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Mercredi
4 octobre 2017

Speaker: Honourable Dave Levac
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 October 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 octobre 2017

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONSTRUCTION LIEN
AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE PRIVILÈGE DANS L'INDUSTRIE
DE LA CONSTRUCTION

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 3, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to amend the Construction Lien Act /
Projet de loi 142, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le privilège
dans l'industrie de la construction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor West had finished her presentation. We are therefore now into questions and comments.

The member from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Good morning, Speaker. Here we are at shortly after 9 o'clock in the morning on a very beautiful September day—

Mr. Mike Colle: October.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:—October day; I'm sorry. I'm still thinking of September. The weather seems like September. I'll be okay.

I listened carefully to the remarks last night from the member from Windsor West. She made some good points. She did a good presentation. I just wanted to add something: This is going to go to committee, this bill; hopefully sooner than later. I think we're voting on it later today, to send it to committee. I'm looking forward to rolling up our sleeves—all three parties—and debating this bill.

We've gone through a lengthy process of consultation, dealing with the construction industry and experts in the sector, and I just want to say a couple of things here in my limited one minute.

Our new legislation would require surety bonds to be posted on public projects above a certain dollar amount. These bonds are currently used on both public and private projects, but there is no legislation that mandates contractors to post them. By posting mandatory surety bonds, subcontractors and suppliers will be protected and paid in case of a project's insolvency.

In addition, specific bookkeeping requirements will be set out to better protect subcontractors if the contractor becomes insolvent or can't pay its debts.

Also, the act is to be kept simple and cost-effective. So our bill is proposing that construction lien claims under \$25,000 could be referred to Small Claims Court, so that the subcontractor—the electrician, carpenter or whoever—gets paid as soon as possible.

Again, I look forward to this going to committee. I'm looking forward to debate this morning. I look forward to it being brought back here for third reading after the committee stage.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further questions or comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: I didn't hear the comments or the speech by the member from Windsor West. I'm sure it was a good speech. However, it is a pleasure to rise here. I haven't had the opportunity to speak to the prompt-payment bill before the Legislature. I don't know if I will get the opportunity, so I appreciate the chance here this morning to provide a couple of thoughts.

This is a bill that we have been waiting for for a long time in this Legislature. I believe one of the first meetings that I had after being elected as an MPP was with concerned members of the construction associations who wanted to bring in prompt-payment legislation similar to what we're debating here today. On a couple of different occasions, we have been this close to getting that legislation done, but prorogation or an election was on the way and—

Mr. Michael Harris: The Liberals squashed it.

Mr. Todd Smith:—the Liberals squashed it, as my friend says.

Here we are today, though, with a new piece of legislation, and it's my hope that we can actually get this done in time for our small business people. It seems like every time you turn around lately, small business people are under attack from this Liberal government here in Ontario and the Liberal government on Parliament Hill as well.

Our small business people are so important. They are the backbone of our economy in Ontario. They provide the vast majority of jobs. We should be doing what we can to help our small businesses, not currently attacking them or constantly attacking them as we currently are. It seems like every time you turn around, they are being hit with excessive red tape in some new regulation. They're being hit with a 32% increase in the minimum wage in less than 16 months—which is very, very difficult for small businesses to adjust to—the rising cost of electricity and the rising cost of natural gas, with the cap-and-trade system that's been brought into place.

It seems like every time a small business person turns around, they're being attacked by a Liberal government

in Ontario or a Liberal government in Ottawa. It's time that stops. Let's get this legislation passed into committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to commend my colleague, our colleague, the member from Windsor West on her speech on this bill yesterday, which I was in the House in the evening to listen to. It's one of those bills where folks in here should be shaking their heads that it's something that hasn't been done already.

It's a basic premise around, if you do the work, you do it right, you fulfil your contract, you get paid in a timely manner. We have gone through all of the dos and the don'ts, the pitfalls, the pros, the cons. There are certainly more pros than cons. In a developed and mature economy, you would think that this would be something that would be a given, that those who perform work in the construction sector in our communities would be paid in a timely way. In order to offer that protection that, again, I think should be a given, let's get this thing done; let's get it through committee.

We have been critical—both opposition parties have been critical—on the fact that the Liberal government of the past 14 years has not passed anything in this light to address this issue, although they have had ample opportunity to do so. We have had incarnations of this bill that have been put forward, that have been promoted, highly touted. We've had meetings. We've met with the sectors. We've met with the stakeholders. They're all in favour. They know this is something that has been needed. Yet, the government has essentially played politics with this thing. They have put it on the table, pulled it back off the table, put it back on the table numerous times.

I don't know what the goal is here, but get it done. This is something that I think has all-party support. It's stalling economic development. It's putting small contractors under the gun and putting them at jeopardy of risking their business. Let's get it done, move ahead, and support our communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this morning to support Bill 142. Before I start my remarks, Mr. Speaker, to respond to the member from Windsor West, I wanted to wish everyone who is celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival from my culture, the Moon Festival, a happy Moon Festival today. Thank you to everybody for doing wonderful things across Ontario in support.

0910

Anyway, I am very, very pleased to support Bill 142. I know the member from Windsor West is passionate about this type of legislation and supporting the worker, particularly for small businesses, and we need to do more.

I'm not sure the member from Prince Edward-Hastings remembers that the Construction Lien Act was first created in 1983. We know who was in government

then. That was well over 30 years ago, and 30 years was a long time ago.

The member from Essex was complaining just earlier that it's taking too long, blah, blah, blah. But, Mr. Speaker, we've got to remember the fact that consultation does take time and, more importantly, this particular Construction Lien Act has been the subject of reviews. But, more importantly, you need to talk to people.

This is a very large province. Yes, there have been a lot of changes since 1983, from the construction signs—now technology is involved in construction. It's a complex issue because it's not just about the businesses; we are looking at subcontractors and others.

Moving forward, we are looking forward to the passage of this bill. But, more importantly, after this second reading we're going to go to committee, have more consultation and, again, it will require some time for those public consultations. I am looking forward to supporting and making sure that, when a company does business, they need to pay on time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Windsor West has two minutes.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate all of the comments from the other members in the House regarding my debate yesterday on the Construction Lien Amendment Act.

I'm going to speak about the last member who spoke—Scarborough-Agincourt, someone who I respect deeply even though she's on the other side of the House. She made a comment that consultation does take time. She mentioned how this legislation has been around in its current form for 30 years. It shouldn't take 30 years to make sure that workers who do the work and do it within the terms of a contract actually get paid for the work that they've done. I'm great with consultation. I think that it's important that we talk to the stakeholders. We see far too often that the government side, who says consultation takes time, rushes bills through, rams through legislation, without doing enough consultation. So I think they should take their own advice and sometimes slow down.

But it's important to note that, although consultation takes time, in 2013 their current Minister of Transportation brought forward legislation around this—four years ago. It was actually his own caucus, it was the Liberal government, that quashed his proposed legislation. So they had an opportunity in 2013 to support one of their own members, and they didn't.

Then, in 2014, my colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh brought forward a motion that was supported—it passed—talking about this very thing again. So, three years ago the member from Windsor-Tecumseh brought this up. It was supported in the House and it went nowhere after that. In fact, he went a step farther and said that when you have a project like the Herb Gray Parkway that was grossly mismanaged by the government at the time—they allowed a Spanish consortium to take off, back out of the country and not pay our subcontractors and our suppliers. They should never have gotten another contract until they actually paid the workers and the suppliers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm really pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill.

I come from a construction family. I was born in November 1953. My dad started a construction company in March 1953, so my whole life, I grew up in a construction family. My dad started with, I think, one backhoe, then maybe one employee. Over the years he built his company into what was one of Canada's largest construction companies. I am happily familiar with the industry. I actually spent a few years myself working for that family company.

I came to really admire the people who work in that industry: people who take such pride in their work, people who work very hard both physically and mentally, people who work together, because the way the construction industry works is, every construction company actually works with a lot of other companies who do part of that job. It's really important that we have rules in place that protect those various companies that contribute to the construction of a building or a road or a bridge or whatever, and that's why I'm really happy to speak to this bill today.

The construction industry is huge in Ontario. It is a very large and important industry, with 400,000 jobs in construction today, Speaker; that's 400,000 families being supported by the construction industry. Of course, much of that construction is government construction, government investments in infrastructure creating many, many jobs. Some 7% of our GDP is in the construction industry. So we need to make sure that our construction laws are up-to-date, and that they reflect today's realities. It's only fair, Speaker, and it's important that we get this right, because it is such a vital industry.

I'm going to speak a little bit about that consultation process. It has taken time to get this right, but we are at a point where I would say that there is a broad consensus that we are doing the right thing, that this is the right step to take. I would say that in this House we have a very happy situation of violent agreement—violent agreement, Speaker—that this is the right step to take, and also in the industry there is support.

Last fall, the government met with 25 key stakeholder groups and an expert advisory group in the construction industry to hear their feedback. We continued to work with that advisory group throughout the drafting of the legislation. In addition, the government requested feedback on Bill 142 in the summer and received a number of submissions with recommendations on how to improve the legislation, because we always want to make it as good as it can possibly be.

The review convened more than 30 meetings, attended by over 60 key interested stakeholders. There were many lively and spirited discussions, as one would hope with a bill of such importance. We also received over 70 written submissions, and the Attorney General met individually with over 30 different stakeholder groups. So we have done our homework to make sure that this bill is as strong as it can possibly be. It has taken us 34 years to

get to this point, and until now—and this is an important point, Speaker—no one has been able to achieve consensus on these proposed changes, and now we have achieved consensus.

We do have a broad consensus on three core issues of the review: that we are maintaining and modernizing the lien and holdback process; that we are establishing a new system for prompt payment; and that we are creating a targeted adjudication system to resolve disputes. There is, as I say, a broad consensus that these are the right steps to take.

Let me just read a few quotes from people who are supporting this. OSWCA, the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association, says that “Striking the Balance (the report) makes a number of recommendations that will (on paper) significantly improve the construction payment and construction lien processes in Ontario, if they are fully implemented.”

“The Surety Association of Canada enthusiastically supports the transition to digital bonding and has been instrumental in facilitating this transition. From a technical standpoint, there's good news. The technology to create, record, execute and deliver electronic bonds is readily accessible and there are a number of commercial-ly available electronic surety systems.”

Again from the Surety Association of Canada: “We sincerely appreciate your resolve in taking on this complex but critical initiative that is long overdue and will have a profoundly positive impact on the construction industry and the economy of our province. Again, I pledge the full support of the Surety Association of Canada.”

“The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers ... appreciates the opportunity to submit commentary to support the review and enhancement of Ontario's Construction Lien Act...”

“Minister, OSPE wishes to acknowledge your effort to ensure the proposed legislation is fair, balanced, and reflects a diverse array of perspectives by thoroughly consulting with industry and stakeholder groups.”

0920

Then they go on, and I'm very happy that they acknowledge the work of the “staff, the ministry, and Bruce Reynolds and Sharon Vogel for their thoughtful work on this significant piece of legislation. In the months and years ahead, Ontario's CLA will prove critical to our ability to capitalize on historic foreign, federal, and domestic investment in the brick and mortar projects that enable our provincial economy to flourish.”

The Ontario Road Builders' Association says it is “pleased to see the final report of the review of the Construction Lien Act and commends BLG and the ministry on this comprehensive work.”

The TTC—Speaker, I could go on and on with positive quotes supporting the assertion that there is broad support for this. And it's not just industry that supports this; there is support from labour as well.

I would like to read this into the record, just to remind people that even within this chamber this is a bill on which we have broad agreement.

The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington said the following: “I think we were at a place where we had a bill that industry was satisfied with, that the members of this Legislature are satisfied with. Although there are some improvements that could be made, it’s a good bill.” It’s not always that I find myself in agreement with the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, but this is one of those times where I completely agree with him.

We had further support from the NDP critic, the member for Timmins–James Bay. He said, “I just want to indicate that it’s something that we, as New Democrats, support. We have been pushing for it and we look forward for this process to continue ... and we can do it justice when it comes to prescribing a bill that is prescriptive, that is clear, that allows a mechanism to work that’s not going to be too onerous and that we have some sort of enforcement mechanism ... that works for people.” Again, I am in complete agreement with the member for Timmins–James Bay.

But there are other quotes that I would like to remind members of the House of. The member for Timmins–James Bay said, “I want to indicate that we have no interest, as a caucus, of holding up this debate for long.” So it sounds—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Could you repeat that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will repeat that: “I want to indicate that we have no interest, as a caucus, of holding up this debate”—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Then let’s negotiate—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, stop the clock. The member from Renfrew: You’d like to sit up here, or what?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Let the minister speak.

Go ahead.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry said, “We’re hoping that we don’t see this bill die again. The government talks about the need for this. The best way of showing that need is actually to move ahead with it and to see that this is one of the priorities.”

We have allowed the debate to continue when we’ve reached 6.5 hours of debate, but this bill has seen more than nine hours of debate. I think it’s time to move this to committee, so I move that the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Deputy Premier has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied 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 heard 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.”

I believe the ayes have it.

This will be voted on after question period.

Vote deferred.

FAIR WORKPLACES, BETTER JOBS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 POUR L’ÉQUITÉ EN MILIEU DE TRAVAIL ET DE MEILLEURS EMPLOIS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 3, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and to make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 148, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d’emploi et la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail et apportant des modifications connexes à d’autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: Good morning. I appreciate the opportunity to join in this debate of what the government has proposed as the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act.

Speaker, as you know, over the summer a number of us sat on the finance committee. I believe—I’m not sure if you and I were in Hamilton together or not. We heard directly from those in our communities and those impacted right across southern Ontario. Given the impacts we heard repeatedly indicated at the committee table, I really feel that it’s important to put some of those issues and impacts here today.

Speaker, I’ll start where much of the discussion has focused over the course of this debate:

- the, of course, serious impact of a 30% wage hike over a year and a half;

- this government’s refusal to provide an independent economic analysis to verify those impacts; and

- this government’s use of the minimum wage escalation as a cornerstone to drive negative reaction towards opposition.

Time and again at committee we heard the earnest pleas of small business owners indicating their concern for the rapid pace at which this government is proposing to force this 30% minimum wage hike onto their shoulders. It’s a weight that many admitted, regrettably, they will have difficulty in bearing.

I think of Little Short Stop Stores presenting in the committee hearings out in Kitchener–Waterloo. Little Short Stops may not be familiar to those outside of our area, but to those in Kitchener–Waterloo, Guelph and Cambridge, the Little Short Stops are mainstays of our communities—or what my kids like to call the “treat store”—a third-generation, family-owned chain of convenience stores providing everything you’d expect from your favourite corner store for almost 50 years, with 20 stores and over 230 employees.

As co-owner Jamie Arnold told us, Little Short Stops are not opposed to a minimum wage reaching \$15. They did question, “[H]owever, what would you do if you found out that your mortgage was going to increase 32% over the next 18 months? Your income hasn’t changed, most other expenses are increasing roughly with inflation, yet your single biggest expense is going to....” He then added, “Well, my mortgage is about to increase \$1.5 million in the form of payroll costs.”

As to what Little Short Stops plan to do to mitigate that hike, Mr. Arnold was clear:

“Step one: We will cut hours in our stores. Cutting hours is not creating jobs; cutting hours is cutting people. The first hours that will be cut will be our 24-hour shifts. Secondly, we’ll be forced to automate.” We already see that happening now; just go to a local McDonald’s or even to a movie theater.

They’ll have to look at health benefits: “We have a benefit plan that covers dental, drugs and health benefits that insures about 150 people as we speak. We simply cannot afford this ... plan.”

So that’s really what we’re talking about here: a 50-year-old, family-owned business forced to make choices that will hurt the very people this government has indicated they want to help with Bill 148.

The result, of course, is fewer jobs, fewer hours and fewer stores. Mr. Arnold’s request at the committee was simple: “[I]f we are going to a \$15 minimum wage, give us more time to get there. Eighteen months is dramatic and crushing. We believe a fair solution would be to continue the inflation-adjusted”—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It’s a little loud over there. Don’t look behind you. It’s right in front of you.

Hon. David Zimmer: Pay attention, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh, we’ve got a coach. Thank you. I don’t need any backseat drivers. Thank you, Mr. Zimmer.

Continue.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you. I do hope that the other side is paying much attention to this because I don’t think that they seemed to actually be paying attention during committee. We heard committee for two weeks right across the province. They said they’d be listening, but I’m just not sure if they actually did.

Where was I here? He talked about 18 months being dramatic and crushing. The same solution the Premier herself believed in just a few short months ago—in fact, it was just January that the Premier stated it very clearly. That’s likely, because as we’ve often heard from the Financial Accountability Office and the Toronto-Dominion Bank, the impact of this 18-month race to \$15 will be 50,000 minimum wage jobs. Of course, as I noted, we heard these same concerns at every stop of the committee.

I do remember the Premier saying—when she was asked back as early as January or February of last year, if she was going to agree to the \$15 minimum wage call, she said, “We’ve got a predictable plan or a predictable format already in place. We need to give those employers predictability.” She said no at that time. But, of course, do you know what’s happening next June? An election, of course: We know that that’s what really this is all about.

0930

Back in Kitchener, of course, it was later echoed in Hamilton when the Canadian Manufacturers and Export-

ers told us “a sudden escalation without corresponding growth in corporate revenues and profit could have significant unintended consequences, including loss of employment, loss of paid hours and a decrease in hiring under-represented groups in the workforce such as women and youth who typically start careers at those positions.”

That’s why we continue to call for that independent economic analysis, a very simple yet vital request given the concerns we heard and one that there should be no reason to ignore. Really, what is the fear from the government side? If the government is right, and the analysis shows that this rapid rise will help people and won’t impact job numbers, then we move ahead with blinders off. On the other hand, if the government is wrong and Toronto-Dominion, the Financial Accountability Officer and others are right about the unbearable impacts and job implications, then you go back to the drawing board, of course. I mean, even out in BC, the NDP have seen their way through to a more stable pace of increase.

The question remains as to, what is the government really afraid of? Could it be because they know once they open the cover of this book, the story will speak to the further implications we heard at committee of the series of other measures Bill 148 proposes to create “fair workplaces”? As the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce told us in Kitchener, “While the media concentrates on the \$15 an hour, and advocates of this bill concentrate on this, this is only the tip of the iceberg that will cause irreversible damage to Ontario’s economy.

“The more dramatic impact is the other 173 changes to the workplace environment outside of the minimum wage increase.”

Of course, we heard from businesses concerned with the emergency leave proposals. “Let’s look at the impact of a few items on ... businesses,” as the Cambridge chamber stated, “such as the personal emergency leave making it mandatory for 10 eligible days off, two of which must be paid, and the employer is no longer able to request medical verification. The costs to large employers would vary from \$1.25 million per year with 1,000 employees to \$11 million” a year for employees roughly around 9,000. This is an enormous change to employers.

As a local coffee shop owner wrote me, “As it currently stands, we cannot allow employees to collect this benefit after only eight days of employment ... that will bankrupt small business ... We had 356 sick days recorded by our employees in 2016.” That’s just one coffee shop. While Bill 148 would see the employer paying out for about 70 of those days, the curious thing is that this provision is completely absent from the government’s Changing Workplaces Review recommendations the Liberals have used as the basis, in fact, for Bill 148.

I do also want to mention, on that note, there were other deputations, of course. One that I think was glaring was that of one of our largest employers, Magna. I want to read a bit of Magna’s written submission. Of course, it didn’t get an opportunity to present at committee.

They go on by saying they “are one of Ontario’s largest and most successful private sectors employers, operating both unionized and non-union facilities. Magna’s annual payroll in Ontario is in the range of \$1 billion, and we invest approximately \$320 million ... annually into the Ontario economy in terms of capital investment and research.

“We also consider ourselves a very responsible employer. All of our employment and compensation practices meet and in most cases, are well in excess of Ontario’s regulatory requirements. We are proud to provide our employees with a competitive livelihood—and by sharing in the profits of our organization, each Magna team member is an important and valued stakeholder in our company.

“Having said all this, for the first time in our 60-year history we find ourselves in the very untenable position of questioning whether we will be able to continue to operate at historical levels in this province. Ontario has increasingly become a very challenging global jurisdiction in which to conduct business, and the recent policy direction of the Ontario government adds further to the already heavy regulatory burdens that exist here. These challenges include:

“—uncompetitive hydro costs;

“—increased payroll and pension costs;

“—cap-and-trade policies; and

“—some of the highest personal income tax rates in the G7.”

They go on by saying, “We believe the tipping point for Magna may well be the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017, the proposed labour and employment law reforms that are extremely one-sided in terms of their scope and impact on the Ontario business community.”

That’s a statement by Magna, and I think it’s gone unheard, clearly, by this government. Knowing that the compounding regulatory burden, high hydro—all these things are forcing jobs not into the province, but out.

I look forward to finishing my two-minute rebuttal. Thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to respond to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. I was part of the debate last night. I did a 10-minute hit, and I think it’s important to reiterate some of the points that I made last night.

This is about what type of a society and economy we want to live in and what our role is in facilitating that, and regulating it of course. Rightfully, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga referenced that we are in a globally competitive economy, but who, in fact, are we competing against?

At this point in time, auto manufacturers can set up in Ciudad Juárez and pay their workers \$2.50 an hour. Ciudad Juárez has an enormous amount of multinational corporations that have set up there for that reason, to be able to pay some of the lowest wages on the planet.

There is also a correlating demographic, or data set, that shows the rate of crime, specifically murder. Ciudad Juárez is one of the highest murder capitals on the planet. When you lower your standard of living, when you lower a person’s ability to earn a good wage and to live a decent life and when you lower the standard for your social services, it has a domino effect on a society. You’ve got drug cartels running that area and running rampant.

Is that what we want to compete with? Or do we focus, as an economy, on the good things that we’ve built together—our health care, our infrastructure, our education system—and focus on those as strategic incentives to entice business to come here? I think we can do that and I think that’s a better and more progressive path.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you for the opportunity to speak for a couple of minutes on this particular bill.

I just want to relate some of the conversations I’ve been having. Yes, I’ve met with a number of businesses and I’ve met with chambers—in some cases, they’re not happy—and we made some commitments.

But, Speaker, let me be clear: I spoke just recently to a fast food organization with multiple locations. Here is the discussion that happened over about two or three months, when I first met with them. They understand where government is going, they understand the social fabric of this province and of this country, and they’ve asked me to relay that we committed to some offsets to help the transition. He said, “That’s all I would ask for.”

Even more importantly, one of the grocery chains in my riding—I met with the owner about a month or a month and a half ago. It was his approach to me. He said, “Lou, I’m sure you folks are dealing with the fair minimum wage, that piece of legislation.” I said, “Of course.” I’m going to try to paraphrase what he told me. He has a couple hundred employees; it’s a big chain.

Speaker, what I would say to you is that he said, “What don’t people understand about disposable income? Disposable income is what the minimum wage is basically all about. People are going to spend that money as they get it. It’s going to be good for the economy. I might sell an extra loaf of bread”—or whatever that might be—“because now people can afford it.”

Frankly, he surprised me. But, frankly, I asked him, “Did you do the math?” His math was that if he raised food prices by one cent, he’d be able to accommodate the minimum wage requirement and he’d be able to give a raise to the folks who are already at that—plus it will leave some money for him.

So, there are some challenges. We’re dealing with them. Let’s get this done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We all understand the need to get to \$15, and all of the economists who have weighed in on this and all of the organizations continue to tell us, it’s the speed at which this government wants to get us there.

0940

You look at our own Financial Accountability Officer, who told us this is going to cost us, at a minimum, 50,000 jobs. We hear from the TD Bank, who have told us that it's an 80,000 to 90,000 job loss.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Why are people yelling across at each other and talking across the floor? The member from Barrie, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, and of course our favourite member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, have talked across the table. I would suggest that you go through the Chair, and if I hear any more—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And we're going to step it up for any backseat drivers, too. Okay? Thanks.

Continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I was talking about the Financial Accountability Office, which has given us a paper that told us 50,000 people are going to lose their job in Ontario. TD Bank came out and told us between 80,000 and 90,000 people are going to lose their job in Ontario. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce says it's 185,000. They all use a different timeline, which is why there are different numbers. But Speaker, all they're really talking about is not whether people are going to lose their job, but how many tens of thousands of people are going to lose their job because of this government. I don't know how you're going to look those people in the face in January—the tens of thousands.

Last week, when I gave my speech on this, I quoted Rahn Plastics in North Bay. I quoted a young woman who said she's already had her hours cut back because her boss was worried about how he's going to make payroll come January, so he's starting now. She's already worried that she's not going to have any hours come January because of this.

I hear what this government is saying, but Speaker, it's no good if you don't have a job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a pleasure to take my place and speak on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin.

We've been talking about this for a long time. Andrea, our leader for the NDP, has been out, our caucus members have been out talking about the need to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. It's nothing new to the areas that we have been speaking to, and that's across this province. It's the message that we've been carrying through.

Yes, we have heard from employers who are going to be having some difficulties, but if you bring this in without the supports that small businesses are absolutely going to need, then the challenges will be there.

