a bit of a tangle.

The point is, this government is outlining in here about private members' public business, and it's a dangerous precedent, I think, in here, to be able to say what members can and can't debate, what they can and can't bring forward. To the members over there who were defending

it yesterday, look into what I just said and decide if you're okay with that as members of this Legislature.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise in this House—I'll say, this morning; I'd written "this afternoon," but I didn't know when I was going to come up. So here I am. I would like to add my comments to the standing order changes that the government introduced last Tuesday, March 1, and the proposed changes by the opposition.

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Rules are very important, as I'm sure you can appreciate, Mr. Speaker, since an important part of your role is to enforce these rules. Rules provide clarity, predictability and order. I like to think that I am a very organized person and I like to provide well-thought-out comments and contribution. Now, I understand that in our world, prompt and spontaneous response may be required, but, when possible, I'd much prefer having time to prepare adequately, and my staff welcome that.

I think that updating, modernizing and improving the functions of this House to the benefit of all members is a good exercise and worth the time and consideration that I am sure the government House leader has put into it.

I also like a clear and fair process. Clear and fair rules about how this Legislature operates should be welcomed, as they are supposed to help us do our job in the best possible way. In fact, it was a real surprise to me that we wouldn't get advance notice of a bill being tabled but yet be expected to be able to debate on this bill at a drop of a dime—or a drop of a hat; I don't know which is the best-suited formula.

With that in mind, I need to raise some of the challenges I have faced as a more recent member of this Legislature, trying to find my footing around all the rules that one needs to know to be adequately prepared to speak on behalf of my community in the various settings, whether it be for debates on government or private members' bills or motions, or during committee.

I want to speak a little bit about the study of bills. Bills that are adopted in this House with a majority of support inevitably affect the lives of Ontarians and therefore need proper consideration. And I want to talk about the consultation with stakeholders when we talk about proper consideration. Good democracy requires that a bill pass through the legislative process, and this should be done in a meaningful way, meaning no cutting corners; meaning starting with real and extensive enough consultation to validate the proposed policy changes and their impact on stakeholders. Too often, however, I've been hearing from important stakeholders that were not consulted and who would have appreciated an opportunity to provide some feedback before the legislation is changed. The most recent example is the deregulation of Chinese medicine in Bill 88, where the government is now having to backtrack following strong expression of opposition with that schedule of the bill, hence the importance of doing your homework right in the first place.

The other part of insufficient consultation comes from the insufficient time being provided to members of this House to study a bill introduced by the government and be able to provide helpful comments during debate. When a bill is introduced with expected debate to follow hours after, it really gives the impression that the government is simply not interested in getting our feedback, even if it could result in good recommendations for improving the proposed legislation. The changes to the standing orders do not address this deficiency.

The work in committee was a big disappointment for me. This is something I was actually looking forward to, thinking of the great opportunity it would be to hear from stakeholders, to discuss and debate amendments and to come out with a better bill. So, for my first participation in the justice policy committee to study a bill, I went all in. I worked on 23 amendments. That was one month after officially taking my seat in this House. Speaker, do you know how many amendments the committee accepted? Zero. That's right; none. None of what I proposed in amendments seemed to have any value. Not even a fair and uncontroversial amendment to indicate that legal aid services should be substantially equivalent in French and in English got any consideration. That was not acceptable.

Of course, the fact that amendment packages are submitted very shortly before the meeting of the committee for study of clause-by-clause is proof enough that there is no intent to consider them seriously. It doesn't matter how I felt after the study of my first bill in the committee, but I can tell you that it changed my perception of how we work in this House. The truth of the matter is that the process in the standing orders is not for the benefit of all members of this House, as indicated by the House leader.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's always a privilege to rise in this Legislature as a representative of the great riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry in beautiful eastern Ontario. With this privilege, it is also a pleasure to support our great Minister of Legislative Affairs and Minister of Long-Term Care, Minister Calandra. He's been a very busy man these days, and we are all in good hands.

As we are aware, the business of the House is conducted according to the standing orders. The proceedings in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and in all committees of the assembly shall be conducted according to these same orders. The purpose of the standing orders is to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a manner that respects the democratic rights of members to submit motions, resolutions and bills for the consideration of the assembly and its committees, and to have them determined by democratic vote; to debate, speak to, and vote on motions, resolutions and bills; to hold the government accountable for its policies; and to collectively decide matters submitted to the assembly or a committee.

The Ontario Legislature is the principal democratic institution in Ontario, and as such the standing orders—the rules that govern the Legislature—ought to exist in

such a way that allows the Legislature to function as efficiently but also as democratically as possible. As stated by political theorist David Docherty, “Legislatures, and the men and women who serve in them, are at the very heart of Canadian democracy.”

Speaker, as we can all agree, there are historically three main functions of Parliament: representation, legislation and scrutiny. I would be so bold to add a fourth function, and that is what we are doing here today: debate.

Referring to Robert’s Rules on debate, there is an expectation of decorum in debate. In debate, a member must confine himself to the question before the assembly and avoid personalities. Speaker, I know sometimes, depending on the subject matter before this House, members can get quite animated, and on occasion need to be graciously reminded by yourself of this key feature of parliamentary debate. It is not allowable to arraign the motives of other members, but the nature or consequences of a measure may be condemned in strong terms. It is not the legislator, but the measure, that is the subject of debate.

Dr. Graham White, a noted political scientist, echoes this sentiment in *The Government and Politics of Ontario* in which he states that: “The legislature—Queen’s Park—is perhaps Ontario’s most central political symbol. It stands as the embodiment of the province’s democratic values—the people’s representatives making laws in accordance with democratically expressed public opinion”—or an election.

Accountability as well as transparency are key components of our government, and it’s why I am always proud to stand in support of, to explain and defend the policies of our government. In doing so, I am able to represent, as well, the views of my constituents that I have had the privilege to represent and serve in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Those are the people we all in this House must be accountable to, with respect to the decisions made here in this Legislature.

Speaker, I’ll admit that while the standing orders of the Ontario Legislature occupy a less prominent role for the average Ontarian, it is the standing orders that are essential to the functioning of this hallowed Legislature.

Referring back to Dr. Graham White, “Standing orders are the set of rules which dictate how and when business is conducted at the Legislature. They are ... referred to as the ‘statute law of the legislature’... As explained by White, ‘Of the greatest practical importance for most House activities are the standing orders.... These are the House rules that set out, often in some detail, the basic procedures which govern consideration of bills, rules of debate, times of sitting, order of business, question period and a host of other matters.’”

The standing orders must allow the Legislature to function efficiently, and that too has been a signature role of our government, which has been cutting red tape, reducing burdens on taxpayers and job creators, and streamlining processes and procedures to bring greater efficiency to government.

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As we continue on this theme, the new standing orders are to help speed the passage of legislation. All members,

I would say, generally should be in favour of getting more bills passed in this legislative session. It is simply good governance, and the people deserve a government that is efficient, accountable and able to provide for the needs of those they represent.

I can recall it was over a dozen years or so ago that my friend and colleague the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries was a freshman MPP in this House. As an opposition member and the mother of a young family, now-minister MPP Lisa MacLeod introduced a resolution to make the Legislature more family-friendly. As the youngest MPP in the Legislature, and with a newly born daughter, MacLeod found the schedule and general organization of the Legislature to be unaccommodating towards the needs of parents. At the time, the Legislature regularly would sit in debate until 9:30 p.m.

When speaking to her resolution in the House on December 6, 2007, she argued, “No one in this place, regardless of gender or political affiliation, should have to choose between being an effective representative in this place and being a good parent.” This push for reform initiated by the MPP from Ottawa–Nepean won broad support within the Legislature and led to the establishment of an all-party committee to examine options to make family life easier for politicians with young children and perhaps lure more young parents into the field.

This example of leadership and change shows how important the standing orders are as it shines as an example of their effect on those of us who are elected officials and how they are applied to every member equally, regardless of their sitting in government or in opposition. With the changes made in the standing orders then, regular late-into-the-evening sittings were no more and it had the most likely outcome of attracting more individuals to seek public office. We can see the proof of that today in this Legislature. We have elected legislators on all sides of the House who are a younger generation, of whom many had or are starting a family, yet saw the ability to stand up for public office.

We are all people who are trying to manage our family life alongside our legislative life, including constituency demands. Some members, like myself, travel significant distances to have the privilege to serve in this Legislature, so that is one more demand that is worthy of consideration here. Making the Legislature operate more efficiently has the novel effect of enhancing democracy by providing us with a greater number of candidates for public office who bring with them a diversity of interests and perspectives to this Legislature, which better represents the diversity of this great province.

As I stand before you, Speaker, while the standing orders may not find themselves front and centre or prominent in the minds of the public, they are an integral part of our democratic and legislative process. I’ll add that they can achieve great things for many when you reflect on this example that I have just brought forward.

Our government remains focused on facilitating swift, flexible and efficient functioning of this assembly. Since 2019, our government has made a series of amendments to

the standing orders to enhance debate, improve democratic oversight and strengthen the institution of this Parliament. These policies we are debating here today will help further these objectives, allowing for the efficient oversight of government spending, robust and focused committee work, and enhanced provisions for the MPPs to participate in the consideration and passing of private bills. We have been consistent in our attempts on this side of the House to streamline government, increase access to government services and eliminate stifling and cumbersome red tape.

Another example of the initiatives we have undertaken is presented here today with the reform of the committee system. With the current standing order changes proposed to the operations of committees, we intended to create policy-specific committees that will help to develop more functional and productive legislative committees at Queen's Park. This includes new committee names being proposed as an effort for clarity of purpose. In these changes to the standing orders, committee names also better reflect the focused policy fields for which each committee is responsible.

Parliamentary procedure has an extensive history in the development of democratic institutions as well as revisions and updates to suit the times they operate within. Two thousand years after the Greeks and Romans instituted the concept of parliamentary law and democratic processes, parliamentary procedure was developed as a science in the British Parliament in the 13th century.

In 1920, author A.F. Pollard published his book named *The Evolution of Parliament*. I would like to share his thoughts from the second edition:

“For political institutions that stand the test of time are organisms subsisting upon their adaptability to their environment and ever changing with the conditions of their existence. Parliament is not bound up with any political theory or any transient constitution; it has been the tool of monarchs, of oligarchs, and of democrats; it has been the means of opposition as well as the instrument of government, the preventive of revolution as well as the promoter of reform. It has been, and is still to some extent, a court of law, a council, and a legislature; and its forms, which were used by medieval kings, have been found still more effective by modern ministers. Its elasticity has known no bounds in the past, and we have yet to learn that it has no value for the forces of the future. The faith of men in what can be done by act of parliament is assuredly not on the wane; and the mother of parliaments has seen her progeny spread into every civilized quarter of the globe.

“Parliamentary institutions have, in fact, been incomparably the greatest gift of the English people to the civilization of the world. Civilized man has drawn his religious inspirations from the East, his alphabet from Egypt, his algebra from the Moors, his art and literature mainly from Greece, and his laws from Rome. But his political organization he owes mostly to English conceptions, and constitutional systems all over the world are studded with words and phrases which can only be explained by reference to the medieval English parliament.”

When the Minister of Legislative Affairs introduced this package of changes to the standing orders, he reflected on the need to do so when he shared in this House, “This series of standing order amendments, of course, is the conclusion of what has been a four-year process of updating, modernizing and, I would suggest, improving the functions of this House to the benefit of the members. I think that is always our primary responsibility as members. What we want to do is ensure that the jobs that we do represent the new realities of the work that we are elected to do, and I think the final package of standing orders, as presented today, really helps us do that.”

Since 2019, it has been our intention on this side of the House to embrace Pollard's analysis as an institution that stands the test of time and showcases its adaptability to the environment, and ever changing with the current conditions of its existence.

The minister would go on to share that these proposed changes to the standing orders—and I quote the minister: “Every generation or two, you have to take a look and see what makes sense, what doesn't make sense and then make the changes to reflect the Parliament of this generation and the ones going forward.” And that's what the Minister of Legislative Affairs has done with this package of proposed changes.

In 2019, for instance, what seemed like a minimal change for some was really a change in the history of how we as elected officials can serve in this chamber. We made a standing order change that reflected our ever-changing times. That change was explicitly permitting the use of laptops, tablets and smartphones in a non-disruptive manner in the chamber. That may seem a bit trivial, but it really was a significant change to the conduct and behaviour of all members. It allows each of us an opportunity to remain connected to those we serve and represent.

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Now, I know that in my time here in the Legislature, unity may not always be a quality actively reflected as we embrace our debate. But the policy and procedure of Parliament in history has been an effort of unifying people of nations, according to Pollard. He noted, “Parliament has thus been the peculiar means through which the English people achieved their unity and nationality, and that is perhaps the reason why the nation has always excelled in politics.” After the last two years, I would feel that we could all certainly benefit from the spirit of unity inside and outside of this House.

Speaker, I want to take a moment; I'm not sure how many of these opportunities remain for me in the House. I've had the privilege over the last 10 years to serve and represent the people of south Ontario, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Prior to that, I served three times as a municipal councillor in Charlottenburgh and South Glengarry townships, and then was elected mayor of South Glengarry in 2003, 2006 and 2010.

As my time of public service is coming to a close, I will miss many parts of this chapter of political life. I have made many great new friends, and have even earned a few

nicknames over my years in this Legislature, mainly from my seatmate beside me. Some have made a similar decision as I have to pass the torch on to another. I know that they, too, will miss their time here. It truly has been a pleasure meeting the people of this grand institution, the people who keep it running and who keep it secure, and the members of the public service who aid in the work that we have done here. As I look back, it has been quite a different format here than over my years of municipal government, but we really have made a significant impact on the people of Ontario as I look back on our record of government.

I was a bit shocked by the stat that of the 14 automobile plants that were built before 2018, 10 were built in the US and four in Mexico. That's quite a startling stat when you look back, because around 2005, Ontario was the number-one auto maker in North America. Over the years, through different policies, it just got more expensive to work here. Electricity got too expensive to attract new industry. Red tape ballooned.

We saw report after report talking about Ontario being the most expensive place in North America to manufacture cars. As a result, companies went elsewhere. We hear a lot of rhetoric around this House about the importance of—whenever GM shut down in Oshawa, it was, “How could that happen?” It was like a shock, but the warning signs have been there for 10 years, and this House ignored them.

I know that in my time here, we talked about red tape. We talked about the need to make changes that would reverse that. Since coming to power, this government has made those changes. Now, we've seen the Oshawa plant moved up. We've seen investments in Windsor with Chrysler and we've seen battery plants taking investments in Ontario that we wouldn't have seen before.

Unfortunately, the price of electricity is subsidized by the taxpayer. It's not the way we would like to see it, but if we want to attract these jobs or keep the jobs we have, that's a necessary decision we took. It could have been the decision of the government and the opposition across here that made the decisions over the time I was here to keep going raising taxes, raising carbon taxes. And really, the carbon tax is a huge question for me, because I hear these days how important it is to keep the price of fuel down, but on the other hand, I hear how important it is to raise carbon taxes. I don't think people in my riding really care what is the composition of the price of fuel. It's the total fuel they pay for. If nothing else, as the price of fuel goes up, should we not be reducing carbon taxes?

Anyway, thank you for the time today, and I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you, sir, for your many years of public service and for your approach to politics, setting an example for us all.

Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: It always fills me with pride to be able to stand in my seat on behalf of the people of Hamilton Mountain and to have the opportunity to debate different things that come before this House. Today, as a deputy whip, it puts another realm of pride to be able to talk about the standing orders and how important they are

to the House team, to be able to put our perspective on the way that the Legislature moves throughout its daily business.

As you know, Speaker, it is the government that creates the agenda that happens on the Legislature floor. They create the standards, and now they have decided to create the rules on top of that. We have seen more standing order changes under this government—I have actual, real numbers. This is the seventh permanent change to the standing orders since this government took place in 2018, compared to five permanent amendments to the rules for governments between 1992 and 2018. That's quite a few. I believe—I've done a quick count, and I think we're around 30 changes to the standing orders to help the government push their agenda through quicker.

I know the government House leader likes to talk about, “It's for the greater good of the Legislature,” but when we look at it as the opposition, as we've heard from members even as near as this morning, they are rules that do not give the opposition the ability or the time to prepare or to do our due diligence, as the people of Ontario expect us to. We have seen government bills rushed through very quickly, and with the standing order changes that this government has done, it has made it even quicker.

The member from Oshawa spoke this morning about a bill that was tabled last week. In that afternoon, by that evening, the staff already had to be out getting a briefing on that particular bill that had 11 schedules, with some big changes for the people of Ontario. By 9 a.m. the next morning, we had to be on our feet, talking about what that bill means to the people of Ontario. It doesn't give time to talk to stakeholders. It doesn't give time to truly digest the changes that are happening, and that doesn't do anybody any justice for any bill that could come before this House or give us the opportunity to truly do our jobs as the official opposition, to ensure that we're keeping the government to account.

The government House leader was given a new title, Minister of Legislative Affairs, as he has been changing many things within this Legislature. I guess it seemed fitting for the Premier to give him that title, along with the pay raise to go with that, and just really, truly give him all of the space to change the Ontario Legislature to the rules that he wanted to see fit.

We know that the government House leader came from the House of Commons, as he was a federal MP. The rules there were different on many things, and he has been changing many of our rules to mirror them. I want to point out—and I spent a lot of time in this House as a deputy whip, so it gave me the opportunity to be here while our House leader, the official opposition House leader, the member from London West, spoke in her debate time. She talked about the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs that they have in the House of Commons and some of the changes that are happening in the Ontario Legislature to reflect that.

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The business that's put before this committee in the federal House includes the review and report of the standing

orders, procedure and practice in the House and its committees. That committee has the ability to create and to change the rules and to bring recommendations forward to the floor of the Legislature—or in that case, the House of Commons—to change those rules. That means that all parties come together to discuss rules that need to be changed to ensure that we are moving forward in the future—like bringing electronics to the Legislature floor. It's really important. It's moving us with the times. Nobody disagrees with that. But it's a committee decision that worked to get them to that point. Here, it's just the lay of the land of Calandra in how we move any standing orders here in the Ontario Legislature, and that's just wrong. It is just wrong when one person working with his little group of folks is creating the changes that govern us.

I only have a few minutes left. I was reading over Hansard, and as I said, I was here with our House leader, the member from London West. I really want to quote her. I'm going to read some of her stuff, because it really just puts the actual element on what we're talking about:

"In a democratic system, there are ... four key elements that have to be kept in mind. We need fair and free elections. We need the active participation of people and citizens in civic and public life. We need protection for the human rights of all citizens. And we need a rule of law in which the laws and the procedures that are passed apply equally to all citizens.

"This is what we do in this chamber. We are charged with ensuring that the laws that we make, the laws that we pass, address the real issues and priorities that are facing the people in this province. The standing orders are the scaffolding that allows us to engage in that very vital obligation to make those laws and pass those laws and bring the concerns of the people that we represent to the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

"The standing orders are essential to the functioning of the Legislature. They dictate how the business is conducted at Queen's Park, how we consider bills, what are the rules of debate, how we elect the Speaker, when we are going to sit, what business we're going to be dealing with, how we conduct question period. The standing orders have to reflect a balance between the government's right to implement its agenda and the opposition's responsibility to criticize what the government is doing, to scrutinize what the government is doing and to hold the government to account."

Speaker, honestly, that is the perfect example of how this Legislature should be run. If the government wants to change the rules according to how the federal Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs does, then they should have implemented the entire rule and ensured that the standing orders are charged to that committee so that as a whole we could make these critical decisions.

You know, Speaker, I shouldn't be that surprised, because—is it that time already?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): It is that time already. I'm sorry to interrupt the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity, and I look forward to returning to this debate this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you so much.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The rules dictate that it is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SUSANNE "SUSIE" BOYLE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Our community has just lost a long-time friend, activist, New Democrat and force of nature. Susie Boyle passed away recently, unexpectedly, at just 61 years old. Many folks in New Democrat circles will know her and will miss her energy, her passion, her excellent laugh and fiery spirit.

Susie had been a long-time New Democrat, and she was one of our local originals. She was active with the party locally and provincially, but also was a relentless voice with the retirees in Oshawa on local and environmental issues. She was active in her church, local Legion and community in many ways. She had been a loving and tireless caregiver to her mother, and she is survived by her sister Teri Boyle and her sons.

I have shared Susie's voice in this room many times, as she wanted the government to hear what it was like for folks living with disabilities and wanted to be a voice for making things better.

Speaker, as we're headed into an election, many of us are connecting with our friends and supporters and are rallying volunteers to get campaigns set up. I met Susie right at the beginning of my political journey, and she amazed me with her loyalty and commitment to a young woman trying to get into this arena. Just about everyone with a phone would have talked to Susie around election time, as she was a giant on the phones. She knew every member and their story and history, and she had worked on every campaign long before my time.

Susie was fiercely loyal and passionate and, sometimes, just fierce. She was a small woman with a huge heart, filled with fight and fury and love and loyalty. She had personal stories of Jack Layton, Andrea Horwath and Jagmeet Singh, and had a million memories of our local campaigns and candidates. I know that Sharon and Nester and Sid and Larry and Andrew and Julia and Willy and Peggy and Gord and all the folks who have been in the thick of it in Oshawa and in the NDP would be able to share a lifetime of Susie stories, too.

This International Women's Day, I'm thinking of Susie Boyle, who was a tiny ball of light, who took my hand to invite me into politics, was a true and loyal friend; who never missed a women's day breakfast at the union hall, who was a bundle of spirit and who believed in better for

people and our community, and she was committed to doing the work to make it happen.

Susie was small, but mighty, and our community will miss her in a big way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Speaker's prerogative: She came from Oshawa to Windsor during my by-election and helped me. Thank you so much.

The next member's statement.

GRAND WATERSHED TRAILS NETWORK

Mr. Will Bouma: This past Friday, March 4, I had the distinct pleasure of joining my colleague the MPP for Mississauga—Erin Mills and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries and other MPPs, local mayors and dignitaries to celebrate the Grand Watershed Trails Network launch of a new website and video.

This initiative will help them reach a wider audience, increase awareness of the trails system and encourage tourism and exploration of the Grand River trail areas.

The Grand Watershed Trails Network's mission is to develop the Grand River watershed as a living storybook of adventure and reconnect communities with the Grand River and with each other by partnering with all stakeholders.

We are raising our family in Brant county and often enjoy the trails system and the unique natural beauty that it protects. This video and website will not only promote the Grand Watershed Trails Network, but Brantford—Brant as a whole, showcasing the amazing community we all call home.

This is a project that I was involved in from the early stages about eight years ago, when I was president of the Brant Waterways Foundation. It is so wonderful to see this trails network coming along from the headwaters to the mouth of the Grand River. I encourage you to take a look at www.grandtrails.ca. Thank you.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Wayne Gates: We've heard this government say that they care about seniors, yet seniors are finding it harder and harder to keep up with rising costs. They say that they're addressing the housing crisis, yet prices have skyrocketed. Young people have given up the dream of home ownership.

I ask the Premier, have you looked at the price of gas lately? You have nothing to celebrate. Ontario residents are breaking under the cost of gasoline right now. I'm saying to the Premier that his government can and must play a role in offering relief at the pumps for Ontario residents.

We offered solutions, recommended using the Ontario Energy Board to try to shine a light on this industry and ban gouging where it occurs. The Premier rejected that plan. I ask this government: What is your plan? How can

you sit back and do nothing? How is this not a crisis worth resolving?

Oil companies are making billions in profit. Today, the price of gas in Niagara Falls is \$1.83 a litre. In Niagara, many people can't get to work, to school or to hospitals without a car.

We know gouging occurs when prices go up 14 cents overnight or just before a long weekend. We know there's a lack of transparency when it comes to refineries. All this leaves consumers open to price gouging.

This government claims to care about people's pocket-books. If that's the case, why are they refusing to even debate legislation that might help at the pumps? Right now, we need this government to step in and use every tool available to them to bring down gas prices and give residents a break. We need a provincial government response to gas prices and we need it now.

1020

MARCEL LAPIERRE

Mr. Jim McDonell: I rise today to mark the passing of Marcel Lapierre, a friend, a municipal colleague and, recently, a valued member of my constituency staff.

Marcel was born and raised on the family farm just outside of Martintown. He graduated from Char-Lan high school in Williamstown and sought employment at the local Cornwall Scotiabank branch, where he met his wife of almost 50 years, Suzanne. Marcel moved over to the municipal government side, serving as clerk and CAO of the former township of Charlottenburgh, and was chosen as CAO for the newly amalgamated township of South Glengarry.

After 30 years of municipal service, Marcel retired in 2006 to a life of golf, curling and volunteering with the local Cornwall Lions Club. Nine years ago, Marcel joined my constituency staff to continue in the role he excelled in, serving the public. Marcel's many friends would stop by our office to catch up on the latest political news or just have a good laugh. He had a way of putting things into perspective, and he was invaluable during my time as mayor and MPP.

Marcel leaves behind him his wife and best friend, Suzanne; his son, Rick, and his daughter, Julie; son-in-law Nathan and daughter-in-law Jennifer; and his granddaughters, Kari and Addison. He will also be missed by his co-workers Marilyn, Allan and Greg.

Rest in peace, my friend.

INVASION OF UKRAINE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, I'm heartbroken. Like so many Canadians of Ukrainian descent, my grandparents immigrated to Canada in the early part of the last century, settling in the prairies to tame the land and to feed our nation as farmers. In the early part of this century, my brother and my father travelled to Moscow several times to initiate the adoption of our dear Misha, a young boy in the town of Tula. My brother, a Canadian of Ukrainian

descent, now living in Toledo, Ohio, and married to an American, adopted a Russian who now serves in the US military, stationed at Fort Bragg.

I am heartbroken. The illegal invasion and subsequent war against Ukraine by the Putin regime has shown the world that democracy is under attack. The atrocities shown by Russian forces against civilians already constitute war crimes. We have been inspired by the resolve of the Ukrainian people to defend their homeland and their right to sovereignty, to self-governance and identity. They fight not only for themselves but for all of us who believe in democracy, peace and human rights.

But resolve alone will not win this war. The global community has shown incredible solidarity with the people of Ukraine. As Canadians, we must commit to supporting defensive and humanitarian resources for Ukrainians who remain on the front lines to defend their country, and for those fleeing for safe harbour in neighbouring countries and abroad. We see that the Ukrainian fight for self-determination has become a fight for self-preservation, and we need to help. I urge the Ontario government to increase their financial support and to develop mechanisms for matching donations from Ontarians. Let no one be mistaken that this war against democracy will be contained within the borders of Ukraine; this is an attack on the values and freedoms that many of us—many Canadians—have fought to defend and continue to defend to this day.

I stand in solidarity with Ukrainian Canadians in condemning the criminal actions of the Putin regime. And to the Ukrainian people, I say: Slava Ukraini.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Today I am delighted to speak on International Women's Day, a day where I, and many others, embrace and reflect on the differences between men and women and the beauty that lies within them.

Women come in many different shapes, colours and sizes, and are each beautiful in their own ways: the stay-at-home mom who struggles to stay awake while nursing her baby for the third time in a night; the businesswoman taking charge of her own company; the woman who juggles both worlds of working inside and outside the home. And some of us do it while wearing four-inch heels, too.

The strength and softness of women, this unique balance, should be embraced and celebrated. Why do we women feel the need to measure ourselves and our achievements to men? Use yourself as your own measuring stick. In the immortal words of Margaret Thatcher, "If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman."

So today, I want to say thank you to all women, all the mama bears who get up every day and do the hard things, who deal with the pushback, who stand apart from the crowd, who don't shy away from confrontation, who stand up for our kids. This day is for you. Thank you.

GREY JAY SALES AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Norman Miller: I rise this morning to congratulate Grey Jay Sales and Distribution for winning the Merchandising Excellence Award at the inaugural Ontario Made Awards. The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters established these awards to celebrate outstanding manufacturers and retailers that help consumers make informed choices by increasing the awareness of Ontario-made products.

Grey Jay Sales and Distribution is headquartered in Huntsville, Parry Sound–Muskoka, and focuses on bringing Ontario-made products to stores across the province and around the world. This includes products from local businesses like Lake of Bays Brewing in Baysville, Muskoka Brand Gourmet based in Huntsville, and Muskoka Springs Craft Beverages in Gravenhurst. Since 2016, Grey Jay Sales has distributed the high-quality products of these local businesses and others so consumers across Ontario can get a taste of what Parry Sound–Muskoka is all about.

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused hardship for many small businesses, I encourage all Ontarians to make an effort to buy Ontario-made products. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and they provide our friends and neighbours with valuable jobs and livelihoods.

I congratulate Grey Jay Sales and Distribution on this award and all the local businesses in Parry Sound–Muskoka that Grey Jay Sales partners with on their success.

CITY OF BRAMPTON

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I live in Brampton, one of the largest and fastest-growing cities in Canada. But it's a city right now where people are struggling. They're struggling because for 15 years, our city was left behind and neglected by the Liberal government.

Now, when the Conservatives got elected, they made a lot of promises to make things better. But I've asked the people of Brampton, "Have things gotten better? Have your car insurance rates dropped? Does your city have an additional hospital? Can you or your children afford a home?" And the answer, time and again, is no.

The Conservative government had four years. They had a full mandate to help our city, and they chose not to because they don't care about Brampton and they don't care about you. And the people of Brampton, they're fed up. They know that we deserve better. We deserve to live in a city where going to the hospital doesn't mean being treated in a hallway. They deserve to live in a city where paying car insurance doesn't cost more than your household mortgage. They deserve to live in a city where owning a home isn't a dream.

That's what we in the NDP are fighting for. We are fighting for a better Brampton, with three hospitals and three emergency rooms, where people pay fair car insurance, where people can afford a home. And mark my words, we are not going to stop fighting until it happens.

WEST LINCOLN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: The rebuild of the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital has been a top priority since becoming MPP for Niagara West. I was born in the hospital, I campaigned for the hospital and I'm very excited to share with you, Speaker, that in a few short weeks, construction will begin on this new hospital.

Yesterday, Hamilton Health Sciences and Infrastructure Ontario announced the selection of EllisDon infrastructure as the preferred proponent to build our new hospital. This team was selected after going through an RFP process including more than 5,500 technical requirements set out by Hamilton Health Sciences, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Infrastructure Ontario. It was a challenging task to select one of the three successful applicants from these high-quality and unique submissions.

But once complete, the builders will build a new West Lincoln Memorial Hospital that will provide patients and families with:

- a modern, up-to-date facility with a capacity for more beds;
- a larger, 24/7 emergency department that will provide more space for staff and patients;
- maternal and newborn services to provide high-quality care during labour and birth; and
- a modern surgical suite to deliver care with the best technology available.

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I also want to thank our local community leaders, supporters, volunteers, doctors and nurses and front-line health care workers for their tireless dedication to this very important regional project in Niagara West.

I also want to pay tribute to the Honourable Christine Elliott, the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Health, a champion for better patient care in Ontario and a strong advocate for our new hospital.

Together, with the support of many ministers and the entire government, as well as Premier Ford, we will build the new West Lincoln Memorial Hospital.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. John Vanthof: Today, I would like to make the House aware of a near tragedy. On BayToday, it was reported what happened Friday. Temiskaming OPP say they got multiple calls Friday afternoon after a school bus was almost hit by a carelessly driven transport truck on Highway 11 in Harley township. The township is just north of New Liskeard. I would like to quote:

“Investigation revealed that a commercial motor vehicle was passing unsafely causing a school bus to take evasive action to prevent a collision,” says Constable Jennifer Smith.

“A short time later, the transport was stopped by police on Highway 11, in Temiskaming Shores,” and the driver was charged.

“It's not known if there were children on the bus at the time.”

This is not an isolated incident. I have one constituent on Highway 11—twice transports have passed a bus as the lights were flashing. He calls and he follows them into Latchford, where the police stop him. This happens constantly.

The vast majority of commercial vehicle drivers are professional and are good at their job. But there are those that seem to be so focused on getting where they're going that they don't really care about the rules. We need to make sure that they're enforced, that they're properly trained, because at some point, lives are going to be lost if we don't.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm very pleased to inform the House that one of our page captains today is Elya Keren-Sagiv, from the riding of York Centre. We have with us today at Queen's Park her mother, Tammy Keren, and her sister, Eden Keren.

Also, we're joined today by a parent of the other page captain today, Leah Elder, from the riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound: her father, Wayne Elder.

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

WALTER ELLIOT

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Mr. Walter Elliot, with five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's government, five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's loyal opposition and five minutes allotted to the independent members as a group.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Mr. Walt Elliot, with five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's government, five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's loyal opposition and five minutes allotted to the independent members as a group. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Milton.

Hon. Parm Gill: Just before I begin, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy International Women's Day.

Mr. Speaker, I'm of course honoured to rise today to pay tribute to former member of provincial Parliament Walt Elliot. He was elected in 1987 and served until 1990 in the newly formed riding of North Halton under the Honourable David Peterson government.

He was born in 1933 in a small community in Bruce county, and everyone knew him as Walt.

Before his time in public office, he was a dedicated educator, helping to shape the minds of young people. Walt received an undergraduate degree from McMaster

University and received his master's of education from Brock University.

He worked for 28 years as a high school math teacher, principal and a department head. Walt was committed to leading and supporting the next generation and was a valued mentor and role model for many students who came through his classroom.

In addition to his exceptional career in education, Walt also worked as a financial adviser, a small business owner and a farm manager. And yet, on top of all this, Mr. Speaker, Walt always still always found the time and energy to volunteer within his community. He was devoted to public service and was a consistent and well-known presence in Milton. He was actively involved in many community organizations, including the United Way, the children's aid society, Halton Recovery House, the Ontario Agricultural Museum, the Halton Region Museum and the Milton Historical Society.

He valued volunteerism and always knew, when needed, that members of the community would step up to help, no matter what the project was. Walt once said, "I believe that a spirited group of volunteers from the Milton area could go a long way to assuring the continued life of the museum." He knew then what we all know now: that the Milton and Ontario spirit is strong and resilient. Walt always encouraged civic engagement in young people, which he demonstrated himself as an organizer and a fundraiser.

He first ran for the Ontario Legislature in 1977 against an incumbent, the honourable James Snow. But it was in 1987 that Walt won his seat in a newly redistributed riding of North Halton to sit in the 34th Parliament. In his time in public office, Walt sat on several important committees and served as the Chair to the Standing Committee on General Government. In 1989, Walt was appointed by the Premier of Ontario as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Housing, a role that I too served as here in this provincial government.

Walt always spoke passionately in the Legislature about his community and the people of Milton. He was committed to representing and fighting for the interests of his riding and understood the difference between the community from the urban to rural areas.

In his first speech in the chamber, Walt discussed the priorities of his constituents in North Halton. As our community continued to grow, he focused his efforts on protecting our environment and the Niagara Escarpment, which made up 30% of the riding at the time. In his growing community, he highlighted the need for advancing the delivery of health care services to the region. He also supported the need for more elementary and secondary school construction, and accessibility for colleges and universities. Our community has grown into a well-educated, young and vibrant area and continues to grow each and every day.

Walt received many recognitions over the course of his life, including a Lifetime Achievement award from the Milton Chamber of Commerce in 2005, a medal for his

community service for the 125th anniversary of Confederation, and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal from the Governor General of Canada.

Walt was married to his wife, Anne, for 60 years and had two children. In his retirement, he enjoyed spending time with his granddaughters.

Mr. Speaker, Walter Elliot was a pillar of our community, a selfless volunteer, a public servant, and I thank him for everything he did to make our town of Milton and the region of Halton the amazing place that it is today.

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

The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a privilege to rise on behalf of the official opposition to pay tribute to Robert Walter Elliot, MPP for Halton North from 1987 to 1990.

Speaker, I rise not only as NDP House leader, but as a member of the unofficial cross-party education caucus that brought so many of us to Queen's Park. Walt's passion for public education—as a high school math teacher, a principal, a department head and a mentor to a generation of students—as well as his lifelong commitment to the Liberal Party were the animating forces that drew Walter to provincial politics in the first place.

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Walter first ran for the Ontario Legislature in the 1977 provincial election in the riding of Oakville, but lost to PC incumbent Jim Snow. Never one to give up a fight, he ran again in the 1981 election, losing again by an even greater margin. Walter sat out the next election but couldn't be held back in 1987, running successfully in the redistributed riding of Halton North, serving as MPP and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Housing from 1989 to 1990.

Walter's motivations were not only to improve the lives of the young people he worked with, but most of all, to improve his community. His Hansard record shows that Walter was ahead of his time in many of the issues he championed, including transit, arts and culture, occupational health and safety, and more. One of my favourite quotes is from 1989 when he said, "In my opinion, the golden rule for industry from now on should be, if your product has to be landfilled, do not make it. I am talking about cars, refrigerators, tires, batteries and so on. The theme for the 1990s should be, 'No more landfill.'"

While his retirement from politics in 1990 may not have been planned, Walter enthusiastically took up participation in community life, becoming actively involved in fundraising and other activities for a range of community organizations, including the United Way, children's aid society, Ontario Agricultural Museum, Halton Region Museum, Milton Historical Society, Halton Recovery House, Canadian region of the Scottish Elliot Clan Society, McMaster University, Oakville Art Society and Grace Lutheran Church in Oakville.

Upon his death in June 2020 in his 87th year, Walter was fondly remembered by those whose lives he touched. Memorial posts provide insights into the quality of his character and the man he was:

“His energy and commitment to the United Way and so many other community endeavours was tremendous. Milton is a much better place for his presence and contribution.”

“Walt always showed us what were the important things in life and encouraged us to look after those things to the best of our ability.”

“He was a dedicated community supporter and a charming, informed man.”

“We were impressed with his devotion to public service and constant optimism. The world needs more Walt!”

And: “He was Milton’s greatest citizen.”

Of Walter’s term in the Ontario Legislature, former Speaker David Warner said, “Walter was deeply respected on both sides of the aisle. During his time at Queen’s Park he served in quite a few positions of responsibility, always serving with honour and distinction.”

To his beloved wife, Anne, with whom he celebrated 60 years of marriage before his passing, to his dear children, Paul and Tina and their spouses, Evelyn and Joe, and to his cherished granddaughters, Emily, Violet and Katie: Thank you for sharing your husband, your father and your grandfather with us, with the people of Halton North and with the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It’s an honour today to rise and pay tribute to Walter Elliot, the former Liberal MPP for Halton North, for his distinguished public and community service.

Mr. Elliot’s accomplishments were very impressive. He was a teacher, principal, businessman, community leader, volunteer, proud supporter and mentor to so many students and young people, as well as an MPP in this Legislature. He was a dedicated husband of 60 years to his wife, Anne, and a proud father and grandfather.

Mr. Elliot first ran for office in 1977, and again in 1981, and I can relate to the fact that it took him 10 years to finally get elected in 1987. Walter made the most of his time here at Queen’s Park, chairing the general government committee and serving as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Housing.

I’ve just got to say, reading about Walter’s love of the Niagara Escarpment, I can relate to that. From his home community in Milton, the escarpment is spectacular and beautiful, and he fought to protect it.

Speaker, one of his colleagues described Walter as an “elder statesman at the heart of positive, progressive politics.” When his time was done at Queen’s Park, he continued to serve his community in so many ways, receiving lifetime achievement and community service awards.

I want to say to Walter’s family, thank you so much for sharing Walter with his community, our province and our country. Ontario is a better place because of his service.

Mr. John Fraser: Today, we honour the life of Walter Elliot, member of provincial Parliament for Halton North

from 1987 to 1990. He also served as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Housing in the Peterson government and other duties inside this Legislature.

Most importantly, Walter was a passionate educator. He was a high school math teacher, the head of the math department in several Ontario schools, vice-principal, principal and, most importantly, a mentor to students.

After obtaining his bachelor’s degree from McMaster University, Walter also went on to complete a master’s in educational administration from Brock University. His love of education carried on into his career in politics. He was also active in his community, including things like the United Way, the children’s aid society, the Ontario Agricultural Museum, the Halton Region Museum and his alma mater McMaster University, among many things.

Walter worked hard to earn the opportunity to represent the people of Halton North. He worked really hard. It took him a few runs to get here to Queen’s Park but, as they say, persistence pays off.

What I like to do, when we have the opportunity to do these tributes, is to go through Hansard and read people’s Hansard. It’s interesting how much the words that we use define us, and we can tell years later what kind of person was standing up and speaking. It’s clear he had a passion for education and health care but, most importantly, he had a passion for the environment. More specifically, he cared very deeply about protecting the Niagara Escarpment.

I also found that he had a sense of humour. His first words in the Legislature reflected that: “Since I have been about 16 years in hard work to assume a place in this House, I really would like to invoke something I always promised myself. That was that the first time I rose in this House, I would pay someone a compliment. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to pay a compliment to the member for Durham East on the length of his speech.”

Another in response, I guess, to a heckle from the other side of the House: “To the member for Scarborough West, I recognize that I am superannuated, but I have never thought of myself as old, even as a math teacher.”

His first speech in the Legislature was a response to the budget of the day. While it was clear that education, health care and infrastructure were important to him, it was evident that he cared very deeply about his own riding of Halton North. He remembered that thing, or he lived by that thing we all need to live by here, which is that he never forgot where he came from, who sent him or what they sent him to do.

Walter had humility and could be self-deprecating. In response to his first speech which I just mentioned, he said, “I would just like to indicate that my first main speech in the Legislature was not nearly the traumatic experience I thought it was going to be. I enjoyed it very much.”

I understand that Speaker Warner talked about how he was respected. It was because of the words that he chose. I want to say that most importantly, above all the words and all the things that we do here, most of all Walter was a devoted father, husband, grandfather and brother, and I want to say his wife, Anne; his children, Paul and Tina; his

granddaughters, Emily, Violet and Katie; and brother and sister, Brian and Audrey: Thank you very much for sharing him with us.

Applause.

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the members for their eloquent tributes as we give thanks for the life and public service of Walt Elliot.

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would just like to acknowledge that it's International Women's Day today. It's a day that we talk about breaking the bias and also remembering our she-roes who continue to persist on the front lines of our health care system, and that's what I want to talk about today, Speaker.

My question is to the Premier. We know that women are bearing the brunt of the backlogged surgeries and procedures here in Ontario. Women are working in our health care system, trying to deal with those backlogs; women are patients who are waiting in pain and anxiety; and women are also caregivers and supporters of family members who are having procedures delayed, who are not getting the fertility treatments they deserve and need, who are waiting for knee surgeries, who are waiting for procedures like MRIs. What we need to clear the backlog, Speaker, is a government that's prepared to invest the dollars and have a plan. Unfortunately, we're just not in that spot.

The minister and this Premier know that things are very bad. Tens of millions of surgical waits and procedures are backlogged. So the question to the Premier is, why is he failing? Why is he failing to get rid of the surgical and procedural backlog that folks say, that experts say, is going to take a long time to fix under their pace?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government's top priority has always been the health and well-being of all Ontarians, whether they've been suffering from COVID or, now, whether they need to have diagnostic procedures done or surgeries done. That's why, since the fall of 2020, we've invested over \$500 million in upgrading our system to make sure that we have the proper number of beds—over 3,100 more beds that we created because nothing much was done by the previous government in that respect.

We've also spent over \$500 million in allowing surgeries to be performed evenings and weekends so that people can get the relief they need. We know they've been waiting, and we are creating, with the investments that we've made, the spaces for them, as well as the health human resources we need to operate those beds.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, you can't fix the system without the staff to run it. I think that's become very, very clear. Beds are great, but if there aren't any staff to run those beds, to provide the bedside care, then we're not going to get very far. In fact, health care workers represented by ONA, SEIU, CUPE and Unifor said this yesterday: "Temporary fixes haven't worked to stabilize the PSW workforce and a one-time \$5,000 payment won't work to retain and recruit nurses who are asking (for) long-term predictability and support."

My question is, when is the Premier going to quit with the gimmicks, do the right thing, provide the respect and dignity that these health care workers and nurses are asking for and scrap Bill 124?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The President of the Treasury Board to respond.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Our government is incredibly grateful for the contributions of Ontario's health care workers and the critical role they have played throughout this pandemic.

Our government has also reaffirmed and invested over \$342 million, beginning in 2021-22, to add over 5,000 new and upskilled registered nurses and registered practical nurses, as well as an additional 8,000 personal support workers. For long-term-care homes, our government is investing an additional \$57.6 million to hire 225 nurse practitioners in the long-term-care sector.

As our public accounts showed, last year we invested over \$19 billion to support health care workers and the people of this province in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, empty words do not retain health care workers. They do not recruit health care workers. They do not return health care workers. They're calling out this Premier on his latest gimmick. That's what they are doing because they know it is not going to clear the backlogs that we have in this province. It's not part of an overall staffing plan to properly run health care. In fact, the ONA president, Cathryn Hoy, calls it "an exclusionary and insufficient band-aid measure that doesn't begin to address the issues driving nurses away and hurting patient care. I know that nurses across the province are irate at once again being thrown crumbs."

How quickly does the Premier forget the heroes on the front line of our health care system? They have had one major ask. They've had it for a long time. He still refuses to listen to what those workers need and what they deserve, and that is to scrap Bill 124. Will he make that commitment to them today, on International—

Interjections.

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

The President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: These are the facts: Our government has made the most significant investments into the health care system of any government in this province's history. The members opposite have voted

no to supporting 56 major hospital projects across this province. They voted no to supporting over \$5.1 billion last year to support hospitals, creating more than 3,100 additional beds, the equivalent of six large hospitals.

Our government will continue to support front-line health care workers. We will continue to support the people of this province and ensure that they get the support they need and, most importantly, that our front-line health care workers get the support they need to get through this pandemic.

HOME CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier, but I can tell you what we've proudly voted against, and that's Bill 124. New Democrats voted against Bill 124.