My friend just spoke in regard to the job losses that are going to be happening across this province. Well, if I recall, in the last platform that the Conservatives were

bringing forward, they were going to cut 100,000 jobs across this province without the increase anyway. So if I'm going to look for advice, I'm going to look for a concrete plan that we've put forward.

Businesses are going to need help. They're going to need lower hydro prices in order to survive. They're going to need job-incentive programs. They're going to need tax cuts in order to build their business so that they can make the changes that they need in order to accommodate the economies that will be coming in the future.

In my area, many of the employers are already paying their employees \$15 an hour because it's difficult. I'm in a different challenge. In my area, particularly in the northern communities, there's plenty of work there. They're looking for labour. They're trying to pull them in. They've got jobs for them within the forestry sector, in the mining sector, and in the service sector. They're having a hard time getting people to come to northern Ontario, where there are good jobs. That's some of the challenges that we're facing in my area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Harris: I want to thank all those members who chimed in on this one.

Having only 10 minutes, I want to cap off with the fact that the government did go out and commission this lengthy workplaces review. It was funny, after you read it all, how many recommendations that were in the report either didn't make it into the bill or were frankly ignored. The biggest one was the minimum wage increase. The panel wasn't given that parameter off the top to review. When employers or labour groups wanted to provide feedback, those panelists said, "That is beyond the scope of our review" and would not allow that.

Of course, there's no recommendation for the card-based certification plan that will see businesses automatically certified upon 50% of employees signing union cards. In fact, review recommendation 144 specifically states, "The secret ballot process for certification should be preserved," provided that protections are put in place to remedy potential unlawful employer interference. As Magna noted in their submission, "a secret ballot vote is a basic principle upon which our democracy is based."

Also, a lot of other organizations noted the sharing of employee contact lists with prospective unions upon 20% support. As one employer wrote to me, "Does the push for a union by 20% of staff trump the privacy concerns of the remaining 80%?" Given the very real privacy questions employers noted at committee and through submissions, I look forward to the government's answers to address the potential imbalance and legal implications of these proposals.

Massive, sweeping labour changes here in the province, two weeks of committee, a lot of listening, but not a lot of action, frankly, from the government for what was heard. Thank you for your time—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It is our pleasure today to continue debate on Bill 148, the Fair Workplaces, Better

Jobs Act. We want to make sure that in this case, in this bill, we have a really fulsome debate, because it did take this government a long time to get to this place.

We had the labour minister set up the Employment Standards Act, where they had many, many consultations and then they came up, obviously, with their legislation. Then they toured the province in the summertime. Granted, I know we're not sitting in the House during the summer, but we were working in our ridings. I think a lot of people felt that they were on vacation, so the type of consultation—they really had to work around their schedules to make sure they could contribute to this bill during the summer. A lot of people had to do a lot of finagling around their summer vacations and their schedules to do that.

But in the end, it got done. The government did do a consultation in London specifically. There were many people who came and presented. Of course, there were labour groups and there were advocates—poverty advocates, housing activists—coming out to let people know that we need to change the minimum wage. People cannot live on the wages they have presently. This government did listen; in that particular part of it, they did listen and they changed the minimum wage to \$15.

Of course, there's debate between the Conservatives on whether or not this is the right thing to do, what we should do and how fast we should do it. One of the members recently spoke up and talked about how we are going to be losing jobs if the minimum wage is increased. But he seems to forget that under his leader Mr. Hudak, in 2014, they wanted to cut 100,000 jobs from the province, good-paying jobs that had benefits and retirement packages. They wanted to cut those jobs out of the province. When we hear that the Conservative are concerned that we're going to lose jobs, it's ironic, because they wanted to cut 100,000 jobs during the last election.

When this bill was first presented, I got a phone call. I got a phone call from Fanshawe College, from the broadcasting department there. A student reporter called me. At that point, we hadn't looked at the bill. We hadn't examined it, we hadn't reviewed the whole entirety of it, so I couldn't really express to her what would happen around student wages. That was something they were very concerned about. So I said, "We'll have to look at the bill when it comes out." Sure enough, I said, "I wouldn't be surprised if that won't be in the bill, but I can't confirm it at this time."

Now I can call her back. She hasn't called me to follow up, but I can certainly call her back and let her know that there is still a two-tier wage in place in this bill, paying servers in bars and restaurants substantially less than everyone else. Of course we know many part-time jobs, when students are attending college and university, are usually in the service industry. So it is tough. We know that students are struggling to make ends meet: rents are expensive; hydro is expensive, as the member from Algoma-Manitoulin pointed out; and since this Wynne government has been in power, there's been an increase in precarious work. There has been an

increase in people working multiple jobs just to pay their bills.

0950

I was speaking to someone just yesterday afternoon. The young woman here said that she's going to be leaving Queen's Park because she has another job in a restaurant in Toronto—and the member from Algoma-Manitoulin was with me at the time. She was expressing that she had to work two jobs to pay the bills. She works at the Spaghetti Factory, very hard, and then she comes here and she works in the dining room in the restaurant area, in the service part, at Queen's Park. She said, "You know, I have to work these two jobs to get by."

Having a minimum wage in that industry—these are the people who we are trying to help lift up out of poverty—to try to make their lives financially secure so that they can feel that they can continue to have a roof over their head and feed their children. So having the two-tier system is a disappointment when it comes to looking at the labour bill, and there are other things that are missing under this bill as well.

When we're talking about jobs, you can't help but think about the CAMI auto workers in Ingersoll who are on strike right now, because they are striking not just for themselves; they are striking for job security. One of the biggest premises that they are talking about is that they want to be the lead plant so that they always have one shift more than Mexico, because that will guarantee that the work stays here. These are good-paying jobs. They are jobs with benefits. I know single moms who work at CAMI, and they can afford to put their kids through school, have a mortgage and buy a car. But if we keep deteriorating the auto industry in this province, there won't be good jobs like this anymore.

I went to the picket line, and I saw the workers who were there. They are out there every day, 24 hours a day, in shifts, fighting for job security. They are not just protecting their jobs, as I mentioned before, but they are also protecting and fighting for what the result will be: the feeder jobs that come in to CAMI, the seats and any other car parts, that rely on making these products for CAMI. It's a trickle effect: They are going to have job security and so are those feeder plants. So it's thousands—literally, thousands—of jobs throughout Ontario.

It's really important, when we talk about this legislation—what's missing from that? We have CAMI that is on strike, fighting for job security. Some of the pieces that aren't in this legislation speak to not giving workers the opportunity to have a union in the workplace.

What's missing is that there's no card certification for all sectors of workers in this legislation. I mentioned before that students, interns and liquor servers aren't brought into parity with the minimum wage. There are no real paid sick days for personal emergency leaves. There's no sectoral bargaining for every sector. There's no explicit protection for employees from reprisals during the bargaining-unit-organizing campaign period. There's no meaningful definition of "employer" or a mechanism to enforce that employees aren't misclassified as "independent contractors."

So here we have the CAMI auto workers fighting for job security, making sure that, when our kids grow up, there will be places for them to get good-paying jobs and also have diversity in our job economy. Because we don't want just tech jobs. We don't want just manufacturing jobs. We don't want just farming and agriculture jobs. We want diversity. We want to make sure that we keep all those things in Ontario, because we know that, when an industry is struggling, there's a domino effect throughout. So having diversity and making sure that we keep our auto sector strong, cultivating our tech industry and building that up—we even want to make sure that, in the north, we have job security for the Ring of Fire. We have been fighting for that. What a game changer that would be, if there was the Ring of Fire in the north, to have that diversity in natural resources.

So, Speaker, it's not just the CAMI auto workers that we are saying need job security and need job protection. We think that everyone throughout Ontario should be experiencing and having the benefit of going to work every day, being able to make a living working 40 hours, and coming home and being able to support their family. When you can't do that, there's a serious problem, because then you have the haves and the have-nots, and that's no way to have a healthy society.

The member from Windsor-Essex talked about the society we want to build and the society we want to build for the future for our children. We acknowledge there are many people who are disadvantaged because they can't find work, for many reasons. Those things have to change. We have to make sure we open the door so that we have good-paying jobs for everyone who is looking, and then we have to make sure we build those opportunities for everyone to have the same level playing field when they access a job, and make sure that it's a safe work environment for everyone as well.

I look forward to further debate on this bill. I hope the government is going to allow a robust debate and exchange of ideas and not just the Conservatives focusing on one part of this bill. There is so much more to this bill to make sure that when you go to work, you get equal pay for the job that you're doing to the person beside you. Equal pay for equal work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: You know, Speaker, after 14 years of Liberal good governance and good public policy, I am pleased to stand up and defend yet another excellent bill, a bill that is about fairness, a bill that is about sharing Ontario's economic prosperity.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in my riding, Bill 148 has been embraced by my constituents. Whether it is on Lolita avenue, where I have all of these rental buildings with a lot of newcomers who live there—I have canvassed door to door in those buildings, and I can tell you this: When I tell them that we are raising the minimum wage, all I hear is, “When does it happen? When does it kick in?”

Here is the interesting thing. I have also received my share of calls from business, and it has never been about

the minimum wage, because most of the businesses in my riding say that they are already paying the minimum wage. But there had been some misinformation around scheduling, some misunderstanding. When I was able to sit down across the table and explain to them what the intention of the bill was, whether it was sick leave, paid sick leave, whether it was around how you don't need the doctor's certificate anymore if you're off sick, whether it was around scheduling—once I sat and explained to them, they went away saying it's a fairly reasonable business proposal that we have put forward.

I think the thing that gives me the most confidence is that this morning and yesterday afternoon, I heard the PCs saying that this is all terrible, and then I heard the NDP saying we are not going far enough. So when I hear one opposition party say that we're going too far and the other opposition party saying we are not going far enough, I get the sense that we are hitting just the sweet spot.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to actually stand and make comment on Bill 148. This is the bill that amends the Employment Standards Act. I only have a couple of minutes, so I want to hit the highlights of what I have really heard all summer as this bill went out in committee, but also as I went around and spoke to my business owners, the employers in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

We have heard the reports from the Financial Accountability Officer of 50,000 job losses associated—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minimum.

Ms. Laurie Scott: —minimum—with increasing the minimum wage to \$15 so quickly. I think it's the speed with which this is going on. I have a lot of small businesses; 95% of them are the job creators in our area. The chamber in Haliburton did its own study, and they figure over 200 job losses just in the Haliburton county area. Now, they are very concerned, the businesses there. They are very seasonal. The fish and chips spot, Baked and Battered, wrote letters to the editor. They said they work at a loss all winter, but they keep their employees full time because they want them to have full-time jobs. They say, “I'm not going to be able to stay open this winter.” In fact, I think they are officially announcing that.

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Their employees are devastated. When I spoke to them, they realized that—up in Haliburton county especially, it's very seasonal—their employers run at a loss in the wintertime to keep them employed, and they appreciate that. You get that from restaurant owners, especially up in the seasonal areas, but all across the riding.

Really, when the government says they hit the right spot, I would say the government is actually harming the people it purports to help by doing this increase so quickly. You have to be very, very cautious of that balance.

That's all the time I have, but I hope to go on later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: My team always prepares some footnotes and articles for me, and this one is so appropriate this morning. I want to highlight a sawmill, the White River sawmill: “The lumber mill took on the challenge laid down by Resolute Forest Products, who donated a” full “railcar of lumber after Hurricane Harvey ravaged the city.” What White River did is they sent out \$20,000 worth of lumber to help out the communities that have been devastated. That’s the CEO of that company, Frank Dottori. The mill is privately owned. It’s operated by Pic Mobert First Nation and the White River Economic Development Corp. A big shout-out to them for having done that.

Here’s the other problem in White River: In that community, you have restaurants, you have hotels, you have grocery stores, and because of the success of this company and the recent success of the new mine that is opening in that community, most of the businesses that are there are already paying or looking to attract employees at \$15 an hour. They won’t be able to attract anybody else to come into the community. One of their biggest challenges that they have is, “Where are we going to put these people?” They have housing shortages.

The point I’m trying to make is, when you are bringing in the \$15—which has been a consistent message from the NDP for a very long time—you have to bring in all the other programs which will help small business, which will help the grocery store, which will help that hotel find the workers that they need, which will, hopefully, build their economy, which, luckily, they are.

But if we keep throwing sticks in their wheels with higher hydro bills, further taxation on them and always looking at creating hardship for them in growing their economies, we’re going to be back here debating other bills at another time. There are opportunities here to really let it grow. Let it grow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I’m pleased to stand in support of Bill 148 at this time. As I have said before, there have been people quoted on TV. A young woman who has two degrees, who is working three part-time jobs, still has to live with her parents. She said she would be able to, with the raise in the minimum wage, probably give up one, maybe two of those jobs and search for work in her chosen field. She might be able to move out of her parents’ place and have a life of her own. I think there are a lot of people who are like that.

This morning on Breakfast Television—there has been a study done about how much money it takes to thrive—not just to live, but to thrive—if you live in the GTA, particularly more in downtown Toronto. The amount is \$50,000 to \$70,000 in order to have proper housing, some kind of entertainment, some kind of good diet—\$50,000 to \$70,000. The people who make minimum wage right now make about \$21,000, if they have 40 full hours a week.

This is ridiculous. It’s time for us to change that. People have the right to have a decent life in Ontario, in Canada. We are not a Third World country. We need to pay people properly. I fully endorse this bill. In here, some of the opposition stand up and say that they’re okay with the minimum wage, but they want it to come in more slowly. If you look in press releases and things like that in their own ridings, it is not what they say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from London–Fanshawe has two minutes.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’d like to start by acknowledging the speakers—Mississauga East–Cooksville, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Algoma–Manitoulin and the member from Barrie—for their comments on this debate.

There have been labour groups and labour activists talking to members of this House. I’m sure the Conservatives have met with them. I know the Liberals have, as well as the NDP. They’ve been talking about changing the minimum wage for a very, very long time. So it has been in the works; the discussions have been there for a few years. Yes, it’s going to happen quickly, but I don’t think it’s come as a surprise.

As I mentioned before, the Employment Standards Act had held consultations, I think for almost a year—short of a year—about the very issues in the labour market that needed to be changed. Some of the legislation that’s here is doing a little better in the workplace. It’s certainly helping the workers.

As the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville talked about, by communicating to businesses what’s in the bill and how it works, I think more people would be at ease. There is a contentious portion in the bill about the \$15 and the rapid speed that it’s coming, but the member from Algoma–Manitoulin makes good points in the sense that we have to give incentives for employers in order to maybe offset that increase.

One legislation that’s coming up in the House is the Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, so maybe there are other areas where we can help businesses continue to employ people in the community. We know that small businesses are the heart of our—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. I’ve got a standing conversation with three people going on when someone’s speaking. Why can’t you take it outside? Why do you have to yell from four seats over and talk when you can go sit beside each other? I don’t get it.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don’t need any comments from the minister, either.

Okay.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Barrie likes to get in on it, too. I think it’s going to slowly go towards severe measures. I’ve just about had it. Finish up. Thanks.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I know this side of the House respects the rules. When we speak, we shouldn't be back-talking to the Speaker. We should be listening and then just debating our bills, because that's what we're here to do.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill 148, the labour bill.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1008 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to introduce to the Legislature the president and chief executive officer of Ontario Shores, Karim Mamdani, and Andrea Marshall and Chris Bovie from his excellent communications staff. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Fraser: In honour of Mental Illness Awareness Week, we have the CEOs of Ontario's four mental health hospitals visiting Queen's Park today. Please join me in welcoming Catherine Zahn, president and CEO of the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health; Karim Mamdani, president and CEO of Ontario Shores; George Weber, president and CEO of the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre; and Carol Lambie, the president and CEO of Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to introduce staff from the Ontario Forest Industries Association: Jamie Lim, Lauren McBride and Ian Dunn; as well as Erik Holmstrom from Weyerhaeuser, chair of the OFIA; Dana Shaw from Shaw lumber, a family-run company that has operated in this province since 1847; Ailbe Prendiville from Kenora Forest Products; Marc Pinette and Sylvain Levesque from Georgia-Pacific; Malcolm Cockwell and Greg Stafford from Haliburton Forest; Roger Barber and Georjann Morriveau from Resolute Forest Products; Dan Bowes from Columbia Forest Products—they took me on a tour this summer; Tom Darechuk from Longlac and Nakina Lumber Inc.; and Jamie McRae from McRae Lumber Co. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd also like to welcome the OFIA here today, as well as the Ontario Community Newspapers Association, something they have in common.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to introduce some guests of mine who are in the east lobby today: Mrs. Balwinder Sinha, who is my first cousin and a very renowned doctor in her region in India; and Jagwinder Kaur Deol, another cousin of mine, who is visiting us from the USA, along with her husband, Manjit Singh Deol. Mr. Deol is an engineer and a retired wing commander from the Indian Air Force.

Mr. Speaker, I want to extend them a very warm welcome to the Legislature. I am sure that they will enjoy the question period and the hopefully pleasant exchange back and forth between the members.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Mae Vaivods and Debbie Noble, from the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, in the west gallery. Welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: First: happy mental health week. On this note, I would like to welcome Dr. Catherine Zahn, president and CEO of CAMH; Karim Mamdani, president and CEO of Ontario Shores; George Weber, president and CEO of the Royal Ottawa; and Carol Lambie, president and CEO of Waypoint. They're making their way to the gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: On behalf of my colleague the MPP for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, I am happy to acknowledge that there is family of page Michael Arruda here today: his parents, Helene and Jesse Arruda, and grandparents Michael and Mary McConell. They are, I think, in the Speaker's gallery, if not the public gallery, this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would also like to welcome to Queen's Park today, from my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, here with the OFIA: Dana Shaw from Shaw lumber and Jamie McRae from McRae Lumber.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I also want to welcome members from Professional Engineers Ontario. Please welcome Bob Dony, who's the president of PEO; Dave Brown, president-elect of PEO; Darla Campbell, who is the PEO government liaison committee chair; and, of course, everyone's friend, Howard Brown, is in the House. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Today's page captain is Charlotte Sellner. With her today in the members' gallery is her mother, Lori Marshall; her father, Robert Sellner; aunts Janet Lala, Yvonne Griggs and Mary Becker; uncle Andrew Griggs; and cousin Alison Griggs. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to welcome the Ontario Forestry Industries Association staff today, with Jamie Lim, president and CEO; Lauren McBride and Ian Dunn; as well as members of their board who are spread between the east and west gallery this morning; Erik Holmstrom from Weyerhaeuser and chair of OFIA; Dana Shaw from Shaw lumber, a family-run company that has operated in this province since 1847; Ailbe Prendiville from Kenora Forest Products; Marc Pinette and Sylvain Levesque from Georgia-Pacific; Malcolm Cockwell and Greg Stafford from Haliburton Forest; Roger Barber and Georjann Morriveau from Resolute Forest Products; Dan Bowes from Columbia Forest Products; Tom Darechuk from Longlac and Nakina Lumber Inc.; and Jamie McCrae from McRae Lumber Company. Thank you very much for joining us at Queen's Park today.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I see my friend Nicole Loreto from the Royal Ottawa is here today, and I know George Weber, who is their CEO. I welcome them to Queen's Park for mental health awareness week.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome students, teachers and parent volunteers from Montcrest School in my riding to the Legislature today—and also former Speaker David Warner.

Mr. Mike Colle: I would like to welcome a constituent of mine who is shadowing me today here at Queen's Park. He's a student from the great school of Forest Hill Collegiate in Eglinton-Lawrence, Brandon Brock. I welcome Brandon here.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: A fine example of women in the field of engineering is here with us today: Darla Campbell is here, from the Professional Engineers of Oakville.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the Older Women's Network here to Queen's Park today with their Living in Place campaign. I'm looking forward to spending some time with them.

Also, from the Ontario Community Newspaper Association, I have Gord Cameron here, who runs the local newspaper in my riding. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome two guests to the House, Bruce and Sheila Davis from the great municipality of Brighton in the riding of Northumberland-Quinte West. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I also want to introduce a very good friend of mine who is here, who is also a constituent and works with the Royal Ottawa hospital. Please welcome Nicole Loreto.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I just noticed that Abbas Homayed, the publisher from sudbury.com and Northern-Life, and a great, great community member of Sudbury, is here in the gallery today. Please help me welcome him here.

Mr. Todd Smith: I see Bruce Davis has already been introduced. Bruce was the past executive director at Trenval, growing jobs in the Quinte region for 30 years. We welcome Bruce here.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am waving to Carol Coiffe, who is in the gallery. I'm afraid I don't know the group that she is here with, but whatever that group is, they're advocating for something really important. Carol Coiffe is one of the world's fine human beings and a member of our church. We love you. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I'd like to welcome constituent Colleen Green, who is at Queen's Park today with the Ontario Community Newspapers Association, as well as Raymond Chokelal and Brian Ruck, who are here today from Professional Engineers Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I also wanted to introduce some friends who will shortly be making it into the House. Please welcome James Witherspoon, Allison Magee and Madison Jager, but most importantly, Sarah Magee, who is my director of operations and is getting married this Sunday. I want to congratulate her and welcome her to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to welcome Suzanne Kavanagh here. She is with the Older Women's Network advocating for Living in Place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is the tradition of the Speaker, a former member is in the House in the public gallery: From Scarborough-Ellesmere in the 30th,

31st, 33rd, 35th Parliaments, and Speaker in the 35th, David Warner is here. Thank you, David.

1040

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: special report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The OEB smacked down Hydro One's outrageous executive salaries. In that ruling, they said Ontario shouldn't be on the hook for what they called "unreasonably high" compensation.

Interjections.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I hear some members of the government laughing at this. It's not a laughing matter.

This confirms what we've been saying all along: Hydro One salaries are out of touch. A \$4.4-million salary for the CEO of Hydro One is absolutely unreasonable. The CEO makes 10 times what the CEOs make in other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier rein in these salaries? Will she bring them in line with other provinces? Yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy will want to comment on the specifics of this, but just to be clear, what was being said on this side of the House as the Leader of the Opposition was asking his question is that we're actually—no one was laughing. In fact, it was just a statement that the system is working. This is exactly the OEB's role.

As I said, the minister will speak to the details, but what we know is that people across this province have seen on average a 25% reduction in their electricity bills; in some of the rural communities, up to a 40% to 50% reduction.

We knew that there was a challenge for many people in the province because of all of the investments that we had had to make to rebuild the electricity system. We've reduced those costs, and as I said, the OEB has a job to do and they are doing it. The system is working.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Liberals were willing to back up a Brinks truck to the Hydro One executive office suite. They created a millionaire's club—a millionaire club of Hydro One executives—and, frankly, the increases are only stopping because the opposition brought it to light.

Mr. Speaker, we still know only about a handful of these million-dollar salaries because the government has

kept these salaries secret. They've removed them from the sunshine list.

It's time to change this back, so a very specific question for the Premier: Will the Premier commit to releasing the salaries of all the high-priced executives at Hydro One? Once again, yes or no? Please don't pass the buck.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: When it comes to Hydro One salaries, Mr. Speaker, it is now a publicly traded company, as the opposition well knows, and decisions over compensation are not made directly by the government.

But what's interesting is, just last week, that party was actually complaining about the decision of the OEB. This week, they're liking the decision of the OEB. That is why this is a quasi—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Put an end to the interruptions, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: That is why the OEB is a quasi-judicial organization and our economic regulator, because they have the best interests of consumers as their mandate. That's why this shows that the system is working. They recognize that they are going to continue to find ways to protect consumers with this, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to adding more in the supplementary.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: I can't get a commitment to return million-dollar hydro executives back to the sunshine list. They dodge and deflect that question.

But the Minister of Energy wants to talk about what happened last week, and I welcome that, Mr. Speaker, because guess what happened last week? Rates are still going up. Another rate hike; it's unbelievable.

It turns out these investments the minister always claims were made into the system were actually just contracts handed out to Liberal-friendly firms. The system is still in desperate need of repair. Why is this government spending \$5.5 million on vanity ads telling people rates are going down, when we just found out last week that rates are going up again? Can we please have an answer to that?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: So let's talk about what's coming down: 25% on everyone's bill is coming down, thanks to this government and with no support from the opposition.

Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker: We've made sure we're holding the rates to inflation. There will be nothing more than inflation. When we're talking about Hydro One's draft rate order, it's estimated that the bill impact for 2017 would be an increase—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order. He knows why.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault:—would be a bill increase of 0.1% and 0.2% for 2018.

That said, let me remind the opposition that the fair hydro plan has lowered bills by 25% on average per household and for over 500,000 small businesses and farms right across the province. We'll continue to do what's right for the people—

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

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the President of the Treasury Board said that she doesn't agree that the advertising the government has introduced is partisan. The Auditor General has explicitly stated otherwise. Why does the government continue to challenge the independent Auditor General?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the President of the Treasury Board will want to comment in the supplementary. But I would just remind the Leader of the Opposition that we are the only jurisdiction in the country that has legislation that puts any constraints around advertising. The constraints that are in place demand that the legislation not be partisan.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's a lot lighter than it used to be before you got your hands on it.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just remind the member from Nipissing, who I think it was shouting out there, that what used to be in place was advertising that had the face of the Premier, the former Conservative Premier, on government advertising. That is partisan advertising. Nothing like that happens. There are strict rules in place. We're the only jurisdiction that has rules around partisan advertising. Other jurisdictions look to us for what we have done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The only jurisdictions looking at Ontario are for ways to abuse government advertising, because they have become the experts on it. The government's bulk media increase this year—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Come to order. Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The numbers don't lie. The government's bulk media buy increased from \$25 million last year to \$57 million this year. That's quite an increase, more than double, and that's unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, directly to the Premier: Did the government only massively increase government advertising to suit their own re-election? Will the Premier finally acknowledge that it's not right to use taxpayer dollars to campaign? Enough waste of taxpayer dollars.