But look, we also have a crisis in our home care system here in Ontario. Of course, women are the majority of clients in our home care system. We are also the home care staff that support those clients, and those staff are run off their feet. They're exhausted, they're burnt out and they are not getting the support they need from their government.

In fact, Home Care Ontario said this before the pandemic: Half of PSWs do not stay in the job for a full year. The scheduling and the pay are the major issues that prevent these women from actually building a good career in home care.

The pandemic pay bump that this government provided is in fact expiring in a few short weeks, at the end of March. Why hasn't the Premier made the PSW pandemic pay bump permanent?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government has taken steps time and time again to increase pay for personal support workers. We recognize the important role that they play in all parts of our health care system.

The member opposite mentioned home and community care. We recognize the important role that home care plays in our health care system, with all of the health professionals involved in it. That's why we passed the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, which will modernize the delivery of home and community services by bringing an outdated system that was designed in the 1990s into the 21st century. That includes personal support workers, registered practical nurses, registered nurses, nurse practitioners and all of the other people involved in the home care system.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, home care and long-term care have been neglected under this government, just like the Liberals before them. Deborah Simon from the Ontario Community Support Association said, "We've seen that this crisis has been quietly building as one arm of the system gets funding while the other, which is designed to keep people safe at home and alleviate the burden, is in dire straits. There is no longer any runway"

with the past Liberal government and now this government's underfunding.

The sector has been pleading for government help to retain staff. They cannot provide the services that people need and deserve in their homes. Why has this Premier refused to pay the wages that retain staff and fix our home care system instead of sitting back and allowing this major crisis in home care to continue to grow?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government is taking the steps necessary to build healthier communities, strengthen our public health care system and end hallway health care. That is why we're taking action to modernize home and community care, with Ontario health teams poised to take on its delivery over the coming years.

The health system's response to COVID-19 has reinforced how important it is for health care providers to work together as one team. Home and community care should be an integral part of our home care system, not a stand-alone system. It's important for all systems to work together to provide the integrated care that patients and families across Ontario need and to provide true patient-centred care.

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We are investing accordingly. We have invested an additional \$548.5 million over the next three years in home and community care, which will add significantly to the hours that are available for people to receive care and to add more workers into the health care system.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The sad thing is we all know that it doesn't have to be this way. We all know that we can actually fix our home care system. We can alleviate the pressure on hospitals and on long-term care. All it takes is the political will and a belief in the public health care system, which unfortunately this government doesn't have. A Canadian Medical Association report just last spring, March 2021, said that the health care system could save billions of dollars if we were properly funding and operating a home care system that people could rely on, and that would free up, of course, more funding for long-term care and for our overcrowded hospitals.

But this Premier, like the Liberals before him, has really done nothing; sat on his hands and done nothing to deal with the crisis in home care. With so many reasons, including the quality care of our loved ones in the comfort of their own home, why has this Premier refused to fix home care? Why is he ignoring the crisis in home and community care in our province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Home and community care is an important part of the health care that people receive in our province. With respect to the \$548.5 million that we have invested into home care, that would support up to an estimated 28,000 post-surgical patients and up to an estimated 21,000 patients with chronic health conditions every year, by providing 739,000 nursing visits, 157,000 nursing shift hours, 117,000 therapy visits, 2,118,000 hours of personal support services and 236,000 other types of home care visits. This is a significant investment that's

going to add greatly to our home and community care services so that people can receive the home care that they need in their own homes and not having to go to hospital.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Ms. Jill Andrew: My question is to the Premier. Women serve our communities on the front lines. As workers, especially in health care during this pandemic, they far too often experience violence and harassment on the job. The Canadian Medical Association Journal noted that “nurses and personal support workers, especially women and racialized” women, “typically experience the brunt of workplace abuse in health care.”

This is only made worse by Bill 124. This government must repeal Bill 124. My colleague from Nickel Belt introduced Bill 68, the Speaking Out About Workplace Violence and Workplace Harassment Act, to protect workers speaking out on this unacceptable reality.

My question to the Premier is: Will this Conservative government commit to passing this bill to protect whistleblowers and protect front-line health care workers like those hard-working Black nurses from the Black Nurses Task Force who are speaking out against violence and anti-Black racism in the workplace? Will the Premier protect our front-line health care workers on International Women’s Day and all the other days of the year?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government will not tolerate any kind of racial overtones or sexist overtones to our front-line health care workers. We are very strongly in favour of protecting them. Many steps have been taken in order to protect their rights and to make sure that they are safeguarded. This happens within every hospital, and this is certainly happening at the level of the Ministry of Health. There is no place for this. We recognize the wonderful work that all of our health care workers provide and we want to make sure that everyone is protected in the workplace. There is no place for any of those activities. We want to make sure that the people who are performing our front-line health care duties, and any health care duties in any aspects—our hospitals, long-term care or home care—are protected to do the job that they are hired to do.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: Racism and sexism, just so everyone knows, are not overtones. This is systemic violence that our front-line health care workers are dealing with.

My question is to the Premier. The violence in the workplace is in addition to all the other stresses that were placed upon women during the pandemic, and before. One of the focuses this week is Black Mental Health Week, and we want to tackle mental health in our Black communities.

Today, we’re working, we’re coming together, reflecting on the unprecedented strength and resilience of women and so many roles they play as workers, caregivers, family and community members. That resilience, though, must be met with concrete steps by this government to support

women, especially our mental health, especially Black women, Indigenous women, racialized women, LGBTQ+ women, women and gender non-conforming folks with disabilities, among many other intersections. Too often, the lack of affordable services creates barriers for women to fully live their lives.

Mental health care must be brought into our OHIP coverage so that all women have access to the health care they need to thrive at work and in their communities. My question is back to the Premier: Why hasn’t this government taken action to make mental health care a part of our public health care system?

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

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that very important question. As you know, from the very beginning, this government has been extremely focused on ensuring that there is a plan to look after the mental health of everyone in the province of Ontario. I can tell you that as part of that plan, when we talk about culturally sensitive services and the need to support women, those in racialized communities, those are all things that are included and are part of our plan.

As you know, we have a \$3.9-billion investment that’s being made, and now, \$525 million in annualized spending is being spent to look after those very things. So we have invested in services with respect to addictions for women—specifically for women—something the past government never looked at and something that we believe is extremely important, to ensure that mothers have the ability to look after their children and that they are also able to get their lives back.

We have made significant investments and will continue looking after the women, all women, in the province of Ontario.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M^{me} Robin Martin: Nous savons que la prospérité est la meilleure alliée de nos concitoyens. C’est une tâche qui n’est pas prise à la légère par notre gouvernement. La francophonie est une richesse économique essentielle. Alors, cette question est pour la ministre des Affaires francophones. De quelle façon ce gouvernement va-t-il soutenir la main-d’oeuvre et bâtir l’Ontario? Que fait ce gouvernement pour soutenir le développement économique francophone et les entreprises franco-ontariennes?

L’hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie la députée d’Eglinton–Lawrence pour cette question.

Je suis très heureuse d’informer cette Chambre et la communauté francophone que le ministère des Affaires francophones, en collaboration avec plusieurs autres ministères partenaires, continue à travailler fort pour appuyer la Stratégie de développement économique francophone qui a été élaborée en 2020. Depuis, dans le cadre de l’énoncé économique de l’automne 2021, nous investissons dans cette stratégie 1,5 million de dollars supplémentaires sur trois ans.

Les entrepreneurs francophones de l'Ontario représentent environ 50 % des entreprises francophones à l'extérieur du Québec. Nous sommes ici pour soutenir les entreprises franco-ontariennes. C'est pourquoi, le 3 février 2022, nous avons annoncé un autre investissement de 380 000 \$ à la Fédération des gens d'affaires francophones de l'Ontario, la FGA, pour élargir ses services de soutien aux entreprises francophones en démarrage et en croissance.

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

M^{me} Robin Martin: Merci, monsieur le Président. Je remercie également la ministre pour sa réponse très intéressante et instructive.

La ministre peut-elle faire la lumière sur l'excellent travail fait pour soutenir la création d'emplois dans les entreprises francophones et bilingues? Pour ceux d'entre nous qui ne sont pas actifs au sein de la communauté francophone, qu'est-ce que la fédération des gens d'affaires, et comment la fédération soutient-elle les entreprises franco-ontariennes?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie la députée pour cette très bonne question. L'initiative de la FGA vise à développer un écosystème d'affaires francophones ici en Ontario pour permettre aux entrepreneurs d'établir des liens avec des organismes francophones qui les appuieront dans leur entrepreneuriat.

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La FGA offrira bientôt un portail en ligne novateur permettant le partage et l'intégration de programmes et de projets d'incubation visant à porter notre innovation collective vers de nouveaux sommets. La FGA offrira de nouveaux espaces de collaboration durables—physiques et virtuels—ainsi que des solutions d'incubation qui faciliteront le développement de nos entreprises francophones. Et la FGA permettra le développement de programmation spécifique pour les femmes et pour les personnes de couleur.

Le tout mis en oeuvre, la FGA sera en collaboration avec plus de 20 partenaires communautaires.

Je remercie la FGA pour leur travail acharné.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Premier. Universal child care is key to gender equity. Women tend to take on the bulk of child care responsibilities and make the biggest sacrifices in their work and personal lives when there are gaps in child care. An affordable child care program helps not just women and children but the economy as a whole. Yet, Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada that hasn't signed on to the \$10-a-day child care deal.

On International Women's Day, I ask the Premier, will he finally stop the delay and sign the deal?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Look, I think not only on International Women's Day but on every day we want to make sure that we have supports in place to allow families to ensure that they have the opportunities to re-enter the

workforce, in some cases, and to provide even more for their family.

We are working very closely to get a deal that is in the best interests of the people of the province of Ontario. We want to get to \$10-a-day child care, Mr. Speaker. That is the goal of the federal program. We are helping the federal government understand how it is that we can get to that \$10 a day for the people of the province of Ontario. I am confident that the opposition would not want us to sign a deal that disadvantages the people of the province of Ontario in comparison to every other jurisdiction in the country.

We will continue to work hard to ensure that we can deliver \$10-a-day child care for the people of the province of Ontario and a deal that doesn't disadvantage future generations of Ontarians so that we can cut a deal today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Back to the Premier: It isn't just at home that women are making sacrifices. The majority of child care workers are women too, and they have been underpaid and overworked for decades. This government has an opportunity now to ensure child care workers are properly paid for the important work they do caring for our children.

Will the Premier finally agree to lift childcare workers out of poverty and out of precarity, stop the stalling and sign the \$10-a-day child care deal now?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: I've said day after day that we are very, very close to getting a deal, and we are very, very close to getting a deal, but we're going to make a deal with the federal government that makes sense to all Ontario families.

The reality is the federal government only contributes 2.5%—only 2.5%, which is staggering. Our government invests over \$2 billion in child care every single year. We also put in a tax credit of \$1,500 to help families with child care.

We're going to get this deal. Just stay tuned, Mr. Speaker. Hopefully it will be sooner than later.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, I asked his government if they would commit to doubling ODSP rates, and the minister for children and social services used a lot of words to essentially say no. The minister said that the government had increased rates in 2018 when in fact the 3% planned increase was cut in half to 1.5%. The minister said that the government's goal was to get people on disability back to work. But what the government doesn't realize is that many people with disabilities face significant barriers to accessing employment.

I want to quote Kim, an ODSP advocate, who described living on ODSP during COVID like this: "It's like I'm being punished for being born disabled, like I committed some kind of crime."

Speaker, will the Premier start treating people with disabilities with respect and double ODSP rates in the spring budget?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the opportunity to clarify what I actually did say yesterday, which is that our government did raise the ODSP and OW rates when we came in in our first year, and that was after the Liberals had a chance to raise rates. The fact is that they waited until before an election that they knew they would lose to do it.

Our government is very, very clear about this: We are understanding the commitment that it is critical to provide supports to individuals who are looking for a job, who may have lost their job or who are unable to work. That is what I said yesterday.

Knowing the challenges posed by the pandemic, we invested more than \$1 billion in the social services relief fund, put out temporary emergency assistance, allowed the discretionary benefit to be used.

On top of this, understanding how critical this is to the vulnerable people of Ontario, we have asked the federal government to come to the table with its campaign promise for a Canada disability benefit, and we will—

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: With all due respect to the minister, the government can't pass the buck on this one. Yes, let's let every party in this Legislature work together to press the federal government to deliver on their promise for a Canadian disability benefit. But let's be clear: ODSP is a provincial responsibility. One-time funds during COVID-19 might help a little bit, but the reality is that you cannot survive in this province on \$1,100 a month. We are forcing people with disabilities to live in crushing poverty, and we as Ontarians are better than this.

I'm calling on the government to raise people out of poverty. Doubled ODSP rates would bring them above the low-income cut-off level in the spring budget. Will they do it?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Our government will continue to be committed to making sure that we get the support to our most vulnerable, as we have been doing during a very challenging time, with the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone understands what the challenge has been on this.

We are making sure that we are meeting with our federal counterpart. In fact, I met with Karina Gould not so long ago and we discussed the topics that are absolutely critical to supporting people in need. I took the moment to stress the importance of the federal government's immediate delivery of their campaign promise to support individuals with a disability in Ontario through the establishment of a Canada disability benefit.

To the member opposite: This is not passing any buck. This is taking responsibility for making sure we work with every government, with every group, to support our most vulnerable people, and I hope you do the same.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: My question is for the Associate Minister of Transportation.

When the Del Duca-Wynne Liberals were in power, they said yes to wasting taxpayer dollars and no to transit riders across the GTHA, who wanted their commute to be more convenient, more affordable and more simple to navigate.

Speaker, Ontario's commuters deserve a government that listens and that is willing to take the steps necessary to improve the rider experience. We know that effective transit infrastructure means more than just laying subway tracks.

Speaker, through you, can the associate minister tell us what he and his ministry are doing to improve the transit rider experience?

Hon. Stan Cho: That is a great representative for Brampton, and he asks a great question this morning.

I'm glad to let the member know that our government is indeed moving forward with improving the rider experience by reducing fares throughout the GTHA, and that includes the great riding of Brampton West. Our government has made it free to take local transit to and from GO Transit across most of the GTHA. We have enacted a GO affordability pilot for Peel region, giving low-income riders a break on transit costs.

Speaker, our government has now also practically doubled the Presto discount for youth and post-secondary students, regardless of where they are enrolled, on GO and UP Express so that our hard-working students can get to and from home or class with more change in their pocket.

Unlike the Liberals, we are saying yes to connecting the grid and yes to getting people from point A to B through a better rider experience.

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the associate minister for his response and for explaining how this government is cutting fares for transit riders across the GTHA.

The Wynne-Del Duca Liberals made getting from point A to point B a financial burden for hard-working Ontarians. They imposed tolls on the people of Durham on the 412 and the 418. When Steven Del Duca was transportation minister, he hiked licence plate stickers by 22%. Mr. Speaker, we cut them.

Can the associate minister tell us what he and the Minister of Transportation are doing to ensure that we never return to the dark days of the Del Duca Liberals and that people can move with more money in their pockets so they get from point A to point B?

Hon. Stan Cho: Del Duca's big plan for transit when he ran for the leadership of the Liberals was to give riders discounts for off-peak times. Del Duca wanted to penalize people for commuting to work or going to appointments. It's basically a commuter tax. He's saying, "Don't worry. You can get a discount when you're not going to work or doing anything else important." It's ridiculous, frankly. It's the old saying, "If a Liberal policy falls in the forest,

but no one is around to benefit, does it even make a sound?”

Our government is concerned about keeping money in the pockets of transit riders 24/7. Even if we only look at how we eliminated double fares between GO and local transit systems across much of the GTA, it's clear that riders are greatly benefiting. For instance, adults who commute back and forth using Brampton Transit and GO three days a week could save \$250 annually on transit expenses.

While the Del Duca Liberals want to impose a commuter tax and increase the cost of living, we are making life more affordable, connecting the grid and the transit rider experience all along.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. This is the fourth International Women's Day since the Human Rights Tribunal's landmark decision on pay equity for Ontario midwives and the third since remedies were ordered to close the gender pay gap. Midwives have been fighting to be fairly compensated for the vital work they do since 2013, under both Liberal and Conservative governments. Yet, instead of ending pay discrimination, both Liberal and Conservative governments have taken midwives to court.

Speaker, why is this government refusing to release to the Association of Ontario Midwives the full gender-based analysis ordered by the Human Rights Tribunal, and why are they continuing to fight midwives in court?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government greatly values and supports registered midwives and Aboriginal midwives. That is why our government invested an additional \$4 million to expand midwifery services in Ontario, bringing the annual total investment to over \$200 million. This investment will help an additional 35,000 families across Ontario to an additional choice in primary care during a pregnancy, birth and, of course, postpartum services.

This additional funding will mean that expecting families across Ontario will be able to access quality care from a midwife during pregnancy, labour and birth, as well as six weeks of support once the baby is born. So we greatly value their services.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The gender wage gap is widest in female-dominated professions like midwifery, as well as other care jobs like child care workers, social workers, PSWs, nurses and more. These are the jobs that have borne the brunt of the pandemic—the jobs that are absolutely critical to Ontario's recovery from COVID-19 and the jobs where women's labour is most undervalued and most underpaid.

Instead of closing the gender wage gap, this government is forcing a 1% cap on nurses and other public sector workers' salaries with Bill 124, which is effectively a wage cut; they are foot-dragging on a federal child care deal that

would raise ECE wages; and they are refusing to make PSW pandemic pay permanent.

Speaker, why is this government so committed to low-wage policies that keep women's wages down?

Interjections.

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

To respond, the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: The Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act is designed to protect all public sector jobs, especially those that protect our front-line services. We are incredibly grateful for our front-line health care workers, and this government has supported them every step of the way, Mr. Speaker.

Just last year, in our public accounts, the government showed its commitment to investing to support the people of Ontario. Over \$19 billion was invested into supporting not only our health care workers, our front-line services, but the people of this province. Our government has made the largest investments in health care of any provincial government in this province's history, and the members opposite have voted no to each and every single one of them. That includes over 56 major hospital projects. Our government will be continuing to support the people of this province, investing in our critical front-line health care services.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, even though provincial appointments are approved by cabinet, the Premier has admitted he does not have the time to review all of his appointees. His hand-picked appointee to the Ottawa Police Services Board, a long-time Conservative donor and activist, actively supported the illegal occupation of our nation's capital. Now, how could this happen? How did the Premier and his government not know the political leanings of this particular individual? Or perhaps they did, and that's a bigger problem.

After the fiasco of 2019, when the Premier was caught appointing his chief of staff's sports buddies and relatives, we were told that there would be a more open and transparent process to political appointments in this province. Clearly, that didn't happen. Other than being a long-time Conservative donor, can the Premier explain the actual qualifications one needs to be appointed to the Ottawa Police Services Board?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, the member opposite can defame people in this House, but do that outside, because it is very clear that this individual has said that he does not support what happened in Ottawa.

Now, in terms of the three Ottawa Police Services Board members, the city of Ottawa made a determination that they were going in a new direction with their police services board. We accepted the resignation of those three

provincial members, and in due course we will be appointing three additional provincial members.

It drives me crazy that you can suggest people have different motives, when they have clearly said that they did not support the protest they attended and they have now explained what happened in that first weekend, when there was no emergency order by the city, by the province or by the federal government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Orléans, come to order. The member for Essex, come to order. The member for Ottawa South, come to order. The member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Supplementary.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Clearly the government cannot explain the qualifications for being appointed to the Ottawa Police Services Board.

Now, Mr. Speaker, property taxpayers in Ottawa are out \$30 million because of the added costs of the illegal occupation, an illegal occupation that was supported by their own political appointees. To date, we've heard nothing from the government about how they're going to support the city of Ottawa and taxpayers in Ottawa with this enormous financial challenge. So on the one hand, they have a political appointee who's adding to policing costs in the capital, and on the other hand, they're doing absolutely nothing to support the taxpayers of Ottawa to pay for those additional policing costs.

The Premier has ignored the occupation in Ottawa. He has ignored the pain and suffering of those who went through it. He still hasn't even come to Ottawa to speak to residents, to speak to business owners about what exactly they went through. If the Premier has no inclination to care about the harassment and violence that people experience in the city of Ottawa, will he at least provide the city the \$30 million they need to cover their bills?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, we have been supporting the city of Ottawa since we came to office. Certainly there have been a number of investments across all sectors, whether it was for policing, whether it has been for long-term care, whether it has been for education or whether it has been for health care. There has been no government that has made more investments in Ottawa and the greater Ottawa area than this government.

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In fact, we actually had to come to the rescue of Ottawa when it came to their light rapid transit. Mr. Speaker, you will recall that the member opposite who just asked the question was responsible for a rapid transit system that was over budget, that was broken and ultimately—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader, take a seat. Member for Orléans, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Orléans is warned. The member for Carleton will come to order.

The Government House leader will conclude his answer.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member for Orléans is upset because we pushed the button to start it but, unfortunately, when we pushed the button to start it, after his work, it didn't start. So we had to pour more resources in to make sure it worked. There is a commission to find out what exactly went wrong, and I hope the member will participate in that commission.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr. Michael Parsa: My question's to the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. The future of work is changing. More than ever, electronic devices are essential to how people work. This leaves room for employers to use these devices to monitor their workers. We can all agree that being spied on without our knowledge by our bosses is never good. Ontario workers are counting on our government to show leadership and to protect their privacy.

Can the minister please share with this House how his ministry's proposing to rebalance the scales and protect Ontario privacy?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for that great question.

Whether you're a delivery person using GPS to deliver packages or an office worker logging on from home, you deserve to know if and how you are being tracked. This is why our government introduced legislation to protect workers' privacy. Our bill, if passed, will make Ontario the first province to require employers to be transparent with their workers about if and how their electronic devices are being monitored.

Our government is leading the future of work, and we're breaking new ground on protecting the privacy of our workers.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank the minister for the reassuring response and for the great work that he and his ministry have been doing for all workers in this province.

The minister highlighted how different types of workers will benefit from these proposed changes, and it's great that it doesn't matter if you're working on a construction site, at the office or at home; this policy will apply to you.

Ontarians are again counting on our government to lead Canada in protecting worker privacy. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Can he tell us what he and his ministry are doing to achieve this goal?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you again to the member for that very important question. Our government is breaking down barriers by increasing transparency. We're empowering our workers by giving them the tools they need and deserve. Data is power, and by pulling back the veil our workers can make informed choices about how they work and who they work for. This is how we are

rebalancing the scales and how we're putting our workers in the driver's seat of Ontario's future.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question's to the Premier. This International Women's Day, while the government uses this as an opportunity to make self-congratulatory claims about how they've championed women, on this side of the House we'd like to bring them back to earth. In the FAO's recent report, Ontario's Labour Market in 2021, they found that there had been a concerning weak job recovery among young women. The report also detailed sharply higher job vacancies in 2021 affecting small businesses, an area of our workforce where women have already had massive challenges trying to succeed.

The government hasn't made it any easier, with many women entrepreneurs applying for government supports, for instance, throughout the pandemic, only to find themselves ineligible because they don't have staff on payroll or they are a family business.

When will this government match their own platitudes with action to ensure that women business owners and workers don't continue to fall through the cracks? Women in the province of Ontario should have every opportunity to reach their potential.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

Hon. Nina Tangri: I do want to thank the member opposite for her question. First of all, I'd like to wish everybody a very happy International Women's Day. It's very important. As we see here today, many members of this House are women, and I'm very, very proud of that fact.

Mr. Speaker, it is this government that recognized that small businesses that were impacted by public health measures needed immediate support, many of which businesses were owned by women. It was this Premier who said that we have to get money to businesses quickly, because we knew that these employers were affected by strengthened public health measures.

I'm pleased to announce that over 9,800 applicants for the small business relief grant have been paid, amounting to over \$98.1 million so far; and there are still a further 8,884 applications that are currently in progress. This is still open until March 11. We encourage anyone who can apply to please apply. Those eligible businesses will receive the funds.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, it is almost like this government is believing their own press releases. It is laughable to hear the minister's response, knowing that small business supports that this government has provided thus far through the pandemic haven't taken any consideration into those industries that are predominantly women-owned small businesses in Ontario.

We know that over half of women-owned SMEs in Canada are in the accommodation and food services industry, for example—an industry that the FAO's labour

market report shows is continuing to suffer. The cheque is not in the mail. Just last week, Aroma Cafe, a woman-owned small business in my riding, announced that it was closing its doors, partially due to pandemic-related financial challenges. Monica and her business partner dreamed about owning their own food space, and now their dream is dying, with no support from the government to turn to.

How will this government ensure going forward that a gendered lens is properly applied to small business support programs? Stop leaving women behind in this province.

Hon. Nina Tangri: I'd like to thank the member once again for her question.

Speaker, it was so important that we provided measures to all businesses, especially those, of course, that are run by our women.

I'd like to remind the member that it wasn't just the small business relief grant or the support grant last year; they were also able to apply for over \$300 million to help offset fixed costs. That includes property taxes, hydro, natural gas. We provided \$1,000 for PPE. We put more people onto the PPE directory.

I'd also like to remind the opposition that it's really important that we invest in our small businesses, that we make sure we have the Building Ontario Businesses Initiative, where Ontario businesses, many owned by women, can apply and procure from our government; that we have a single window for business, so that more businesses, including women-owned businesses, can have less burdens, so they can have a more centralized system, have a business—

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

ASSISTANCE TO BUSINESSES

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Mr. Speaker, businesses in my riding are in danger of closing their doors for good, because they're not receiving adequate financial support from this government. It is the Premier's responsibility to make sure that his failure to control adequately the occupation in Ottawa doesn't lead to people losing their businesses.

Since the government's announced funding, BIAs have reached out to me to say that they appreciate the financial support, but it's not enough. They need breaks. They need tax breaks, they need hydro breaks—they need anything, really—and they specifically said that affordable daycare is a barrier for entrepreneurs. They need an eviction ban for those who are still unable to pay their rent.

This is adding to their stress and anxiety—and mental health support is also needed.

The government needs to recognize its part of the responsibility for what has happened and provide appropriate relief. Will the government do that?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I agree with the member opposite: It's not only the provincial government; it's the federal government and the municipal government that have to work together to ensure that Ottawa can recover from the three-week occupation. That is why we worked very, very quickly with our federal partners. The federal government has provided funding, and we have also provided funding.

We went just a little bit further and in a bit of a different direction than the federal government, not only to provide support for the small businesses that were impacted, but to provide support for the tourism sector in Ottawa. It's such an important sector to the people of Ottawa, so we went that little step further with something that was guided, of course, by the member for Ottawa West–Nepean, the member for Carleton and our other members from the Ottawa area. We understand how important it is to help Ottawa recover. It's the second-largest city in the province of Ontario. It is the seat of our federal government, but it is also a huge economic driver when it comes to arts and culture, and we will continue to be there for the people of Ottawa.

1140

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Mr. Speaker, unless you were in Ottawa during this three-week-long occupation, it might be difficult to understand how people were suffering.

As businesses, workers and residents are still trying to recover, it has been very disturbing to learn about the links between the Premier and these anti-public-health demonstrations. The Solicitor General should have been making sure that the lawlessness in Ottawa was addressed, but we see that a senior staffer in her office was supporting the occupation and donating to the organizers. We have also learned that a man that the Premier appointed to the Ottawa Police Services Board strongly supported the occupation while having access to confidential law enforcement intelligence.

Given this failure of governance, does the Premier plan to come up with a new police board appointment process that will obey the rules of transparency and accountability?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.

I have to say to the member for Ottawa–Vanier that the supplementary question didn't really connect with the original question. Would she care to rephrase her question?

Start the clock.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we see that the Ottawa Police Services Board had an active role in what happened in Ottawa and the active occupation and the lack of action by this government, will the government review what the Ottawa Police Services Board's actions and roles are to have a government process that is—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Does the government wish to reply? Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Well, Speaker, just to save the member, I will say this: that we will continue to work very closely with the people of Ottawa through our members of

provincial Parliament and indeed with the members opposite.

We all want the same thing when it comes to Ottawa. We want to ensure that the second-largest city in the province of Ontario, the seat of our federal government, the economic driver for eastern Ontario, which is responsible for so much revenue in terms of arts and culture and the thousands of people who work within those industries, is supported. That's why we're providing support not only to small businesses but support also to the tourism and cultural sector within Ottawa.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. Lilli is a young girl who lives in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. Recently, she reached out to me to share her father's story. Lilli's father, Michael, used drugs for many years before she and her brother were born. But he was able to achieve sobriety when she was one, and he was able to stay sober for 11 years. Michael was always there for his children despite his battle with addictions.

Sadly, Michael relapsed at the end of last year, and he died by overdose in January. Lilli's dad reached out for help before he passed away, but he faced long wait times for residential treatments. Michael died on the wait-list.

No child should ever have to face what Lilli and her brother have experienced. Can the Premier please tell Lilli and her family what he is doing to provide timely access to residential treatment beds and addiction services?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. My heart goes out to Lilli and to her family.

We know that this is an issue that existed prior to the pandemic and of course has been aggravated. That's why we have made, and I'm proud to have made, an announcement that \$90 million is being invested through a new Addictions Recovery Fund, which will immediately expand access to addiction supports province-wide in adding almost 400 new addiction treatment beds, including in northern, rural and Indigenous communities.

This is a problem that exists everywhere throughout the province, and this funding complements the \$32.7 million in new annualized funding for targeted addiction services and supports, including treatment and care for opioid use disorder, that we announced last summer, which has also helped to enhance access to evidence-based services. Every Ontarian deserves to be fully supported in their journey to get help with recovery, and that is what this investment is.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Lilli and her mother told me that she wanted to share her father's story because she didn't want anyone else to feel how she feels or how her dad felt. There are many more people like Michael who

tried to get help and they weren't able to get the treatment that they needed.

A new report released by the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network and by Unity Health found that half of Ontarians who died of an opioid overdose in the early stages of the pandemic had interacted with the health care system in the month before their deaths.

This is an ongoing public health crisis, and it's time that the government treats it as such.

Last week, I met with Addictions and Mental Health Ontario, which is requesting a baseline funding increase to community-based mental health, addiction and substance use by 8%—\$120 million annually that would save lives. Can the Premier commit today to providing this increase?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Since 2019, our government has announced \$525 million in new annualized funding for mental health and addiction services. This, by far, is unprecedented from any other government in the past—the amount of investments that have been made. We are taking this very seriously. This means that we are establishing more and better critical mental health and addiction services, and we're creating new supports. We are actually making it easier for people to access services. We're filling the gaps, and we're looking at the fragmentation and building a cohesive system to help an individual through the creation of a continuum of care. And yes, treatment and recovery are critical in that continuum. Investments are being made.

In addition to the \$525 million, \$90 million for an addiction recovery fund—over and above that—was invested into the mental health and addiction system in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we have invested in Breaking Free virtual supports and all other supports necessary to ensure that anyone who needs help is able to get it when and where they need it, regardless of—

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

ECONOMIC REOPENING AND RECOVERY

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: My question is for the Premier, and it is a question that is being asked by thousands of Ontarians, like Tina and Andrew in my riding. What they want to know is why this PC government is continuing with Bill 195, the reopening Ontario act, otherwise known as the ROA. Why not end it now? What is going to be different in two weeks, and how is the science changing in two weeks?

Will this government commit today to end the ROA?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The response? The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I think we've been very clear. As we start to emerge from the latest wave, the Omicron wave, we are starting to eliminate some of the restrictions that were put in place.

I note for the member opposite, of course, that we are back at full capacity in a number of our sectors, and we're seeing enormous jobs and opportunity come back to the province of Ontario.

One of the things that we've heard—and I know the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade will confirm this—is, because Ontario did so well during the pandemic, because we're making such important investments in health care, because we made important investments in transit, transportation, a lot of companies want to come back here.

So it's not just about the pandemic and emerging from the pandemic; it's about showing leadership, and that is what we've done.

As a result of the hard work of the Minister of Health and the entire crew here, we're seeing jobs and opportunity come back to the province of Ontario like we've never seen before.

And of course, we'll look at the reopening Ontario act as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Do you have a supplementary?

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Speaker, I do not have a supplementary, especially when the answer was not responding to—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay, there's no supplementary.

Next question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. My constituent Samantha is a recent cancer survivor but can no longer get around her two-storey house as she could before. She needs a bungalow with fewer stairs. Even though her own house has increased in value, in order to find a home to meet her needs and budget, she has to move further east and further away from her family support system and the doctors she sees regularly for follow-up care.

In a recent article in Oshawa This Week, Meredith Kennedy, the president of the Durham Region Association of Realtors, said, "I'm working with first-time buyers looking in Clarington right now; it's very difficult when bidding against 20 or 30 people to stay within your price range."

Re/Max recently put out a report that Durham region's home prices have risen 500% in the past 25 years. Remember 1996, Speaker? It's when I graduated high school, and the average home in Durham was about \$150,000. That same home now is about \$925,000, an increase of more than 500%. What are her options?

What is the government's solution to the housing crisis and challenges in Durham region?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker, and through you to the honourable member: Our government is doing a lot.

Right from the first day we were in the Legislature as a new government, we knew that the housing supply crisis was severe, fuelled by 15 years of inaction by the Liberal government, supported 99% of the time by New Democrats.

We brought forward a swath of improvements in the system with our More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan; I want to remind the members opposite that they voted against those measures.

What did those measures in 2019 result in? They resulted in tremendous new construction being built, single-family homes, homes of all types, missing middle and also purpose-built rental, some of the likes we haven't seen in over 30 years.

What we're trying to do now is build upon the success of our housing supply—

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

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

Shumaila shared her concerns about the lack of measures to ensure housing is affordable. "Areas like Oshawa used to be affordable for average-income families like myself, but now Oshawa is also becoming a city difficult to reach. Where should my children settle if they can't plan a future in Oshawa?"

While these PCs are tripping over themselves to destroy our green spaces and ingratiate themselves to developers fixated on urban sprawl instead of intensification, communities are needing leadership to build affordable housing, invest in capital repairs of existing housing stock and make it harder for non-resident speculators to eat up our supply.

My question is, will this Premier commit to the solutions in the NDP plan for housing that will make a difference to real folks and families in our community?

Hon. Steve Clark: We're not going to go back to the failed policies of the New Democrats and Liberals. We're not going to go back to the politics where the answer to every opportunity is no. I'm not going to demonize any provider, whether they be in the public or the private sector or the non-profit sector that wants to build more homes of all types, of all shapes, of all sizes.

Again, we're in a situation where here's another New Democrat who will speak about housing but yet won't join us in asking the federal government to pay their fair share. We're being short-changed \$490 million. Again, we're not getting any support from any of the parties.

I'm glad to say that the new Liberal candidate in Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte has come forward and actually supported it, so at least there's one Liberal in the province who's supporting our "fair share" campaign.

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

This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1153 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated March 8, 2022, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 111(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 66(c), the supplementary estimates 2021-22 of the Ministry of Health before the Standing Committee on Estimates are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Pursuant to standing order 65(c), the supplementary estimates 2021-22 of the Ministry of Health, not having been selected for consideration, are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPLY ACT, 2022 LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2022

Mr. Sarkaria moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022 / Projet de loi 96, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2022.

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 President of the Treasury Board like to explain his bill?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: The Supply Act is one of the key acts in the Ontario Legislature. If passed, it would give the Ontario government the legal spending authority to finance its programs and honour its commitments for the fiscal year that is to close at the end of March.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hon. Jane McKenna: Speaker, my mom used to say, "Go out and make a difference." I want to thank all the women in this House for doing that every single day, on International Women's Day.

Today is International Women's Day, a day to celebrate and be inspired by the incredible women all around us. It's also a day to acknowledge the work that's still left to do to tear down the barriers, to break the bias that still exists for women in our province, our country and around the world.

I often to say to my kids that working alone you make progress, but working together you make history.

In my role as Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, I've seen the amazing things that can happen when one woman helps another. I've met so many women and girls who inspire optimism, embrace vulnerability and embody resilience every single day.

Speaker, women make up about half of the population, but when it comes to gender parity in many industries and sectors, women are still largely absent from leadership roles. For example, in the technology industry, only 13% of the executive team are women, while 53% have no female executives at all. In Ontario, just 2.8% of women have an apprenticeship or trade certificate, and only 39% are enrolled in STEM programs.

But times are changing. For instance, now 67% of Toronto stock exchange companies have adopted written board diversity policies. Approximately 90% of those policies include a specific focus of increasing women on the board. It's policies like this that show just how far we've come in breaking down barriers that have prevented so many women from reaching their full potential.

Speaker, what we learn and experience as children and youth can have a lasting impact throughout our lives. My mother passed away when I was 10, but to this day, I still remember how every morning we'd walk out the door and she'd say, "Go out and make a difference." At the time, being so young, I thought it was odd to say that, but Mom's morning ritual became a tremendous source of strength, endurance and guidance for me after her passing. In fact, when I had my own children, I said the exact same thing to them every single morning.

As a mother of four very strong, independent women, I've seen first-hand how mentors can change the direction of young people's lives. That's why I've always believed mentoring is one of the best strategies to help close the gender gap.

As Ontario's Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, I've always made it a priority to champion initiatives that empower women to succeed. I'm proud of our government's focus on increasing the economic empowerment of women in this province.

As part of a multi-ministry approach, Ontario's government is constantly looking at ways to address barriers to employment and increase representation of women in male-dominated industries.

That's why, to help us address the unique economic barriers women face, along with my colleague the Minister of Finance, we created Ontario's Task Force on Women and the Economy. Last summer, we heard from women across the province—diverse voices from the public, private and non-profit sectors. The feedback we received was pivotal in identifying ways our province can improve economic outcomes for women, and the recommendations

from the task force have advised our government. This advice has helped our government better support Ontario's diverse women as they enter or re-enter the workforce, it has helped us better support women entrepreneurs, and it helps us remove barriers for women looking to start a career in the skilled trades and STEM fields.

Speaker, I am proud of the work our government is doing to support women and to break down barriers that exist for women, including Indigenous, Black and racialized women, who often face an even greater bias.

We've increased supports for the Investing in Women's Futures Program, which helps marginalized women develop the in-demand skills they need to participate in the workforce. Supports under the program are available through 23 phenomenal women's centres across the province, operated for women by women. They provide a safe space and wraparound supports for women experiencing social and economic barriers. Over the past two years, the Investing in Women's Futures Program has helped more than 1,900—I repeat, 1,900—women get employed, start their own businesses and pursue further training and education.

We're also modernizing the education curriculum to ensure all students have the foundational and entrepreneurship skills they need in a rapidly changing world, along with a renewed focus on science, technology, engineering and math. These skills are critical to our province's economic growth. Young women have already made great strides in pursuing STEM degrees, and we need to ensure graduates have equitable opportunities in our workplaces.

Speaker, I also want to acknowledge the selfless contribution of women caregivers, paid and unpaid, who make personal sacrifices every day to provide support for those who cannot care for themselves. Across the country, women with young children or women who are caring for an elder parent face many difficult decisions.

Despite the many challenges we've all faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario is getting stronger. We're getting stronger because of the women who are connecting people with jobs, supporting our kids and leading the way in our non-profit sector. We're getting stronger because of the people working to break down barriers and provide life-changing supports for Ontario's Indigenous, Black and racialized women. And we're getting stronger because all of us are committed to making the future brighter for the next generation.

On International Women's Day and every day, we are reminded that alone we are strong, united we thrive, and together we create the power of she.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

1510

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm proud to stand on behalf of the official opposition to speak on International Women's Day, with the theme being #BreakTheBias.

My mother is and will always be my greatest inspiration. She raised me as a single Black mother. She taught me very early on that I'd need to work "10 times harder" as a Black person, and that even with my best efforts,

racism, prejudice and implicit biases against girls, women and Black folks would influence people's perceptions of me and possibly even my outcomes. Funnily, these weren't offered as depressive lessons; they were matter-of-fact and never took away from my joy or the conviction I had to always try my best, knowing that I may not be successful, but at least I had showed up in everything I could do. I watched my mother do just that, over and over again. I saw her resilience, her exhaustion, her vulnerability, her strength. I saw her ability to make the best out of some pretty crappy situations. And I saw her actively showing through her own actions that asking for help and admitting when you couldn't manage something wasn't a show of weakness, but a show of strength.

I still have a lot of work to do on some of my self-care goals, as my mom would say. I need to eat and remember to chew and remember to sleep, no matter how busy the days go.

Looking back at me and my mom's experience is the very reason why, on International Women's Day and all throughout the year, I work so hard to help Ontario women be successful.

Success looks differently for all of us, but at its core, success should be deeply rooted in not only individual but community health and wellness. That means ensuring every woman, every mother, every girl has access to the basics: the basics of clean drinking water; the basics of affordable housing—housing that's designed to keep folks in place as long as they can be; equitable and inclusive education; fair wages; safe working conditions; nutritious and delicious food; freedom from gender-based violence and economic abuse, among other forms of violence; and access, of course, to necessary medication, dental care, eye care and mental health care, from head to toe.

For women to succeed, we must create the social conditions that make that possible. We need an Ontario with affordable housing. We need an Ontario with affordable child care. We must have an Ontario where women are being paid for the work they do—equal pay for equal work. Pay equity shouldn't still be an issue here. We need an Ontario that has a wage that is responsive to and reflective of the affordability crisis we're in, and that's why I'm so glad to be a part of the NDP official opposition, where we're fighting for a \$20 minimum wage.

I could go on and list many women who have inspired me in my life: my partner, Aisha; our formidable leader, Andrea Horwath of the NDP; past professors and teachers; educators and mentors; and, frankly, the 50% of our NDP official opposition caucus, who are women too—that's a really, really big, inspiring thing. But make no mistake: In this Legislature, we have about 39.5% of us who are women, and while we are the best-represented Legislature in the country, as a teacher, I'd have to say that 39.5% isn't exactly where we want to strive for. We need many, many more of us here. We need Black and Indigenous women here. We need racialized women here. We need neurodiverse women here. We need trans women here. We need women with disabilities in politics.

And to my brothers in here: We need men to mentor. We need them to open windows and doors; to help create pathways; to step back, quite frankly, at times and give up space—or at least share space, because when you share a space of power, it doesn't make you weaker; it actually makes you stronger. Show them the potential that's here.

Representation rooted in equity and social justice in politics is an investment every time. It's never a subtraction.

So please, as I wrap up today's International Women's Day, I ask this government to remember the calls that we are making, that we've made every day for the sake of women and for the sake of girls—for those same girls we want to train up in STEM. They need to have jobs that they feel safe in. They need to have jobs where they're paid and respected. We need the government to repeal Bill 124. We need to create a society that's free of violence against women and girls. And we must, must, must have affordable child care in the province, because if you can't take care of the kids, you can't have a chance of sitting in this House.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: International Women's Day is a day of unity to celebrate the outstanding achievements of women around the world. However, this year's International Women's Day's theme is "Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow." Because women still face challenges based on their gender, we need to keep pushing for a more equitable society. Women face barriers on the basis of gender that intersect with other identities such as race, sexuality, class and disability.

We need to work to elevate all women and recognize the specific challenges facing different women. We have specific demands that can help achieve that:

- access to free feminine products in schools;

- access to affordable child care;

- access to pay equity;

- protection against sexual and physical violence;

- protection against harassment, such as what is proposed in my colleague from Orléans's private member's bill titled Stopping Harassment and Abuse by Local Leaders Act, which I hope all members will support;

- giving nurses, who are overrepresented by women, fair working conditions and a paycheque that corresponds to the important work they do in our society.

And, of course, there is so much more that we can do.

A stronger Ontario is a more inclusive Ontario, where women have a voice.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour today to rise on International Women's Day and honour all women in Ontario and around the world. I especially want to honour the strong, smart women in my personal, professional and community life.

In the limited time I have today, I want to focus on an issue that has been brought up by a strong woman leader in Guelph, Helen Fishburn, the CEO of Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington, who has pointed out that women have had a disproportionate mental health impact over the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The stress of working from home while teaching kids

and trying to keep the house together has been difficult. The stress of working in traumatic situations in long-term care, hospitals and LTC homes as COVID-19 has ravaged them—in a profession that’s disproportionately represented by women. The unequal impact of job losses in women-majority sectors—like the hospitality and retail sectors—which have been hardest-hit by pandemic restrictions and have placed more economic and financial challenges on women. The rising levels of gender-based violence have put tremendous stress on women’s lives and women’s organizations. And to top it off, Bill 124, which caps the wages and total compensation in primarily women-dominated organizations, has added to the economic stress that women face.

So, Speaker, on International Women’s Day and, I would say, each and every day, we need to build a more caring and equitable Ontario. We need to ensure that mental health services and supports are affordable, accessible and culturally appropriate for all women. Today, let’s prioritize women’s mental health as we celebrate the major contributions that so many women make to our province and to this Legislature, and let’s ensure that all women can access the mental health services and supports they need and deserve by expanding coverage that’s available through OHIP to access those service each and every day.

PETITIONS

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It gives me great pleasure to present these petitions from the good people of Wellington–Halton Hills. They read as follows:

1520

“Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1”—it has now been brought back;

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Faisal Hassan: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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. I’ll be affixing my name to it and providing it to page Owen to deliver to the table.

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mr. Allan Lacoste from Coniston in my riding for signing these petitions.

“Make PSW a Career.

“Whereas there has been a shortage of personal support workers (PSWs) in long-term care and home care in Ontario for many years;

“Whereas Ontario’s personal support workers are overworked, underpaid and underappreciated, leading to many of them leaving the profession;

“Whereas the lack of PSWs has created a crisis in LTC, a broken home care system, and poor-quality care for LTC home residents and home care clients;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Tell Premier Ford to act now to make PSW jobs a career, with full-time employment, good wages, paid sick days, benefits, a pension plan and a manageable workload in order to respect the important work of PSWs and improve patient care.”