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have been very clear that the advertising that is put into the public realm is

about giving people information. It's about giving people information about programs, about changes that are being made.

It's interesting: The Leader of the Opposition sat in Mr. Harper's caucus, I think for nine years. I seem to remember Canada's Economic Action Plan ads all over the country. I don't remember hearing a voice from the backbench saying that he didn't think that was acceptable.

The reality is that we are putting information into the public realm, giving people a way to get more information on free tuition, on reduced electricity bills. They will get more information on free medication for their young people from zero to their 25th birthday. That's all information people in this province need and want.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
Interjections.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Premier just spoke about how she used to criticize government advertising. Sadly, she has become what she has criticized. Frankly, she has now abused it to a greater level—

Interjections.

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Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, sadly, the Premier has become what she once criticized, but to a greater extent than we have ever, ever seen, taking government advertising from \$25 million to \$57 million in an election year. Does the Premier think the public is stupid, that we don't see this?

They're using government advertising to campaign. The Auditor General says it's partisan. Everyone says it's partisan, but the Premier says trust her; don't trust the Auditor General. Mr. Speaker, I'm on the side of the Auditor General.

Will the Premier do the right thing and abandon these partisan ads?

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Just because you yell it doesn't make it true.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The Minister of Economic Development and Growth will come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would like to repeat what I said at estimates about a dozen times, and apparently your representatives at estimates didn't report that to the Leader of the Opposition.

In a line called "bulk media buy," which is a line in the Treasury Board estimates, it is true that it started out last fiscal 2016-17 at \$25 million, but shortly after the beginning of the year, we consolidated into that line advertising budgets from a number of other ministries, meaning that the actual amount of that line was \$50 million. This year it's \$56 million, and the reason for that

increase is the increased cost of translating to make sure all Ontarians can get the information, to make sure we comply with the disability act so that people who have visual or hearing disabilities can get the information, and to make sure that we can include digital advertising. The increase—

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question est pour la première ministre. There is an overcrowding and hallway medicine crisis in Ontario hospitals. The Premier knows it, her Minister of Health knows it and the good people of Ontario, who are forced to get medical treatment in overcrowded hospitals, also certainly know it.

The Liberals think that shortchanging hospitals by \$300 million in this year's budget and thinking about opening 150 interim beds in Toronto will solve the problem. This is not so, Speaker; this is not true.

Is the Premier purposefully ignoring the magnitude of this crisis, or is she really that out of touch with what's going on in our hospitals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will want to comment, but let's be clear: In our budget this year, there was over \$500 million—half a billion dollars—in additional funding for hospitals. We recognized that there needed to be an injection of funding into hospitals, and that was part of a \$7-billion increase in health care funding over the next seven years.

We recognize that hospitals have challenges, but to the point that the member opposite raised about the opening of beds in a facility that had been shut down, it's intriguing to me that the NDP wouldn't see that if there is a challenge—and this is about the flu season; this is about an anticipated increase in patients—they wouldn't see that solving that problem would be a good thing to do. That's what we are doing: We are solving a problem that is imminent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital reached a capacity of 123% in January 2017. Just so you know, Speaker, 80% capacity is the maximum that experts consider safe for a hospital.

Is this enough to convince the Premier that she and her Liberal government must act now to stop this crisis from getting any worse?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I just had a look at the occupancy rate for Tillsonburg, the most recent data. Unless the member opposite somehow magically has data different than or more recent than what is published by the ministry, from April to June of this year they were below capacity.

In fact, the member knows that the vast majority of hospitals across this province are below and often

substantially below capacity. But it continues to boggle my mind that this party would somehow oppose the proposal coming from half a dozen hospitals in the northern part of the GTA to open up 150 beds to relieve pressure on those hospitals, to take non-acute patients into a more appropriate transitional rehabilitative environment, which is better for them and addresses the capacity—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, only the NDP would ask us to increase hospital capacity and then oppose those very proposals that are aimed to increase capacity.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Between January and May of 2017, Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital's occupancy rate for its acute-care beds stayed above 112% at all times. I will send the FOI document over to the minister. This is five long months straight where the good people of Tillsonburg were forced to receive medical care from a hospital that is operating above safe capacity limits.

Front-line staff and hospital administrators are doing everything they can, but they need help, Speaker. Will the Premier do the right thing, admit that there is a crisis and finally make sure that our hospitals have the resources that they need to offer the best care possible to Ontario's families?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I would propose that half a billion dollars to our hospitals this year and half a billion dollars in additional funds to our hospitals last year is addressing the challenge that the member opposite is talking about.

They voted against our budget that included \$24 million specifically to address capacity and wait times across the hospital system. But it's not surprising, Mr. Speaker, when they had a minister of cuts proposed in the last election to cut \$600 million from health and education—for a government, when they were in government—for a short time only, fortunately—that closed almost 10,000 hospital beds, including 13% of all the mental health beds in this province and 24% of the acute-care beds. They delisted home care. They decreased the hospital budget in their last year of government. They reduced the number of drugs paid for by the public formulary. That's their record. I'm not taking any lessons or advice from them.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Start the clock. New question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. This morning we learned that three long-term-care homes in Ontario have been ordered to stop accepting new residents. The conditions in these homes

are horrific. Complaints range from inappropriate food and severe understaffing to violence in one home that went unreported to police for days. Seniors in London, Mississauga and Fergus deserve better than this. The Minister of Health himself said that there was "risk of harm to the residents' health or well-being" in these homes. That's what's happening in these homes right now.

It's all well and good to stop new admissions, but can the Premier tell these families what her plan is for vulnerable seniors who are already in care at these homes and who are being forced to live with these atrocious conditions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I said this yesterday: I take my responsibilities very, very seriously when it comes to individuals in this province whose home is in a long-term-care home, Mr. Speaker. That's why it is completely unacceptable that these operators are not meeting the province's standards, that they're not following the act that applies to them. That's why I issued the three cessations of admission to these homes, because they are not complying.

But it's important to recognize the vast majority of long-term-care homes in this province are complying fully with the act, many of them going beyond the act and providing that important, safe, high-quality care to the residents of their homes.

It's also important to recognize that our inspection system—which is an annual system in which every single long-term-care home in the province is inspected on an annual basis—is actually seeing results. In fact, this is proof that we are able to identify the poor operators and act accordingly.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The wait-list for long-term care in Ontario tops 30,000 people, yet the Premier seems content with the status quo. She seems content to just stop admissions to the worst homes and ignore the fact that the wait-list is growing and conditions across the province are worsening.

We are going in the wrong direction on seniors' care in Ontario. Instead of improving care and opening new homes to meet the huge demand, we are allowing heartbreaking conditions to become the new normal and doing nothing about the wait-list. How can the Premier hear the stories coming out of these homes this morning and not expand the Wettlaufer inquiry to include a broad look to address the systemic problems in long-term-care homes?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I categorically reject the perspective of the member opposite. Once again, as with the previous question, I'm confounded by the NDP. Do they or do they not want us to crack down on those long-term-care homes that are repeatedly violating the act and the orders which are applied by my inspectors in my ministry? This is precisely, again, what I would expect

they would support, that if we find operators that are not complying with the act—and these are particularly egregious examples, when you look at some of the orders that were issued against these homes—we feel that it's entirely appropriate. It builds a stronger system and it sends a message not only to all the long-term-care homes across the province that this kind of behaviour is unacceptable, but it reinforces to Ontarians what is the case in the vast majority of long-term-care homes: that they are safe and they are secure and it is their home.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I can't believe this minister categorically denies that there are systemic problems in long-term care. Our parents and our grandparents deserve better than what the Liberal government seems to accept as good-quality care. They deserve to have a shower, to have help brushing their teeth, to eat good-quality food that helps them stay healthy. They deserve to live with dignity and respect.

These issues in the long-term-care system are systemic. It's more than just three homes with terrible care. This is not a question of rooting out a few bad apples. We need a find-and-fix approach to our long-term-care system.

Will the Premier finally admit that violence, short staffing and poor care are not just one-time occurrences in these homes and expand the Wettlaufer inquiry to look at all the issues that we know are going on in almost every long-term-care home across Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I find it remarkably irresponsible for the member to assert that in nearly every long-term-care home in this province, these occurrences are happening. I think it's outrageous, I think it contributes to fearmongering, and it's consistent with the line that they've been taking across the board in disparaging and denigrating our health care system.

We have one of the best health care systems in the world, and I will defend that to the end. I know that there are challenges, including in our long-term-care homes—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's not fair to the families. It's not fair to frail seniors to instill fear in them that the home that they live in is somehow providing less than the highest quality of care. And we will crack down—

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's not fair that you're ignoring them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor West will come to order.

New question.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. As the minister knows,

the forestry sector directly employs 57,000 people, mostly in northern Ontario. Forestry provides almost one in five jobs in the north.

We have seen what happens when mills close: Communities become ghost towns.

Speaker, the forestry sector and northern Ontario breathed a sigh of relief when the minister announced she would delay the posting of the draft species-at-risk guidelines this summer. Will the minister commit here today to real consultations with northern communities, indigenous communities and the forestry sector, and to share with those groups the government's socio-economic analysis before moving forward with the species-at-risk guidelines?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I was delighted to meet with members of the OFIA and their members this morning. This is an important sector to the province of Ontario. Over \$15.5 billion worth of economic activity provides good-paying direct and indirect jobs to 172,000 people across the country, in over 260 communities. Our government has come alongside this industry to ensure that it's going to be thriving into the future.

At the same time, I also know that northern mayors, communities and First Nations leaders take their environmental stewardship and the protection of endangered species seriously. They live it and breathe it every day.

We are continuing to work to find a solution that protects species at risk in their habitat, minimizes impacts on forest operations and wood supply, and continues to provide economic benefits to the people of Ontario. We continue to engage with all of our partners and our indigenous communities to find a path forward to ensure that we can protect species at risk—

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

Supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: Back to the minister: Northern Ontario is facing huge challenges in keeping and attracting working-age people, in part because the area is losing jobs. The minister has the power to do something to help the people of northern Ontario. The species-at-risk guidelines need to take into consideration not only the animals that live in the north, but the people, their lifestyles and their ability to make a livelihood.

This government claims to be worried about precarious employment—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of municipalities.

Mr. Norm Miller: —but your own policies are creating precarious employment in the north. One mill manager told me he has hunted and fished—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Municipal Affairs, second time.

Finish, please.

Mr. Norm Miller: One mill manager told me he has hunted and fished in the area for more than 20 years and he's never seen a caribou or any sign of them. Yet the ministry wants the forest managed for caribou that aren't

there. Since moose and caribou don't live in the same habitat, creating caribou habitat would drive moose out of the area, moose that are part of the local way of life.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister recognize today that people live in the north as well and that they should be valued?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: We continue to engage with our industry partners and with First Nations—including the federal and provincial ministers of forestry—across the province not only to ensure that we can protect our caribou species, but also recover them. It's at that recovery program that we are now taking a second look. We've put a pause on any further posting to ensure that we have the science right and that we continue to engage with all of our partners across Canada to make sure that we get this file right.

But I don't take lessons from the opposition member. The Conservatives do not support forestry in Ontario. Our government has provided over \$74 million this year for forest roads funding. Under the PCs, forest access roads were completely downloaded to the forest industry. The forest industry sector was abandoned—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I stand; you sit.

New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Last week, the Ontario Energy Board released a preliminary decision on Hydro One's transmission rate increase. The OEB gave Hydro One nearly everything it asked for, and we remain on track for a huge jump in transmission rates next year.

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The OEB said that these rate increases were being driven in part by executive compensation, but then it approved 96.5% of Hydro One's compensation costs. Last year, the CEO of Hydro One—the privatized Hydro One—collected six times the salary of the previous CEO. Does the Premier think that ratepayers should feel grateful that the OEB trimmed back this sort of executive greed by a mere 3.5%?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, let me reiterate: Depending on Hydro One's draft rate order, it's estimated that the bill impact for 2017 would be an increase of 0.1%, and 0.2% for 2018.

That said, our fair hydro plan has lowered bills by 25% on average. This is the single largest rate reduction in the province's history, which both opposition parties voted against, I might add.

When it comes to executive compensation, I understand that people are concerned when they hear that number, but Hydro One is now a publicly traded com-

pany and decisions over compensation are not made directly by the government. But they have become a better-run company. That executive has found \$75 million in savings. They brought forward a voluntary ban on the winter disconnection program; they ended it. They are becoming a better-run company, and that's exactly why they have that executive in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Taking out a huge loan to drive down rates is not a credible strategy.

The Premier promised that a privatized Hydro One would mean lower rates, not higher. Her hand-picked privatization guru said that “private sector discipline” would drive down costs and rates for consumers. Instead, “private sector discipline” means a CEO salary that is six times what the previous CEO earned. “Private sector discipline” means a huge increase in transmission rates for next year, plus another huge increase in distribution rates that Hydro One is also demanding.

Will the Premier finally admit that her “private sector discipline” simply means more private profits for her private sector friends?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Let's be clear: Hydro One R1 and R2 customers are seeing a 40% to 50% reduction in their bills. I know he doesn't like to talk about that or even look at that because he voted against—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: On top of the 40% to 50% reduction that Hydro One R1 and R2 customers are seeing now thanks to this government, let's talk about how they've become a better-run company with many other things that they've put in place.

They've actually introduced more active customer communication, calling customers directly with issues. They're giving customers choice with billing cycles, helping them to better manage their bills. They've introduced e-billing and are working towards mobile billing. They're ending the practice of security deposits for new customers and, of course, as I said before, introducing a voluntary ban on winter disconnections.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question this morning is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Providing all Ontarians with timely access to the care they need, whether at home, in their community or in one of our outstanding hospitals, is of the utmost importance to our government, but also to me as the member for Davenport.

Over the past 14 years, Ontario's health care system has improved tremendously. We've increased our investments in health each and every year, allowing us to treat more patients, provide better care and reduce wait times to some of the shortest in the country.

More than a million more Ontarians and 94% of all Ontarians now have access to a primary care provider. We've gone from worst to first for reducing wait times,

including hip and knee replacements, cataracts, cardiac care, radiation oncology, MRIs, CT scans and ultrasounds, as noted by the Wait Time Alliance.

I know that our government has increased funding for health care by \$23 billion since 2003. Can the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care please inform this House of the achievements our government has proudly made?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. Because we are in the middle of Mental Illness Awareness Week, I want to not only acknowledge that and how critically important our supports for those who are suffering from mental illness are—and the fact that there can be no health without mental health. It's that important. I want to acknowledge and celebrate and thank the mental health leaders. Many of our mental health leaders are here with us today.

We have increased funding, every single year we've been in office, to the health sector. We're building on these important investments by increasing investments in hospitals, in long-term-care homes, in home care, in community care, in mental health—and that includes the investment this year and last year of \$1 billion added to the operating costs of our hospitals and \$20 billion over the next decade in capital investments.

We'll continue to make the investments required to ensure that—as third parties are telling us—we have one of the best health care systems in the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Minister, for setting the record straight in this House. I know health care is a top priority for our government, and I'm pleased to know of the great investments that we're making in our province's hospitals.

But I also know that our government is doing more than just investing in hospitals. Our government has made a commitment to providing Ontarians with the support that they need to create a truly accessible, integrated health care system for all Ontarians.

Can the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care please inform this House of the investments the government is making to expand accessible care for all Ontarians going forward?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, 14 years ago, during their tenure, the PCs closed 10,000 hospital beds. During their tenure in the 1990s, the NDP closed 9,645 hospital beds. In the last several years, we have added to the complement of acute-care beds by nearly 1,000—in just the last several years.

Since 2003, the number of physicians has grown by more than 6,000. In fact, it's growing at three or even four times the rate of population growth currently. We have 28,000 more nurses, including 11,000 more RNs. That includes 2,642 additional nursing positions created over the last year alone. I think we can all agree that even that one statistic is a remarkable achievement, given that the previous PC government fired 6,000 nurses.

TREE PLANTING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. The minister has an-

nounced that, as of this time next year, she's closing the Ontario Tree Seed Plant in Angus. I want to quote from an October 2013 release from her ministry that says, "The Ontario Tree Seed Plant is celebrating 90 years of preserving biodiversity, protecting the environment and supporting the forest products and wood manufacturing sectors." It goes on to say, "By supporting tree planting, the facility helps Ontario adapt to the effects of climate change, restores endangered tree species and supports tens of thousands of jobs in the forest industry."

Last year, I remind you, you spent \$1.6 million to upgrade this facility and its boilers. So what has changed? Has this government decided it's no longer important to protect our environment, support the forest products sector or adapt to climate change? What is it?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I have met recently with Rob Keen from Forests Ontario, as well as Steve Hounsell, who is chair of that board, and I've listened to their concerns.

As Ontario's forestry practices have changed, the demand for services provided by the tree seed plant have decreased significantly, and it no longer makes sense to operate such a large facility. As a result, we'll be moving towards a more efficient and modern seed archive. During this transition, we'll be encouraging new market opportunities for Ontario's nurseries to provide native seeds to grow trees for the industry and the public.

Because we're modernizing these services, there will be significant savings to the Ontario taxpayers through reduced operating and capital costs. By developing new policies like the new seed zone policy and creating a modern seed archive, we'll be better positioned to respond to changes associated with climate change, including successfully delivering on the 50 Million Tree Program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: Speaker, we're talking about the loss of a valuable and unique resource in Canada. If the announced closure goes ahead, we'll be losing the ability to protect and restore our forests with native, genetically appropriate species. My constituents are concerned not only for their jobs—by the way, it's not a really large operation; there are six jobs involved—but also about the loss of this valuable resource that's literally being thrown away by your government with no consultation whatsoever.

1120

Growers in my riding point out that the seed plant is a state-of-the-art facility producing the very best quality of seed. They explained that the seed storage is also top-notch and involves much more than just buying a freezer, as some government representatives have told us. Growers also note that this will directly impair the feasibility of Forests Ontario's 50 Million Tree Program, as well as other conservation initiatives.

My constituents have questions, lots of questions. I ask the minister, will she agree to meet with my constituents and to explain what is happening, why it's happening, and formulate a good plan going forward?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to thank, again, Rob Keen and his team, who came in to speak with me from Forests Ontario, for their work in delivering the 50 Million Tree Program and this year's Green Leaf Challenge. We're going to continue to look at all the options, working with our partners to ensure that this is a win-win situation for Ontario residents as well as our partners.

The member opposite knows we're working with our partners to provide a smooth transition and is just trying to score cheap political points. He knows what we're doing is moving from an outdated model to a more efficient and modern one, one that will save taxpayers money. It was, unfortunately—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Wrap up, please.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Unfortunately, it was his party in 1996 that opened our province's provincial nursery program for privatization and put the Ontario Tree Seed Plant in this position in the first place. He might want to—

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

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is to the Premier. Good morning, Premier. Ontario should and could have the safest roads in Ontario—or, I should say, in North America. My mistake. Yet so many families have been devastated by accidents and loss of life on a single part of the 401; so many, in fact, it's earned the disturbing nickname of Carnage Alley. Just ask the friends of the Payne family, or the Smulders, or the Brundritts.

For years, concerned citizens have been calling for a median barrier between London and Tilbury. When can we expect enhanced highway safety measures to be put in place on this stretch of the 401?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Infrastructure will want to comment on the technical issues, but first, let me express my condolences to all of the families who have lost loved ones on this stretch of highway. I know that some of them are here today, and it is an unbearable loss. I want them to know that we are listening. I know that the Minister of Transportation is going to be meeting with them later today.

We are going to be moving forward to put in place a barrier on that highway. As I say, the Minister of Infrastructure will speak to the specifics. I understand that the ministry is working right now on getting started on building a barrier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: These fatal accidents didn't happen in secret. They're well documented, and without new safety measures, they are likely to increase. The 401 is being widened in the Toronto area. More trucks will be heading to the two new border crossings in Windsor. We need to feel safe when we drive on the 401. Why won't the government listen and commit and give us a timeline for median barriers along this stretch known as Carnage Alley?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. Road safety is our government's top priority and I know that my colleague the Minister of Transportation takes any concern about it very, very seriously.

I'm aware that a number of advocates from this part of the province will be here at Queen's Park today to share their concerns regarding the need for median barriers on Highway 401 between Tilbury and London. My understanding is that Minister Del Duca will be meeting with a number of those advocates later today, including the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, who was also concerned with this particular issue.

I know that that will be a very important discussion and that the minister will have more to say at that time.

For now, I would be pleased to advise that more information on that will be provided this afternoon by the minister. He has given very serious attention to this issue and is looking forward to meeting with the constituents and the member this afternoon.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique, the Honourable Chris Ballard.

In the last 14 years, Ontario's air quality has improved dramatically, and the medical and health community know this well. That's why we took the initiative to be the first in North America to permanently ban coal-fired electricity generation in the province. In doing so, we have significantly reduced the number of smog days in Ontario.

I know this particularly because emergency room visits because of asthma, COPD, emphysema and other respiratory ailments have decreased dramatically. The 2016 Toronto's Vital Signs report shows that premature deaths and hospitalizations as a result of air pollution have dropped by 23% and 41% respectively since 2004.

Ontarians are able to breathe easier and live longer—and this is actually documented. My question is, can the minister please explain how Ontario's air quality has improved under our mandate?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Merci beaucoup pour la question. Thank you to the member for that question. It's a very important one, which he would know, being a medical doctor himself. It's an opportunity for us to talk about how we've made life better and more fair for Ontarians in the past 14 years.

As the member mentioned, we have significantly reduced the number of smog days in Ontario. In 2005, for example, Ontario experienced 53 smog days. That's 53 smog days in one year. Twelve years later, we have seen zero smog days so far in 2017—from 53 to zero.

By shutting down coal-fired plants, we have reduced sulphur dioxide emissions in Ontario by nearly 25%, which has significantly increased Ontario's air quality. Thanks to our government's environmental leadership over the past 14 years, Ontarians are literally breathing easier than they were 14 years ago.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you to the minister, not only for his stewardship; in our own personal corridor consultations, I know he has a true passion for this file.

Extreme climate events unfortunately are increasing, it seems, week to week these days. Scientists are attributing this to human settlement, coal, fossil fuel burning and a number of other activities.

A recent study shows that more than half of Americans believe climate change contributed to the severity of recent hurricanes in Florida and Texas, as well as the Caribbean. We know this is a global issue, and Ontarians are facing similar concerns about climate change.

In the best traditions of that saying, “Act locally, but think globally,” our government has actually taken steps to mitigate climate change. Can the minister please explain how this government has taken action to mitigate the increasingly apparent threats of extreme climate events?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member for that very important question. In the past decade, climate change has become an increasingly important issue globally and right here for Ontarians. Our government has responded by taking significant steps to mitigate climate change and to make Ontario a green leader in the face of this global problem. We know that steps such as introducing a cap-and-trade system, which caps pollution levels and reinvests every dollar into programs that will help Ontarians fight climate change, are the best path forward.

What we don’t know is if the opposition even believes in climate change. In fact, the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex tweeted on January 16 of this year, “@JustinTrudeau should not force provinces to implement a carbon tax or cap-and-trade. Period.” This raises the question: Do the members opposite believe that climate change is not a threat to our province?

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question to the Premier: They call it “Carnage Alley” for a reason. The stretch of the 401 between London and Tilbury is one of the most dangerous roads in Ontario.

About a month ago, on August 29, a pickup truck crossed the centre median of the 401 near Dutton and smashed into a van on the other side. Two people in that van were a mother and her five-year-old daughter. They died of their injuries, and the driver of the pickup has been charged. It has now come to light that the driver of the pickup was intoxicated with both alcohol and cannabis in his body.

1130

Nothing can bring Sarah and Freya Payne back. They died from their injuries. But a median barrier would do a lot to prevent needless deaths and accidents like theirs. Some of the Paynes’s friends and family are here today

in the east gallery. A median barrier would have solved that.

Premier, when will the government act and build the barrier before another tragedy happens?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, my deepest condolences to the families. There are no words that can really express the sorrow at the loss of a family member. We do work very hard in this province; we consistently have the safest or the second-safest roads in North America, and that has been for many, many years.

But there’s always more that can be done, and this particular piece of highway is a place where there needs to be more done. That’s quite clear. You know what? I want to thank the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex for being such a strong advocate on this issue, because he has been. He’s brought it forward and he has been very clear about what needs to be done. Thank you.

I want the member to know that the ministry is actively working to install high-tension cable barriers in the grass median on this section of Highway 401. That is in the works. I know—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I’ll finish in the supplementary. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You will.

Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the Premier: Marc Lafontaine was killed in another isolated accident, along with his niece, Alyssa, in Carnage Alley. A tractor-trailer crossed the median and hit their car head on. Mr. Lafontaine’s sister, Denise, is here today.

I commend the Minister of Transportation for agreeing to meet the concerned friends and family of the victims. I have petitions numbering over 4,000 signatures from across Ontario demanding construction of a concrete median barrier in Carnage Alley. I will be reading that petition into the record this afternoon.

My colleague Jeff Yurek from Elgin–Middlesex–London and I have been advocating for public safety for some time now. Premier, what will this government do to make sure that real action is taken to build the barrier and make Carnage Alley safer?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let’s agree that a barrier has to be built. The ministry is working on that engineering right now, so there will be a barrier built.

I think it’s important that—

Applause.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes.

I think it’s important that the families have an opportunity to meet with the minister. I can tell you this from having been the Minister of Transportation for a couple of years: There are always discussions around materials, exactly what the specs should be, exactly what it should look like, timing. My hope would be—and I say to the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex that he and the families will be able—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Chatham–Kent–Essex—that he will be able to be with the families, meet with the

Minister of Transportation and ask all the questions around what is happening in the Ministry of Transportation. But we agree a barrier has to be built, and it will be built.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. This morning, the Liberal government announced that only 400 people have so far signed up for its Basic Income Pilot Project in Thunder Bay, Brantford and Hamilton. New Democrats have raised concerns that the amounts received are not adequate for the participants and could keep them struggling in poverty if the basic income is subject to garnishments and debt collections.

Well, surprise, surprise: Now we've learned that anyone who signs up for the basic income project may be subject to garnishments and debt collections on that income. This is according to the coordinator of the Basic Income Pilot Project.

This is unacceptable. Regular recipients of ODSP and OW are not subject to these additional garnishments and collections, but it seems those on basic income will be. It has even gotten so bad that poverty advocates in my hometown of Hamilton are warning people not to join the project.

Many Ontarians struggle under household debt, but for people in poverty debt this can be a crushing, endless loop. Will the Premier confirm that basic income is subject to creditor liens on that income? Will she commit to making the necessary changes to ensure that this isn't the case?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. My understanding—I have asked about this, and the responses I've received from staff are that there are not many hundreds more but, in fact, thousands more people who are in the pipeline to be processed and to be part of the pilot.

Are there questions about the rules around the pilot? Are there adjustments that will likely have to be made? Yes, Mr. Speaker. It is a pilot project. This has not been done for decades. It has been talked about for 30 or 35 years, but until now, until our Liberal government, no government has taken it upon themselves to actually put a pilot in place to find out whether this is something that can help people. We're doing that, and we are working very hard with the researchers to get it right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, poverty is affecting people right now, Premier; however, it will be years before Ontario makes a final decision on whether to turn the pilot project into a broad policy.

This is the reality, Mr. Speaker: Poverty is affecting Ontarians now. And we have a solution. Bill 6, the Ministry of Community and Social Services Amendment Act, could actively help reduce poverty immediately. By creating a Social Assistance Research Commission, annual recommendations can be made to determine what the social assistance rates need to be in each region of

this province. Moving Bill 6 forward will give the province the ability to experiment with this minimum-income project.

So my question is, Speaker, why has this government stalled Bill 6 in committee?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, the Basic Income Pilot is one part of a response to poverty reduction in Ontario. It's an important pilot project, and we're working very hard to get it right. The Minister of Community and Social Services is also engaged in reform of the social assistance program.

But, on top of that, we recognize that people need support. So free tuition for over 200,000 students in this province, an increased minimum wage to \$15 an hour, free medication for children from zero until their 25th birthday: Those are all supports that are being put in place to tackle poverty across the province.

There's always more that we can do. The Basic Income Pilot is part of that.

INDIGENOUS RELATIONS

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ma question est pour le ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation.

Reconciliation is a key priority of this government. We know that reconciliation is more than just an event or more than just an apology; it's a journey. It's a journey that we have to take together with our indigenous partners.

My own riding is on Algonquin territory, and I'm very happy that the government has made some significant steps to finally have a modern treaty with the Algonquins.

Can the minister give us more examples of the work that has been done in the last 14 years to rebuild relationships with our indigenous partners and ensure a better future for First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: The reality is that the last time the Conservatives were in power, relations with indigenous communities across Ontario were strained, flaring into crisis, all due to a lack of respect for indigenous people's rights and cultures.

Just a month, though, after forming government in 2003, we launched the Ipperwash Inquiry at the request of indigenous communities. It was this inquiry that delivered many of the recommendations for righting our province's relationship with indigenous peoples, including the creation of a full Ministry of Indigenous Affairs.

Since we established the ministry 10 years ago, we've worked every day to reconcile relationships and ensure a better future for indigenous peoples. We've closed gaps and removed barriers. We've supported cultural revitalization. We have found meaningful solutions to historic grievances through honourable agreements, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Thank you to the minister for his answer and for his inspiring commitment to his portfolio.

I understand that over the years the parties opposite have voted against different budgets which provided many significant investments to support indigenous communities.

In 2014, the budget provided investment in urban indigenous communities and the Ring of Fire. The parties opposite voted against that.

In 2015, the budget included commitments to ensure clean drinking water for First Nations. The parties opposite voted against that.

In 2016, the budget had major investment in indigenous health and in programs to end violence against indigenous women. The parties opposite voted against that.

Just this year, the budget provided for an historic commitment to reconciliation, and I want the minister to give us the impact of these investments over the years.

Hon. David Zimmer: Here's what our government has achieved: We've officially apologized for Ontario's role in the residential school system. We've made a historic \$250-million commitment to reconciliation through The Journey Together. We've committed \$108 million to take actions to end violence against indigenous women. We've concluded 24 land claims. We've provided \$121 million in compensation to First Nations. We've committed \$95 million to support indigenous communities' economic development. We've passed the Treaties Recognition Week Act, making Ontario the first province to officially celebrate this week every November.

Speaker, our record is clear, and it's a shame that the parties opposite have voted against the historic agreements that we have made to support a better future for indigenous people in this great province.

Interjections.

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

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from London–Fanshawe has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care concerning systemic problems in long-term care. The matter will be debated at 6 p.m. this afternoon.

DEFERRED VOTES

CONSTRUCTION LIEN
AMENDMENT ACT, 2017
LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE PRIVILÈGE DANS L'INDUSTRIE
DE LA CONSTRUCTION

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to amend the Construction Lien Act /
Projet de loi 142, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le privilège
dans l'industrie de la construction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 142, An Act to amend the Construction Lien Act.

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

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On September 12, 2017, Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of Bill 142, An Act to amend the Construction Lien Act. Ms. Matthews has moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Ms. Matthews's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Crack, Grant	MacLaren, Jack	Takhar, Harinder S.
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Thibeault, Glenn
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Vernile, Daiene
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Martins, Cristina	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Zimmer, David
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy	Oosterhoff, Sam
Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Romano, Ross
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	Mantha, Michael	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Tabuns, Peter
Coe, Lorne	McDonell, Jim	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Norm	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	Walker, Bill
Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Natyshak, Taras	Yakubski, John
Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 52; the nays are 39.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Naqvi has moved second reading of Bill 142, An Act to Amend the Construction Lien Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1151 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gretzky, Lisa	Moridi, Reza
Anderson, Granville	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harris, Michael	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Arnott, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Naqvi, Yasir
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Natyshak, Taras
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Nicholls, Rick
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Oosterhoff, Sam
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Pettapiece, Randy
Bisson, Gilles	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Jones, Sylvia	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Patrick	Kiwala, Sophie	Rinaldi, Lou
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Romano, Ross
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Clark, Steve	MacCharles, Tracy	Scott, Laurie
Coe, Lorne	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Colle, Mike	MacLeod, Lisa	Sousa, Charles
Coteau, Michael	Malhi, Harinder	Tabuns, Peter
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Damerla, Dipika	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Thibeault, Glenn
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Vanthof, John
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Dong, Han	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	Wilson, Jim
Fedeli, Victor	McMahon, Eleanor	Wong, Soo
Fife, Catherine	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McNaughton, Monte	Yakabuski, John
Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.	Yurek, Jeff
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Norm	Zimmer, David
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 92; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So referred.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: A point of order, Speaker: I'd like to correct my record. I should have said 172,000 direct and indirect jobs "across Ontario," rather than Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is always allowed to correct the record. It is an appropriate point of order.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1156 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to introduce the following guests: Roshanne Atherley, Alicia Stephen, Tatiana Baznarova, Marc Emery, Jodie Emery, Daniel Bell, Jordan Comden, Julia Linbomiskia, Dmitri Gravof, Yevgen Konaryev, Yuri Devorin, Oleg Ratnikov, Mary Woodburn and Bob Yaciuk. They are all here to hear a statement I'm going to read in a few minutes on the selling of marijuana.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's a great honour for me to welcome some very important guests here today for the introduction of a bill shortly. Please welcome Sarah Hobbs-Blyth, executive director of Planned Parenthood Toronto; Chelsea Barnett, communications coordinator for Planned Parenthood Toronto; Racquel Bremmer, of Planned Parenthood Toronto; Aynsley Smith, of Peterborough's Reproductive Justice Committee; Elizabeth Brandeis, Association of Ontario Midwives; Kara Gillies, executive director of Choice in Health Clinic; Robyn Bolivar, clinic manager of Choice in Health Clinic.

I'm also proud to introduce three members of my ministry, from our policy division, who worked very hard on the bill that I'm about to introduce. Please thank Sara Weinrib, Joshua Patlik and Agapi Mavridis for their hard work.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a number of guests who are, hopefully, arriving here very soon and joining us today at Queen's Park to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month: Maria Luisa Gimaldi, Lino Martinez, Andrew Lopez, Lupe Ledesma, Luis Ibarra, Amanda Martinez, Ericka Aguilera, Monica Linares, Mariela Soto, Angela Buitrago, Angela Maria Frago and Carlos Cortes.

Bienvenidos, todos, a Queen's Park. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader and Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you. I knew I would miss a name, Speaker. I also want to welcome and thank Jacqueline Tasca, my senior policy adviser, who did some incredible work on safe access zone legislation that I'll table.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You better have said that—that's all I have to say.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MID-AUTUMN MOON FESTIVAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, today many Canadians of Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean heritage will be celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival with their family and friends. On behalf of the people of Oxford and the PC caucus, I'm pleased to offer best wishes to everyone celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival, or Moon Festival, as it's often known.

This is an ancient festival during which gratitude is expressed for good harvests and abundance and togetherness with family is celebrated.

I am looking forward to upcoming events with our friends in the Taiwanese community later this week as we celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival.

Oxford is proud of the strong relationships we've had with Taiwan since George Leslie Mackay travelled there from Embro in the late 1800s and became one of the most well-known Canadians in Taiwan. In fact, on March 21, 2018, *Kai the Barbarian: The George Leslie Mackay Story* will celebrate its opening night and world premiere at the Embro Town Hall on George's 174th birthday.

I would also like to wish a happy belated birthday to George's granddaughter Margaret Mackay, who recently celebrated her 98th birthday.

I'm sure families from many communities around Ontario will be coming together to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival. Some will bring moon cakes, some will be sharing fruit and gifts, and others will be lighting and hanging lanterns. It is in the spirit of celebration and togetherness that we wish them all the best for a happy Mid-Autumn Festival.

BETSY DeVOS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: People across the province are wondering about the impending visit of American Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and why this government would welcome someone whose platform is to undermine publicly funded education and funnel public dollars into private pockets.

Betsy DeVos is part of an administration that dropped protections for trans students. She shields private schools that discriminate against LGBTQ kids and children with special needs. She has cut work-study opportunities, cut billions out of the education budget and attacked civil rights on post-secondary campuses.

I understand we want to build trade relationships. I understand she's the Secretary of Education in the United States. So have your meetings, but it doesn't mean we have to welcome her with open arms.

We need to make it clear to her that strong public schools are inclusive spaces where all children should feel safe and able to learn. The message we send to our students should trump the message we send to Betsy DeVos. Inviting her into our classrooms says we condone her exclusionary views.

I will always defend accessible, inclusive public education that ensures better futures for all our children. Your Liberal government underfunds our students and their futures. You sold off Hydro One and cut a revenue stream that funded health care and education. You aren't fairly funding our special-needs students or strengthening public systems—and you can't say you do when you sell off our public assets for parts. Our schools deserve better.

Ontario educators and students are amazing. I don't worry about the fabulous impression we will make on the Secretary of Education. I worry about the influence she could have on this government. Public education should not be for sale.

DAVID HOLLINGER AND DOUG GIBBONS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: In my member's statement today, I'd like to honour two members of my community, David Hollinger and Doug Gibbons.

This past weekend, at the Kitchener Waterloo Sertoma Club, David was awarded the Service to Mankind Award. David has lived his life as someone always willing to give to other people, often performing work to help inspire youth, serving on the board of governors for Conestoga College, and fundraising for local charities and community projects. David is now retired, and he still volunteers for oneROOF in Kitchener. This is a support centre for youth in crisis. He also helps to run the volunteer-coordinated festival of lights in our community called the Wonders of Winter. He spends at least 600 hours a year volunteering at the Wonders of Winter alone.

The other recipient, Doug Gibbons, was also honoured this weekend as the Sertoman of the Year. Doug has been involved in many activities, but primarily with our local speed skating club for over 20 years and coaching for 10 years. Doug has been a bingo chairman for the last 15 years and a minor soccer team coach for 30 years.

It is community builders like Doug and David who make Kitchener-Waterloo such a great place to live. I congratulate them, and it is my pleasure to praise them here today.

CANNABIS REGULATION

Mr. Jack MacLaren: This statement is on marijuana selling.

At the Trillium Party, we understand that small business is the backbone of Ontario's economy. We know that small business creates 75% to 80% of all the jobs in Ontario. If small business thrives, Ontario thrives.

We are strongly opposed to the government's plan to sell legal marijuana through a large single-desk, LCBO-type government monopoly agency. We strongly support selling legal marijuana through regulated, independent small business outlets. This will be competitive and it will be effective, efficient and the lowest-cost service to consumers. It will be safe because it will be regulated.

The competition that comes from a free market economy will encourage consumers to use safe, regulated marijuana because it will be at a competitive price. This lowest price will provide competition for illegal sellers of unregulated and unsafe marijuana. It will be safer for consumers.

DOWN SYNDROME

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I rise today to speak to a tragic reality occurring in the country of Iceland, and to draw attention to a concerning rise in lack of respect for human value, dignity and worth for those individuals and families impacted by Down syndrome.

Earlier this year, the American broadcaster CBS reported that Iceland is eliminating Down syndrome through the use of abortion. CBS reported that almost 100% of unborn children diagnosed with Down syndrome are aborted in Iceland. The reality is that Iceland is not eliminating Down syndrome; they are eliminating people.

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I had the chance to meet with the Niagara Down syndrome society last month, and we talked about the enormous social, economic and cultural contributions that individuals with Down syndrome have brought to the Niagara region and all of Canada. I was proud to meet with them and stand with the families and individuals who live with the struggles that Down syndrome can entail.

The article that CBS released, which details what is occurring in Iceland, bears a headline which asks the question “What Kind of Society Do You Want to Live In?” I know what my answer is, Mr. Speaker. I want to live in a society where individuals with Down syndrome are cherished, loved and respected.

I want us all in this Legislature to work hard to make Ontario a society where individuals with Down syndrome are recognized for their unique gifts, valued for their rich perspective and treated as equals by a society that esteems them. Join me in that work.

BETSY DeVOS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I rise today in support of education workers and families in Ontario who are extremely concerned and disappointed that this Liberal government has agreed to host President Donald Trump’s education secretary, Betsy DeVos.

Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation president Harvey Bischof stated that Betsy DeVos’s visit is “alarming” and “an affront to our members, that Ontario would allow someone who openly promotes a corporate assault on public education to visit schools in our province.” This visit is insulting to education workers in this province.

We know that Ms. DeVos believes in publicly funded private schools, which is something New Democrats will never stand for. Worse than that, she has targeted transgender students and rolled back policies for addressing sexual assault on post-secondary campuses.

Why should Ontario schools, education workers and students entertain a guest who is so out of touch with the rights and values that we hold dear?

As a parent of a child in one of our high schools, I am appalled by this Liberal government’s decision. Why would we expose students to someone who doesn’t support the very things that we try to instill in our children—things like acceptance and equality?

This Liberal government must listen to the teachers and education workers of this province and revoke their invitation to Ms. DeVos.

CYPRUS NATIONAL DAY

Ms. Soo Wong: I’m honoured to rise in observance of Cyprus National Day and recognize the 57th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Cyprus.

Cyprus is a small Mediterranean country with a population of almost 800,000 people. The friendship between Canada and the Republic of Cyprus goes back over 50 years to when Cyprus asked the UN to create a peacekeeping force. Canada’s peacekeeping operation in Cyprus, from 1964 to today, is one of Canada’s longest and best-known overseas military commitments.

As we celebrate Cyprus National Day, we also need to remember the sacrifice of the 28 fallen Canadian peacekeepers who paid the ultimate price in our country’s efforts to bring peace to Cyprus.

Cyprus National Day is a time to recognize Ontarians with Cypriot heritage, whose customs have become a part of our cultural fabric and who have contributed to the growth, prosperity and vibrancy of Ontario.

To celebrate this occasion, the Legislature will be raising the Cypriot flag at Queen’s Park tomorrow, October 5, at 12 noon. There will be many special guests in attendance, including the High Commissioner of the Republic of Cyprus in Ottawa, His Excellency Pavlos Anastasiades.

I would like to thank my constituent Christine Amygdalidis, the president of the Cypriot Federation of Canada, for organizing tomorrow’s Cyprus National Day celebration at Queen’s Park—and for the 50 years of friendship between Canada and the Republic of Cyprus.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I’d like to extend best wishes to everyone celebrating Cyprus National Day.

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE

Mr. John Yakabuski: In October 1967, Algonquin College in Pembroke welcomed its first 16 students, primarily in evening courses taught at what was then Champlain High School. The following year, full-time programs began, with 49 students in classes that included business administration, general technology and architectural drawing. Later, a permanent location was found at the site of the former Maple Leaf Dairy, which, after modifications, would serve as home to the campus until 2012. The campus would grow and continue to offer more and more programs and opportunities for post-secondary students. Today, it offers 21 full-time programs at its waterfront campus, the most magnificent college location in the province, in my unbiased opinion.

Its growth continues as, this fall, registration topped 1,000 students for the first time—an amazing accomplishment from its humble beginnings some 50 years ago.

Its Renaissance Square waterfront campus, which opened in 2012, was indeed a game changer and has helped turn Algonquin Pembroke into a destination college.

Since opening it has encouraged other economic development, including the building of three independently

owned student residences, providing 170 spaces. These are much needed because approximately 50% of Algonquin students come from outside Renfrew county.

Yes, Speaker, Algonquin has come a long way. I would like to thank the visionaries, such as Bill Kutschke, who saw the potential, the opportunities and benefits of establishing a college in Pembroke. I also want to thank the leadership teams, faculty and staff, both past and present, for continuing to make Algonquin a special place and one of the true jewels of the city of Pembroke and the county of Renfrew. Thank you very much.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: October is Hispanic Heritage Month in the province of Ontario. For the third year in a row, Hispanic Heritage Month will honour the more than 400,000 Ontarians of Hispanic and Latino descent and serve as a chance to remember, elevate and educate future generations about the achievements of our Hispanic-Latino community.

Today, the Hispanic-Latino community is one of the fastest-growing and most diverse groups in our province. I'm truly humbled to personally represent 10,000 members of the Hispanic-Latino community in my riding of Davenport.

The Hispanic-Latino community continues to contribute to our province's prosperity. They start and build businesses, volunteer, and contribute to Ontario's cultural and artistic landscape.

In May 2015 my first bill as an MPP, Bill 28, An Act to proclaim the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month, was passed in the Ontario Legislature. By proclaiming the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario, our province recognizes the rich contributions of Hispanic and Latino Canadians to our social, economic, political and multicultural fabric.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to urge all members to join me this afternoon—later today—for a reception in the government caucus room to enjoy an exhibit showcasing art from the Hispanic-Latino community, and to recognize and celebrate the third Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario.

I'm truly grateful that I was able to make Hispanic Heritage Month a reality in Ontario, and I welcome all members to participate in the festivities across Ontario. Muchas gracias.

MID-AUTUMN MOON FESTIVAL

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I rise today to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival. The Mid-Autumn Moon Festival is celebrated on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month. The festival's tradition goes back over 3,000 years, when it coincided with the harvest. The Mid-Autumn Festival is celebrated by the people of China, Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore, Taiwan and Vietnam.

In the Chinese culture, it is believed that a full moon is a symbol of peace, prosperity and family reunion.

To celebrate the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival, Koreans visit their ancestral hometowns and share a feast of traditional Korean food, such as songpyeon, which is a rice cake, and yakju, which is rice wine.

Here in Ontario, eating moon cakes and other sweet treats is just one of the many traditions associated with this festival.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members from both sides of this House to join me in celebrating this important festival. Once again, let's unite to send a collective message that in Ontario, cultural diversity is our strength.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements and lack of heckling therein.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO ACCESS ABORTION SERVICES ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 PROTÉGEANT LE DROIT DES FEMMES À RECOURIR AUX SERVICES D'INTERRUPTION VOLONTAIRE DE GROSSESSE

Mr. Naqvi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to enact the Safe Access to Abortion Services Act, 2017 and to amend the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act in relation to abortion services / Projet de loi 163, Loi édictant la Loi de 2017 sur l'accès sécuritaire aux services d'interruption volontaire de grossesse et modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée en ce qui a trait aux services d'interruption volontaire de grossesse.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The Protecting a Woman's Right to Access Abortion Services Act would, if passed, protect access to abortion services by protecting the safety, security, health and privacy of people seeking to use these services, as well as people providing or assisting in the provision of these services.

This includes the establishment of safe access zones, prohibiting set-out conduct, such as advising or persuading someone to not use abortion services or harassing behaviour. These zones around clinics would be 50 metres and can be increased up to 150 metres. It would also provide safe access zones of 150 metres or prescribed lesser distances around the residences of protected service providers.

Finally, this act would also amend the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to further clarify that statistical or other information related to the provision of abortion services would be subject to the act.

HUMAN RIGHTS CODE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LE CODE
DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE

Mme Des Rosiers moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 164, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to immigration status, genetic characteristics, police records and social conditions / Projet de loi 164, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui concerne le statut d'immigrant, les caractéristiques génétiques, l'existence de dossiers de police et la situation sociale.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: The bill amends the Human Rights Code to include immigration status, genetic characteristics, police records and social conditions as prohibited grounds of discrimination. The purpose of this bill, if passed, is to ensure that the Human Rights Code counters new forms of discrimination that some Ontarians face; namely, discrimination on the basis of their immigration status or their genetic characteristics, police records or social conditions.

It is the role of government to ensure that we confront discrimination in a proactive manner, and this bill, if passed, would empower the Human Rights Commission to educate and to act to ensure a more equal society, free of all forms of discrimination.

PERSONAL INJURY AND ACCIDENT
VICTIMS PROTECTION ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES VICTIMES DE LÉSIONS
CORPORELLES ET D'ACCIDENTS

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to amend the Law Society Act and the Solicitors Act with respect to matters related to personal injury claims and client agreements / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Barreau et la Loi sur les procureurs à l'égard de questions liées aux demandes d'indemnisation pour lésions corporelles et aux ententes avec les clients.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: If passed, this bill would call for a number of measures to protect accident victims so when they go to their solicitor to ensure they get a clear, transparent agreement in Canadian Tire English, that there are no referrals allowed without the consent of the injured; and also that any advertisements done on buses, television, radio, or urinals at Blue Jays games are not allowed unless they're approved by the Law Society of Upper Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I appreciate the concise language, but I'm betting dollars to doughnuts that that wasn't in the explanatory note—but I thought I would let it go by. "Canadian Tire language" was kind of cute.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Laura Albanese: I rise today to speak about October being Hispanic Heritage Month here in Ontario.

This month is a great opportunity for all the people of Ontario to learn about the more than 400,000 Ontarians of Hispanic and Latino origin. October is the time when this community comes together, not just with one another but with millions of others around the world, to pay tribute to their shared culture.

Hispanic culture and Latin American culture have contributed so much to music and art here and around the world.

Mr. Speaker, in recognizing Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge my friend and colleague Cristina Martins, the member from the riding of Davenport, for her tireless efforts to champion Bill 28, An Act to proclaim the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month.

October is a significant month for this multi-faceted community. Celebrations are held around the world, including Hispanic Day—Dia de la Hispanidad; the Day of the Cultures—Dia de las Culturas; the Day of Respect for Cultural Diversity—Dia del Respeto a la Diversidad Cultural; and many others.

Today, this community is one of the fastest-growing in Ontario. In fact, Spanish is the fourth most common language in our province, with almost 200,000 Ontarians naming it as their first language learned.

Ontario's Hispanic and Latin American community hails from many Spanish-speaking countries, including Spain, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador and Peru, just to name a few. While members of this community have come to our province from a number of nations, each with its own distinct culture, Spanish speakers have developed a shared sense of community and have gathered in certain hubs around our province and our country.

Many have an entrepreneurial spirit and have opened their own thriving businesses. The Toronto Hispanic Chamber of Commerce estimates that the economic impact of Latin American businesses in the Toronto-area economy alone is between \$49 million and \$74 million annually.

Those who have maintained business ties with their countries of origin have helped to boost international trade. Ontario's two-way trade with Spain alone is more than \$230 million annually.

It's hard to argue with the fact that the influence that Hispanic and Latin American communities have had on our province is very significant. We are fortunate indeed to be one of the primary provinces of choice in Canada for Hispanic and Latin American immigrants.

Mr. Speaker, as is the case with many of my colleagues, my own riding of York South–Weston has a thriving local Hispanic community that is contributing to our province's prosperity and growth. Over the years, I've been privileged to meet with many people whose families have been here and have contributed for generations, as well as those who are newly arrived. The Hispanic and Latin American community in my riding is very active, and I'm struck by the fierce commitment that all its members share, to family, to heritage and to our province.

On behalf of our government, I offer best wishes to the Hispanic and Latin American community of Ontario, and I encourage all Ontarians to take part in this month's many joyful celebrations. Thank you very much. Muchas gracias.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Michael Chan: I'm honoured to rise in the House today to highlight an important milestone in my ministry's effort to support Ontario firms to expand internationally.

The recent provisional application of the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA, means more market opportunities for Ontario businesses. I am thrilled that this important step has been taken following tremendous commitment and hard work by all parties involved. I also congratulate our colleagues in Ottawa and partners across the EU for these great achievements.

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Less than one year ago Ontario, Canada and the EU celebrated the signing of CETA. Today, Ontario is well-prepared to take advantage of this progressive trade agreement for the benefit of the province's businesses and workers.

My ministry works actively with Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses to diversify their exports to key markets, including the EU. Specifically, we are hosting workshops to help educate businesses on export and marketing strategies, and leading 14 trade missions to the EU to help Ontario businesses gain market intelligence,

secure new business partnerships, and establish and expand their footprint.

Ontario also has trade and investment offices established in London, Munich and Paris to provide valuable in-market support.

Businesses that already export to the EU now benefit from the removal of 98% of all tariffs on Canadian goods destined for the European Union's 28 member states. The reduction and removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers will make Ontario goods, technologies and expertise more competitive in the EU.

As a group, the EU is Ontario's second-largest trading partner. In 2016, Ontario exports to the EU were nearly \$22 billion. This number is expected to grow even more with CETA in place. In addition, CETA is expected to create 30,000 new Ontario jobs and boost the province's GDP by \$4.5 billion.

Speaker, CETA is truly a historic trade agreement fit to address the needs of the globalized world and the modern and growing economy that exists here in Ontario, particularly due to the vast number of industry sectors it covers.

We know that Ontario's strength when it comes to trade lies in the global competitiveness of our sectors and the skills of our people. These are sectors that are globally recognized and are often the lead points of conversation that I have with dignitaries and business leaders on trade missions throughout the EU and beyond.

Ontario's producers, manufacturers and service providers in our traditionally strong markets such as auto, agriculture, forestry and mining, chemicals and plastics, along with our new-age industries such as ICT, clean tech and e-commerce, will all benefit from the immediate elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers.

Our current export success to European markets is well-documented and the provisional application of CETA will only further this growth.

Speaker, allow me to highlight key sectors and the benefits they will experience through this provisional application. Our auto industry, which in 2016 accounted for \$231.9 million in exports to the EU, will now see significant reductions in trade barriers. Tailored to our existing supply chain, it is estimated CETA will allow for up to 100,000 Canadian passenger vehicles to be exported to Europe, a significant increase for our automakers, who will now enjoy a competitive advantage in the EU that other jurisdictions do not.

Speaker, our mining industry is integral to local economies, particularly in northern Ontario. In regard to exports, the EU is a top customer for metal and mineral products. In 2016, \$12 billion worth of precious metals and stones were exported to the EU, contributing significantly to our province's economic prosperity.

Prior to the provisional application of CETA, aluminum and aluminum products faced tariff lines of up to 10%; iron and steel products, up to 7%. With these now eliminated, Ontario companies will experience greater market access in the EU, leading to more domestic jobs and higher wages.

Speaker, our province's information and communication technology sector has undoubtedly solidified itself among leading global jurisdictions, with Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo and Ottawa being recognized as the go-to hubs primed for research and export opportunities. In 2016, Ontario exports to the European Union in the ICT sector amounted to \$587.2 billion.

Based on the work of my ministry's in-market services, we know that there is a demand for cutting-edge ICT products and services in the EU. With the provisional application of CETA, Ontario companies will have access to bid on and compete for government procurement contracts to supply ICT products or software services.

CETA's provisional application instantly makes Ontario products and services more competitive in the world's largest importing market for goods, containing a consumer base made up of 507 million people. It is this opportunity that makes us a globally competitive force worldwide, and it will be the key in advancing our presence well into the future.

During the negotiations, Ontario actively engaged with the federal government on behalf of its businesses and workers to ensure their interests were reflected within this historic trade agreement. My ministry will continue to represent the interests of Ontario businesses, workers and communities as the international trade landscape evolves.

Diversifying and expanding trade is a key component of my ministry's international trade strategy and part of Ontario's plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in their everyday lives. The unlocking of 28 new markets for Ontario SMEs means greater potential for diverse revenue growth that often leads to expansion within the province.

Today, CETA now joins NAFTA and free trade agreements with South Korea and Chile, among a host of others, as our trading corridors globally. Canada is also in free trade discussions with growing economies like India, China and Japan. With these agreements in place, Canada has preferential market access to over 1.2 billion consumers. Given the diversity of our province's sectors, engaging in trade agreements with multiple jurisdictions makes sense for Ontario.

CETA is the most aggressive agreement that Canada and the EU have ever negotiated. It is an important example of how governments can work together to create new jobs and new opportunities for our citizens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries?

Therefore, it is time for responses.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Lorne Coe: It's a pleasure to rise today as the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus liaison to the Latin American Hispanic community and speak about Hispanic Heritage Month.

It's truly a celebration of Hispanic traditions and cultural influences of all Latin roots throughout Ontario, and provides residents and visitors alike with the opportunity to celebrate, enjoy and experience the rich heritage of Ontario's Hispanic culture.

The Hispanic community is committed to preserving its rich cultural heritage and its important contributions to the social, cultural and economic fabric of Ontario.

This celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario gives us an opportunity to pay tribute, as we should, to new cultural traditions as well as the merging of fresh experiences with Ontario's mainstream traditions.

My riding of Whitby-Oshawa is home to many families from the Hispanic community, and I'm proud to celebrate their rich heritage and culture with them regularly.

1540

In this Legislature, we pride ourselves on this being a place where people of all cultures are welcome, respected and able to live in harmony with each other. On behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, I would like to wish the Hispanic community a joyful heritage month.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: On behalf of Patrick Brown and the PC Party, I am pleased to respond to Minister Chan's ministerial statement. I would like to begin by recognizing our federal counterparts of all political stripes. The Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement was an endeavour undertaken largely by the Harper government, and I was pleased to see the new government get it completed.

Upon opening up market access for Ontario's food and manufacturing exports, there will certainly be a benefit to so many hard-working Ontarians and their families. I would like to share some of the benefits that have been recognized.

Because of CETA, more North American cars will be allowed into the European marketplace, and now we have new markets for Ontario-made cars and parts. This will create new opportunities for automotive manufacturers and suppliers across the province. Specifically, it applies to the great riding of Huron-Bruce, where Westcast Industries makes auto parts in Wingham. They're very much looking forward to potential expanded markets.

I have also heard of a great deal of support across the agri-food sector, which will bring so many new and exciting opportunities for food processing not only in Huron-Bruce but across Ontario as well. From our fruits and vegetables to our beef and pork and value-added food products, such as good Ontario goat cheese, Ontario agriculture will see the significant benefits of reduced trade barriers and expanded market access.

But we need to build an environment in which people can confidently grow their businesses. Sadly, this is lacking. With the cost of energy, which goes up again January 1, as just one example, the Wynne Liberal govern-

ment is causing hesitation throughout investors. People are hesitant to grow their businesses under the Liberal watch.

I am pleased to say that the PC Party of Ontario, led by Ontario PC leader Patrick Brown, our party, is hearing from so many partners. For instance, the German chamber of commerce and their consul general are thrilled about new opportunities to co-operate with Ontario, Canada and Germany.

The Ontario PC Party is committed to ensuring that Ontario farmers, manufacturers and small businesses are given every opportunity to take full advantage of this trade agreement and continue to grow and prosper.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Good afternoon and buenas tardes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to also welcome folks to Queen's Park recognizing Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario. Bienvenidos. It is my great privilege to have the opportunity to rise in this Legislature today to recognize October as Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario.

Remarks in Spanish.

I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I'll translate.

I would be pleased to speak for my time today in Spanish, but I know that in this great chamber, we can only speak French or English. Today, however, that is a shame.

This is a month to highlight the impact and influence of Hispanic Canadians and to celebrate and share Hispanic culture and heritage. I went to high school in California, where I had the opportunity to study Spanish. In addition to the language, we also studied culture and heritage. I was lucky to gain a broader appreciation of a community outside of my own.

Canada is a place of marvellous diversity and shared stories, and Ontario is only made stronger because of this. We celebrate that fact this month, and we must work together to ensure that the dream of Ontario is achievable to all those who seek it.

Though it is important that we recognize the many diverse communities in Ontario, let's not forget our mandate to address the issues that affect all communities in every corner of this province. Let's recognize the contributions that Hispanic Canadians have made and will continue to make to our province by taking action on the issues that affect members of their community.

Of the many reasons that I am proud to call Ontario home, our diversity of language, culture and heritage are perhaps the greatest. Diversity is a core Canadian value. It is a core value of New Democrats, and a core value of the community I live in as well. Every June, in my riding of Oshawa, we celebrate Fiesta Week, a week-long multicultural festival that gives Durham residents the opportunity to experience various cultures from across the globe and celebrates the richness of our diversity.

Remarks in Spanish.

This month is for the wide Hispanic community and for all of their friends and neighbours. We want to

explore, know and celebrate Hispanic culture and heritage together. On behalf of Ontario's New Democrats, we wish everyone a wonderful Hispanic Heritage Month. Gracias.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to comment on the CETA provisional implementation comments that the minister just raised.

New Democrats understand that trade is vitally important to our economy; however, the rules of international trade are also important. New Democrats, both at the provincial and federal levels, continue to have some very serious concerns about CETA and its impact on Ontario businesses, provincial and municipal procurement, and Ontario workers and Ontario farmers—the investor-state provisions specifically.

In February 2016, during CETA's legal scrubbing phase, the minister announced changes to the ISDS, the investor-to-state dispute settlement provisions that are supposed to improve transparency and strengthen measures to combat conflicts of interest of arbitrators. However, the new investment court system still allows foreign investors to seek compensation from any level of government over policy decisions that they feel impact their profit. This is no more evident than in our current NAFTA arrangements, where investor-state provisions allow foreign entities and foreign conglomerates to sue national and subnational jurisdictions for impediments to their profits, as we see a \$250-million legal suit against the province of Quebec for their ban on fracking.

These are the cautionary tales that you'll only hear from New Democrats when we talk about CETA or any trade negotiations. We've heard today, and I listened quite closely to both the Liberal and other provincial parties—it's nothing but roses and rainbows when it comes to free trade agreements. People in our ridings and in our communities across this country understand the implications of free trade and the impacts that they have on their communities. We see devastation in our agriculture sector, we see offshoring of good manufacturing jobs and we see no balance and fairness truly ingrained in these trading agreements.

For once and for all we would love to see our country and our province play an active role in ensuring fair trade agreements where we protect those natural resources, where we protect those good-paying jobs and raise the bar for our partners in trade, where we don't set the standard at its lowest common denominator and where we can all prosper and profit from trading agreements.

It's high time that this government do its due diligence when it comes to the impacts. We will see a bill come forward because those are the rules under CETA implementation—all the provinces have to agree and enact enabling legislation—but I urge this government and I urge the Liberal Party to do its homework on the impacts that this will have on our communities. We can't afford to lose good-paying jobs and we can't afford to

compete against jurisdictions that don't want to set their standards as high as we have and deserve here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First, I would like to thank all members for their statements.

I would like to remind the member from Oshawa and point out that, before, during and after, the use of another language other than English and French—that it's actually not permitted. I would remind her that Hansard will probably show it as simply "another language." I would caution all members. Greetings seem to be okay, but when we start going full into other languages—it's not the practice in-house.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we move to petitions, I would also like to introduce former members who have arrived. They were supposed to be in the Speaker's gallery, but I think they're afraid of heights; I'm not sure. I would like to acknowledge the members in the members' gallery: Mr. John O'Toole, the former MPP from—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hold on, I want to give them full boost here—Durham East during the 36th Parliament and from Durham during the 37th, 38th, 39th and 40th Parliaments. Thank you for being here.

Also, the former member from Peterborough during the 36th and 37th Parliaments, Mr. Gary Stewart; welcome to you. Thank you for being here.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do have a point of order from the member from Davenport; I apologize.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to introduce a number of guests who have joined us here this afternoon for Hispanic Heritage Month. I know I introduced a number of them earlier, but they're now here: Lino Martinez, Severino Centritto, Amanda Martinez, Lumy Fuentes, Claudia Montoya and Monica Linares.

Bienvenidos esta tarde aquí. Gracias. Thank you so much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think I set the stage for that one. I'm sorry.

1550

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in 2009 the Ministry of Transportation received environmental clearance for six lanes of the 401 between Tilbury to Elgin county;

"Whereas the 401 between Tilbury and London was already known as 'carnage alley' due to the high rate of collisions and fatalities there;

"Whereas current work being done on the 401 between Tilbury and Ridgetown will reduce the road to a single lane for up to three years thus making this stretch a serious safety concern;

"Whereas there have already been four deaths, nine serious injuries requiring hospitalization and over eight collisions this summer within the one-lane construction area;

"Whereas the government of the day pledged to invest \$13.5 billion in highway improvements and has sharply increased the fees for driver permits and licence renewal fees which are used for highway maintenance and improvements;

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

"To commit to upgrading the 401 from four to six lanes and install a median barrier from Tilbury to Elgin county."

I approve of this petition. I have over 4,000 signatures for this, so I approve this and pass it to page Emerson.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Cindy Forster: "Ontarians Need Access to Medical Specialists.

"To the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care:

"Whereas the Ontario government collects incomplete and misleading data on wait times, accounting only for the time it takes between treatment recommendation and medical procedure, but fails to account for the wait time that occurs prior to the initial specialist intake appointment; and

"Whereas there is currently no mechanism in place to accurately measure and track the time between referral to a specialist and the initial specialist appointment; and

"Whereas Ontario is behind international standards for specialist wait times, particularly in the specialties of neurosurgery, gastroenterology and rheumatology; and

"Whereas many Ontarians are forced to wait several months, or even years, before getting treatment from a specialist in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to create a mechanism to accurately and effectively track complete wait times to see specialists in Ontario, with the goal of ultimately reducing wait times for patients and families."

I support this petition and affix my signature. I will send it with Milind.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas one in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in her lifetime;

“When public education about sexual violence and harassment is not prioritized, myths and attitudes informed by misogyny become prevalent. This promotes rape culture;

“Less than 10% of sexual violence cases are reported to police. For every 33 that are reported, only three result in a conviction;

“Sexual violence and harassment survivors too often feel revictimized by the systems set in place to support them...;

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

“Support the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment’s final report, highlighting the need for inclusive and open dialogue to address misogyny and rape culture; educate about sexual violence and harassment to promote social change ... and address attrition rates within our justice system, including examining ‘unfounded’ cases, developing enhanced prosecution models and providing free legal advice for survivors.”

I agree with this and will put my signature to this and hand it to Javan.

GO TRANSIT

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

“Whereas GO train horns are currently allowed to sound until 11 p.m., five days a week;

“Whereas people who live on the GO train routes are being disturbed by these horns, waking their children and themselves and disrupting the general peace;

“Whereas the city of Markham unanimously voted to silence the horns and were overruled by Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca;

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

“That the Liberal government of Ontario respects the wishes of the residents, Mothers Protesting for Silence and local politicians and reverses the decision to allow train horns to blow before 5:30 a.m. and after 8 p.m., five days a week. To replace them with buses or reschedule the said train times.”

I’m very happy to affix my signature and give the petition to page Rachel to bring to the desk.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

“Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

“Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

“Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In so doing, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients’ groups within one year.”

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page Javan.

ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE

Mr. James J. Bradley: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we’ve seen rapid growth of vertical communities across Ontario;

“Whereas elevators are an important amenity for a resident of a high-rise residential building; and

“Whereas ensuring basic mobility and standards of living for residents remain top priority; and

“Whereas the unreasonable delay of repairs for elevator services across Ontario is a concern for residents of high-rise buildings resulting in constant breakdowns, mechanical failures and ‘out of service’ notices for unspecified amounts of time;

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

“Urge the Ontario government to require repairs to elevators be completed within a reasonable and prescribed time frame. We urge this government to address these concerns that are shared by residents of Trinity–Spadina and across Ontario.”

I affix my signature as I agree to the petition.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents in rural areas can be particularly susceptible to property crimes, and can experience concentrated spikes of criminal activity in small communities; and

“Whereas all residents in the province of Ontario deserve to feel safe in their communities; and

“Whereas illegal drug use has become endemic across Ontario; and

“Whereas there are clear links between illegal drug use and property crimes; and

“Whereas communities often find criminals back on their streets on bail while cases work their way through the courts; and

“Whereas when crime spikes in a small community, residents live in fear;

“Therefore, we the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement policies that will empower the judiciary to keep criminals off of our streets who pose a significant risk of reoffending while out on bail.”

I agree with this petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with Ariana.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a petition called “Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

“Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

“Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

“Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

“Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

“Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

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

“Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

“Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

“Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario’s ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

“Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics.”

I wholeheartedly sign this petition and give it to page Eva.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

1600

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

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

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Greg.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Michael Harris: I’ve got one here.

“End the DriveTest Gridlock.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the people of Ontario are required to register and successfully complete any of a series of written and/or road/vision tests offered through the Ministry of Transportation to obtain and/or maintain a driver’s licence allowing legal operation of a motor vehicle in the province or beyond; and

“Whereas, as per terms of the 2010 contract renewal with the government, the private corporation Plenary-Serco is responsible for:

“—providing knowledge and driving tests to individuals applying for or renewing driver’s licences in any class, including commercial classes of licences

“—maintaining and operating a network of DriveTest facilities and travel point facilities

“—responding to customer inquiries and complaints; and

“Whereas the 2010 contract renewal between the government and Plenary-Serco was, ‘projected to generate an estimated \$800 million in shared revenues over its [10-year] term’; and

“Whereas at the time of the contract signing the existing driver examination services network processed approximately 575,000 knowledge tests, 675,000 road tests and exchanges over 90,000 licences from other jurisdictions; and

“Whereas Plenary-Serco DriveTest customers across the province have faced egregious, costly delays in booking, and/or executing, drive or knowledge tests, or completing renewals—delays that in some cases amount to days of lost time and work for customers, extended lineups, and ‘camp-out’ queues; and

“Whereas these delays impact all sectors; often leading to time off work and/or inability to provide necessary information to prospective employers—costing both employers and employees alike—and directly impacting seniors in the driver’s licence renewal program and youth entering into the graduated licensing system; and

“Whereas, despite terms of the publicly available portions of the Plenary-Serco contract that provide the government ‘auditing,’ ‘monitoring,’ ‘increased monitoring,’ ‘performance penalty’ and ‘warning notice’ powers,

there has been no indication of penalties or warnings to address continued failings to deliver basic customer service; and

“Whereas KPMG reportedly performs annual audits of Serco’s ‘processes and procedures’ on behalf of government that are not publicly available without filing a freedom-of-information request;

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

“End the DriveTest Gridlock!—Make government, KPMG, and Plenary-Serco self-audits for publicly funded DriveTest services publicly available, and immediately end the government’s delay in implementing government’s contracted ‘increased monitoring,’ ‘penalty’ and ‘warning’ powers, to allow the people of Ontario the DriveTest services they’ve paid for and Plenary-Serco has contracted to provide.”

Speaker, I’m going to sign this and send it down to the table.

WATER EXTRACTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is called “Protect Water as a Public Good.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas groundwater is a public good, not a commodity; and

“Whereas local ecosystems must be preserved for the well-being of future generations; and

“Whereas the United Nations recognizes access to clean drinking water as a human right; and

“Whereas the duty to consult indigenous communities regarding water-taking within traditional territories is often neglected, resulting in a disproportionate burden on systemically marginalized communities during a period of reconciliation; and

“Whereas a poll commissioned by the Wellington Water Watchers found that two thirds of respondents support phasing out bottled water in Ontario over the course of a decade; and

“Whereas a trend towards prioritizing the expansion of for-profit water bottling corporations over the needs of municipalities will negatively impact Ontario’s growing communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on Premier Wynne to direct the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change to prioritize public ownership and control of water over corporate interests and fund the accessibility of free drinking water in public spaces across the province.”

I couldn’t agree more with this petition. I will affix my signature and give this petition to page Greg.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. James J. Bradley: I am presenting this on behalf of the Minister of Natural Resources, who, as a minister, is not permitted to present petitions. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I affix my signature and I give this to Javan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PATIENTS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 RENFORÇANT LA QUALITÉ ET LA RESPONSABILITÉ POUR LES PATIENTS

Mr. Chan, on behalf of Mr. Hoskins, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 160, An Act to amend, repeal and enact various Acts in the interest of strengthening quality and accountability for patients / Projet de loi 160, Loi visant à modifier, à abroger et à édicter diverses lois dans le souci de renforcer la qualité et la responsabilité pour les patients.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Chan.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa Centre. Now I would like to turn it over to him.

Mr. John Fraser: South.

Hon. Michael Chan: Ottawa South. Sorry for that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We’ll recognize the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the government House leader as well. Thank you.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Chief government whip.

Mr. John Fraser: Chief government whip; sorry. I blew it. My God.

Mr. John Fraser: Okay, now we're even. I messed up. There we go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Do you know who's who?

Mr. John Fraser: No, I don't. Sorry.

Interjection: It's unheard of.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm Paul.

Mr. John Fraser: We got an hour. We got an hour.

Interjection: Hi, Paul.

Mr. John Fraser: Let's get all this out of our system now, okay? Can we do that?

Interjection: It's out of our system.

Mr. John Fraser: Can we do that?

I'll be sharing my time with the chief government whip.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay.

Mr. John Fraser: I often get the two confused.

I'm pleased to rise today to lead off discussion of the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act on the occasion of its second reading, and I thank the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for this opportunity.

The bill before us today, if passed, would greatly benefit Ontario patients. It will give them safer and better quality care, and it would make it easier for them to air and resolve any concerns they might have with their health system.

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, nobody wants to be a patient; however, at some point, most of us are one. When that happens, we want our experience to be as easy as possible, and we want the best possible outcomes. That is precisely why we are introducing this bill—because we want to make the patient experience in Ontario as easy as possible.

Several different pieces of this legislation are all directed at improving quality and accountability within the system. The scope and the impact of this bill will affect a broad spectrum of our health care system.

It would make it mandatory for the medical industry to annually disclose to the government all payments at or above a set dollar threshold provided to named recipients, such as health care professionals and organizations, among others.

It would ensure that public health programs and services remain current to protect the health of Ontarians.

It would strengthen the inspection and enforcement framework of the Long-Term Care Homes Act, in response to concerns related to care in long-term homes.

It would improve the effective administration of the Retirement Homes Act by strengthening resident safety and consumer protection, increasing transparency and accountability, and enhancing governance.

1610

It would also establish a single regulatory framework that streamlines and modernizes and strengthens the oversight of community health facilities.

It would also enhance and modernize the emergency health services system in Ontario by improving access to the right care at the right time in the right place, and by

connecting health care partners and providers across the patient's journey.

It would amend—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me.

Point of order, the member from Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I don't think we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Would the Clerk check for a quorum, please.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Continue.

Mr. John Fraser: Are we good? Okay.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Poor John.

Mr. John Fraser: If you could just stick around—I know it's not scintillating. I'm trying my best here, folks. But let's keep a quorum. I might lose my place.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm not trying to do that.

Mr. John Fraser: I know. I'm just teasing.

It would amend the Excellent Care for All Act to strengthen patient-centred care by protecting the integrity of Patient Ombudsman investigations and by enabling Health Quality Ontario's collection, use and disclosure of personal health information.

That's a great deal of ground to cover. I don't propose to do that all here today, because I want you all to stick around, but I do want to start with one particular aspect of this bill, and that's transparency; specifically, transparency around payments, or what are called "transfers of value," from the medical industry to health professionals or health care organizations.