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

CURRICULUM

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It’s an honour to rise today to present the following petitions on International Women’s Day, on behalf of Eunice, Effie, the Safe Campus Coalition, the Western University students’ council, as well as all the students at Western who signed and who are working so hard on this issue. It’s entitled “Support Survivors of Gender-Based and Sexual Violence.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas upstream prevention education and prioritizing the voices of survivors are vital; and

“Whereas prevention work should be progressive, evidence-informed, and survivor-centric in order to proactively mitigate sexual and gender-based violence before it happens; and

“Whereas post-secondary students should be equipped with campus and community sexual- and gender-based violence response resources; and

“Whereas institutions’ sexual violence policies must take a trauma-informed and survivor-centric approach;

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

“Immediately amend section 17 of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and the Ontario curriculum to:

“—require that post-secondary institutions participate in a gender-based and sexual violence campus climate survey administered every three years;

“—require post-secondary campuses to employ an appropriate and proportional number of gender-based violence educators;

“—require that all staff and faculty be trained in how to respond to disclosures of gender-based and sexual violence in a way that is survivor-centric and trauma-informed;

“—include sexual health in all subject areas of the K-12 curricula and, specifically, amend the health and physical education curriculum to include research-based education about consent and safe relationships.”

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

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms. Jill Andrew: This petition is on behalf of the wonderful artists we have in St. Paul’s: “Invest in Ontario’s Arts and Culture Sector.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the arts and culture sector contributes \$28.7 billion to Ontario’s GDP and creates over 300,000 jobs;

“Whereas the Ontario Arts Council budget has not been increased at Ontario’s rates of inflation, exacerbating the income precariousness of artists and cultural workers, some of whom are making less than \$25,000 a year and lesser still for those of equity-seeking groups;

“Whereas many artists and cultural workers in Ontario are also gig-economy workers, who are often underpaid and unprotected due to misclassification;

“Whereas the income precariousness was made worse through the pandemic through issues of regulatory unfairness of the arts and culture sector, disproportionately impacting the performing arts sector and OAC-determined priority groups, including BIPOC, Indigenous, women, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA2S+ artists and cultural workers;

“Whereas the reinstatement of the Indigenous Culture Fund is a vital step to truth and reconciliation for Indigen-

ous peoples of Ontario through its protecting of Indigenous arts, culture, heritage, language, ceremonial practices, and knowledge-sharing;

“Whereas the impact of arts and culture is inter-ministerial with proven benefits across” many institutions and “many ministries including education, mental and public health, infrastructure, tourism, and job creation;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to adequately invest in the arts and culture sector, including supports for equity-seeking groups, small, medium and grassroots collectives in our communities, and individual artists, to ensure their personal and economic survival.”

I overwhelmingly agree with this petition. I’ve affixed my signature and will pass it to Elya.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the worker advocates at Justice for Workers for collecting signatures on a petition entitled “A Just Recovery Means Decent Work for All.

“Whereas COVID-19 has exposed the way in which low wages, temporary jobs, unstable work and unsafe working conditions are a health threat not only to workers themselves but also to our communities;

“Whereas systemic racism in the labour market means Black workers, Indigenous workers, workers of colour and newcomer workers are overrepresented in low-wage, precarious and dangerous employment and more likely to be without paid sick days, supplemental benefits or working part-time involuntarily;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change employment and labour laws to:

“—provide at least 10 permanent, employer-paid emergency leave days each year and an additional 14 during public health outbreaks;

“—ensure all workers are paid at least \$20 per hour, no exemptions;

“—promote full-time work by offering additional hours to existing part-time workers before hiring new employees;

“—provide set minimum hours of work each week, and provide schedules at least two weeks in advance;

“—legislate equal pay and benefits for equal work regardless of race, gender, employment status or immigration status;

“—protect all workers from unjust firing (stop wrongful dismissal) and ensure migrant and undocumented workers can assert labour rights;

“—ensure all workers are protected by ending misclassification of gig workers, and end all exemptions to employment laws;

“—make companies responsible for working conditions and collective bargaining, when they use temp agencies, franchises and subcontractors; make companies financially responsible under the Workplace Safety and

Insurance Act for deaths and injuries of temp agency workers;

“—end the practice of using temporary agency workers indefinitely by ensuring temp workers are hired directly by the client company after three months on assignment;

“—make it easier for all workers to join unions by signing cards, allowing workers to form unions across franchises, subcontractors, regions or sectors of work...; and

“—enforce all laws proactively through adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the laws.”

I'm proud to affix my signature and will send it to the table with page Pania.

1530

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition here to save eye care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government;”—until the recent discourse—“and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

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

ABORTION IMAGES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to present the following petition on behalf of Katie and the Viewer Discretion Legislation Coalition. I'd like to thank them for their support of Bill 41 and for collecting signatures all across Ontario on this petition. It's entitled “Call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to Block Disturbing Anti-Abortion Images.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas an anti-abortion group, the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform, is distributing unwanted flyers to people's homes and displaying placards on major streets in London featuring horrifying and graphic images of aborted fetuses;

“Whereas regularly displaying graphic images on our streets and in our homes is traumatizing, difficult and misleading for women, children, and other vulnerable members of the community;

“Whereas the display of these images at crowded intersections creates a hazard and distraction to drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians;

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

“To support calls for an injunction based on the need to prevent a public nuisance, and should it not be possible to proceed with an injunction, to develop and bring forward legislation to prohibit the use of such graphic and disturbing images on flyers dropped in people's mailboxes or exhibited on placards used in the street.”

I support this petition. I will affix my signature and deliver it through page Benjamin to the Clerks.

CHILD CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Colette Pilon from Capreol in my riding for these petitions.

“Demand \$10-Per-Day Child Care....”

“Whereas several provinces and territories, including British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Yukon, PEI and Newfoundland and Labrador”—and every other province—“have implemented a \$10-per-day child care program;

“Whereas Ontario has some of the highest child care costs in the country and the costs have made quality child care hard to access for many families;

“Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on the child care sector;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To immediately negotiate an agreement with the federal government to introduce a \$10-per-day child care” program “in Ontario; improve wages for ECEs and child care professionals; and invest in child care capacity to support the recovery from COVID-19.”

I support this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it to the table with Tanisha.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Faisal Hassan: “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I support this petition. I’ll be affixing my name to it and providing it to page Owen to deliver to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 8, 2022, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion regarding amendments to the standing orders.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): When we adjourned the debate earlier today, the member from Hamilton Mountain had the floor. We return to her now.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased that I still have 11 minutes on the clock. I will start by recapping so that folks who are watching at home now understand what it is that we’re debating here in the Legislature.

This, Speaker, which I don’t believe is a prop, is the standing orders of the Legislature and the book that rules how the Legislature works—the tools, the language, the rules that govern us on the Legislature floor.

Interestingly enough, since this government came into power in 2018, this is the seventh standing orders group of changes that has come forward. I believe just over 30 standing orders have been changed, maybe even more—that was kind of a quick count that I did—changing the rules of how the Legislature functions and what governs us, including that I must stand in my space. That is a simple rule that is governed under the standing orders of the Legislature. For folks at home: These rules are quite important for ensuring that the government and the Ontario Legislature can function by law. Saying that this government, since 2018, has brought forward these many changes is quite large—because between 1992 and 2018 there were only five changes made to the standing orders. So it’s not something that is done often. But there are times when it is quite important that these changes be made.

We know that having our devices, such as laptops, phones—being able to speak from such a device was never allowed under previous standing orders. Now the change has been passed in previous motions to allow us to do that.

Different changes that allow this House to function better—for the House to be made accessible for people with disabilities. That’s a fantastic change that has been made. It’s unfortunate that the government didn’t do that with the entire province, as promised under the AODA—to be accessible by 2025. They’ve definitely missed that boat, but they ensured that it could happen within the standing orders.

So we have definitely seen major changes that control the function of how we work, the way that bills are tabled, the amount of time that a bill is tabled compared to when it is read in the House for the first time. It used to be a couple of days, and now they can table a bill one day and it can be read the next day. That is quite the turnaround, particularly when you have large bills that come before the House.

As I was saying earlier this morning, we’ve seen a bill with 11 schedules—major changes for the province and for the people of this province—and yet there was absolutely no time.

If you at home were watching just a few moments ago, you would have seen the government table a bill. That bill will actually, at this time of day—it’s almost 4 o’clock, so it has to be able to be brought up on to electronic Hansard, recording and broadcast, but that bill will be able to be read in this House first thing tomorrow morning. We will have to be able to get our hands on that bill, go through the bill, look at the changes that are being made and be able to debate it appropriately on behalf of the people of Ontario. That is our job as the official opposition—to look at legislation that the government brings forward and to scrutinize, to applaud, whichever be the case for that certain legislation. And yet, there isn’t enough time to speak to the proper stakeholders, to be able to speak to our constituents, to hear feedback on how folks feel about the legislation coming forward. It’s much too quick of a turnaround time.

1540

Interestingly enough, one of the changes that the government is bringing forward this time talks about private members’ business. Private members’ business is a very important piece of this Legislature because it gives all of the elected people in this House the opportunity to bring forward legislation. There’s no money attached to that legislation. It’s a good idea; it’s something that will change a wording or will enhance something, or it could create a specialized day—as today, International Women’s Day. I believe it’s actually in our standing orders that we do these International Women’s Day ministerial statements. So there are changes here that will govern how those private members’ bills will now come to the floor. For the first time in my 10 years here—and I know others have been here and they’ve also never seen it—we’re seeing those rules being changed by the government House leader on the fly. So there are great concerns over structures like that.

This takes me back to another spot—because also I debated this this morning. There are pieces and things I’ve got all over the place.

When rules are changed, they should be changed as a whole. They shouldn’t be changed according to one person, who is the government House leader and his small team behind him—because I’m sure it’s not the entire government caucus that is making these changes. It is the Minister of Legislative Affairs who is creating this. That’s also a new position that was created by the Premier, for this minister to be able to do these changes and to make

these amendments. It's interesting that he has focused on how the standing orders run in the House of Commons, which is, respectfully, where he was elected before he was elected provincially. They have a committee called the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. He has changed one of our committees to the same name, but he didn't give that committee the same powers that the House of Commons enjoys. At that committee process, they come together as a committee and they talk about standing orders; they talk about changes; they talk about, how can we make the legislative floor, the House of Commons floor, more efficient for the people of Ontario? But that isn't here. This is not what we're seeing. What we see—I've called it the "House of Calandra" rules. He changes the rules and he brings forward standing order changes because he feels like it. There is no insight from the opposition or the third party. It is just the House of Calandra rules that hit the Legislature floor and they become the new law and the new way of doing things. I think that's a real disservice to the people of Ontario, because there really should be back-and-forth. That's the purpose of this portion of the standing orders—debate, to make sure that ideas are going back and forward, that we're talking about what's good, that we're talking about what's bad, so that when we get to the committee process, we can actually make real changes to make bills better and stronger for the people of Ontario.

But this government continues to be focused on themselves, and we have seen it time and time again. There have not been bills that come to this floor that make me excited about having the opportunity to be here. My job is to come here and constantly be on top of what this government is doing now to the people. What do we have to try to embarrass them out of and try to get them to backtrack on?

Last week is another perfect example. Bill 88, I believe, is the bill that—or was it Bill 86 that has schedule 5 in it?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Bill 88.

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes. Bill 88 is the Working for Workers Act 2—because they couldn't get it right the first time. They usually have to bring things back a second time. Their schedule 5, which was the Traditional Chinese Medicine Repeal Act—like I said, this is the bill that dropped very quickly. There was no consultation on this bill. This schedule removes the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario, which was a huge blow to them. They had no idea this was coming. Because they were able to gather their thoughts, gather their people, really push on the government, the government then backtracked and discharged that bill to the committee, pushed it back to the committee to be able to remove that schedule before it comes back here for second reading. That's what happens when we have a government that rushes through. It doesn't consult. It doesn't want to listen to anybody else. It just wants to be the House of Calandra, and the rules that Calandra brings forward are the rules that will govern this province. It's a disservice, Speaker, and it's unfortunate.

I'm looking forward to June 2, to there being a new government and a government that's actually going to rule this place for the benefit of the people of Ontario, making sure that people are always front and centre—not more standing orders that benefit the government right before an election.

There are so many things that we could have been talking about, but instead we've focused our time on the House of Calandra. That's the wrong direction. I think that we can do better, and I know that we'll do better when New Democrats are on that side of the House.

Thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I would caution all members not to disparage the names or reputation of other members, and on a go-forward basis—I didn't want to interrupt the member, but when we refer to other members, we refer to their ridings or their ministerial positions.

Further debate?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I have the floor. Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I must say to my colleague opposite that I actually do like the ring of "House of Calandra." I don't know if he has purses over there, like the house of Gucci, but we're going to find out.

Speaker, before I get into my remarks, I want to say thank you for the great years of service that you have provided to this Legislature. I know you decided that you won't be running again. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working with you across the aisle—sometimes on the same side of the aisle, but in different political parties and caucuses. I wanted to say to you and to all members who are leaving this assembly by choice that I wish you all well and success in your future endeavours.

It's always a great privilege to be able to rise in this chamber and speak to the assembly. This month, I have the opportunity to celebrate being a member of this House for 16 years. I have to say, after 16 years, the awe and attachment that I have to this place has not yet wavered. Truth be told, my fascination and admiration for this assembly and its members, from all political quarters and from all parts of Ontario, has only grown. A diversity of opinion ought to be respected, not necessarily accepted. Likewise, decisions taken by governments must reflect present circumstances and keep up with evolving times, as difficult as those times may be.

My commitment to the people of Nepean–Carleton, and now to the people of Nepean, remains strong to this day. It remains because I have always felt I could speak my truth here. I can use my voice here, and I know each and every time I stand in my place, my vote counts. Although I'm now a minister, I did spend 13 years in opposition.

So as I speak today to the proposed standing order changes, I do so with fond regard for this institution, for governments and oppositions of past, the opposition of

today and, of course, the standing of our current government under the Premiership of Doug Ford and the House leadership of Minister Paul Calandra.

1550

I'm reminded from periods throughout my career that democracy is fragile. It is the rules in a democracy that protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority. As I reflect on my time in this chamber, and now the polarization in our own country as witnessed in my city of Ottawa during the occupation, or a world away as a violent Russian aggressor challenges the world order in Ukraine, it's ever more important that we continue to preserve our democracy and the traditions that we uphold while at the same time renewing and modernizing our institution.

The member who spoke before me talked about a committee that would meet to discuss the Legislative Assembly. I had the opportunity to do that in 2008, and I'll read to you my Hansard from that time. I said at the time—and I believe it today:

“Each member here is a steward of this Legislature. We are the conscience of this place, and we are expected to modernize Queen's Park to help it adapt to the changing times so we can best represent the people who sent us here. We must do this together.... Our collective ideas will be what makes Queen's Park more representative, more functional and more democratic.”

“In this era of democratic reform or democratic renewal, we have an opportunity as legislators, not just as Conservatives, Liberals or New Democrats, to work together to make changes that will reflect the generational, gender and ethnic diversity that we now celebrate in this chamber.”

I feel as strongly about this today as I did 14 years ago. That's likely because the idealistic 31-year-old woman who aspired to represent this House but wasn't always able to hear or see the other side has had the opportunity. I'm now a more experienced 47-year-old and I've seen more or less all of this in action. And I've got to say, after this many years here, Speaker, I am far more pragmatic.

I've served with some legends. I've got three, four or five names here, but I'm going to actually—there are a couple of legends in this chamber. The member from Timmins, the member from Oxford, and the member from Muskoka have all served in this Legislature in House leadership positions. They've all served in this Legislature over a long period of time. Together, we all got to serve with some other legends, like Norm Sterling and Bob Runciman in the PC caucus. Bob said he got to this Legislature as “Mad Dog” Runciman, but he left after 27 years as the mellow mutt.

My late friend and a former colleague of yours, and a rabble-rouser, the former and late Peter Kormos from the NDP—I remember walking in on my first day in the Legislature, and on my maiden speech, I had that legend respond. He was so kind and generous in his advice to me on how to proceed as a new member, and I hope and I would expect that all members of this assembly would afford each one the same type of opportunity. I was in opposition, brand new, sitting at the back, and another

government member—a Liberal at the time—was pretty tough on me. I remember him standing up and—at the risk of saying something unparliamentary, Speaker, the late great Peter Kormos stood up and said, “That member opposite is nothing but an *arsche nudel*.” I didn't know what that meant, and on great authority I can tell you it's not a word I can say here in English, but it is a German word for something.

I also wanted to pay tribute to the now regional chair of Niagara, who was the longest-serving MPP in this House: Jim Bradley. He was the king of the quiet heckles. Any time Jim wanted to get under your skin, he would find a news article that he could figure out would just trigger that.

That's the types of thing I got to see early on in my career. Having served with each one of them, I got to see that they had the opportunity not only to have House leadership positions within their respective caucuses, but they each served in the cabinets of their respective parties. To watch them, as a young MPP, wax eloquently on the floor was quite something, or to play with the rules in this place, like a type of dance—they would use the procedures as steps to that dance, and they would use the issues of the day as music. I, only really over the past number of years, the last three years, have been able to appreciate that type of parliamentary democracy that sometimes seemed futile, particularly when you're in opposition.

I have to say, I knew sometimes that these lions of the Legislature would roar mightily at each other in House negotiations, sometimes rolling over the floor of the assembly, but I can tell you—I saw it first-hand—when those members were outside this chamber, they had a long and enduring respect and friendship with one another that I hope we can all reflect on today as we go into another election and we reflect on the things that we do right together in our Parliament. I do lament, however, the fact that COVID-19 has kept us apart for two years. Just now, we are in this assembly, after two years, to start speaking together, to start building those relationships across the aisle.

Speaker, I may have been a rabble-rouser once or twice in my career. Truth be told, I bore witness to it, but I also sometimes was a partaker in some of the exchanges and excitement. A couple of times, it was for the good; sometimes maybe it wasn't for as good of purposes, and I can stand here today understanding that.

I remember when I first arrived here in 2006. All of you know my daughter, Victoria. She was basically brought here just as a brand new baby, and she learned to walk here on the floors of this assembly. She became a page. Well, she'll be 17 this Saturday, and I'm really excited for her.

Applause.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks, everyone.

She really has learned a lot about this, and it always made me make sure that when I left this assembly, no matter how hot or cold I felt, my daughter knew that I respected people like Andrea Horwath, Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne, and not just Tim Hudak, John Tory and Doug Ford. It's really important that we share that with our children.

I was able to work with the government at the time to make Queen's Park more family-friendly. We used to sit, if you can believe it—we would start at 1 o'clock in the afternoon, and we would often finish in the evening, at midnight. I didn't think that was a great way for any member in the GTA, who was not going to be able to see their family—and it was certainly difficult for me, as a mother of a newly born child. So I saw that work, but not because we didn't have to struggle to get there—and we did, and we were able to achieve that.

Many members here who were here during 2009-10 will remember the great HST debate. Our friends in the NDP at the time rallied along with us. I was the government accountability critic, and our finance critic at the time was Norm Miller. We got a trick from the NDP, who figured out, I think, in the Harris government, that they were going to bring in close to 500,000 or a million amendments with street names, to filibuster. So me and my friend Normie brought in 500,000 amendments, and they had to be brought in on a forklift into this House. That's so we could play with the rules and procedures. We eventually wound up shutting down the assembly for two straight days. A current member of this assembly who I shall not name and another former member who MPP Walker now has succeeded, Bill Murdoch, shut down the assembly and actually slept in the hallway, in what is now the opposition bench, where we used to be. I can tell you, the evenings there were quite something.

Another thing that a number of members here would remember was during the minority Parliament and the gas plants—when, actually, the minority was the majority and the opposition had a lot more power on committees. I can tell you, having had the opportunity to work with the MPP for Toronto–Danforth, who also shares my 16th anniversary, along with myself and the Minister of Health, that we had a great opportunity to work together and we did a number of great things for government accountability. You'll recall that it did bring down a government, and it included an OPP investigation.

Never have we shone more in this assembly than when we've done tributes for other members, members who have decided to vacate on their own time and decided to not run again, when we get to actually say things that we admire about them and not have to worry about them being used in a brochure—but also former members who have passed on.

I remember my first tribute was to Bob Mitchell, who was an MPP for Nepean and a former minister. Thinking about his family being here and the debates long, long since gone when he was here and everything was so personal—they were standing up there, and I couldn't help but cry, thinking about the sacrifices his family made and, of course, the sacrifices that each member here has made.

I think co-sponsoring of bills has been something that has been a great addition to this assembly. We have made some more changes, and I'll get to that in a moment. I had the opportunity to work with John Fraser and Catherine Fife in bringing in Canada's first concussion legislation, Rowan's Law. I was able to work with Cheri DiNovo and

one of the members of the Liberal Party—sorry—in bringing in the Trans Day of Remembrance, and then of course Lebanese Heritage Month, working with all three political parties, something I'm very proud of.

1600

Since 2018, our assembly, under our government, has made significant changes to both increase the accountability for members' speeches and to empower private members.

The reforms proposed today include deadlines for trading ballots at the new start of a Parliament or session, beginning on the 12th sessional day.

So there are new changes there.

With notice on Thursdays at noon, the government House leader can recall the House at 9 the following day.

In a year where there's a fixed election, the spring meeting period ends on the fifth Wednesday prior to the set date.

And during debate—this is something that I think is quite good and brings more accountability in the House and actually substantiates debate far more—when a member speaks for less than 10 minutes, they are allocated five minutes of Q&A. I think that allows for a more thoughtful exchange of ideas and requires us to actually study our subjects—more than just the talking points that I remember used to be put in front of me.

I think that these are some of the issues that are going to be important.

After the introduction of private bills, they will no longer be referred to committee automatically. They will remain on the order paper for four weeks, after which time they can be called for second and third reading without debate or amendment, and a member may file a request with a Clerk that a bill should be studied by a committee.

None of these things have been done before.

To the member who spoke prior to me, who said that we need to study these things: I think sometimes when we see a glaring issue, we need to address them. That's why our government made some other changes throughout this mandate, which is coming quickly to a close; we're looking forward to seeking a second.

We've eliminated the need for ministers to verbally refer a question to colleagues during question period, as is the practice in other Canadian Legislatures. I think that was just a redundancy and it's something that is quite good. If the issue is clearly with the Ministry of Heritage and it went, for example to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, it is easily referred to us. Similarly, there are programs in my ministry—for example, for after-school programming—that are in alignment with education that I may have a response for, but it might be asked of the Minister of Education. I think that's really important.

One of the other things that I think has been very good and that follows on the federal tradition is allowing our parliamentary assistants to answer questions in the Legislature. I think that speaks for people to be ready, to understand more thoroughly the issues for not only their constituents but for the stakeholders whom we all represent in our various proposals and policies.