I want to give some context by way of explanation, because this is an important step that we want to take, and I hope it receives the support that it deserves. We know, and have known for some time, that there are relationships and certain types of interactions between the medical industry and elements of the broader health care sector—and by "medical industry," I mean manufacturers of pharmaceuticals, medical devices, biologicals and supplies. Within the broader health care sector, we're talking about individual practitioners, organizations, associations, patient advocacy groups, pharmacies, researchers and so forth. And in terms of interactions, I'm referring to things like funding for research, fees for speeches, paying memberships on advisory committees, or travel expenses to international functions. These are transfers of value, and the concern obviously is, at what point does the accepting of these payments and transfers constitute a conflict of interest?

An interesting thing is, I'm going to be speaking on a panel at a health care conference in Ottawa that Bruyère Complex Continuing Care is putting on, and in advance of being on that panel, I had a questionnaire that was about a page long that went through a series of conflicts very similar to the things we're talking about in this bill, because the organizers of the conference wanted to make sure that those who were attending the conference knew if there were any potential conflicts about the advice or the ideas that people were giving. I think that's something we

would all expect. That's something that I understand now, inside a lot of medical conferences in communities, is becoming standard, so I wanted to mention that.

You'd be aware, along the lines of this, as well, of the Open Pharma campaign that occurred nationally a few months ago. It was a campaign led by a number of prominent Ontario physicians, researchers and academics. They wanted the federal government to mandate public disclosure of all payments and transfers of value from drug companies to doctors. Further, they wanted Canadian patients to have the ability to check an online database to see if their doctors had received funding from the drug industry.

I think this is critical, that we know what relationships exist inside these professions and these organizations so that we can make informed choices about the care we receive. Actually, Mr. Speaker, this is something that patients in several other countries, including the United States and France, are already able to do. In the United States, the Physician Payments Sunshine Act of 2010 requires manufacturers of drugs, medical devices and biological medical supplies covered by Medicare, Medicaid, and the State Children's Health Insurance Program to collect and track all the financial relationships with physicians and teaching hospitals at or above \$10, and to report these data to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

In France, the Bertrand act of 2012 mandates that the producers or marketers of pharmaceutical drugs and medical devices and virtually all regulated health and cosmetic products, regardless of whether the products are reimbursed under the French social security regime, must disclose payments of €10 or more to health care providers for fee-for-services sponsorship and research arrangements. All of this was in order to promote transparency and allay concerns about conflicts of interest in the study, marketing and prescription of drugs.

Open Pharma was a laudable campaign, made even more impressive on June 20 of this year, when 10 brand-name pharmaceutical companies released partial details about \$50 million in payments and value transfers that had been made to Canadian health care professionals and organizations in 2016. That's a partial disclosure, and that's \$50 million. The size and the value of what we are talking about are of course much larger than that.

We saw in Open Pharma a campaign, an opportunity and an inspiration to pursue a transparency initiative of our own that goes beyond even the Open Pharma idea. Shortly thereafter we opened consultations with key stakeholders this summer within both the medical industry and health care sector to discuss ways of establishing greater transparency across the health system.

You might ask, "Why is this such a big deal?" The answer really is, Mr. Speaker, our relationship with the medical industry is extremely important. The industry supports critical research. It supports professional education programs and it funds services and equipment in hospitals and other institutions. The industry frequently partners with consumer groups to support initiatives

around health advocacy and disease awareness. These are all valuable and much-appreciated contributions to our health care system. It is clear that our relationship with the medical industry is extremely important.

The Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act will, if passed, bring about the following changes.

The medical industry will be mandated to disclose all transfers of values they provide to named participants. Those recipients will be prescribed in regulation later on, and could include all regulated health care professionals, health care organizations, their executives and others.

In speaking of others, I was on the general government committee, where the issue of diluted drugs came up about four years ago. It was very interesting to look at the relationships that existed inside some of those group-purchasing organizations that one might see as a conflict with the mission that they had. It's very important, I think, that we take a look at these regulations—take the time to get a broad enough scan of those individuals and organizations and institutions that need to be covered by this piece of legislation.

Speaker, there would be a set dollar-value threshold above which this regulation would kick in and the transfer of value would have to be reported. At that point, the data would have to be made available on a public, Internet-based, searchable database that would show the names of medical industry firms that provided benefit, as well as the names of the health care professionals and health care organizations that were recipients.

This bill also provides for a regular evaluation of the legislation and data to be undertaken by the ministry so we can be sure that events are unfolding as we intend.

The bill also provides for appropriate enforcement measures to enable us to address non-compliance. These measures would also include inspection and audit powers—again, so we can be sure that things are unfolding as we believe they should be.

1620

This focus on transparency should not come as a surprise. The government, led by Premier Wynne, is fiercely committed to making Ontario the most open and transparent jurisdiction in Canada. Open government is not just the name of an initiative; open government is our goal, because open government is good government, and good government is what we owe Ontarians.

I'd just interject on a personal note: My first private member's bill was about transparency and accountability in members' expenses, which was included in that broader accountability bill. I appreciate the support of those members of the Legislature who supported that bill.

Through our Open Government Initiative we are creating opportunities for civic dialogue and engagement so people can weigh in on government decision-making about programs and policies that affect their lives. We're doing a better job of sharing government data so that researchers, app developers, not-for-profit organizations and others can help to solve problems that Ontarians face every day.

In addition, through our Open Government Initiative, we are providing Ontarians with the information they want and need to help them better understand how their government works. We believe that our system is the strongest when Ontario patients have access to all the information they need so they can make informed decisions about their health care. For that reason, we are committed to strengthening transparency across the health care sector.

My colleagues have heard me speak many times about Patients First, Ontario's action plan for health care. Central to this plan is a commitment to transparency and openness. We call it Open by Default, and it perfectly mirrors the approach that's being taken through open government. Through the Patients First plan, we have taken a number of steps to enhance transparency and accountability of the health care system, and we're measuring and publicly reporting the current wait times for major health services.

Speaker, you would remember that before 2004-05, we weren't reporting on wait times. There was no coordinated effort to try to ensure that people were getting access to timely care by measuring it. This initiative, of course, has evolved over time and has led to a reduction in wait times but also some innovation in terms of how we manage those resources. For instance, in Ottawa, we have a single queue for orthopedic procedures like hips and knees that has drastically reduced wait times.

We've also taken steps to improve patient safety by having hospitals report on nine patient safety indicators. Hospitals are now required to establish expense rules where expenses are reimbursed from public funds and to post information about expense claims on their public websites. Hospitals are now subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. We are ensuring higher quality and greater value for the health care system through the Excellent Care for All Act. Under this act, hospitals now publicly release their annual quality improvement plans, and their executive compensation is tied to the fulfillment of those plans. In addition to all that, we have asked Ontario's public health units and health regulatory colleges to make transparency and increased public disclosure a priority.

Transparency is a watchword in Ontario health care, just as it is across the Ontario government. Several countries in the world have already taken action to increase the transparency of the relationship between the medical industry and their health systems. Until now, Canada has not. No Canadian jurisdiction mandates the medical industry to report transfers of value to health care professionals or organizations, and we want Ontario to be the first.

We want to strengthen transparency in Ontario's health care system and increase public trust and confidence. We also want Ontarians to have no doubt whatsoever that the health care system has their best interests at heart. We want to provide access to all the information Ontarians need to make the best possible decision when it comes to their health. We want to improve the ability of

health care leaders to engage in health system planning. We want to give health care leaders an important tool with which to protect the reputation and credibility of their organizations. We want to allow the ministry to better understand the financial relationship in the health care system through health system research and analysis.

We want all of those things because they add up to better care for patients, and because our government is committed, and will always be committed, to putting patients first.

This legislation, if passed, would mark an important continuation of the transformation of health care delivery in this province, which this government has laid out in detail in Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care. The bill before this Legislature includes 10 schedules of legislation that would, if passed, improve quality, accountability and transparency within the health care system, all toward one goal, and that is to deliver a better patient experience.

It is my firm belief that we will achieve this goal by relentlessly challenging ourselves and our partners to look beyond our own specific areas of responsibility—in health care, many of those jobs are not just crucially important; they are potentially life-saving—and instead see everything we do from one point of view: the point of view of the patient.

To our patients, health care should be a single, seamless experience, whether they are receiving care in a hospital, in the community or at home. That is the driving philosophy behind our Patients First action plan, and it is the driving philosophy behind the bill before this Legislature today.

I want to focus the remainder of my time here today on aspects of the bill that relate to the strengthening of the inspection and enforcement framework for Ontario's long-term-care homes as well as the issue around the rules of resident confinement.

I do want to say, just before I begin this section, that I'm very fortunate in my community to have two excellent long-term-care homes: The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre as well as St. Patrick's. That's about 750 beds all together. They provide excellent care, and I'm very proud to have them in my riding. I want to thank all of the staff and the volunteers and the board members for the work they do, and for caring for the people that we care for most.

I'd also like to say as well that I have family in long-term care, and family who are approaching long-term care, and I think most of the members of this Legislature—because a lot of us are around a certain age—have that happening in our lives too. This section of the bill is very important. Long-term care is, I think, equally important to all of us here. I know that all members share the same concern.

Also, I know very well from many conversations that I have had first-hand as well as feedback we've received from government—I speak to many people in my community. There is great sensitivity and concern to those living in our long-term-care homes as well as those who

care for them. The critical thing about long-term-care homes, the critical word in there is “home.” That is what we want to achieve: It’s a home. The ideal is to have people living in their home in community. In community, everybody is there; they look out for each other. It strengthens the care that people are able to give to each other when everybody is looking out for each other.

Let me set the context for this from a legislative point of view: The Legislature passed the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, after a long and extensive consultation process with residents, caregivers and other stakeholders. We undertook that work out of a profound sense of duty to our seniors—those people to whom we owe literally almost everything. They are our parents, our grandparents and our family members. Our principles, our prosperity, for many of us, our very lives are dependent on these people—on the seniors, the people who are being cared for in long-term-care homes. Our seniors are the people who gave us care, love, and protection before most of us had a few words for asking. So it’s our collective responsibility to ensure that our province’s seniors live safely and with dignity.

We, as a government, had heard that request, and I want you to know, Speaker, that we, as a government, are resolute in answering it. The Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, enshrined that commitment into law, but as we often say in government, our work is never done, and there’s always more to do. What is good can be made better, and what is better can be made best. We are never above listening to or acting upon good advice and sound evidence.

1630

Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the Auditor General conducted a value-for-money audit around long-term care in Ontario. As a result of that audit, it was recommended that the ministry (1) strengthen its enforcement process to promptly address homes with repeated non-compliance issues, and (2) evaluate the potential use of other enforcement measures, such as fines and penalties.

The safety and security of Ontario’s long-term-care residents remain this government’s top priority, and we are committed to ensuring that we have in place the necessary tools to ensure that safety, which is precisely what the long-term-care component of this bill is designed to do. The proposed amendments to the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, would expand an already strong legislative and regulatory oversight system for Ontario’s long-term-care homes sector for the benefit of Ontario’s 78,000 long-term-care home residents.

The financial penalties and new provincial offences we are proposing are intended to send a clear message to those long-term-care home operators with ongoing care and safety concerns. It also makes changes to improve the overall quality of care and safety of residents in your homes, or face the consequences. Those consequences are up to and including the revocation of your licence to operate a long-term-care home in this province.

As you know, Speaker, each of Ontario’s long-term-care homes undergoes an annual inspection to ensure that

they comply with the Long-Term Care Homes Act and Ontario Regulation 79/10. In addition, our ministry inspects homes based on complaints from residents, their family members, staff and the public. The evidence we have gathered in the years since the Long-Term Care Homes Act came into force tells us our approach is working well. But as I said earlier, we as a government firmly believe there is always more we can do, and that is especially true when it comes to the care and the well-being of our seniors.

What we are proposing in the bill are amendments to the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007. That includes strengthening the inspection and enforcement framework. Specifically, what we are proposing not only includes the financial penalties and new offence provisions that I have mentioned, but also the power for the minister to issue directives to long-term-care homes on areas of critical importance to residents, for example, those related to medication management.

We have one of the strongest inspection programs in North America and one of the most highly regulated programs in North America. Bringing in these new enforcement tools will strengthen inspections by helping us direct resources to where they are needed most, so that inspectors can respond and address critical issues.

That isn’t the only improvement we are proposing in this bill, if passed. We are introducing the ability to suspend a licence, providing the opportunity for a long-term-care home to address critical non-compliance issues while minimizing the impact on residents. In addition to this bill, we are undertaking key investments in long-term care for an improved resident experience.

As we announced in the 2017 budget, we have committed \$10 million in new funding for Behavioural Supports Ontario in order to provide enhanced supports for long-term-care residents with challenging behaviours and those who are at risk for developing these behaviours due to dementia and other cognitive impairments. We also have committed up to \$15 million in funding for food to enhance the quality of nutrition as well as support the needs of residents with special diets and ethnocultural food requirements.

We are also proposing improvements to the ministry website to help people make decisions about long-term care. It will feature improved search functionality to help people find the information they need quickly and easily.

Our government has been working hard on a number of initiatives to put residents first, and this bill is just a part of those efforts. We are also introducing funding extensions for three centres for learning, research and innovation, or CLRIs, which are located in Ottawa, Toronto, and Waterloo. This new funding will enable centres to incubate and spread innovative practices in seniors’ care, resident care and geriatrics across the province.

Currently, right now, as part of my mandate for palliative and end-of-life care, we’re looking at how we can spread the culture of excellent palliative care inside long-term-care facilities. We know there are many great centres of excellence. We know that we have to spread

that culture and that knowledge and those skills and support palliative care in long-term-care homes.

Through the Enhanced Long-Term Care Home Renewal Strategy, we're supporting the development of more than 30,000 long-term-care beds in more than 300 long-term-care homes by 2025 and eliminating all four-bed wards in Ontario's long-term-care homes.

Mr. Speaker, recently I was in Arnprior with the Premier and, as well, with the member from Renfrew-Nipissing—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pembroke.

Mr. John Fraser: Pembroke. I was getting there. Thank you very much. It was just slow.

We were announcing the Grove redevelopment. That redevelopment actually expanded the size of the Grove. They provide excellent care there. It's really great for that community. It's a great community there, Mr. Speaker. The Grove is a great community. You could get that feeling when we were there and when we made the announcement, speaking to the residents and speaking to the staff. They are providing excellent care. And not only are they a great community inside the home, they are really attached to the community, and, Mr. Speaker, you can tell it makes all the difference in the world. I want to tip my hat to them.

I was really proud and pleased to be able to be at the announcement of that redevelopment to, I believe, 90 beds or 96 beds from 60 and change. Residents will benefit from redeveloped homes which facilitate the provision of quality care and service in an environment that is comfortable, aesthetically pleasing and as home-like as possible.

In addition, our government has announced the addition of 75 nurse practitioners to long-term-care home staff across this province. To date, 60 of these positions have been funded, starting in 2015-16.

We know the difference that nurse practitioners have made to the quality and timeliness of patient care, particularly in primary care, since our government first championed their introduction. It only makes sense that we draw upon their skills and expertise to care for the seniors who make Ontario's long-term-care homes their homes.

There's another aspect to the bill before this Legislature that I wish to speak to, as I mentioned earlier, and those are amendments that relate to the safety and security of residents in Ontario's long-term-care homes. This government is committed to meeting residents' safety and security needs in a way that respects their rights and sets out clear criteria for when residents may be confined. I should clarify that by "confinement," I mean restrictions on a resident's ability to leave a long-term-care home, or an area within the home, unsupervised.

We are proposing a consent-based confinement framework for a reason, and that is the safety and well-being of the people who are cared for in long-term-care homes. We want to ensure that a resident with severe dementia and at risk of getting lost is safe.

To implement the changes proposed in the bill before this Legislature, we will fund new rights adviser positions to support residents in long-term-care homes. These advisers will meet with any long-term-care resident who disagrees with being confined or simply asks for a meeting.

Our research tells us that no other jurisdiction offers rights advice for long-term-care residents who are confined. Once again, this is Ontario leading the way on this initiative.

Our proposed amendments to the act relating to confinement will provide clarity for care providers, residents and families on the circumstances under which a resident can be confined based on consent.

Should a substitute decision-maker consent to confinement on behalf of a long-term-care resident who is found incapable of making that decision for themselves, the resident will be informed of their right to speak with a rights adviser. The resident will also be able to seek a review by the Consent and Capacity Board of both the substitute decision-maker's consent and of the finding that the resident was incapable of making their own decision regarding confinement. The resident will be able to receive assistance from the rights adviser applying to the board.

1640

Speaker, I truly believe that all of these proposed changes I have spoken to today are steps in the right direction. They'll build on the work that we've done already, and they position us to deliver even better care for our patients and our long-term-care residents where they need it and when they need it. These proposals fall in line with our Patients First action plan and they further demonstrate our commitment to delivering better, coordinated and integrated care—care that is, from the patient's perspective, seamless.

As I mentioned earlier, the safety and security of Ontario's long-term-care residents remain the government's top priority. It is a duty and responsibility that we take very seriously. The amendments contained in the bill represent the next step forward in fulfilling our obligation to those who have given us so much: our seniors.

I look forward to the debate. I give my time to the chief government whip.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Chief government whip.

Mr. James J. Bradley: The member did such a good job of covering so much material, but what I wanted to note at this point in time was that this bill actually enhances so much of the health care system. It takes a lot of things that had to be done with the health care system and ensures that they're going to happen.

There are going to be some people unhappy when you make changes. That always happens. There are going to be some people who are going to say, "Why didn't you do it 20 years ago?" I can say, "Why didn't you do it 40 years ago?" in my case. But I think there's a fair consensus amongst the health care community out there that what is contained in this bill is positive. I suspect, though

I can never predict, that this might even receive support from all parties in the House. No doubt they'll want to make amendments to parts of it which would be additions or significant changes taking place, but I do think this bill goes a long way.

I listen to the question period in the House from time to time, and it deals with these health care issues. I listen to the criticism that comes. One of the things you've heard me say, Speaker, perhaps privately when there's a discussion going on or in the House, is—the question I ask now of people is, “Are you prepared to raise taxes to ensure that we have the new level of service?”

It's interesting, when I'm meeting with different delegations and groups in my own riding and other places. I don't say only, “Are you prepared to accept?” I say, “Are you prepared to campaign for a tax increase to pay for this?” I can count on one hand the number of people who have said unequivocally that yes, they are prepared to do so.

What governments are trying to do around the world—this government as well, and part of this bill certainly points in that direction—is make changes to the health care system that will improve it without substantially increasing the funding. A lot of this is shifting. For instance, as you know, in many cases years ago, home care was not what it is today. Mind you, there's a much greater population of seniors because people are living to an older age today. If you look at the people who are now in long-term-care homes, they're largely much older and frailer and have more medical challenges than would have been the case a generation ago.

Along the way, there's a step called home care. If you ask most people, they'd rather be at home. I can recall that my own father had a kidney problem at one time. He was a person who had never been in a hospital in his life, but he had a kidney problem one time when he was about 78 and was not a good patient, was not a patient patient in the hospital and not a happy camper. I would have thought that there was some question of whether he was ever going to come out of that hospital, except at Christmastime they kicked the patients out, of course. When he got to go home, what a big difference. Yes, there was some care that had to be provided and some extra provisions made, but what a difference it made.

As much as we can, we try to ensure that there are adequate and excellent home care services for people. That is not without a cost, and that's why I keep asking all the time of all politicians from all parties when they say—“Are you prepared to raise taxes?” I ask that question to do this because there are a lot of really good things that could be done: an expansion of services, making the services better in terms of quality. Often that requires additional dollars.

One of the problems is, when we talk to people out there, if one of the parties in the House ran in the next provincial election advocating an increase in taxes, it might not be a successful party at the polls. So I think when people are asking you, I and others in this House to enhance and expand services, then we have to make sure that they are prepared to pay for them.

But one of the things that people have asked for today in the health care system is transparency. Everyone deserves to have as much information as possible, so transparency is good. It's difficult sometimes because various institutions are reluctant to bare all the facts out there about something that has happened, but by and large you find you can't go wrong with transparency. Often when people will see why something is done—not just that it's done, not just the announcement. You and I as members of the Legislature would know that sometimes we sit down with people who will legitimately question why the Legislature would be doing this. It doesn't happen all the time, but once you sit down with them and say, “This is why this is being done,” you find out that they are more accepting of that. So I looked at the transparency that's contained in this bill, and the fact that we're moving in that direction, and I know that that's very important. We think that information related to health care professionals and organizations should be made available to the public. Much of it is at the present time.

We know that if this bill is passed, we'll have a better understanding of the value of some of these services that exist. So what we would be doing—because there's a lot of discussion of this today even in the House, in questions that are there. We'll be guaranteeing that all long-term-care home operators are providing safe and quality care for residents. That's a major challenge. We just saw in the media this week that three such institutional settings have been prohibited from receiving more patients—that was announced this week—because they were not meeting that standard.

It's often not the patients themselves in a long-term-care home, but it's the family of the patients who come to us and say, “We think this quality of care is” either “good,” or, “It's not up to standard.” Again, I think that people are looking for more in that regard. Again, that would not happen without some additional costs.

What we're looking for, as the member for Ottawa South has mentioned, is more robust enforcement tools and a stronger inspection program within these homes. It would also give ambulances the ability to transport patients to more appropriate settings, such as mental health facilities, to best address their individual needs. Sometimes the hospital isn't the place.

If you look back—you and I would remember this a generation ago—the qualifications that a person in an ambulance would have were different. These people were very good people, dedicated, but today our paramedics are required to have a far more detailed knowledge of the health care system, and can provide intervention when they arrive or in the ambulance itself. Now this legislation is saying, “You know, sometimes the hospital isn't where patients should be taken.” There may be mental health challenges. They would recognize a more appropriate setting would take place—so it would give that ability to our ambulance operators.

We also want to reduce overcrowding in emergency departments, and provide the best care for patients in the most appropriate settings when they call for 911 assist-

ance. Once again, we recognize, any one of us who has been there as a patient, or had family as a patient in an emergency department, that it is sometimes chaotic, depending on how many people are there. We can only imagine, for instance, what it would be like in a catastrophe such as Las Vegas, where you had so many people killed and injured. Those incidents happen from time to time, for a variety of reasons.

1650

The access that many people have to a hospital system is actually the emergency department. Some people arrive there who should be going to an alternative—sometimes we call them urgent care centres. Being directed there would be valuable.

I can say as well that when we go there, I think there's a feeling among some that it's first come, first served. As we know, in an emergency department that's not the case. If somebody is coming in with a very serious heart attack, that person is shunted to the front of the line. If they're coming in with a laceration somewhere, likely that is going to wait.

Nevertheless, people look to government in any jurisdiction to provide the circumstances where you have good emergency care. That's one of the goals that we have within this particular piece of legislation.

The changes to the Long-Term Care Homes Act I think are valuable changes. They would enhance our oversight system for long-term-care homes so families can remain confident their loved ones are safe and receiving the highest possible quality of care.

I like the fact that there are new enforcement tools to ensure that long-term-care home operators with recurring care and safety concerns are urgently addressing these issues. From time to time there's going to be something that will arise that's an exception in one of the homes. There are other homes that may have more than exceptions, and that's where the enforcement agency has to come down very hard on those people. We've all encountered people who have mentioned that to us.

We need those enforcement tools—financial penalties for homes with repeated non-compliance—to ensure that all home care licensees are addressing these concerns on an immediate basis.

Those penalties are there. I support those penalties. We know that those who are in these long-term-care homes—they're not all seniors; some are other people who are in a very vulnerable situation. But because they are vulnerable in our society, we as legislators have an obligation to protect them.

Under the Ambulance Act, the changes that are being made are going to be very positive. I mentioned before the ability to have those individuals who should go to something other than a hospital brought there. Many times, as I say, the ambulance attendants themselves—the paramedics—are able to provide some service that may actually solve the problem of the person before they might ever get to a hospital.

We want to protect children's health by regulating recreational water facilities like splash pads and wading

pools, which are fun for kids, but there can be accidents that happen or there can be, heaven forbid, some kind of a poison that might be found there—E. coli or something of that nature.

We also look at the fact that we are helping to protect consumers' health by preventing infection at personal service settings like barbershops, nail salons, tattoo parlours and aesthetic practices.

We would improve food safety by revising the definition of a food premise to include part of a home that is used to operate a food business. This can be controversial. You will hear people say, "Why is the government being onerous at the fall fair?" or something like that. There is a negative opportunity for people to acquire some kind of serious illness if there are not the proper controls in place. I know that annoys people, but all it takes is one or two deaths or serious illnesses, and minds are changed considerably.

We looked at the funding of all of these things. I note in the House when opposition members—and I was an opposition member for years, so I know the role of opposition members—get up and talk about cuts. I call them phantom cuts in this case, because every time I look at the health care budget it goes up substantially every year—up in hundreds of millions of dollars every year. I hear questions come from the opposition about cuts. And of course, they aren't really cuts. Then that forces the Minister of Health to go into history and talk about cuts that were made in previous years. Now all of those cuts—my good friends in the New Democratic Party have asked some questions about funding and have alleged funding cuts that I know have not happened. I won't bring the Speaker into this because he's neutral, but I know that they have not taken place.

The minister lists all of the cuts that have taken place in those years, and the beds closed and mental-health beds diminished and so on, and what I say is, for instance—in the NDP case, not necessarily the Conservative case, because they have a different approach. They didn't do it to be mean, all those cuts. They didn't do it to be mean or because they didn't care about health care. It's often the circumstances they face, just as—you and I would have as a hero Tommy Douglas and his successor in Saskatchewan, Roy Romanow.

I can recall in the 1990s that the NDP government was compelled to close 52 rural hospitals. I'll bet the opposition in those days was raking them over the coals for it, but as Dr. Janice MacKinnon said in her book, *Minding the Public Purse*—she was the former Minister of Finance of Saskatchewan under the Romanow government. She explained why it had to be done. They did not want to do it, but there were circumstances that arose. So I'm very understanding of when other parties have done that. I know that our government hasn't done that because we've been, at least in recent years, faced with pretty good economic times in terms of revenues coming in to meet the needs of the province.

I know the opposition members will be commenting on that, but I wanted to put that on record because I think

it's important to know that when other governments have made those cuts—and I know we retort with that—they didn't necessarily do it to be mean or not understanding of the needs of health care. They did it because the circumstances dictated that that had to be done.

I like the fact we are increasing transparency and accountability in governance through the following changes: permitting the Auditor General to conduct value-for-money audits of the RHRA—I think that's exceedingly important; giving the minister authority to require reviews of the RHRA, the Retirement Homes Act; making other housekeeping amendments to improve the operation of the RHRA, such as establishing deputy registrars to maintain business continuity.

These changes, I think most people would agree, would reinforce our commitment to strengthening consumer protections by strengthening our ability to address unlicensed retirement homes and enforce compliance in licensed homes, making them safer for residents. I think that's a goal everybody in this House would have regardless of what their political affiliation or their riding might be.

We know that the other changes that are made are going to be extremely beneficial to people, under the Medical Radiation Technology Act, some of them. The office of the Patient Ombudsman—and by the way, may I say that our government has chosen an excellent Patient Ombudsman? In fact, I thought that person would have been an excellent choice as the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario. Had she been the leader, I would have been running for the hills because certainly the party opposite would have had a chance to win the election. There's more question about that now, but there was a good choice, I thought, the former member of this Legislature from just east of the city of Toronto. Christine Elliott was, I think, an astute choice by the government because she had demonstrated her concern about health care. Unfortunately, she wasn't able to buy, or whatever it is—sell as many memberships as the present leader, but what a good choice for Patient Ombudsman. I think that it's a favour to the people of Ontario, in one way, that she was not chosen as the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, because she was available, then, to serve in this capacity. But it was certainly a loss for Progressive Conservative Party who, I think, would have done very well to have Christine Elliott as their leader. But that didn't happen, and it's not for me to make that kind of decision, as to who is the Progressive Conservative leader.

1700

The proposed amendment that we have is going to allow the government to enable HQO to more fully engage with patients and family members and communicate more effectively with Ontarians. Very often—and we do this as individual members of the Legislature—we benefit immensely by personal communication with our constituents who have had certain experiences with, for instance, the health care system.

Now, some will say to us, “I had a marvelous experience. It operated perfectly for me. Boy, we've got a nice health care system in Ontario.” Others will say, “My experience was different from that.” That's where we have to be prepared to address that. I think, with the Patient Ombudsman being able to do this, with the Ombudsman able to require the ability to protect any sensitive information that comes to light during their investigation, that allays some concerns.

The proposed amendment, as I say, will allow government to enable HQO to more fully engage with patients—that's very important. HQO can use patient narratives—of course, with the patient's consent—to support HQO's patient-centred orientation as a provincial agency that reports on the quality of the health care system from patients' and caregivers' perspectives. I think there was general consensus in this House that it was good to establish that office and for the choice that was made.

There were a lot of consultations that took place for this legislation, I think, as the member for Ottawa South, the parliamentary assistant, made very clear. We as a government consulted with the medical industry and associations; with government-related organizations; with patient groups, societies and foundations; health care organizations and associations; the Open Pharma campaign representatives; and the Ontario public service staff.

Over 60 individuals representing 43 different organizations attended the in-person sessions, while those who were not able to attend were offered to provide feedback via teleconference or written response. The ministry has held three hours of consultations specifically for patient groups, societies and foundations. Because often—not often; I'd say always—the best legislation, the best regulations, the best policy come from consultation taking place, as with the changes coming under the Ontario Drug Benefit Act.

We're introducing an amendment that, if passed, would remove the last outdated reference to physicians in the Ontario Drug Benefit Act. This would reflect that other health care professionals, such as nurse practitioners, can prescribe drug products in Ontario under certain circumstances. Expanding the scope for nurse practitioners is something that we wanted to do in the Protecting Patients Act of 2017.

Now there were many people who commented favourably about the measures that are contained in this legislation. One area I think all of us confront now is the number of people who unfortunately have Alzheimer's. That is very prevalent now, largely because of an aging population. But it is very, very difficult for families who are afflicted with this. Virtually every family is touched in one way or another—the greater family or friends—with Alzheimer's.

I was pleased that Chris Dennis, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, had this to say about this legislation:

“We are supportive of transparency around private sector influence in the delivery of health care and commend Ontario's leadership on this issue. Quality of pa-

tient care is paramount, and we think everyone in the sector has a role to play to ensure that Ontarians are well-informed so they can make the right decisions.”

How true that is.

We’ve had a number of those who have said that. Dr. Adalsteinn Brown, interim dean of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, said the following, “Improved access to information can only reinforce the credibility and reputation of our health care institutions. I support increased transparency within Ontario’s publicly funded health system. Transparency will increase public trust and help providers, patients and their families make the best choices.”

Family Councils Ontario spoke approvingly; the executive director of the Ontario Association of Residents’ Councils—the list goes on, including Doris Grinspun, who is the chief executive officer of the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario—all making positive comment.

I know there’s going to be a suitable debate; this is just the beginning of the debate, but there will be a suitable debate on this. This is the kind of bill that I think would probably attract the support of all the parties in the House, though you and I know, Speaker, we can’t always make those predictions. To be fair to each of the parties, they have to bring it to each caucus, where there’s a discussion that takes place, and then decide whether they’re going to support the legislation, not support it or make amendments to it and then support it. Often the support is dependent upon whether there are amendments that the government is prepared to accept—and we always hope that everybody is going to be open-minded to those kinds of amendments.

I commend the parliamentary assistant, who I know has worked very hard on this legislation, as he has on so many bills in committee. I happen to sit on committees where bills have come for consideration and he has been the lead on behalf of the government, as the parliamentary assistant. He understands, I think, exceedingly well many of the challenges that we face in Ontario. He has brought forward private members’ bills in this House which have reflected that personal concern. So I want to commend him for the work he’s done. It’s onerous being the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It has to be one of the most onerous responsibilities, just as being the minister is.

I look forward with great anticipation to the debate that will take place in this House. Members will be speaking on the bill. I know that they will all be very positive in their approach and not simply rake the government over the coals—especially the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He’s noted for being very non-partisan and complimentary of this government, so I’m going to be able to sit down and allow him in a moment, after the two-minute hits, to have his say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s a pleasure to rise and add comments to Bill 160, the Strengthening Quality and Ac-

countability for Patients Act, 2017. I listened intently this afternoon to the debate and I also, as well, look forward to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound as he goes through and explains his position, being our critic for long-term care. This bill certainly has a lot to do with long-term care.

I know in my office a number of people present as families who are concerned about their elderly parents or relatives, or even themselves, who have experienced a stay in our health care and hospital facilities. I think the case is, as the member from St. Catharines said, that people who present now are presenting at a later age—older—and when they do come in, they’re usually in more infirm health because they’ve lived longer, they’ve lived in their homes for a lot longer, but when they do finally present and they have to go to a long-term-care home or into the hospital, the issues they have may be more serious than they would have had even a generation ago.

I’ve had family members who have worked their way through the health system, and I’ve been fortunate that most of them received adequate care, and I’d probably say excellent care in most cases. We found the nurses and the doctors very responsive to any issues that we had.

I’m sure that this bill, as we look at it when it goes to committee, will have lots of motions and recommendations and improvements that the opposition and the third party will certainly move. I look forward to that debate, and I also look forward to the comments from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound in just a very few minutes.

Mr. James J. Bradley: He’ll be very positive.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I know they’ll be very positive and erudite, as is always the case.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I’ll rest my case.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I thank the member from Ottawa South and the member from St. Catharines for their hour weigh-in on this big government bill.

The NDP certainly supports the improvements for transparency in health care and for better quality health care for patients and seniors in this province. The member from St. Catharines talked about how the budget is ever-increasing in health care. Unfortunately, the NDP doesn’t think that the funding takes into account population growth, it doesn’t take into account the aging population, the rate of inflation, the cost of living—all of those things are continuing to increase at the same time as various budgets in health care are being cut.

The member from St. Catharines also said that the government is guaranteeing that all long-term facilities are going to provide safe and quality care. I say to the members of the government, how are you going to do that without a significant investment in front-line staff? That is actually where the problem lies in long-term care.

At the end of the day, seniors don’t care about you redeveloping their homes. They don’t care about a fancy new big-screen TV on the wall in the room. What they

care about is quality food and somebody to assist them in making sure that they're eating it. They want quality activities. Their families want them to be engaged in conversation. They don't want them lying in bed for 18 hours with no one ever speaking to them, turning them, or getting up to toilet them. What seniors and their families want is to make sure that they live with dignity and with respect and with the care that they deserve in those final years, and not withering away in a long-term-care bed with nobody attending to their care.

I'm going to have 20 minutes on this later and I'll have a lot more to say about it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Daiene Vernile): The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: I'm very pleased to be able to comment on the debate this afternoon, a very eloquent debate by the member from Ottawa South and the member from St. Catharines. They point out quite a bit of extensive information in this bill in front of us.

I'm going to comment on what I just heard from the NDP caucus. In my riding, this week, I attended a groundbreaking ceremony alongside the Minister of Health for CAMH's third phase. This is going to help many, many people who are challenged by mental health issues. That's another testament that our investment in the health care sector is expanding the capacity, which allows us to look after more people.

Of course, we thank the private donors. The McCain family was a big donor on this to CAMH, but certainly the government's investment is seen across the province.

I noticed that there's mention about leading a quality life and making sure our seniors are living a quality life. I think this bill goes the distance to ensure that the long-term-care home operators are under stricter rules by increasing the fines. But what's also important is that they are getting the right support at home, because we know that seniors want to age at home. We want them to have a very fulsome retirement life. For example, the government's Seniors Community Grant Program is allowing a small amount of grant to assist these seniors in their activities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Daiene Vernile): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill. I'm going to be doing another 20 minutes here shortly, but I'll just talk to the chief government whip. Certainly, he made a lot of good points. He mentioned that I'm non-partisan; I certainly try to be. But as he is most well aware, our job is to be the loyal opposition to the government and to challenge them and ensure that there is transparency in everything they do. I take that as a great thought, that he knows that I'm one of those people. I can talk after this little bit of theatre and have very balanced discussions and try to find a way that's going to help.

I certainly agree with him 100% that they made a fantastic choice in the Patient Ombudsman. Christine Elliott has served her province, her community and, frankly, our country for many years, and she will do a fantastic job

and will continue to do that. I was proud to serve with her and in fact be her deputy of health.

Mr. James J. Bradley: You supported her for leader, didn't you?

Mr. Bill Walker: I did, in fact. She is a wonderful lady, and she'll do a great job.

The parliamentary assistant—I think last week we were talking in here and he made a comment about how we don't often agree. Actually, I think in many cases, he and I personally do agree. How he and his party approach things, I think we sometimes definitely disagree on, but I think the end game—in some cases, we actually are very close to that. Things like the hospice that happened in my riding, I know he was very involved with, and he sees the value, as I do. I think when it comes down to patient care, we're both on the same side: We want the best for patients. How we get there and some of the ideals we have about what that constitutes are different.

I would like to thank the minister's staff from the Ministry of Health. They actually just gave me a briefing about an hour and a half ago, kind of that just-in-time delivery, if you will—but they gave me a briefing on this bill to clarify. I want to thank them. I was very frank with them and I was very hard-hitting—but to me, that's my job: to make sure I understand. That's how regulations and legislation should be crafted—so that it's unambiguous, it's black and white, it's clear, it's consistent, so every user out there understands what they can expect and how it should be done.

I'm going to talk for about 20 more minutes on this and get into a lot of details. I thank the members for speaking and for the opportunity to give them my points in response.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Back to the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I want to thank the members from Sarnia–Lambton, Welland, Trinity–Spadina, and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and the chief government whip for his very kind words and his able support of me—actually not getting through the full hour. It was good to have his remarks and have that support from him.

I was writing down the other things that are in this bill: the Ambulance Act and the public health care act. Those are all really important.

I did listen to what the member from Welland had to say—and I want to start by saying I agree with the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I think we all have the ideal of how we want to get there. We do see things differently. We do this sometimes in the House, where we throw things out: “Well, remember what you did in 1990 and what you did in 1999?” Well, we all had to make choices. We know what we're doing right now—but there's a limited pot of money and we all make decisions about how we're going to do that and try to utilize it as best we can.

What I want to say about long-term care, though, is—and this is something I have been thinking about a lot lately. Where I see excellence in long-term care, there are two things that I find: that it's a home, and that it's a

community where people look out for each other. That's the ideal that we have to get to. That's what our long-term-care homes have to be.

We can build rules, and we're doing that. We can make sure we have stronger enforcement tools, and we need to do that. But what we also have to realize is that those places have to be communities. We have to put more front-line resources. We always have to look at those things. But our communities actually have to realize they have to help those places be communities as well. It requires all of us.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Daiene Vernile): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent to defer our lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has asked to stand down the lead. Do we agree? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I would like to, again, as I did in my response a few seconds ago, thank the minister's staff for the briefing provided to this very specific piece of legislation just a couple of hours go. It was a little bit of just-in-time delivery, but it was good, it was thorough, and I do appreciate all of the members who participated in that discussion.

As the PC Party's critic for seniors, long-term care and accessibility, I am pleased to rise and give input into schedules 5 and 10 of Bill 160, Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act, as it concerns amendments to the Long-Term Care Homes Act and the Retirement Homes Act.

From the perspective of our caucus, we want to see a system that upholds safety and equality and is a success for all senior residents in care homes in Ontario. Of course, how could we not want that, Mr. Speaker? As I said in my response, it's sometimes more the reality of how we get there and the processes we find.

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Mr. Speaker, this is our personal commitment to the seniors who shaped and built this great province we have today—and that will be, should be, and needs to be a priority. There is no greater urgency than ensuring seniors, who are our most vulnerable citizens, have access to care, from home care to long-term care, when and where they need it.

I think the members opposite know exactly where my concerns lay with regard to their party's record on long-term care. After all, I have asked 45 questions in question period and twice as many in the estimates committee, while voicing my concern about inadequate access to care, funding and enforcement in long-term care, all of which have led this government to fail our seniors.

As I shared again to the chief government whip, that is our role. He knows that well because he's complimented and suggested it in cases—that it is the role of the opposition to be very hard-hitting, to be very much the group that keeps the government to task on all aspects of legislation.

With 80% of Ontario's 627 long-term-care homes being compliant with the laws with regard to operations and provision of care, the problem clearly lies not with the operators but with how the ministry is responding—or not responding, rather—to the other 20% who are non-compliant. So before I get into the specifics of Bill 160, I first want to review those key concerns, some of which are being addressed in this bill, albeit not to the full extent of what they should be, in my opinion.

If you think back to the questions and statements made in the House in response to my concerns with this government's mishandling of the long-term-care system, you will find they always focused on inadequate access to care, funding and enforcement of seniors' protections to the full extent of the law. The three areas are connected, as they lead to infractions that would be targeted after Bill 160 is passed.

With regard to access to care, I've been voicing the government's mishandling of our seniors' access to physiotherapy.

After cutting funding and access to physiotherapy in 2013—which, of course, at that time I challenged and was very concerned about the ramifications of that. What was going to happen to the people who lost funding for that care? What was going to be the real reality to the people—not about a budget, not about numbers—the actual people who were losing access to care?

Ontario's seniors in long-term care are suffering twice as many falls. This is a problem because falls are a common cause of hip fractures and result in a costly hospitalization. Also, Speaker, as we all know, falls can lead to ministry orders against a home for non-compliance, something Bill 160 is trying to address.

If you think back again, they cut funding without giving a lot of thought to what the repercussions were. They're actually saying, "We want to have fewer falls"—they set that as a goal. But it only stands to reason that the chances that you're going to actually have some kind of a mishap are greater if you have less care and fewer people actually in the facility trying to help you and keep you in a healthy state. So while the Minister of Health has promised to reduce seniors' falls and set the target at 9%, there is no indication he's anywhere close to it. As I've said in this House many times, it's interesting when I hear numbers—because I want to know: Did they actually do any kind of a pragmatic thought process? Did they use any kind of science to say that this is actually achievable and what the result is?

We've had so many examples of where those numbers don't match up. When we heard about the gas plant cancellation, we heard a \$40-million figure being used by the government, and they stood there and said, "Absolutely." And yet we know, today, that it's \$1.2 billion. So when they use a 9% figure, Speaker, I wonder how they use that.

I've asked about the redevelopment of long-term-care beds. They said 30,000. They're at about 10,000—and, if I'm really kind, I will even give them up to 12,000 or 14,000. How could you not have a plan to know exactly

when and where you're redeveloping over 14 years? They're still saying, "It's all good. We're on track." You're at 30% and you've been in government for 14 years.

So I challenge them when I hear numbers.

Results from the Health Quality Council show that twice as many seniors are suffering dangerous falls in every local health integration network across Ontario, and that falls in long-term care have been increasing steadily since this government cut physiotherapy treatments. Again, they went down an ideological path, people are suffering for it, and they're still not backing up and saying, "We made a mistake and we're going to reverse and change that."

Mr. Speaker, these are dangerous statistics. We want to know that our seniors' safety is absolutely assured and that it's a true priority of government. So why did this Liberal government cut physiotherapy, knowing it would increase seniors' falls and compromise their health? And is this cut leading to higher rates of non-compliance? These are very legitimate questions and the government needs to address them.

Secondly, the government has seriously mishandled capacity and seniors' access to long-term-care beds across Ontario, despite receiving capacity-specific recommendations that called for more beds in Ontario to accommodate our growing senior population and their mounting acuity needs. Mr. Speaker, all of us have heard about the baby boom generation that's coming at us. This isn't a new phenomenon that just started a month ago or a week ago. For 14 years, this government has been in power. They have had the lead. This is a file that they should have had absolutely at the foremost of their thought process, knowing that those people, those wonderful seniors who have built our province, are having a need coming at us, and yet, at every turn, there's not enough beds and not enough funding in the care homes. We're seeing more falls than less falls. They're cutting physiotherapy services instead of adding physiotherapy services.

After 14 years of inaction, we're left with 30,000 outdated nursing beds—that's almost half of our entire long-term-care capacity—and a record—high wait-list for beds. I believe the most recent update is 30,000 seniors are on the long-term-care wait-list for a bed. It's shameful that the government is not increasing capacity. This wait-list is already projected by the long-term-care industry that it's going to hit at least 50,000 people by 2021, and in the last budget, I saw no money for new beds—nothing that they even talked about that we're looking to address, even though they've known about this for a number of years.

People in Ontario come to me. They've lost trust. They've lost hope that this government truly is making seniors a priority, because there is no plan. There wasn't one word of mention about the beds that are needed. They didn't do anything to address the actual long-term-care situation—crisis, in some cases. I have families every day coming to me, wondering where they're going

to put their loved one. Who is going to take care of them going down the road?

In his promotion of Bill 160, the minister has said he wants to implement recommendations from the 2015 Auditor General's report, the one that also warned of long wait times. He has also said that he wants to make seniors' care a top priority—wants to make. Why hasn't he made it, Mr. Speaker? He has been there in that position for a number of years, and those who came before him—the Deputy Premier was health care. Where was that priority under her tenure?

You can say when you're only a year into government, "I don't really know and I don't have all the plans and I can't address everything." But 14 years—does it not seem that you would want to have some trust in your government that this was a priority? Would you not see action showing that that was a priority after 14 years?

I get asked every day in my critic role whether I believe the government is—because the people are saying to me, "I don't believe that seniors are a priority for this government. Do you, Mr. Walker, believe?" And I have to sadly say, "No, I don't think they are."

I stand every day in this House proudly to represent and defend those seniors and ask for services, which for the most part are about safety, for those wonderful people who need these services. I don't know how genuine a statement that says, "I want to make"—when you, again, have been there and when you still have no plan to house the 30,000 frail seniors on the long-term-care list.

I have asked in estimates for two years. You said you were going to redevelop 30,000 beds. It would only stand to reason, I think, and to give people true comfort and belief that a government is in control, that if you say, "I'm going to build 30,000" or "I'm going to redevelop 30,000," you should be able to give me a list that says here is how many in each year, what LHINs they're going to be built in and a time frame of when they should be completed. Yes, it can change; yes, it can move. But would you not at least—Mr. Speaker, I don't think you would ever ask to have a house built and just say, "Oh, go start building and we'll talk about the details later." You would think that you would say, "I want"—how many bedrooms, how many bathrooms, whether you want a basement, what type of cupboards.

I find it interesting that they throw out numbers all the time but there's never the follow-up. Whenever I ask those detailed questions, as is my responsibility as the opposition, you would think they would be able to hand it to me and say, "Mr. Walker, here it is. It's been on the shelf. We've had this. We've spent lots of time." They spend all kinds of money on studies. They always talk about consulting and going to the people and spending huge amounts of money on consultants. Do we ever get that study that they actually put in?

I don't know how they can stand and say that we're doing really well with 10,000 out of 30,000 beds completed and no plan, as I mentioned earlier, for new beds, yet we know that that wait-list is going to double in the next five years.

Finally, I want to remind members opposite that homes require stable and predictable funding to support the needs of residents entrusted in their care, and also to meet the ministry's regulations. Yet it's no secret that not only has the government mishandled access to care and capacity and not planned accordingly to accommodate our growing senior population, it has also underfunded the long-term-care system to the point that homes have been struggling to meet residents' care needs.

When I put before the government my private member's bill to provide guaranteed funding for seniors in long-term care, the minister failed to enshrine this protection in law. It's shameful because everyone knows this government was underfunding the system by so much that even prisoners were being fed better than seniors in long-term care.

Then you throw on 400% increases in hydro that come out of the same budget. If you're going to incur 300% to 400% increases, the reality is, if you're not giving them more money, it has to come from somewhere. Sadly, in many cases, it's back to that direct care for the patient, and we're hearing that time and again across the sector from all kinds of people who are feeling that they have had less services than more services.

We all know that this government has had record high revenues in all the years of their tenure, and yet they continue to run debt and deficit.

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Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Is that a compliment?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's not a compliment. Especially for the Minister of Education, it's not a compliment when you're closing 600 schools across our great province when you've had record revenues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, it appears we're having a little conversation across the floor again. I think we're going to go through me, aren't we?

Mr. Bill Walker: Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you so much.

Continue.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to address, through you, a comment to the Minister of Education, that it was not a compliment. As you're well aware, I'm holding you to account for 600 school closures across our great province despite record revenue. So yes, you've had the record revenues. It's how you've managed those dollars and still put us into higher debt than we've ever had in our province's history, and you're still smiling—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The member from Huron-Bruce may be baiting the Minister of Education a little bit, but you are biting. No more. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, what I was suggesting was, I had tabled a private member's bill, and the minister has continued to fail to enshrine this protection in law. We know, again, how

much underfunding has happened when there are prisoners who are receiving more money in allotment per day than our long-term-care patients. Imagine the difference in quality of life and better care this funding guarantee would give our seniors. So I ask the minister time and again: Why won't he enshrine in law a guarantee that spending on seniors in long-term care will never again dip below the rate of inflation?

Finally, enforcement of the laws to protect seniors in long-term care was another critical missing piece. Up until the last few months, when the minister moved to cease admissions at a few nursing homes, there was no such enforcement. Two years ago, in 2015, I filed order paper questions with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to find out how many orders or fines they issued following their annual inspection of long-term-care homes. Around the same time, Ontario averaged 265 urgent and non-urgent complaints each month. Urgent complaints are the most serious, involving allegations such as abuse or neglect. There were also, on average, 1,150 critical incident reports each month. This was happening at the same time the Auditor General started sounding warnings about the minister's lack of action in cracking down on repeat offenders of non-compliance.

Instead of getting assurance that the government was using enforcement tools in the act to achieve compliance, I received a blanket response. The Minister of Health and his Minister of Seniors Affairs wrote to say they were proud of their work on long-term care. Both of them have always spun it as, and I'm using actual quotes and talking points from two ministers: We are "putting patients at the centre of the system," with a "laser-like focus on long-term care." We are "indeed providing the highest levels of care." We have "beefed up inspections ... residents continue to feel truly at home and safe in their homes," and compliance is up; quality is up. In addition, their response to my questioning of such exaggerated statements was, "That's a little rich for the party opposite to be asking."

The question is, if you had done your job and if all of what you've been repeating in the House was true, then why would we need to urgently debate Bill 160 today?