Providing time for a reply to opposition day motions for independent members is also something significant. We've never had this many independent members, in my recollection, in this assembly in 16 years. I know that there are a number of different political parties over there. I do think it provides them with an opportunity to be part of the debate, be part of the discussion and be part of the solution. Everyone should challenge a government, while at the same time each government should be able to extol the virtues of their particular pieces of legislation and their policy direction, as chosen by the people who sent us here.

I think, just simply by allowing more time for private members' business, I've seen more private members' business pass in this Parliament than I've seen in every other previous Parliament.

Speaker, I'd be remiss not to talk about the wonderful work that you did in terms of making sure that we have Ontario's first poet laureate. Because of that, my ministry has been able to work with the poet laureate through the Ontario Arts Council, but directly with the ministry. I have to tell you, we worked very hard trying to save Christmas Cheer several years ago in Ottawa, and this year, when we did it back in person for the first time since COVID-19 hit, the poet laureate joined me and was able to provide his great work to the people of Ottawa, right then and there, who were making sure that there would be support for a number of different charities. So I want to say thank you for that—and to all members.

Bob Bailey, who I think is the world champion record setter—he probably has the Guinness World Record for the most private member's bills passed. So that's great.

There have been a number of things, some of which are more about reducing red tape, and others which are more about increasing the level of debate that we have.

Is everything perfect? Well, do you know what? Everything that we do on the floor of this House is an evolution. We could be dealing with challenges for 15 to 18 to 25 to 30 years. We have to continue to evolve and move, and I think that the Legislature here is doing that, and it's doing that for the first time.

We did a lot of it because we have a House leader like Minister Calandra, who served in federal Parliament and got to see where government members who were not in the executive council were able to have more influence on public policy in the House of Commons, and also got to see the ability for opposition members to really have more autonomy. I think that's good for democracy. I think it's good for the discussion. I think it's good for the debate. And I think we should have more conversations about how we debate in this place, how we vote in this place.

In fact, during the COVID-19 pandemic, when we were voting and we were going to the separate doors and we weren't voting in our seats, I actually quite enjoyed that process. I've got to tell you, Speaker, I was skeptical at first, because I'm so used to having that ability to stand in my place. When they call what used to be the member for Nepean—Carleton, which is now the member for Nepean—or I guess you would refer to me now as the Minister of Heritage—standing up in my place and taking my seat and

being able to vote, there's nothing quite like it. I challenge any member here to say that there is something like it. To be able to be sent here by 50,000 or 30,000 constituents, to stand here, to speak on their behalf, to come up with solutions to problems, to then vote on those solutions, whether you agree or not, regardless of what side you're on—or maybe we are on the same side of these issues—is something quite special.

I know the opposition's job is to hold the government to account and to bring forward constructive viewpoints. I understand what their job is and what their role is here. I know it all too well. I was a glutton for punishment for four terms. It was the fifth term that was the charm, sending me over to this side of the House, which was wonderful, and I hope to see it repeated.

On this side of the House, we also have a role to play. We have a number of different competing interests. We have a number of issues that we have to deliberate on. We work with all of our stakeholders, we work with constituents, and in many cases we try to work with the opposition as well.

What I believe is before us today with this motion, on behalf of the government House leader, is something that further progresses the debate in Ontario, further enhances our democratic values, further allows us to evolve with the changing times in the province of Ontario.

One of my great friends and mentors was the former leader of my party, the former member for Niagara West—Glanbrook. Of course, we're happy that Sam Oosterhoff is here, but Tim Hudak was a great friend of mine and still remains a source of mentorship for me and friendship to this day. When I gave his tribute as he was ready to leave the Legislature, you'll recall, Speaker, I was very emotional because of that friendship. I remember him walking out—and I urge and implore every member to think about this. For those of us who were here, we'll never forget how he walked out. He challenged each and every single one of us. He said, "You have a microphone right in front of you. Use it." The day I walked in here I intended to use it, and the day I walk out I'm going to use it again, but I'm going to use it every single time in between as well.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wish I could say I'm glad to take part in this debate, but quite frankly, I'm not. This is one of these times, yet again, when the government has decided the agenda here is, "How do we consolidate power on the government side, and how do we limit the ability for the opposition to be able to hold the government accountable?" There's just no other way of explaining this.

This is not the first time the government has brought standing order changes before this House. This government holds the record when it comes to how many times they've introduced standing order changes in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, what is really maddening: Here we are, less than, what, a month and a half away from the next general election, and the government finds it necessary to change the standing orders yet again.

If you're so confident that you're going to win the next election, wait until you get back. Campaign on it, go out in Ontario and tell people, "We want to make it so that there's more power on the government side and less ability for the opposition to hold the government to account." Run on that. You have the right. It's a democracy. We live in Canada; we live in one of the luckiest places in the world, where people have that ability.

I will argue that this government is making it harder and harder for members who get elected in constituencies across Ontario, who come to this place either on the government side or the opposition side, to really speak what they believe and what their constituents are saying. When it comes to trying to hold the government to account—nobody can hold a candle against this government when it comes to how they have really diminished the ability of the opposition to hold the government to account.

1610

Mr. Speaker, Parliament is an amazing thing. We are not a republic. We are not a system as we see in the United States and others, where you have a republic system. We are a Parliament, and a Parliament is supposed to operate in a certain way. The first basis of the Parliament is, if a party gets a majority, they have the right to control the agenda of the House. Nobody in the opposition argues with that. We understand it. That's the way that it was designed. And do you know what? The other thing we all understand is that the government, in the end, has to have the ability to pass its agenda. I have never argued, in opposition or while in government, that a government shouldn't have the ability to pass its agenda. Right or wrong, that's the right that they have. That's what the constituents and democracy have given the winning party who ends up as a majority government on the other side. The time to call that into question and to accept or reject the government's moves is in a general election. That's when those things happen.

What this government is doing is, quite frankly, turning its back on a tradition of Parliament that existed and started almost 300 years ago. Parliament has been an evolution. Why do we have a Parliament? I'm not going to get into the whole thing. There was a king and there was taxation and a whole bunch of stuff. But eventually, what we ended up with is a responsible style of government, where people elected people to a Parliament in order to be able to make the decisions, and the monarch was there in order to okay those things and didn't have the power that they used to have to override and just set the agenda. We set up the Parliament in order to be able to make sure that the government could move its agenda but that the opposition and members of the government had the ability to challenge, had the ability to push the government in whatever direction.

If you look at the mother of all Parliaments, Westminster, if you take a look at the history of what has happened there over the years, where members of the government—and you saw it in the Brexit debate, Mr. Speaker: They took a position opposite to their own government and

decided to oppose the government in its own way, and the result was what it turned out to be.

If you take a look at the history of Winston Churchill—Winston Churchill sat on three sides of the House. He was a Conservative, a Liberal and a Conservative again, which brings the whole motto "Liberal, Tory, same old story" into focus. Winston Churchill did a great job of that. Mr. Churchill, as a member, I think, is held as an example of somebody who was able to get things done. He was not afraid to hold his own government to account, and he was not afraid to hold the government to account when he was in opposition. He did it from both sides of the House.

Parliament always understood that that's what is sacrosanct to Parliament—people get elected, and they have a responsibility to bring different points of view to the question before the House.

This government, by way of what they're doing in the standing order changes, quite frankly, is diminishing that tradition.

I listened to the honourable member the Minister of Heritage talk about how changes to the standing orders were akin to red tape. I'm sorry; Parliament is not red tape. That's not what this place is all about.

Parliament is about people coming together, debating the issue at hand and making a decision. And yes, the government, if they have a majority, more than likely will win those decisions, but they have to hear the arguments from all sides.

There have to be rules in this House that allow the opposition to hold the government to account but in the end ensure that the government is able to get its way. It also has to have a system where members of the government who do not feel comfortable with the decision can oppose their government without being thrown into the independent side of the House, as we've seen with Mr. Ford through this entire Parliament. If you disagreed or took an oppositional position to the Premier, you ended up on the other side of the House. I don't think that's right. I think it's good to have strong, healthy debate within a government caucus, and certainly within an opposition caucus.

When you change a standing order to essentially say that we're going to change the rules so that the government has yet more power to do what it wants and much more limit the ability of individual members of the government and the opposition to be able to hold it to account, it's the wrong thing to do. That is not what democracy is all about.

A couple of changes, to give example to this, that the government is—I won't even read the note; I pretty well know what's in it. The government is making a couple of changes here. One of the changes that I think on the surface sounds like the government can spin it as being a great thing is changing the estimates process. We're going from a system where the opposition and the government have the absolute right to call any ministry before the estimates committee and review its estimates for up to 15 hours. That's just the way the rules are written, and you can't take that away from a member of the government or a member of the opposition. So if there is an issue going

on in health care, an issue in education or transportation, whatever it might be, any government member in this House who sits on that committee can say to their caucus, “I want the Ministry of Health called for a 15-hour portion of committee hearings in order to look at the estimates of that ministry”—in other words, how it spends its money, how it’s held to account, how programs are working or not working. That is how we’ve done it in this place for a number of years. We realize that the federal system that the honourable House leader is trying to move to—we used to have it in this Legislature years ago, and we got rid of it for a reason. Why? Because the government majority would decide to put other business in committees in order to not allow the estimates to go forward.

There’s another standing order that currently exists that’s going to stay in these standing orders: that by the third Thursday in November, if the estimates have not been heard, they are deemed to have been passed by the committee—in this case, the committees. That means the government who controls the majority on committee is going to be able to say—let’s say long-term care, just as an example. We went through the atrocity of what we saw with the amount of deaths and what happened in long-term care through this pandemic. If the opposition or a government member wanted to call the long-term-care ministry before committee for estimates, in the current system, that would happen, because the member has the exclusive right to be able to do so—have that ministry called before committee for a review of estimates. In what the government is now proposing, estimates will fall to various committees—six of them. Let’s say it’s long-term care you want to get. Long-term care will then be assigned to one of the committees that’s in the standing orders—and I’m not going to go through which committee it is. The government, with its majority, could decide, “We’re going to have one hour of review of estimates,” or “We’re so busy. We’ve got too much work here. We’ll get to it”—says the government House leader. All of a sudden, the third Thursday of November would come by and there could have been no estimates on the Ministry of Long-Term Care, in that scenario. That could happen. No member in this House is going to stand and tell me it can’t happen. The government House leader is going to say, “Oh, we would never do that. Oh, no, that’s not our intention.” Wow. Wow. Give somebody power, and they will use it. It’s as simple as that.

So they are now gaming the system to the advantage of the government. If there’s something controversial when it comes to the expenditures of a ministry, when it comes to policy or expenditure, the government is going to be able to shelter a review of that ministry at the estimates of that particular committee. It won’t be hard to do. Just call every private member’s bill that is in that committee, or call every government bill that’s in the committee. The government is going to have the majority. They control what gets called in committee. That’s the way it works. If the government has a majority, they not only get the chance and the obligation and responsibility to call what happens in the House, but they also control what gets

called in committee. So we very well could end up in a situation where the estimates of particular ministries won’t happen if the government feels it’s not to their political well-being. That’s not what Parliament is about. Parliament is about having a full airing of these issues and allowing the questions to be asked in this House or in committee so that the public has the information before them to make up their own mind. But if members have their hands tied and can’t do their job because the government has changed the rules of the House, shame on you, I say to the government. Shame on you.

1620

Now, I know that I’ve listened to some of the debate where government members are lauding this as a great, great, wonderful thing that’s going on and how wonderful the government House leader is. I remember these members in opposition. I remember a lot of these members when they were the official opposition in this House for the term of the Liberal Party, and listen, I agree with them. There were all kinds of things that the Liberal Party did that I also disagreed with. In fact, most Ontarians disagreed and threw them out of office and they ended up here as a rump, as independents, and rightfully so. That’s how the democratic process works.

Could you imagine, Mr. Speaker, if an NDP government or a Liberal government would have brought the type of standing order changes that the Conservatives have done over the last four years? They would be swinging from the chandeliers. You know the members—and I’m not going to name their names because I can’t remember their ridings and I’ll get called out of order, but Mr. Yakabuski, the minister responsible for heritage, the energy minister—

Mr. John Vanthof: He’s definitely a chandelier-swinging.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, my God, they would just be swinging from the chandeliers. They’d be saying, “A crash to democracy! How terrible this is.” Well, it’s funny what happened on the road to the government side. It’s like being converted on the way to Damascus. They end up on the other side and they forget all of those things that they believed while they were in opposition.

Does the government have the right to table legislation? Yes. Does the government have the right, the obligation, to make sure that the legislation passes if it has a majority? Absolutely, yes. You can’t have a system where members of the opposition can forever hold up a government, hold up the will of the House, because they would have a majority. But the opposition has a responsibility, and so do government members, to hold the government to account.

There are things that I’m sure have happened in these last four years where there are members of the government who have not agreed with decisions made by the Premier’s office. I remember; I was in government 1990 to 1995. There were some of those as well, and I spoke against them in the House because the rules back then allowed me to do that. I paid a price, to a degree. I didn’t get kicked out of my caucus, but people would tell you what they thought about what you were doing. But there were certain decisions I didn’t like, and I think it’s a responsibility of

members to be able to do that in a way that's respectful, that makes the point, doesn't personalize it, and tries to make sure that change comes from that in a way that brings us closer to where we've got to be.

They're also changing—and this is inside baseball; nobody out there knows or cares until it affects them. They're changing the way that private members' bills will move through the House by, I think—is it 12 days that you have to wait after the throne speech and after—

Ms. Doly Begum: It's eight.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's eight? So they're now going to say—currently, the practice in this House has been, if I had a private member's bill or a government member had a private member's bill, you'd table that bill, and you have a two-week notice, and then you're allowed to debate it. That's how it has worked here for years. And there's a reason for that, right? You've got to give members of both sides of the House the ability to move legislative ideas through by way of bills or motions.

The government is now saying you're going to have to wait eight days, eight sessional days, which is essentially two weeks, before you're able to call them. That doesn't sound like much, but given the other standing order changes they made in regard to how that will coincide with throne speeches and other mechanisms within the standing orders, you could be in a situation where you're going to have far less private members' bills being pushed through the House. Who does that serve? That doesn't serve government members well. It doesn't serve me well in opposition. I'm just rather sad for where we're going with all of this.

We saw the other day when the government House leader got up and he referred out of the Legislature the London—what is it called again?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, Bill 86, Our London Family Act.

First of all, every member of the House has the right to introduce a bill and the right to debate it when their ballot number comes up. That's never played with. But this government, for whatever reason, decided to refer this bill to first reading from the House. The government may in the next number of weeks have hearings in committee. They may call it back; I don't know. But why would you do that without the consent of the member?

I have a bill on gas price regulation. If the government said to me, "Listen, would you be willing to have your bill go to first reading so we can tweak it so that possibly we can vote for it at second reading?" I might say yes. But what you did in this case is you never even went and talked to the member and said, "We're going to refer this bill to first reading."

Can you imagine my friend Mr. Yakabuski if that would have been done to him? What's his riding, Mr. Speaker? I'm sorry. Renfrew?

Interjection: Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Renfrew–Nipissing—whatever. I would never be a good Speaker because I can never remember ridings, let alone mine.

But my point is, can you imagine if an NDP government or a Liberal government would have done that to that member, would have done that to the Minister of Energy or would have done that to the Minister of Heritage? They would be swinging from the chandeliers, and rightfully so, because you don't muck around with the right of a member to introduce a bill and have it debated.

Yes, the government can vote against it at second reading. That's your mechanism to agree or disagree with a bill. But to refer a bill out of the House after first reading and not give it second reading, that's just a really bad way to do things.

So when you look at, overall, what these standing order changes have done, they amount to the same thing this government has been doing for a while. It's about how we can game the standing orders so the government has more control in the House and on committee to be able to advance its agenda and do what it's got to do and limit the ability of government members and opposition members to hold them to account. And quite frankly, I don't think that's right.

I listened to the previous speech—I'm going to get in trouble for this one—where it was said the minister responsible, the government House leader, was in the federal House and he had all these ideas and he brought them over to the provincial House. If he liked the federal House so much—resign here and run federally. Quite frankly, this Legislature has operated for hundreds of years, for 130 years, whatever it is, prior to his showing up, and we did quite well in this Legislature. We've passed some of the best legislation this country has ever seen. Why? Because of the way this Legislature operated. The rules there were such that it allowed that to happen.

I don't mean any disrespect to the honourable member, the government House leader. He's an honourable member. But my point is that a Legislature is different than a federal Parliament, and to start mucking around with the rules the way that he has and the way that this government has I think is a disservice to democracy and certainly a disservice to all members of this House.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): When the applause dies down I'll call on the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Todd Smith: For the record, in response to the member from Timmins, I've never once swung from a chandelier. I'm not sure if the chandeliers in here would hold me or not. But anyway, it is great to join the debate here this afternoon on the standing order changes, and I appreciate all of the comments that have been made by my colleagues on both sides of the aisle here today.

I have had the opportunity to be the government House leader, as you'll know, Mr. Speaker, and served alongside the member from Timmins, who was the House leader for the official opposition for the first year of this government, from 2018 to June 2019. We had all kinds of collaboration that went on during that time. During that time, we saw

some standing order changes that my office brought forward to change some of the ways that this House operated.

I would say that change in this place is nothing new. I mean, every government that comes into power here makes changes to the standing orders. I know the member has been around a lot longer than I have and he's seen a lot more standing order changes from other governments. There was a time that question period in this House took place at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, from what I understand, not so long ago. But when the McGuinty government became the government of the day, they decided to move question period to the morning. That's just one example, but there have been many, many changes to the way that our House operates here, so to indicate that this is some radical move by our government House leader to change the standing orders is just not reality, Mr. Speaker. There have been many, many changes over the 200 or 300 years of parliamentary procedure and parliamentary tradition that we have here in Ontario.

1630

The member from Timmins quoted Winston Churchill, and I will too here today. Winston Churchill once said, "To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often." I think the Minister of Heritage spoke to this fact, Mr. Speaker: that standing order changes are an evolution. They're a constantly evolving modernization of the way that we do business in this place, and it has changed over and over over the years.

I know it's the job of the official opposition to object, and certainly I wouldn't have been swinging from the chandeliers, Mr. Speaker, but I may have slapped my desk or pounded my desk a few times over the years in opposition to what the government of the day was doing over on this side. But change has to occur. It just simply has to occur.

Before I got into politics—the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington will know this well—I used to be a news director at Quinte Broadcasting. You'll appreciate this, being a former broadcast journalist yourself, Mr. Speaker. I recall when I became the news director at Quinte Broadcasting in—you'll remember this—the old rip-and-read days with the teletype machine. The news would come off the teletype every day, and you actually would literally rip it off of the printing machine and you would go into the booth and speak into the microphone. When I became the news director, I said, "We've got to change this. This is crazy." For one thing, one of the announcers lit my news on fire one day while I was reading it.

Interjection.

Hon. Todd Smith: That happened to you too.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Hot off the presses.

Hon. Todd Smith: Yes, "hot off the presses," says the member from Timmins.

But we had to modernize what we did, and I'll tell you, there was a lot of resistance, because there were some members in the newsroom who were pretty set in their ways. They could only read off of a piece of paper. They couldn't read off a screen. There was no way they were ever going to be able to use this thing called a mouse to be

able to move the words up and down the page or the screen. But we did it, you know? We took that leap of faith at Quinte Broadcasting and we transformed the way that we deliver the news, and certainly that has continued to evolve long after I left.

I recall one of my jobs—and the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington will remember this as well. I used to spend a lot of Saturdays at Leon's Superstore in Trenton, where it seemed like every single weekend there was some kind of remote broadcast, and there was some kind of a sale on a television set or a piece of furniture or bedding—the "No Money Miracle." I recall in the early 2000s, when I was there one Saturday morning, I bought myself a state-of-the-art television. This thing was the size of a Pinto, and a rear-projection TV. I remember getting a great deal on this thing: 57 inches of power for \$2,700. This was state-of-the-art. And nowadays, you could buy a 57-inch TV that's that thick and hangs on your wall, and costs about 700 bucks.

Interjection: Oh, for \$300.

Hon. Todd Smith: Right? So things continue to evolve, and this Legislature has to evolve as well. That's the focal point of our current House leader.

When I was the House leader and working with the member from Timmins at that time, as I say, we did bring in some changes to the standing orders allowing for night sittings more often and those types of things—nothing too drastic. But we were pretty busy; we passed 20 pieces of government legislation in that first year, all part of our mandate that we were elected on. So we were very busy, and I was also the Minister of Government and Consumer Services and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, so you could almost call me a part-time House leader, because I was busy doing ministry things as well.

But in 2019, in June, the Premier saw fit to create a stand-alone position for the House leader, to modernize the way that we do business here in this Legislature, and Mr. Calandra has done an admirable job, I think, in bringing changes that were much needed to the way we operate here.

We've had many different House leaders over my 11 years that I've been here. We started with John Milloy from the Liberals and then Yasir Naqvi. Both of them also had portfolios in a ministry that they were responsible for, as I did, but now we have Minister Calandra, our House leader, whose sole responsibility for most of his service here was being the House leader. Now he's obviously taken on the long-term-care responsibilities as well. But he's made a number of changes, and I think they are great changes that have really increased the profile for private members. I know the member from Timmins referred to the fact that some of the changes aren't going to be great for private members, but I'll tell you, we have had so many private members' bills pass in this Legislature under the guidance of our House leader Minister Calandra—I would say probably more than any other government in our history. The only person who could pass a private member's bill prior to the changes was Bob Bailey. He was the king of

getting private members' bills passed, the member from Sarnia–Lambton. But since then, we've seen all kinds of great bills pass in this Legislature.

I think simple things, from burying the three private members' bills the way they always used to be on a Thursday afternoon after most of the members had already gone home for their weekend—you know, bam, bam, bam, 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock, 4 o'clock, we had private members' business. Nobody ever knew what was going on. You would try and drive some media, but most of the Queen's Park media gallery was checked out by noon or after question period on a Thursday anyway. So unless you were the king of private members' bills like Mr. Bailey, you never really got the attention for your PMBs that you'd like.

Under the changes that Minister Calandra has brought in, we now have a real spotlight for private members. Not only does each member get their own day of the week to debate their bill—usually three, sometimes four now or more—but the votes on those private members' bills are also deferred until question period the next day, which also puts some added spotlight on those very, very important private members' bills.

I've had the opportunity to pass a private member's bill in this House. It was a very unconventional way to pass a bill; I remember it fondly. It was St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 2014, and it was the Tamil Heritage Month bill. I was doing a lot of work in the Tamil community and had gotten to know the members of that community and the leadership in that community very, very well. Members opposite may remember that day, I stood up and asked for unanimous consent during question period with a lot of the Tamil community here filling the gallery, and the government House leader said, "Yes, we're going to pass that bill."

I think it was like scattershot after that because I think three or four other private members' bills passed on unanimous consent that same day, but that was very rare. It was very rare for a private member's bill to get passed during those days. So I think some of the changes that Minister Calandra has brought forward when it comes to PMBs are really important.