The truth is, you're just now, in an election season—strange as that may seem, Mr. Speaker—creating an overhaul of the system via schedules 5 and 10, especially as it concerns oversight and enforcement.

I've again been asking—there's the Casa Verde case. There was an inquiry done in 2005, and it's my knowledge—and again, I just asked in the briefing—that less than 30% of the recommendations from that inquiry have ever actually been implemented by this government. So why do you spend the time and the money and give false hope to the families who have already suffered through it and those who may come along, and say that we've only got 30% or 33% of the actual actions? You start to wonder, Mr. Speaker: Could we have prevented such things as the most recent tragedy with the Wettlaufer case? That's what I tried to say when that first happened: Yes, an inquiry is there, but what we want to see is

urgent action. What is the minister doing today to give people confidence and comfort that the safety of their loved ones is absolutely paramount?

Some of the things that are in schedules 5 and 10 are okay. They're going to address some needs, and I'm pleased with that. I've always tried to be, as the chief government whip suggests, a person who's non-partisan at times and fair to them when there are good things that they do. I'm quite pleased to give them credit. As you are well aware, Mr. Speaker, sadly, that's not as often or as frequent as all of us would like that to be. If they were doing great things, it would be wonderful. In opposition, often the things that they are mismanaging—the incompetence and the waste—come out, and those are the things where we have to, to be fair to the public we represent, make sure they are informed and aware. Because there is an election coming, they do need to understand the true facts so they can make an informed decision.

I'll go back to the bill, Mr. Speaker. Schedule 5 includes amendments to the Long-Term Care Homes Act, the Health Care Consent Act, the Substitute Decisions Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act with respect to the use of restraints, inspections, and penalties that will punish repeat offenders, proposing, among other things, that restraints cannot be used for the convenience of staff or licensees or as a disciplinary measure. Restraints are allowed only if immediate danger presents. Interestingly—and again, I want to give the government kudos when they do a good job and actually meet a target—they've actually reduced the use of physical restraints in long-term care to 6%, down from 16% in 2011.

The bill also proposes that inspectors can issue penalties to force homes into compliance with the act, but they'll also have the power to reduce the penalty amount if it presents unnecessary hardship on the home—details to be set in regulation. One of the challenges that my critic provided us with when he did an overall comprehensive summary of this bill is, again, the reality that there's a lot of this in regulation, which never comes in front of us, which it should. You give a lot of the power to the administration and the bureaucracy behind the scenes to set the rules and regulations, not us, the legislators who are given the privilege to create law. So we have some challenges with that.

I think it would be good to understand if this is a need. If they find that there's a need for more inspectors, are they going to actually provide those? Because I think, again, what people want to see is—I want to see the actual fruit of the labour of the people out doing those inspections. If there's a repeat offender, I definitely support going after those, cracking down and not allowing non-compliance to continue unabated.

They'll charge fees for inspections for recurring non-compliance. Again, it's great to charge more fees. It seems to be like a tax. There's never a tax that they don't like to add, this government, but at the end of the day, what are those fees going to do? Are they going to add

more inspectors so they can get to those inspections in a more timely way to ensure the safety of the residents? Or is it just going to become another fund that comes in and we never know where the money ends up and we don't know if it ever gets back to front-line care?

We certainly have some situations in here. They're going to hike penalties. The first offence is \$100,000 or 12 months of jail time; a second offence is \$200,000 or 12 months in jail. Again, I think there has to be teeth to this. If people are continually consistent in being in non-compliance, then at some point, fines will be one of the deterrents to hopefully incent them to be better.

There's also a little bit in here, Mr. Speaker, where they talk about—I'm starting to run out of time. We pushed for whistle-blower protection. People who are out there that see what's going on and want to report it: They have to be protected, because those are the people who are actually stepping up. I did not see included in Bill 160 any strengthening of this whistle-blower protection for family members with loved ones in long-term care, people like Diana Pepin in Ottawa. Diana quit her job and became a full-time advocate for better care for her mom, who was in long-term care. She was a nurse, by the way, so she understood the front line; she understood the reality of health care. Do you know what happened to her, Mr. Speaker? She was served a trespass notice and limited access to her mom—unacceptable. Someone standing up and caring for their dear loved one, their mom, and they're denied access? Something is wrong in the system, and she has to be given true protection. If you're going to want people to be the guardians of the system, you want people to be able to step up with no recrimination.

I already mentioned the Casa Verde inquest. Less than 30% of the recommendations have been implemented to date from the Shirlee Sharkey and Gail Donner reports. This government and minister have had hundreds of recommendations from the multiple task forces, inquiries and reports over the last 14 years, and yet many of them have never been implemented.

Schedule 10: It's about a rights adviser. If someone isn't able to make their own decisions, a rights adviser is there and they have the ability. What I suggested in the briefing was that we want to ensure that we have the ability for that person to get the care they need in a timely manner and that the system is consistent and standardized.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government rushing legislation when the sector impacted by the changes has had no input into its creation? Is it because it's the election season, because the party opposite has been publicly shamed to the point where no one has any confidence left in how they're managing the long-term-care system? In 14 years, their mishandling of the long-term-care file is terrible for seniors, for their families, for front-line staff, for operators and everyone who trusted them when they said that seniors' care was their top priority.

Considering these facts, it is very clear that the safety and security of residents—although they might say the right things, actions, as we know, speak louder than words.

We want to see a government that truly puts detail into it, that they actually put those enforcement processes in place. We would not want to forget why, in 14 years, they haven't done any of this, and yet, all of a sudden, eight, 10 months before election, this is a big issue.

I will always stand for seniors. I have been doing that and am proud and will continue to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from London–Fanshawe.

Hon. Michael Chan: Point of order.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry. Point of order, Minister Chan.

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, I would like to correct my record. During my ministerial statement, I said, “In 2016, Ontario exports to the European Union in the ICT sector amounted to \$587.2 billion.” The figure I meant to say is \$587.2 million.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member is allowed to correct his record.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Listening to the member from the Progressive Conservatives today, he was talking a lot about what we've been saying here in question period and what we said during our motion on September 14. There are systemic issues in long-term care that we actually have to address under the public inquiry that's currently open which is looking at the first phase, which is the Wettlaufer criminal acts, those heinous murders that happened. That needs to be done, of course, to get answers for families.

But taking it a step further and opening it up into phase two, it will actually address what he's talking about. He talked about capacity. We say there are capacity issues, capacity availability and access within the region. That needs to be done. There are 30,000 people on the wait-list. We need to talk about what that capacity looks like in each region and how we can change that for people who are waiting for a bed in long-term care, not just shuffle them off into the alternative care beds in hospitals. They sit there for months and sometimes years, waiting.

What happens is they then don't get prioritized. For the people who are living in home care who need to get into long-term care, there are no other options. They're in crisis. They get put into a long-term-care bed and the people in alternative care beds in hospitals stay there waiting because they're not classified as a crisis.

Speaker, if we really care about how to address the problems in long-term care and address the wait-lists, about which the member opposite went on at length, let's look at systemic issues and include in that one of those pillars that we talk about under phase two in the public inquiry.

I will be addressing this in the late show. I'm grateful I was able to ask for a late show. This morning, when the minister answered my question, I didn't find it satisfac-

tory, and I'd like to talk about the systemic issues that are really happening. It's not about fearmongering; it's about getting to the root of the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He's right; we do agree on most things. There are a couple of things I disagree with him about right now in his comments. I heard his comment about food in long-term-care homes. It's not understood on the other side that the comparison that you're making between Ontario's prisons and the long-term-care system is apples to oranges. Inside long-term care it's called a raw food diet. Inside our corrections, it's a prepared food diet. It's the full cost of the food, preparation and the food as well. So don't mislead people and compare apples to apples. And the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member will withdraw that comment.

Mr. John Fraser: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Continue.

Mr. John Fraser: Just so you have the facts so you can present them in a straightforward way to people, I wanted to make sure to provide those to you.

I heard the member from Sarnia–Lambton, and I agree with him. There is excellent care happening in Ontario's long-term-care homes. In my community, I can talk about the Perley, St. Pat's, Hillel Lodge, the Grace, the Glebe. I could go on for the rest of the afternoon about the excellent care that is happening in our communities.

We have to be vigilant. We have to be prepared to apply our resources where the risks are greatest. That's what this bill talks about. But we also have to take into account where care is happening and elevate that excellence and let people know that that's happening there. I know that does not serve the purpose of debate, but it's a fact. I want to make sure that I highlight that and underscore that for the members opposite, who I have a great deal of respect for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has done a superb job again, as he always does, speaking to the legislation that the government brings forward, Bill 160, the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act, 2017.

Mr. Speaker, you'll know that there was an announcement yesterday by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care that a couple nursing homes—I think three in the province—were issued notifications of cease admissions by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. One of those nursing homes was in our community of Fergus in the riding of Wellington–Halton Hills: Caressant Care. I've visited Caressant Care many times over the years, and I know there are very good people who live there and very good people who work there.

Obviously there's a problem, and I would hope that we can work together to seek a solution because I believe

very strongly we owe our seniors the very best possible standard of care we can give them, and certainly we're all concerned about this.

This morning I took the opportunity to speak to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care after question period to relay some of my concerns and make sure that he was aware of what was happening. He seemed to be, obviously, on top of it, but I asked him to ensure that our community receives all the information that it needs. This it isn't a time to keep anything from the public because obviously we would be concerned about the people who would not be going in because of the cease of admissions.

Certainly we're concerned about the residents who are there right now. We've got to make sure that their needs are being attended to and that whatever deficiencies have been identified by the Ministry of Health through this process are corrected. I would hope that the owner of the nursing home and the management are taking steps to do that; I understand that they are.

That's an important thing to draw to the House's attention this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, in my view. Certainly my commitment to ensuring the best possible long-term care for our seniors continues as it always has been, and I want to do whatever I can to help.

Again, I want to compliment the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his fine remarks, and I look forward to further debate on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments. The member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Waterloo.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Kitchener-Waterloo. Sorry.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you.

The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound I think did a very good job of addressing some of the issues.

I think what's going to happen with Bill 160 is that we're going to have this push-pull, this tension about what actually, really is happening in our care homes. I want to reference a London article that just came out from author Jonathan Sher from the London Free Press. He's covering the three homes that have been ceasing to register people.

These are the cases—right, I have 90 seconds.

“A registered nurse turned a blind eye toward abuse by one resident against another after it was witnessed by a personal support worker...”

“A second incident of abuse, alleged by the family of a resident, went unreported...”

“A resident who saw another resident abuse a third resident said they reported what was seen to the assistant director of care, even providing a letter, but the assistant did not give the letter to the director of care”—a breakdown in the long-term-care system.

“A nurse with only four hours of orientation training with the home made medication mistakes twice in their first shift...”

“Residents and their families complained about understaffing and the owner of the home admitted he has let 10

front-line positions go unfilled for a period of time”—so he can make some more money—“creating a shortfall of nurses and personal support workers to look after residents.”

This is the most heartbreaking part: “The lack of staffing led to many complaints. A resident who was normally continent but needed help to get to the bathroom said they repeatedly were left to soil and wet their clothes because that area of the home was so chronically short of staff that those who worked were slow to respond to a call bell. Records showed staff regularly took between 13 and 36 minutes to respond to” a call.

So I would argue—we will argue—that the profit agenda has undermined the quality of care in the province of Ontario. I can tell you one thing: Bill 160 does not address it, not one bit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has two minutes.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to thank the members from London-Fanshawe and Kitchener-Waterloo.

I think we're kind of on the same page, that long-term care is not in as good shape after 14 years of Liberal government as it was prior, and that there's lots of improvement that could be made.

I'd like to commend and thank my colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills for his kind words. Frankly, he is a role model. I aspire to be like him because he always comes prepared and does a great job for his residents.

He talked about the announcement of lack of admissions and the standard of care being a priority. If this government didn't waste so much money, there would be more money for a standard of care.

Most of my remarks are directed to my good colleague from Ottawa South. Earlier he made a comment: “There's a limited pot of money.” Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to give him facts, because he challenged that I don't always use facts in here.

I'm going to tell him that he's had record revenues, and yet he and his party have raised the debt and deficit to unrecorded, unprecedented levels.

I'm going to tell him that they told us in this House that it was going to cost \$40 million for cancelled gas plants, which we've never seen anything from, but the number was actually \$1.2 billion. I wonder how much care we could give to our seniors if we had that \$1.2 billion.

I want talk to him a little about the Ornge and the eHealth boondoggles and how much more care we could give to our seniors if we didn't have those nightmares on their books.

I want to ask him about the \$25 billion that they found miraculously to borrow for a two-year quick reprieve of hydro rates, and why he doesn't use the fact of a 300% to 400% increase to most people in businesses across our great province when it's their money, and it's going to cost \$46 billion at the minimum, potentially \$93 billion, that, again, is not going into care.

I want to talk to him a little bit about the 30,000 beds that they said they would actually build. You would think,

in a 14-year term, they would have more than a 30% track record. I would like him to answer at some point in this House why they don't have all 30,000 redeveloped and why there wasn't a single cent in the budget for new beds, knowing that there are 50,000 people on the wait-list in the next five years. Those are facts I would like the share with the member across the hall.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I would like to seek unanimous consent to stand down the lead for the NDP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Welland is seeking unanimous consent to stand down the lead. Do we agree? Agreed.

Member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Speaker, I have a whole nine minutes to actually talk about this—and you know that, certainly, health care is one of my passions, having been a nurse for many years.

But I wanted to speak to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, because he raised the important issue of physiotherapy with seniors, and not just physiotherapy in the long-term-care sector, but the fact that none of our seniors have access to physiotherapy as an outpatient.

Just two weekends ago, I was at my local Legion for an 80th birthday party, and I was speaking to a man named Carl and his wife. They are on a two-year wait-list for physio for Carl. Carl suffers from Parkinson's disease. He has seen a specialist; the specialist has told him that he needs to have physiotherapy. So he got himself on the list at our local rehab centre, the Shaver rehabilitation centre, and it is going to be two years because there is no government funding for outpatient physiotherapy for anyone in this province.

While the member from Ottawa South says that seniors want to stay at home and we want them to stay at home and we want them to live out as many years as they can in their homes, many of them can't. The ones who can still need those services. They need physio. They need social programs. They need people visiting them on a regular basis.

I can tell you that when I talk to some of the personal support workers who actually look after seniors—I had one story told to me this past summer where a senior was in a hospital bed and she needed a nursing home bed, but they sent her home anyway. So she was getting 24-hour-a-day care in the local hospital, but they sent her home with only three hours of care for every eight-hour shift, even though she wasn't mobile enough to even get up and use the washroom facilities on her own. I can tell you, these personal support workers were so fearful that she was going to fall. How does a government approve and support somebody who needs 24-hour care in a nursing home, and who's on a wait-list, being sent home with only three hours of care for every shift?

The tsunami is coming. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound talked about 30,000 people on that wait-list. In my own area, I think there are 1,400 or 1,500

people on the wait-list just in Niagara, where we have a population of 440,000. And it's not easy to get on that wait-list. When you actually get on that wait-list, you are pretty old and you are pretty fragile because you have to jump through all these hoops, for which the former CCAC—and now the LHIN—was responsible to even make that list.

I can tell you that my own mother was 91 and it took us a year to get my mother on that list, even though she was suffering from some dementia and was wandering outside of her own apartment.

The member from Ottawa South said that, yes, there needs to be some more front-line investment, and that seniors' facilities need to be their home. I totally agree with that piece—and that the community also needs to be involved.

But you know, Speaker, seniors' kids are already seniors. When the seniors are actually getting into a long-term-care bed today, their kids are already seniors. Their kids have already been looking after them for 15 or 20 years. They've been providing care to keep them out of a nursing home, so by the time they get to be in their mid-eighties to nineties, their kids are in their seventies and they don't have the energy or the ability to be coming in and providing more care for parents that they've already looked after for the last 15 or 20 years.

I can tell you that most nursing homes I've been involved with over the years, whether it's a for-profit or a not-for-profit, which my friend from Kitchener–Waterloo just spoke about, have thousands of hours of volunteers already in those homes.

I know that in the city of Welland we have Rapelje Lodge, named after Doug Rapelje, who was a long-time administrator of the nursing home sector in my city; we have Woodlands of Sunset; and then we have Villa De Rose. So we have three long-term-care homes, and we have the same number of beds today that we had 20 years ago. When they actually redeveloped those beds, it took us seven or eight years to get a new home built. Even though the government announced it in 2007, it took until 2015 to get those 96 beds redeveloped. So the government does need to have a plan for some long-term planning on how we are going to meet the needs of those 30,000 today and 50,000 10 years from now who are going to need long-term-care beds in this province.

What's happening in my community I'm sure is happening in communities all across this province—that some of these people are going into retirement homes where they don't have the staff to look after people who require a long-term-care bed. So they're putting people on a floor, all in the same wing of the retirement home, and they are bringing in personal support workers to give them a half-hour or an hour of care a day, get them into a shower and get them into the dining room for their meals, perhaps, but that is all the care that they are getting when they really need to be in a long-term-care facility.

There are huge problems coming down the pipe, and the government continues to invest in for-profit health care. They are allowing the contracts to continue for for-

profit community care; they are allowing long-term-care development in the for-profit sector. The New Democrats in this Legislature believe that every government dollar, taxpayers' money, should be invested for care and not for the profits of people who are making profits off the backs of the taxpayers and the seniors who actually need this care. I think the government needs to move from subsidizing the for-profit sector around health care in this province and take all of those dollars and use those dollars to buy more health care for people in this province.

Now, I've got a few stories, but I only have one minute, so I think that I'm going to go back to the government whip's comments. He talked about how the opposition parties would be coming forward with amendments—no doubt they would be coming forward with amendments. All I want to say in my last minute here, Speaker, is that no doubt the government will vote down all of those amendments, which they always do.

Mr. James J. Bradley: There's always hope.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I don't believe that there's any hope, Speaker, that the government won't vote down those amendments, because I can tell you that certainly in the last bill that we dealt with, Bill 148, the government voted down, I think, 48 of 50 amendments. So I'm not hopeful that, in fact, the government is going to entertain amendments from us even if they're great.

That's where we stand, Speaker, and if you're going to—unless you want me to start another story.

Interjection.

Ms. Cindy Forster: You're good? We're done? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for London–Fanshawe has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

1800

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: First, I appreciate the opportunity to further address the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care today. I have to tell you that it takes a lot for members to feel so dissatisfied with a response to such a serious issue, such as seniors and what's happening in long-term care, that I felt today was so necessary that I had to have this late show. That's the background as to why I asked for a late show.

I also want to acknowledge the importance of the government's inquiry into the horrific crimes committed by Elizabeth Wetlaufer. Families, of course, deserve answers and closure for the tragedies they've endured. My heart sincerely goes out to the victims' families and everyone affected by those unspeakable acts. This resulted in, of course, the government calling the public inquiry.

I would also like to address that public inquiry piece. On September 14, the Legislature voted for the New Democratic motion to immediately broaden the scope of the public inquiry into the safety and security of residents in long-term-care homes and address its systemic problems. That was a motion we put forward. We did that, Speaker, because we wanted this government to really take this matter seriously.

The motion identified eight systemic issues in the long-term-care system. I'd like to take this opportunity, Speaker, to remind you of what those are, as they speak to so many of the issues that we're talking about today in Bill 160: the safety of residents and staff; quality of care; funding levels; staffing levels and staffing practices; regulation, enforcement and inspections; capacity, availability and accessibility in all regions; the impact of for-profit privatization on care; and government action and inaction on previous recommendations to improve the long-term-care homes system.

Two of their own government cabinet ministers voted for the motion calling on this government to acknowledge the systemic problems in long-term care. Both of those members have surely faced some of the issues I've just highlighted in their own ridings with their own constituents.

Speaker, our job is to bring the stories of our constituents forward and to ensure that they are heard in the Legislature. I have heard countless stories from people in my riding whose loved ones are living in care homes that struggle to provide a basic standard of care. Many of those families don't want their names repeated for fear of reprisal or no-trespassing orders—that happens.

The long-term-care system is in crisis, and our government is answerable to the thousands of families and front-line workers who need the inquiry to be immediately broadened.

This morning, during question period, I asked about the three long-term-care homes that have been ordered to stop accepting patients. The minister's response, Speaker, was far from satisfactory. Seniors in homes in London, Mississauga and Fergus are living with such poor standards that this government had no choice but to take action with cease admissions orders.

This isn't helping the 30,000 people waiting for long-term-care placement. We want to address these issues in the second phase of the public inquiry so that we can actually find and fix those problems. The conditions in these three homes illustrate the broader problems that are systemic in our care homes in Ontario. As I mentioned this morning, the complaints that have gone unaddressed range from food residents are being served to the vio-

lence that's happening and they're experiencing in long-term-care homes and the overall unacceptable conditions that seniors are living in.

Simply cutting off admissions to individual homes that have been brought to the minister's attention isn't the solution to fixing the various problems present in every care home in this province. Speaker, rest assured that this is not about fear-mongering. Literally, every care home has these systemic problems to a certain level. Some tilt one particular way, where even capacity, availability and accessibility is a systemic problem throughout this province.

Instead of increasing funding levels and addressing staffing levels and practices, among other systemic issues, the government needs to take a hard look at the safety and security of residents and front-line workers in the long-term-care system. While it's imperative for the government to investigate the circumstances that led to the eight tragic murders committed by Elizabeth Wettlaufer, it also needs to immediately address the systemic problems in the long-term-care system.

So I will ask this government yet again: When will you commit to focusing on the systemic issues that are in the long-term-care system and broaden the scope of the public inquiry into the safety and security of residents in the long-term-care system?

I hope this government is going to take this seriously, Speaker, and actually address the systemic problems, and not just sweep them under the rug and continually tell us, "Everything's fine. We're addressing them through certain measures." It needs to be a systemic, full picture of what's going on throughout Ontario. Let's take a hard look at these problems. Let's be honest about them. Let's find them, let's fix them, and let's do it for our seniors and the future generations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The parliamentary assistant has five minutes to respond.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member. I thank her for her question and for the opportunity to participate in the late show. It's certainly every member's privilege to do that. I think they are great opportunities.

It's interesting that we were debating a bill, just before we had the late show, which has particular measures of compliance and transparency around long-term-care homes.

I want to go back to something I said earlier in response to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. In my community of Ottawa South, and Ottawa in general, we've had a real challenge that has come up. We have a director's order for four homes. They are four not-for-profit homes. When you see and hear about some of the things that happen in there, they are of concern to all of us. Then, on the other side, I have a mother-in-law in long-term care, and I know that the care that she is receiving is excellent.

I spend a lot of time in long-term-care homes and I see excellent care being delivered by dedicated people. I know I said this already about three times this afternoon—but that whole sense of a home and community, where that is, you have excellent care. I won't go back

into listing all the long-term-care homes in my riding and in Ottawa that are providing excellent care. We can't lose that because we have to raise up that excellence. It's about making everybody excellent.

I know that the members opposite were looking for an expansion of the scope or another phase to the Wettlaufer inquiry. I firmly believe we have to get to the bottom of how this heinous an act can occur inside long-term care. I think there's a broad enough scope to look at some other things. That will lead us to take a look at what things we could do to help with those outliers—because they are outliers. It's not to say that there isn't need for constant improvement, that we don't need to expand the availability of long-term care, that we don't have to take a look at the issues of ALC in long-term care, because they do exist. Are people in the right place or do they end up there by virtue of how the list works and where there is to go?

We've addressed that in Ottawa through supportive housing that's connected to long-term-care homes, at Bruyère and at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre. There's a continuum of care, where people can live together—again, I come back to it—in community and can support each other.

I'm not going to go through the litany of investments and how many new beds and how many beds were redeveloped. It's happening. But I think what we need to focus on is taking a look at where the risk really is. In Ottawa, they said that we've got some risk right here and that's why there's a director's order and there's another investigation. We have to have the kind of sanctions that can make a difference, especially at a management, an executive and a company level. We have to have those things there. If you don't have those, there's not really a penalty. But in actual fact, what we have to get to is that that's just simply not acceptable.

I want to relate to one other thing when it comes to long-term-care homes. I have the same concern that the member does. We may see things a bit differently—but I do like to highlight the excellence in long-term care. Many of us read obituaries as part of our daily work because we represent communities. I consistently see in there thanks to a certain home, thanks to the staff, and appreciation of what's done.

We have to get to the bottom of these things; there's no question about it. We also have to acknowledge the excellence that's happening there. What's happening in this whole process of some outliers and serious things happening is that everybody is getting painted with the same brush and it's not right.

I appreciate the member's advocacy. I know that she'll continue to do that. That's a really important part of what happens here. I appreciate the chance to have a late show.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1810.

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McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Hon. / L'hon. Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC) Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	York–Simcoe Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Mike Colle, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Cheri DiNovo, Michael Harris
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Han Dong
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Mike Colle, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Granville Anderson
Granville Anderson, Yvan Baker
Grant Crack, John Fraser
Lisa Gretzky, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi, Lisa M. Thompson
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
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James J. Bradley, Wayne Gates
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Amrit Mangat, Jim McDonell
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Ross Romano, Monique Taylor
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Lorne Coe, Bob Delaney
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Harinder Malhi, Gila Martow
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