I would also say, for members in the opposition, moving members' statements—and I know the members who have been here since I have been, in 2011, will remember at 1 o'clock in the afternoon coming in here for their member's statement. There was no one here; nobody was watching. Moving those members' statements to 10:15 in the morning before question period I think was important, because those members' statements are very important. I know the members opposite—I believe they at least will appreciate the fact that there is more attention paid to those members' statements as well because of that move that our government has made.

There have been many other changes as well, like technical changes, allowing for laptops and tablets to be used in the Legislature.

Introduction of visitors was always a bit of a challenge and a pet peeve, unless you were a member who wanted to

introduce somebody before question period. Sometimes introduction of visitors would take as long as question period, because everybody would stand up and introduce somebody from their neck of the woods to the Legislature, which took far too long and just delayed the business of the day. I'm not saying it wasn't important, but certainly the changes that we've made in that regard are welcome to getting the business of the Legislature done.

There were changes that were made to accommodate, really, only the two recognized parties in the Legislature, too, which is the first time in this House's history I think, that there have been two parties that have been recognized—the NDP and, of course, our governing PCs. The Liberals were reduced to independents—and then just one Green member. Of course, there have been a few independents who have popped up on the other side over the last little while as well. Those changes, giving those members a voice, have been important to our democratic institution that we have here. So I believe those have been welcome changes as well.

1640

Establishing time for questions and answers following each speech given during debate on government bills has been a great evolution here in the House. Members will remember we had questions and comments, which really was just an opportunity for members to stand up and say whatever they wanted to, instead of holding the speaker who had just delivered their 20-minute speech to account and making sure they were aware of what they had just shared with the House. I think it gives sort of a question period-type of atmosphere or engagement in the House that is much more informative, instructional and possibly entertaining for people at home as well. So I like those changes that were made, and I think they were long overdue as well.

Take-note debates, a new feature in the Legislature, which allow us to debate important things that are going on in the world—I know the member from Sarnia–Lambton, again, was the catalyst behind having the line 5 debate, which is so important. You look at what's going on in the world right now—and there was unanimous support for that pipeline here in the House because of its importance not just to Ontario, but to Quebec and the western provinces and much of the Midwest United States, when it comes to their economy. You see what's happening in Russia and Ukraine right now—Ukraine in particular—and what's happening in Europe and the energy crisis that has been created because of the invasion in Ukraine. It makes me look back at that debate on line 5 and recognize how important it is to have those pipelines in our country. Actually, we need more of them so we can continue to have the supply of domestically produced energy that we need in this province.

We closed an unintended loophole which would allow a bill to be debated in a morning, afternoon and night sitting on the day. It seems like it makes sense to me.

There were a number of other items that were brought forward in these latest changes.

The elimination of deferral slips—it's just an unnecessary step that had to be taken to defer the votes to the next day. I can remember so many occasions when the individual, whether it was the House leader or the whip, just forgot to stand up and hand the deferral slip to the Clerks' table or the Speaker. It eliminates that embarrassment, actually, and allows for all of those votes to occur on the next sitting day of the House.

So, Speaker, a lot of these changes are long overdue.

When it comes to the makeup of our committees—and I understand where the member from Timmins is coming from. But I can tell you, having just gone through the estimates process myself last spring, I believe it was—yes, just before; it was in June, actually, of last year—and spent 15 hours in the estimates committee, as the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services at the time. There were multiple members of the opposition who participated. It took three days for me to complete that appearance at the estimates committee, and the four different members of the opposition asked the same questions over and over, day after day after day. It was very repetitive. I don't know how coordinated the members of the opposition were in their efforts at that estimates committee, but it wasn't an overly productive period of time—certainly for us, as government members, but even as opposition members. I don't know how much they actually benefited from that process.

It seems to me that there are lots of opportunities in this House to hold the government to account, whether it's the estimates, the public accounts or question period in this House every day, or just by calling a press conference and having the media come and attend. There are so many different ways to hold the government to account. So I don't buy it when the opposition says that the changes to the standing orders are going to put more power in the government's hands and reduce the effectiveness or make the opposition parties impotent. I believe what it does is actually speed up or streamline the way that we can do business in this House. And there are lots of opportunities to hold the government to account.

The member from Hamilton Mountain was speaking earlier about changes that were made to a bill that we introduced earlier this week. Quite honestly, the changes that were made to the bill this week by the government were because of an outcry, because of work that had been done by opposition parties and stakeholders.

So there's plenty of time to provide feedback, there's plenty of time to oppose, and there's plenty of time to work together with the government to make changes to legislation that we've introduced.

By no means am I going to stand up here and say that the government gets it perfect every time, because the government doesn't get it perfect every time. We've had to make changes, and I think, particularly, we've learned that during the pandemic, Mr. Speaker. We've been working at an extremely accelerated pace in bringing forward legislation and also in bringing forward emergency measures to deal with the pandemic. Government has been working at a very, very rapid pace.

When it comes to the House standing orders and the procedures of Parliament, we're constantly changing the way that we do business here, and Parliaments around the world have evolved over the years as well.

I'll just close with a quote from one of my favourite politicians and one of the individuals who has inspired me most: Ronald Reagan, the former President of the United States. I actually named my daughter after President Reagan. I didn't call her Ronald; I called her Reagan, because that wouldn't have worked—if I had called her Ronald. The president said this: "Freedom is the right to question and change the established way of doing things."

We're constantly, in this House, challenging each other, and we have to change the way that we do things too, to modernize the way that government works in this province, so that we are making Ontario a better place to live—bringing in legislation that's pro-growth, allowing our economy to flourish, while at the same time providing the services, the health care, the education and the social services that we need; making sure that we have an energy system that is actually working for the people of Ontario and for businesses in this province to prosper, so that we can grow and increase our gross domestic product and increase our revenues in the province without taxing people; growing our economy to make sure that we can meet the needs of the people of Ontario. That's the mandate of our government; it has been for the last four years, and I believe it's why the people of Ontario, coming out of this pandemic, are going to put their trust in Premier Ford and our team again on June 2—because we are best suited to grow our economy, to make sure that we can prosper and get back to being the economic engine of Canada.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: It is always a pleasure to rise in this House and to speak on behalf of the decent, hard-working people of York South–Weston.

Today we are discussing amendments to the standing order amendments. It is my understanding that this is actually the seventh permanent change to the standing orders since this government took office in 2018. This follows a pattern of the government looking to prioritize government bills, limit debate and consultation—and with respecting the long-standing and well-proven procedures and processes of the Legislature.

Speaker, before this government assumed power in 2018, in the previous 26 years, there were five amendments made to the existing standing orders. Why is it that this government feels the need to put their hands into our long-standing and workable standing orders, while previous governments did not? Seven changes in less than four years by this government, compared to five amendments in 26 years—is this government looking to tilt the playing field to their advantage?

1650

The government will say that they like to consult with stakeholders and allow debate on bills, motions and business of the House. The reality is that the debate has

been limited. Government bills are rushed through when they see fit and as it suits them best, while on this side of the House we are often put at a disadvantage. I don't know how many times in this place the official opposition has shown up in this House to work on behalf of all the good citizens of Ontario only to find that we don't know which bill will be debated on that day. Clearly, it's wrong, for a government that says it wants to work on behalf of the people of Ontario, that they choose to keep the opposition in the dark until the last minute on issues to be debated. This shortchanges the people of Ontario. This doesn't allow the opposition to be fully prepared and researched to give a bill the best attention and scrutiny it needs.

Perhaps one of this government's many changes to the standing orders is that reasonable notice of what is going to be on the agenda is actually provided. That would be an amendment one could support, and it would be seen as actually benefiting debate and strengthening our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, a recent example is Bill 84, yet another government omnibus bill, with 11 schedules. Less than 24 hours after being printed, the bill was up for debate. Not only did we in the opposition not have time for proper review, but stakeholders who were directly affected did not have time for input or consultations. My office was contacted by Dr. Jeffrey Schiffer, the executive director of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. This organization performs valuable work providing care for quality of life, well-being and care and healing for children and families in the Toronto Native community. Dr. Schiffer was alarmed and stunned that he was only finding out about an amendment in Bill 84, in schedule 3, that had a very direct impact on Indigenous services for children in care when it was at third reading and being debated. Dr. Schiffer provided several good suggestions to the amendment he should have had the opportunity to speak to this government about, but the government, in their unusual cut-red-tape rush, bypassed that process. This is shameful and an affront to democracy.

A standing order amendment that ensured consultation and reasonable notice would be welcomed.

This government, time and again, has had to reverse its decisions because in their rush to push a bill through, they did not do what would be considered due diligence and fulsome scrutiny.

My office has been flooded with calls and emails from traditional Chinese medicine practitioners and those who use their services saying that they found out, last minute, that schedule 5 of Bill 88 would deregulate acupuncture and other forms of traditional Chinese medicine. The folks who contacted my office wanted to know how a government can make changes that could so dramatically affect Chinese medicine, and why those same providers and patients were not even asked for their opinion. Deregulating traditional Chinese medicine could potentially jeopardize the safety of patients in Ontario. It's simply incredible that the government, the health minister and the Premier actually thought this was a good idea. I would love to know where this idea even came from. Who exactly was advising the government to deregulate

traditional Chinese medicine? I can assure you, it was certainly not the traditional Chinese practitioners and their patients, who I have been hearing from so much in these past few days. Public outrage about the changes was so great that the health minister had to do an about-face on Monday and had to state that the government will now work with the college, and that plans to deregulate and scrap the college are now off the table.

Mr. Speaker, it is our role in the House to uphold and ensure the democratic process on behalf of the good citizens of Ontario.

I would suggest that when a bill can be introduced at the beginning of the week and in four short days it can be passed, that is a problem, and that shortchanges democracy.

The government has the sole ability to introduce a time allocation motion—not have the bill go to committee, and have a third reading to quickly pass into law.

I find it curious when the government chooses to exercise its power to speed up the implementation of a bill—and which bills they pick to have that done.

Interestingly, I had my own personal experience with the government process and how they prioritize and strategize things on February 23, when I introduced the Our London Family Act, a private member's bill that was created by our leader of the official opposition, in close collaboration with the National Council of Canadian Muslims. My tremendous colleagues from London—Fanshawe, London North Centre and London West all co-sponsored this bill. This bill was developed in response to the tragic circumstances of June 6, 2021, when three generations of the Afzaal family were killed in an Islamophobic attack in London, Ontario.

Just one year earlier, Mohamed-Aslim Zafis had his life taken in an act of hatred, while he was volunteering his time at the IMO mosque in Toronto.

Our London Family Act is not a partisan issue; it is a moral one. I was very hopeful that on my birthday, on March 10, this Thursday, we would have an opportunity to debate this bill in the Legislature at second reading. Much to my surprise and to the surprise of the political procedure watchers in Ontario, the government took the previously unprecedented move of going from first reading directly to committee and bypassing second reading and debate. Speaker, I have to assume good faith on behalf of this government, because surely this is a bill that would be highly likely to receive unanimous support and should be quickly moved along and passed. As I stated, the National Council of Canadian Muslims helped with the drafting of this bill, through their very valuable consultation and advice. This should have been an instance where the due diligence and community input had been achieved. Instead, here we are with a bill at committee after first reading. I've asked the government for a clear timeline that will bring Bill 86 back from committee and ensure it becomes law before the House rises and we head to an election. Surely all sides of the House want this to happen. I'm awaiting word of the government's plan. Procedurally, my birthdate of this Thursday was no longer able to be utilized.

Speaker, private members' bills are unique opportunities for members of the opposition to give voice to issues that matter in their communities, and I don't believe it is good democratic process to have that right taken away by the government. So this week, we are not debating an Islamophobia and hate bill that we all support, and just yesterday, it was suggested that, instead, my ballot date could be used to debate a bill declaring the first Monday in March as Black Mental Health Day, that I co-sponsored with my fine colleague from Parkdale–High Park. This is another very important bill which acknowledges that anti-Black racism contributes to poor mental health and that Black Ontarians have a harder time getting the care they need due to discrimination and stereotyping. Race-based health data would be collected, COVID very much alerting us to the vital need for that data and the provision of culturally appropriate health services for our communities.

An important bill, but yesterday, while various points of order were raised and debated, the government suddenly withdrew their motion for this bill to be debated on Thursday. I believe it is a very sad day for democracy when a government that didn't like the criticism and legitimate points made about procedural rights that this week we can now say that neither Islamophobia nor anti-Black racism will be debated in the Legislature.

This is what is taking place in this Legislature and under current standing orders now, without the new amendments we are debating today. When I read the amendments to the amendments that are being debated in government order 12, standing order amendments, I think that standing order 101 raises some red flags. Standing order 101 deals directly with private members' public business, and even the government side should be concerned with the suggested changes, because let's face it: You won't be sitting on that side of the House forever, and you just might want fair treatment for all in this House to enjoy access to democratic rights that does not impose time delays and reasonable notice.

1700

The amendments to standing order 101(a) would be deleted and the new clause would read as follows: "Except on the 12 sessional days immediately following the speech from the throne to open the first session of a Parliament or four sessional days immediately after any speeches from the throne following a prorogation of the House, one item of private members' public business shall be considered at the times as set out in standing order 9(a), and the time provided for each shall be allotted as follows...."

What this means for private members' public business is that there is a delayed start to private members' public business after a throne speech. The amendment gives the government the ability to potentially limit the time available for consideration of private members' public business. For example, remember last September, when the government chose to prorogue the House because of the federal election. With these changes to the amendments, when the House returned October 4, 2021, the first chance for a member to have a private member's date would have been nearly a month later, on November 2.

Again, under current standing orders, it is often difficult for the opposition to navigate the private members' public business system without obstruction. Now we are seeing a time delay as to when we can get on the public record with community concerns. These changes significantly limit the number of possible private members' public business ballot slots, thus reducing the voices of opposition members for their communities.

Ballot date swaps and the rules surrounding them are addressed in standing order 101(c). The deadline for ballot swaps to take place changes from the Thursday of the sessional week prior to now eight days before the earliest of the two dates being traded. The issue here is that members who have ballot dates in the second week of the fall and winter meeting period would have to make their swaps in June and December for dates as late as September and March, respectively.

I find it rich that this government feels that this much advance notice is needed for ballot swaps for private members' public business when they gave themselves the ability to start debate on complicated omnibus legislation less than 24 hours after the bill is tabled. Democracy for all or just for some?

Residents of York South–Weston have many important issues on their minds. When we think of the skyrocketing cost of living, the inability to access housing they can afford, and the education and health care crises we are enduring, why is it that we are spending time debating an issue like standing order amendments? Did this government hear from a groundswell of the community saying, "We need standing order changes"? Or is it this government's way of continuing what has been their legacy since being elected in 2018 of fast-tracking legislation important to them while removing and limiting opposition debate and community consultation on what are the many huge omnibus bills this government shepherds through the House like a Trojan Horse?

Speaker, we need to strengthen the democratic process and actively seek ways to increase community consultations and participation in the political process. I hear from seniors, young people, families, folks from all walks of life and backgrounds, and their views and experiences are deeply rich and informative. It is such a shame we have a government so entrenched in its own ideology and so suspicious and mistrustful of others' views that they actively limit debate and consultation.

Just this week, I asked a question in this House about the Eglinton Crosstown and how the government removed equity hiring targets, local procurement and community consultation from the Metrolinx community benefits agreement. This, of course, is another example of the government moving forward too quickly and not consulting with the community and hoping no one would actually notice. Well, I'm not surprised: The community noticed. I raised the concerns of those like the Mount Dennis Eco-Neighbourhood Initiative who were so alarmed to have these important clauses ripped out of the community benefits agreement. The government backtracked, as they should. I am happy they did, but I don't applaud them for

thinking they could take away equity hiring targets, community consultation and local procurement from projects that directly use taxpayer money.

These many examples of a government that seems to fly by the seat of their pants and make things up as they go along have resulted in the Ontario population losing faith in government, not trusting them and thinking cynically that they are all the same. Well, Mr. Speaker, we are not all the same, and the differences between us across the aisle couldn't be clearer. I believe the good folks of this province see that more and more every day.

Like the community that has told me they have lost faith in the government, I don't accept just their word or promises, like months ago when the Premier said that a child care deal, for the last province and territory without an agreement, was "very close." So when community benefits agreements are changed and watered down, even reversed by this government, I cannot help but demand to know how they will measure and report those equity targets and what local procurement is being done and how much, and what, where and when is the community consultation taking place on projects that directly affect their lives.

I also want to know clearly that the Our London Family Act bill, which we are not debating this week, will be out of the committee and fast-tracked to law. I know you can fast-track when it suits your agenda.

My community of York South–Weston wants to know when we can discuss poverty, housing, community safety, jobs, health care and education. That is their focus, Mr. Speaker, and that is my focus. Why don't you join the conversation and see just what we can achieve as a province?

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to rise today in the Legislature and add to the debate this afternoon. I've been listening quite intently since 3 o'clock or so, when we first came back, and it's an opportunity to speak on government motion 10.

Before I begin, I want to commend the government House leader on bringing forward government motion 10 and his continued commitment to improving the way the House does business on behalf of the people of Ontario. I think we would all agree that the government House leader and his team have tabled a number of changes to the standing orders that have proven to be really good ideas. I expect that the changes in government motion 10 will be more of the same. I also want to thank the member from Markham–Stouffville for the work he has been doing since he took over as Minister of Long-Term Care.

Just briefly, Speaker, I was really pleased to have the Minister of Long-Term Care join me virtually in Sarnia–Lambton on the 28th of January to announce an exciting new long-term-care project for our community. Sumac Lodge will be totally redeveloped through investment by this province, adding 156 new beds and 100 upgraded beds in a completely new facility. This was really big news for our community. It means that there are now 207 new and 315 upgraded long-term-care beds in development, under construction, or completed in Lambton county. I want to

thank again the minister for this important investment in building modern, safe and comfortable homes for our seniors. It really means a lot that local seniors will be able to stay near their friends and family in Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on about how great this government has been for the residents of Sarnia–Lambton, but for now, I will focus my comments on government motion 10 and the amendments proposed by members from the official opposition. This series of standing order amendments is the conclusion of what has been a four-year process of updating, modernizing and improving the functions of this House to the benefit of all members. As members of the Legislature, we should all strive to ensure that the jobs that we do represent the new realities of the work that we are elected to do, and I believe the proposed changes to the standing orders put forward in government motion 10 really help us do that.

1710

I've been here 15 years, not nearly as long as the member for Timmins or some other colleagues in the House. But when I heard one of the previous speakers speak about how they didn't like to see all of these changes to the standing orders, I wondered, would people want to go back to question period in the afternoon, which was the change by a former government? Would they like to see House sittings into the evening, at 9:30? I don't think so. Those were made to make it more family friendly. Those were changes by another government, and I don't know whether we liked them in opposition, but now that we're government, we have learned to live with them—like I say, the question period in the morning and a number of other things that are not in my notes.

I really like how we do the tributes to former members. I remember being here—I think it was on Thursday afternoons. There would be nobody in the House. It was Thursday afternoon. You'd look up in the galleries and very rarely were families here. Now we have them in the mornings, just before question period, and there are—well, when the galleries open again, there will be people here to hear those tributes. The families will be able to make it in here in the morning and be home again in the evening if they live somewhere close in southwestern or even northern Ontario. I think that was an important change that was made to pay the proper tribute to those former members. Someday, we'll all be in that role—hopefully not sooner than later, but we'll be there.

The improvements the government has made over the last four years reflect how much things have changed since the last substantive change to the standing orders. As an example, this government brought in changes to the broadcast act. That hadn't been done for a number of years. We updated the act to include streaming and other things that didn't exist when the broadcast act was first considered. I remember in one of the committees, when I was in opposition, we talked about making changes to the broadcast act. We brought in people from the government services at that time. They talked about the feasibility. Of course, COVID-19 made it necessary. And I heard someone say the Attorney General, during COVID, brought the law,

the legal system, forward more in 25 days than they had in 25 years. So that was a good example too. We did this because it is important to ensure the people of Ontario can participate in our democracy using the technology of today, and that's a good thing.

But we didn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. In 2019, you will recall, there was a modification to the daily order of business to increase the profile of members' statements by moving them from the afternoon to the morning, just before question period. Prior to that change, we would do members' statements in the afternoon and the House was virtually empty, and lots of times, the galleries were empty as well. By moving the statements to the morning, before question period, we now have a full House. The galleries, under normal public health guidance, are full, as I said before, and it's an opportunity for important events to be recognized by people in your riding and by the opposition and the sitting members, to be able to pay tribute to them.

My constituents, Mr. Speaker, also like to see that I can bring up important local issues first thing in the morning. Doing statements in the morning fits the persona of all of those early risers in Sarnia–Lambton, and I'm sure your riding as well. People that work shift work are up in the middle of night or, at my place, people going to work—my son works in the Chemical Valley in Sarnia, and he leaves around 6 in the morning. I get up at 5 to make sure he gets up. When I'm home, I get up. Anyway, I'm used to those early mornings, so I think those statements in the morning just make sense because there's a chance that somebody will be watching TV and see their statement made about their riding.

Another change that we made, Speaker, was to permit the use of laptops, tablets and smart phones in a non-disruptive manner in this chamber. I've seen a number of people use them to speak and read their notes. I haven't got to that point yet, but I see the member from Humber River–Black Creek has got his out. I think I've seen him use his before. I'm not used to that yet. I'm a little longer in the tooth. Yes, there's the gentleman from Peterborough. He's got his out. I guess he could get up and speak with his notes as well—the other member there, the deputy whip.

So I'm a little longer in the tooth. I'm not quite that handy with that yet—still figuring out how to use my cellphone. I'm glad I've got it plugged in out there and I don't have to worry about it ringing. I still have to remember to turn it off when I come in the chamber.

This is an important change that we needed to make to reflect how modern technology has really become the conduit for how we get our information in this day and age. I still enjoy reading a newspaper to get my news, but I know that with the pace of things today, our devices have become almost indispensable for doing this job.

Something I've noticed is that I haven't read a whole newspaper for a long time. I don't know whether it's just me, but I find it very difficult to concentrate to read. At one time, I would read a couple of newspapers a day from front to back. I don't know whether it's because of the

smartphones and the laptops, but especially the smartphones—there's so much information available on a 24-hour basis, I just can't read a newspaper anymore. I can't sit down and really read one. I don't know whether that's just me. I wish that wasn't the case, but it is.

We also eliminated the need for a minister to verbally refer a question to a colleague during question period. This was unique to Ontario and actually wasted a lot of time set aside for the members of the government and the opposition to answer and ask these important questions. So that was another good change, I felt.

Mr. Speaker, we also eliminated the requirement for written authorization for a parliamentary assistant to answer questions during question period when the minister is absent. That's something, as a parliamentary assistant, that I've had the opportunity to experience, and I know a number of other colleagues have as well.

The change we made ensured that parliamentary assistants could answer questions on behalf of the minister when they were absent so that it wouldn't then be referred to someone else who may not have been familiar with the file. We made this change, and I think it really helped the opposition to hold the government more accountable, because that is their role and that's how Parliament should function.

Mr. Speaker, we made changes to allow electronic distribution of background materials to ministerial reports and sessional papers that are tabled in the Legislature. By allowing electronic distribution, the opposition is able to get that important information much quicker. They're able to plow through it much quicker and they're able to really start holding the government accountable or providing suggestions right away. I think that was touched on earlier this afternoon, and the members have taken advantage of that. I think that's an important change.

This government also made changes to allow for the co-sponsoring of private members' bills by up to four members, including members belonging to the same party. I've had some experience with co-sponsoring a bill. The member from Hamilton Mountain and I—yes, Mr. Miller—sponsored a bill a number of years ago—

Hon. Todd Smith: Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Robert Bailey: That's right, Hamilton Mountain–Stoney Creek.

Interjection: Hamilton East.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—whatever. Anyway, you all know who I mean.

The member and I sponsored a private member's bill called Ontario One Call, a very substantive bill. It saved a lot of lives and saved a lot of damages to infrastructure. That was my first experience with a co-sponsored bill, but I'm very happy with the outcome of that, and I think that member was as well.

I personally had some success working across party lines also, passing private members' bills into law. Allowing more members to co-sponsor bills is a great way to show how we can co-operate in this Legislature, even if we represent different parties or roles in the Legislature, to improve things for the people of Ontario. I'm looking

forward to maybe having the opportunity to sponsor one of these bills with three or four members; I think that would be great.

Another change made by this government included permitting temporary committee substitutions for afternoon sessions of committees with at least 30 minutes' notice—again, Speaker, a small thing, but an opportunity to make committees in this place work a little better.

We also established a time for question and answer following each speech given during debate of government bills, replacing the two-minute comments from members. This a change that I personally have really enjoyed. Moving to a question-and-answer period after each speech has elevated this place. It allows members to elaborate on some of the points in their debate remarks. It also allows the opposition to focus in on that member's comments and ask some important follow-up questions.

With this change, we have really seen the quality of members as well and the work by all members of this House improve. We get a better sense of how the opposition critic has become an expert on the bill and is able to really hold the government accountable. We also get to see a parliamentary assistant or a caucus member fight back and explain why changes that were being proposed are important.

I also really like the change we made to enhance the focus on private members' public business by considering one item per day on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. As someone else earlier said, the House is focused on one private member's bill each day, which means more members are able to participate in private members' debates, instead of having it on a Thursday afternoon, when a lot of members, if they're able, like to get away, especially if they live some distance away. They may have wanted to speak to a bill, but on Thursday they could be travelling. Now they know it's either Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday. It gives them an opportunity to be able to hear it, speak and add to that debate.

1720

We've also allowed the vote on private members' bills to be deferred until after question period the very next day. This is an important point. By deferring the vote until after question period, when all members are present, it allows all members of this House to cast their vote, yea or nay, on the many important private members' bills that members bring before the Legislature each session. This change really elevates the work of all members who bring private members' bills to this chamber.

Speaker, we also created a provision for a take-note debate. With a take-note debate, there's an opportunity for this House to seize on an issue of great importance. To date, I'd say we've used this new tool very, very effectively. I'd like to add—oh, here it is in my note. You'll all recall that the very first take-note debate—one of the first, anyway, if not the first—that we held was on the importance of Enbridge's line 5, a pipeline meeting the energy needs of Ontario, Quebec and the entire Great Lakes region. Line 5 has a big impact on my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, and I was pleased to bring that debate forward.

I approached the government House leader. He acquiesced to that and encouraged me to bring it forward, and I was really impressed with the debate on all sides of the House that day. I know the member for Essex took part, and a number of other members from the third party, and a lot of members from this side of the House. It stressed the importance of that line.

I knew it was important at the time, but with what's going on today in Europe, with Russia, Ukraine, the energy shortages and the price of gas going up every day, it just demonstrates the importance of that line 5, and I hope that the Governor of Michigan is aware and is watching what's going on, as well as the Secretary of Energy in the Biden administration. Maybe they'll have a little change of heart.

I was surprised that the official opposition did move an amendment trying to diminish the government's support of the energy sector by removing the word "pipeline" right out of the motion, but I know the people in Sarnia-Lambton who depend on the continued operation of line 5 for thousands of jobs noticed that and took part in that debate as well, because I heard from many of them after. I'm really glad we had a chance to debate that important issue and show that our government supports the energy and chemistry sector in our province. The opposition completed that debate as well by supporting it unanimously at the end of the day.

Mr. Speaker, this is just a brief summary of some of the changes that our government has brought to the rules of the Legislature over the last four years. Government motion number 10 is a set of proposals that the government is bringing forward that will continue to build on the improvements that we have made. Included in that set of proposed changes are the following:

Currently, all estimates, when they're introduced, stand referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates. What we're proposing is that those estimates, when introduced, stand referred to the respective policy committee for that ministry or office. This would mean that the Standing Committee on Estimates is eliminated, but it also means that estimates will then flow to each of the policy committees and the standing committees of this Legislature. This means more estimates can actually be reviewed by those committees, and it means those members of these committees can become subject matter experts in those fields that they are responsible for on that committee.

With government motion 10, we're also allowing the opposition to lead off the selection of those estimates when it comes to specific policy fields. We're allowing those committees to decide how much time they want to spend on it. The committee itself has been empowered to make those decisions as to which estimates they want to review, how long they want to spend on those estimates and who they want to call. Members of the committee will become subject matter experts on those ministries that are assigned to them, and I think it will be a far better use of the Legislature's time.

The Standing Committee on Social Policy will deal with children, community and social services; colleges

and universities; education; health and long-term care; seniors and accessibility; and women's issues. The Standing Committee on Justice Policy will handle inter-governmental affairs, the Attorney General, francophone affairs, government and consumer services, and the Solicitor General. The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs will be elevated to a policy committee. It will handle management board; economic development, job creation and trade; finance; labour; training and skills development; and the Treasury Board.

I see I'm starting to wind down on time here, so I might have to leave some of this. A number of these have been covered by other members, so I will move on. What we are proposing is that after first reading, PR bills are required to remain on the order paper for four weeks, but before they can be called for second reading, any member of the Legislative Assembly committee, or five members not on the committee, may file a request with the Clerk that the bill be referred to committee. It's just a process that reflects the fact that it is not always necessary for this entire House to be seized with the reopening of a numbered company that has gone dark. That should not be something that the entire House is seized with. But there are some times when the House should be seized with that, and this reflects that.

We are also proposing changes to private members' bills again to make them better. We want them designated earlier. We are proposing a requirement to allow, two weeks ahead of time from your ballot date, what you will be prepared to debate so that members can prepare properly. Moreover, at the start of every session, we always delay PMBs by unanimous consent, because members usually aren't ready because the bills haven't yet been drafted. We are moving that, and the PMBs will now start on the 12th sessional day. Again, in the spirit of making sure there's more time for debate, we are allowing the House to be recalled on Monday mornings. We did this for PMBs in the last session, and it seemed to work well.

Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the changes that have been made by this government and some of the changes that are being proposed.

I really want to commend the government House leader and his team on the work they've been doing. I think it's obvious, Mr. Speaker—I did some calculations here, looking up at the carving over your head: 1867. I think that's 155 years. I'm sure, in 155 years, there's been a number of changes made to the standing orders. Someone said that in 26 years there were only five changes made; we've made a number in the last four or five years. But I think that's progress, and I think that's what this place is all about. Things have changed. Who would have thought of using tablets—in the 1940s or 1950s especially. I think this is all part of what we're trying to do here: make this place better, make Ontario better and be able to serve our constituents to the best of our ability.

Speaker, again, I want to thank you, on behalf of the members of Sarnia–Lambton, for the opportunity to stand here. Thank you again for the time today.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: It's an honour to join the conversation today on the standing order amendments that the Conservative government has put forth.

I would first like to say that I don't know if anyone in St. Paul's who is dealing with housing issues—I'm thinking about one particular person who is managing mental health and has been evicted during the pandemic. I don't know how relevant this particular motion might be to that constituent during a pandemic. I would also say that the constituents of ours who often frequent our Out of the Cold programs and our The Stop food bank and whatnot programs, who are dealing with food insecurity—these folks right now are not quite certain as to the relevance of this motion.

I say that to say this: At a time like this, when we are dealing with unequivocal loss in our communities, we are dealing with international affairs that are, quite frankly, monstrous, I'm just not certain as to what the real goal of this motion is, other than a power grab. I feel there is a lot more work we could be doing that actually speaks to the needs and the interests and the demands, frankly, from our communities across the province.

I'm thinking particularly of a mom—I'll just call her J, because I didn't get her consent for today's usage. J is a mom who has a son, an older son—an adult son, quite frankly—with developmental challenges who needs supportive housing to allow him to have his autonomy.

1730

I can assure you that Janet—sorry, I used her name; my apologies, but I have used her name before on the record—has reached out to the government on many occasions. She's eager to consult with the government on their housing strategies, on their housing platforms, if they have one. She's eager to offer suggestions as to how we can maybe tap into some of the unused housing that's in the province, in Toronto, for instance, that often gets gobbled up by Airbnbs, by temporary rentals; how we can utilize the resources we have, while obviously, of course, working on building more resources. She has not received a response from the Premier himself. She has asked for the Premier to give her a call, to check in on her and her wonderful son, and that has not happened.

You know, people like her, people like my friends at various unions that are fighting consistently for workers' rights, that are fighting to create a society where women and girls are not subject to violence—I'm thinking of Canadian Women's Foundation, METRAC, Sheena's Place with regards to eating disorders, Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, YWCA, Plan International, OCASI, OAITH, Red Door Family Shelter, and the list goes on. Organizations like these have submitted letters to the government indicating what they need budgetary wise, indicating how the government can make policy stronger. These letters often do not go answered. What I see when I look at the standing order amendments, I don't see anything that necessarily makes it easier for community members to have their voices heard.

With today being International Women's Day, I do want to shout out the SEIU women's committee, OFL's

women's committee, PSAC and CEIU's women's committees. I joined them this morning. These are all folks who are fighting for workers' rights. They're fighting for livable wages. They're fighting for strong, healthy and positive work conditions for all employees. These are folks who enjoy consultations. They thrive on consultation. They thrive on being able to trust that when a member stands in the House, the member is speaking not on behalf of simply their individual interests, and certainly not only from a political place based on their party affiliation, but that they're actually speaking the voices of their communities, of those hard workers, of those teachers, education workers, small business owners, into the record, and that that will be heard by the government—at this time, it's the Conservative government—and taken into consideration when legislation is created.

I think about the Working for Workers Act, Bill 88, a government bill. One of the sections in that bill, if I'm not mistaken—yes, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, section 4. If we're talking about occupational health and safety, how is it possible to have any legislation come from the government that wouldn't incorporate the suggestions, the actual legislation, frankly, that our member from Nickel Belt has been struggling to get the government to see, her Bill 68?

I want to read a quote for everyone in here, so that we understand the gravity of the issue that we, on this side of the bench, are trying to ensure that the government is consulting on with the right people: "The Ontario Council of Hospital Unions/CUPE (OCHU/CUPE) commissioned a poll in 2017, involving almost 2,000 hospital workers to determine the prevalence of violence against staff. The results were deeply troubling." They found that "68% of the nurses and personal support workers (PSWs) had experienced at least one incident of physical violence in the past year. In a subsequent poll of staff in long-term care the number of incidents was even higher—89% of PSWs said that they experienced physical violence on the job, 62% at least once a week. Among the nurses, 88% reported having experienced physical violence, 51% at least once a week."

Along with receiving that letter which frankly was startling, because it's one thing when you hear of an issue—and I would like to hope and dream and pray that the government is hearing from the people who are most impacted by the issues that come into this House. That would require for the government to actually be listening to front-line health care workers who have been harassed, who have been assaulted, who have worked in less-than-ideal working conditions.

The call is clear—and I haven't had the chance to read Code White: Sounding the Alarm on Violence Against Health Care Workers, with a foreword by Dr. Michael Hurley, I believe it is. But what I know is—through consultation, I've heard, and I know many of us on this side of the bench have heard—an initial step, a very concrete step we can partake in to address violence in the workplace would be to pass the NDP Bill 68, and that, of course, is the bill submitted by our fantastic health critic and

possibly soon-to-be health minister from Nickel Belt. This is a proposed amendment to the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect workers who speak out about workplace violence and harassment.

Nowhere is that mentioned in the Working for Workers Act 2—I guess there was a need to revisit. Revisiting isn't always a bad thing. Revisiting, frankly, I think is a sign of strength. You can revisit; you can edit; you can shift; you can change; you can course correct. It's a sign of humility when you want to try to get things right and you've got to try a few times sometimes to get certain things right. But I think when the foundation is flawed, that makes your attempts hollow. By foundation, I mean the fact that this is the seventh change to the standing orders that this government has tabled in their four years of government, compared to only five changes being made between 1992—so a year after I started high school—and 2018, the year in which we were elected, many of us new folks especially. It gives me reason to raise my eyebrows.

I ask myself: Seven changes, less than four years apart—is that really about making the work of the Legislature run smoothly, is it for making it work better? Or is this a power grab? Is this an opportunity to take power away from the official opposition—which is pretty petty, because when you take power away from the official opposition, you're actually taking power away from the Ontarians who brought us all here. Being that the NDP is, frankly, the only party that really cares and centres the lives of those who are most marginalized and those who have often felt unheard, that is a terrible message—just even from a marketing and advertising point of view—for the government to send, that they would like to silence the official opposition, take away our autonomy and, I would argue, especially trip up the newer members.

1740

Again, I would much prefer to be standing here and doing a speech on the crisis that is happening in my midtown community, on Eglinton West, in Little Jamaica, with the fall of hundreds of our small businesses that simply have not received the support they need—and not by any fault of their own, quite frankly. They've applied, and they've reapplied. Some got some funding after a lot of finagling, including calls from my office and emails and letters. Others were told they'd get funding but were waiting weeks, months on end. And others just straight up didn't get any funding.

I'm thinking about a wonderful artist, actually—again, I didn't get permission to use her name in this particular set-up—who went from 150 children in her art studio, clients, future artists, to none; who has applied and has not received any funding, not with the first batch of support grants from the government, and certainly not with the remodelled "relief" grant.

Our small business owners have been pleading for the longest while: "Please create some sort of an appeals process so we can get help; so if we're denied for a technicality, for a typo, we can get help." I can assure you that that kind of consultation—I wish the government would accept it, but they haven't.

Earlier in question period, I literally asked—was it today or was it yesterday? The days bleed together sometimes. I asked, “Would you extend the deadline of the Ontario small business relief grant, considering its glitches, considering folks who haven’t received emails or calls back or help?” We couldn’t get an answer. It doesn’t matter, the money and the millions that the government claims to be throwing here and throwing there—it didn’t get to my buddy in St. Paul’s, who went from 150 art students to zero students.

With all that money that the government says they’re throwing around, I’d be remiss if I didn’t remind the government again of the Financial Accountability Office’s discovery, mere days ago, of the \$5.5 billion that could have been spent a little differently—for health care, education, autism families, you name it.

I want to also spend a couple of minutes on schedule 5 of Bill 88, which, again, demonstrates what happens when the government doesn’t listen to community. When you don’t listen to community, community rises up, and that’s what we saw. The government had to say, “Oh, bleep. We’ve got to take that schedule out of that bill.” It’s that kind of knee-jerk legislation that doesn’t centre the voices of the people it impacts the most, that runs the risk of really hurting them.

A constituent of mine who owns an acupuncture TCM clinic in our community said, “Jill, section 7, which allows for the termination of all unresolved investigations, inquiries and proceedings related to fitness to practise or discipline that were being conducted by the college—if you take that out, there are no protections for the worker or the client. What about sexual harassment, what about clean needle procedures—all kinds of things?”

Luckily, the community was able to rise up, and we were able to support our communities, and we rose up as well here, in the Legislature. The member for Toronto–Danforth was outside there speaking with I don’t know how many acupuncturists who were also advocating.

A very important thing that I want to mention here as well: I think it was in the estimates, if I’m not mistaken—but I don’t want to butcher it here. The estimates process: Each committee will decide how long each ministry will be considered. Currently, each recognized party has up to 15 hours per round that can be used to review up to two ministries. Under the new rules, the majority has final say over the length of time for a ministry review, opening the potential for a government to use its majority to limit the amount of time and access opposition parties have to question ministers and ministry officials.

At the end of the day, whether it’s women’s issues, whether it’s the ministry of culture, heritage and sport, whether it’s the Ministries of Transportation or Education or Housing, we need transparency. It is not enough for the government to simply rewrite the rules so that they can take the power and silence us from questioning their ministers, from questioning the ministry about matters that are life and death, quite frankly, for many of our constituents.

In my last moment, I just want to say to my colleague from York South–Weston and to my colleagues from London, who put forth the bill with community, the National Council of Canadian Muslims and many others—the Our London Family Act (Working Together to Combat Islamophobia and Hatred)—I want to say thank you to all of you for your heroic work in working with community. I’m stressing “with community” here because at the end of the day, the heinous crime, the hate crime, the Islamophobia that was the catalyst for this bill—it had far-reaching potential to address other forms of racism, to address xenophobia, to address anti-Semitism. The hat trick that this government pulled—it didn’t only impact the members whom I know were eager to debate this piece of legislation this week, but it was a real hit to the gut to the families, to the community members, to the National Council of Canadian Muslims, who made it clear that this needed to be done now, that it shouldn’t have been a partisan issue, that it didn’t need to wait for the election, and that it could have been rectified and made law now. The government chose to make a mockery of this demand from the Muslim community, and that is shameful.

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

Interjections.

Mr. Norm Miller: It’s a lively crowd here this afternoon. Waking them up—that’s a good thing.

It’s an honour to stand here today to speak to proposed changes to the standing orders. The standing orders for this Legislature are a living document. They change and evolve over time.

All parties have changed the standing orders. For example, the Progressive Conservative government under John Robarts made major changes and introduced the first real modernization of our standing orders in 1970. The government of Bill Davis changed the standing orders three times: in 1976, 1977 and 1980. David Peterson’s government changed them in 1986 and 1989. The Rae government made changes three times: in 1990, 1991 and 1992. The Harris government changed the standing orders in 1997 and 1999. The McGuinty government made changes in 2003 and 2008. And our government has made a number of changes during this term.

I want to thank Joanne McNair from the table research office for pulling this list together for me. She actually pulled this together for a debate in 2019, but I’m pleased to get to use it now.

Every party has made changes to the standing orders in the past 50 years. The NDP under Bob Rae made three sets of changes. The Davis government made three sets of changes between 1977 and 1980. Some of these changes have been relatively minor, others have been major changes, and some have been very necessary, like the 2008 changes to make the Legislature more family-friendly so MPPs with young children could balance these two roles more effectively.

1750

We happen to have the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries in the Legislature right

now, and I know she was very active and a new mother when first elected. I, of course, was here then, and I must admit, I'm very pleased with those family-friendly changes, because the Legislature used to start—I think it started at 1 o'clock, and it went to 9:30 pretty much every night. But it didn't really change the workday for me. I still got here at 8:00, 8:30 in the morning. Anyway, it just made for really long nights. I must admit, the change is much more beneficial for those who have other things to do in the evening.

It's important that today, on International Women's Day, we recognize that those changes were necessary to encourage more women to run for office. What the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries said in 2008 rings true today. She said, "No one ... should have to choose between being an effective representative in this place and being a good parent." Thank you for that quote, Minister.

Since it is International Women's Day, I want to take a moment here to recognize a woman who helped blaze the trail for the many women who serve in the Legislature now, and for women in the medical field, and that would be the late Dr. Bette Stephenson, who served in the cabinets of Premier Bill Davis and also with my father, Frank Miller. I knew Dr. Stephenson well, as she and her family were actually guests, in my former life as a resort operator, for a number of years, so we saw them on holidays. Dr. Stephenson certainly had so many firsts, and they were all described in the tributes to her. I know she was a great friend of my father as well.

Getting back to the discussion regarding the standing orders, I want to quote a paper by a former Ontario legislative intern, Emma Stanley-Cochrane, now Emma Ferrone, who was an intern in 2008-09. She wrote a paper about the process of making those changes to the standing orders. In her introduction, she wrote:

"While disagreement is a natural and expected factor in the relations between government and opposition parties, the issue of the standing order reform has historically created a unique type of conflict among the parties as they dispute not ideology or policy but the rules by which the Legislature operates.

"This has proven true in nearly every instance in recent history in which the governing party of Ontario has reformed the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly. In each case, regardless of which party has held power, the opposition has cried foul, claiming that the government is acting out of self-interest and even undermining the democratic process of the Legislature. Nevertheless, each

Ontario government in recent years has introduced reforms to the Legislature's standing order, and each time this has occurred, it has been met with strong resistance from the opposition parties."

I've sat through a number of debates on changing the standing orders, and I have to say, I think that really does sum it up.

I want to take this time to put in a plug for the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme. As this quote shows, the young people of OLIP are smart and insightful. I recently learned from my current legislative intern—that's Clare Simon—that Emma Ferrone is now working as a program supervisor at the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. To any of the opposition or backbench members of the Legislature who didn't apply for an intern this year, and to all future members, I encourage you to apply for an intern. They're a great asset to any office, and I've really enjoyed working with the 17 interns that I've had over my time being an MPP. It has been one of the great joys to have them in the office. They're certainly such a positive force in the office.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I move that the question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Miller has moved that the question be now put. We've had almost 10 hours and 29 or 30 speakers. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I did hear a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred to the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): A point of order, the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Speaker, if you seek it, you'll find that there is unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member has suggested that if I seek unanimous consent to see the clock at 6, we will agree. Are we agreed? Agreed. The clock is at 6.

Report continues in volume B.

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Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associé des Transports (RGT)
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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
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Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
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Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Vacant	Ajax / Ajax	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Vacant	Elgin—Middlesex—London	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Randy Pettapiece
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Goldie Ghamari, Randy Hillier
Christina Maria Mitas, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ian Arthur
Ian Arthur, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
Ernie Hardeman, Mitzie Hunter
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
Jeremy Roberts, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Michael Bushara

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey
Will Bouma, Guy Bourgouin
Chris Glover, Mike Harris
Logan Kanapathi, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Gilles Bisson, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Billy Pang
Amanda Simard, Marit Stiles
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
Lucille Collard, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Jim McDonell, Suze Morrison
Randy Pettapiece, Gurratan Singh
Donna Skelly, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Laurie Scott
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Rima Berns-McGown, France Gélinas
Goldie Ghamari, Mike Harris
Faisal Hassan, Jim McDonell
Sam Oosterhoff, Laurie Scott
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Hogarth
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
Christine Hogarth, Michael Mantha
Taras Natyshak, Michael Parsa
Amarjot Sandhu
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Aris Babikian
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Aris Babikian, Lorne Coe
John Fraser, Vincent Ke
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Bhutila Karpoche, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin, Jim McDonell
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Vanessa Kattar

Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight / Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations d'urgence

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Tom Rakocevic
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell