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Mardi
12 septembre 2017

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Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
Greffier : Todd Decker

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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 12 September 2017 / Mardi 12 septembre 2017

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Construction Lien Amendment Act, 2017, Bill 142, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2017 modifiant la Loi sur le privilège dans l'industrie de la construction, projet de loi 142, M. Naqvi

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4871
Mr. Victor Fedeli	4879
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	4879
Mr. Mike Colle	4880
Mr. Steve Clark	4880
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4880
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	4881

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Gila Martow	4881
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4881
Mr. Lorne Coe	4881
Mr. Ted McMeekin	4881
Ms. Sylvia Jones	4881
Mr. Yvan Baker	4881
Mrs. Julia Munro	4881
Mr. Jim Wilson	4881
Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn	4881
Mrs. Julia Munro	4881
Ms. Cindy Forster	4881
Hon. Eric Hoskins	4881
Mr. Wayne Gates	4881
Hon. David Zimmer	4881

Correction of record

Mr. Bill Walker	4881
-----------------------	------

Legislative pages

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4881
-------------------------------------	------

Decorum in chamber

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4882
-------------------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Opioid abuse

Mr. Patrick Brown	4882
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4882
Hon. Eric Hoskins	4883

Greenhouse gas emissions

Mr. Patrick Brown	4883
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4883
Hon. Glenn Thibeault	4884

Hospital funding

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4884
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4884
Hon. Eric Hoskins	4885

Seniors' health services

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4885
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	4885
Hon. Eric Hoskins	4886

Autism treatment

Mr. Michael Harris	4886
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	4886
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	4887

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Catherine Fife	4887
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4887

Housing policy

Mrs. Cristina Martins	4887
Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn	4888

Child care

Mr. Bill Walker	4888
Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris	4888

Workers' compensation

Ms. Cindy Forster	4889
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4889

Cycling policies

Ms. Ann Hoggarth	4889
Hon. Steven Del Duca	4890
Hon. Eleanor McMahon	4890

Wind turbines

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	4890
Hon. Chris Ballard	4890

Employment standards

Ms. Andrea Horwath	4891
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4891

Cannabis regulation

Mr. Arthur Potts	4891
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4892
Hon. Charles Sousa	4892

Flag-raising ceremony

Mr. Yvan Baker	4892
----------------------	------

Correction of record

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4892
-------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4892
Mr. Taras Natyshak	4893

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

International Plowing Match

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	4893
----------------------------	------

Anniversary of NDP in Nickel Belt/Sudbury East

Mme France Gélinas	4893
--------------------------	------

BIG on Bloor Festival

Mrs. Cristina Martins	4893
-----------------------------	------

Natural gas

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	4893
----------------------------	------

Flooding in Windsor and Essex county

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	4894
-------------------------	------

Jayesh Prajapati

Mr. Mike Colle	4894
----------------------	------

Opioid abuse

Mr. Victor Fedeli	4894
-------------------------	------

Conservation authorities

Mr. James J. Bradley	4894
----------------------------	------

The Giving Tree Unionville

Mrs. Gila Martow	4895
------------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	4895
Report deemed adopted	4895

Standing Committee on Estimates

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	4895
Report deemed received	4895

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Simcoe Day Act, 2017, Bill 150, Mr. Barrett / Loi de 2017 sur le Jour de Simcoe, projet de loi 150, M. Barrett

First reading agreed to	4896
Mr. Toby Barrett	4896

Silver Merle Corporation Act, 2017, Bill Pr69, Ms. Forster

First reading agreed to	4896
-------------------------------	------

Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (PTSD Benefits), 2017, Bill 151, Mr. Natyshak / Loi de 2017 modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents

du travail (prestations pour état de stress post-traumatique), projet de loi 151, M. Natyshak

First reading agreed to	4896
Mr. Taras Natyshak	4896

Representation Statute Law Amendment Act, 2017, Bill 152, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2017 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne la représentation électorale, projet de loi 152, M. Naqvi

First reading agreed to	4896
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	4896

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Wasaga Beach

Mr. Jim Wilson	4896
----------------------	------

Long-term care

Ms. Catherine Fife	4897
--------------------------	------

Ice machines

Mr. Arthur Potts	4897
------------------------	------

Transportation infrastructure

Mr. Steve Clark	4897
-----------------------	------

Mental health services

Mme France Gélinas	4898
--------------------------	------

Water fluoridation

Mme Nathalie Des Rosiers	4898
--------------------------------	------

Hunting and fishing licences

Mr. Victor Fedeli	4898
-------------------------	------

Disaster relief

Mme France Gélinas	4898
--------------------------	------

GO Transit

Mr. Arthur Potts	4899
------------------------	------

Government advertising

Mr. Bill Walker	4899
-----------------------	------

Missing persons

Ms. Catherine Fife	4899
--------------------------	------

Hospital funding

Mr. Jim Wilson	4899
----------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017, Bill 148, Mr. Flynn / Loi de 2017 pour l'équité en milieu de travail et de meilleurs emplois, projet de loi 148, M. Flynn

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn	4900
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4903
Mr. Steve Clark	4908
Ms. Cindy Forster	4909
Mme Nathalie Des Rosiers	4909
Mr. Bill Walker	4909
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	4910
Mr. John Yakabuski	4910

Mme France G  linas4917
Mr. Arthur Potts4917
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....4917
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....4917
Mr. John Yakabuski4918
Second reading debate deemed adjourned4918

**ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / D  BAT SUR
LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT**

School safety

Mr. Lorne Coe.....4918
Mr. Granville Anderson4919

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 12 September 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 12 septembre 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

Mr. Naqvi moved 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): Mr. Naqvi.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. Good morning to everyone. It's a great honour for me to rise in the House today to open debate on a bill that would, if passed, support thousands of workers and businesses in Ontario's construction sector.

Before I do that, Speaker, I want to acknowledge some guests in the chamber who had direct involvement in the development of this bill. I would like to welcome Bruce Reynolds and Sharon Vogel—I see Sharon here and not Bruce; I'm sure he's making his way to the House—and two of their associates, Paul Guaragna and Laura Delemere—welcome—from the law firm of Borden Ladner Gervais. I will speak a little bit about them in my remarks, but just to say at the outset that they have been extremely instrumental—

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me; a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I don't believe we have quorum to hear the wonderful speech by the Attorney General.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): A quorum is present. Thank you very much.

I return it back to the Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I was saying, I just want to extend my gratitude to Ms. Sharon Vogel and Mr. Bruce Reynolds for the incredible work they have done in assisting the government in developing this very important

piece of legislation. As members would know, having looked through the legislation, this is a complex area of law with a lot of nuance and intricacies, and technical expertise and know-how were very much needed. Having experts like Bruce Reynolds and Sharon Vogel on our side was extremely helpful in navigating through various different interests that exist and the technicalities around this very important issue, to the point where we are here today in the form and shape of Bill 142.

Speaker, I would also like to welcome two members of the expert advisory group who also assisted in the development of the bill before you today. They are Tanya Litzenberger from the city of Toronto and Derek Freeman, who is a counsel and specializes in the area of construction law as well.

Speaker, I would like to extend my thanks to all of the guests for their continued work and support in helping with this important piece of legislation. Thank you to them for taking time out of their busy days to attend the beginning of second reading debate on this important bill.

We all know that Ontario has a strong economy, and it should come as no surprise to anyone that our construction industry is a driving force behind it. The sector is responsible for almost 7% of the province's GDP, and it employs more than 400,000 hard-working men and women in our province, not to mention the many more people and businesses that benefit from this particular sector. The construction industry literally builds Ontario up. That's why it's so important that we always support the sector, so that it can continue to thrive.

The bill before you today is the largest proposed change to Ontario's construction industry in over 34 years. It's a bill that, if passed, would help bring our laws up to date to reflect current industry best practices and ensure that each and every worker on a project is paid on time and in full, to support not only the thousands of people who work in this important sector but also their families.

I would like to now take a moment to talk about how our construction sector operates.

A construction project involves multiple projects. The best way to look at it is like a pyramid, with the owner or developer at the top entering into an agreement with one or more general contractors. Each general contractor then enters into an agreement with specific subcontractors to work on certain parts of the project, and those subcontractors hire other workers and suppliers. You can see the development of that pyramid.

The payments flow downwards in a similar fashion. The money flows down from the owner or developer until everyone working on the project gets paid. How-

ever, when a company does not get paid for its work, it sets off a chain reaction that affects payroll and delays payments needed for trade workers, suppliers and everyone else who has worked on the project. This can have a devastating effect on not only a project or business but also on the workers themselves. This is not fair, and it is definitely not right.

If you have ever known anyone who works in construction, you know that it can often be a tough job. It's hard work. It's physically and mentally demanding, and it's exhausting. I have a ton of respect, and I know members around this House have expressed their own respect, for the women and men who work in our construction sector. Can you imagine working hard outdoors all day through all kinds of climate, and to come in at night and learn that you won't be getting paid? How do you pay your bills? What do you tell your family? How do you support them? Protecting Ontario families is a top priority for our government.

Projects like these will no doubt create a lasting legacy in the province because, as we know, we are seeing construction projects all across the province. I just look at my community of Ottawa Centre, where we are building an extension to the Ottawa Heart Institute—one of the best heart institutes in the world, saving lives every day. We're building a major expansion, with new surgical rooms. People are working day in and day out to get this expansion built.

A new school was built in my community in Ottawa Centre, the Broadview Public School, that went up in a matter of one construction season, so that our children could be in this brand new school—from the old school, that was built in the 1920s, which was asbestos-laden and whatnot—and be able to be in a state-of-the-art facility to get an education.

We are about to commence construction of a new pedestrian bridge over the historic Rideau Canal, which is protected by UNESCO. That project will happen in two construction sectors. It's a beautiful bridge, which I hope you'll come to Ottawa to visit once it's built in 2019 as one of the Canada 150 legacy projects.

0910

But projects like these—and I can go on and on, and I'm sure every member in this House can talk about incredible projects that are happening, be it building public transit like the Ottawa LRT in my hometown or building hospitals or schools or community centres. All these projects happen because there are people working on them. There are many partners in these projects. The stories that we hear sometimes, that the projects stall because somebody is not getting paid or money has run out—we want to make sure these kinds of things never happen.

So, Speaker, to make sure that this critically important industry continues to thrive, we need to make sure that our construction laws are up to date and reflect today's realities. We need to stand up for the needs of Ontario workers and businesses. That's why the proposed Construction Lien Amendment Act is so important, because it

would modernize our construction laws to make payment and adjudication processes fairer, simpler and work better for people.

The Construction Lien Act was created in 1983. That's well over 30 years ago. Until recently, the Construction Lien Act has not been the subject of a major review. But a lot of things have changed since 1983, and the construction laws that worked for industry back then just are not cutting it in today's economy. Construction projects and payment processes have become more and more complex. Late payments are becoming a pervasive problem in all sectors of the construction industry. In fact, between 2002 and 2013, the average collection period in construction has increased from about 57 days to 71 days. The increased complexity of construction projects means that resolving disputes takes more time than ever—sometimes months or even years—to work out. That means that it can sometimes be years before some people see the money owed to them for their hard work. That's no way to do business, any business, and that's no way to treat the people who work for them in these businesses in our communities.

Over the past decade, we have received several proposals from stakeholders about how to change the Construction Lien Act. While everyone agreed that there were things that needed improvement in the act, it has always been difficult to reach consensus on exactly what changes needed to be made, which in large part can be attributed to the diversity of the industry. That's why, Speaker, in 2014 our government announced that we would launch an independent review—and that's an important part, and that's where our good friends Ms. Vogel and Mr. Reynolds come in, in terms of conducting that independent review of the Construction Lien Act. This review would include, among other things, finding a way to address payment issues in the construction industry.

In February 2015, we retained Bruce Reynolds and Sharon Vogel—both of whom are leading experts in construction law at Borden Ladner Gervais and are well respected across the construction industry—to lead this review. When we retained Bruce and Sharon, we made clear to them our commitment for change, our commitment to update this law that directly affects hundreds of thousands of Ontarians every day. We made it clear that everything was on the table, and we trusted in them to get this job done. Suffice it to say that we gave Bruce and Sharon a formidable task. I would like to acknowledge and thank them today for their expertise and advice during the review. Over the last a little over a year, I had the opportunity to very closely work with them, and I'm absolutely impressed by the thoroughness they have demonstrated and competency in getting this work done.

The review they conducted was done in three separate phases over the course of almost two years. In the first phase, the reviewers developed a consultation document that identified key issues, including prompt payment, and asked stakeholders to submit their concerns. Once they received that feedback, they began extensive consulta-

tions with a broad range of stakeholders, including both the private and public sectors, architects, engineers, legal and other building professionals and the financial sector.

Speaker, they were not short on participants. The review convened more than 30 meetings which were attended by over 60 key interest groups hosting many lively and spirited discussions, as I am told; and they also received over 70 written submissions. We are talking about very technical written submissions as to how the law should be changed.

I myself, as the Attorney General, the minister responsible for the Construction Lien Act, individually met with over 30 different stakeholder groups once I received the final report from Ms. Vogel and Mr. Reynolds.

Speaker, it has taken us 34 years to get to this point, and until now, no one has been able to achieve consensus on these changes—until now. This is really an incredible milestone. I think the process that was undertaken to accomplish that, in terms of the consultation and the conversations, really added to the consensus we see today in the form of Bill 142. Thanks to this work, a broad consensus was reached on the three core issues of the review: maintaining and modernizing the lien and holdback process; establishing a new system for prompt payment; and creating a targeted adjudication system to resolve disputes. After consultation with these stakeholders, Bruce and Sharon landed on a plan for a way forward.

But before I continue, Speaker, I would like to just take a moment to personally acknowledge all of the different groups who contributed to this incredible effort. I think it's worth mentioning them, to understand the depth of expertise that was canvassed and consulted in this entire process.

It includes legal sector associations with construction expertise, like the construction and infrastructure section of the Ontario Bar Association, who participated in a subcommittee on the Construction Lien Act review.

In addition, private sector organizations like Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc. provided input during the consultations.

We also heard from municipalities and associations, including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the city of Toronto, the Toronto Transit Commission, Toronto Community Housing Corp., York region, and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association.

Of course, we worked very closely with associations representing building professionals. They included the National Trade Contractors Coalition of Canada; the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors; the Ontario Dump Truck Association; Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters; the Ontario Electrical League; the Ontario General Contractors Association; the Ontario Good Roads Association; the Greater Toronto Sewer and Watermain Contractors Association; the Ontario Road Builders' Association; the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 793; the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association; the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 183; Toronto Electrical Industry Benefit Administrative Services; the Laborers'

International Union of North America, Local 183; the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario; the Canadian Institute of Quantity Surveyors; and the Metropolitan Plumbing and Heating Contractor Association.

Speaker, you can see the level of expertise that exists in all of these organizations. We know many of these associations ourselves, as we have met with them on a regular basis. We have heard from them about the issues around the Construction Lien Act, especially around prompt payment, and many other important issues and topics that relate to our construction sector. They were all extensively involved in this review period, that took two years before we got here today.

I would like to take the time now to read comments provided in response to the Construction Lien Act by the Carpenters' District Council of Ontario, which represents approximately 30,000 members throughout this province.

This is what they say: "The Carpenters are overall very pleased with the changes proposed by this bill. We believe that the proposed changes have met the government's mandate to have the Construction Lien Act better align with the modern-day construction industry. Most importantly, the new legislation ensures the steady flow of funds down the chain to the various contractors and subcontractors—and ultimately our members' wages—in the construction pyramid."

0920

They concluded by saying that the "Carpenters welcome the changes proposed in the bill and congratulate the government on its willingness to update the province's construction lien legislation to better serve today's construction industry and particularly the men and women who work within it."

I would also like to mention several other associations who contributed valuable expertise and insight throughout this process, organizations such as Prompt Payment Ontario, Ontario Association of Architects, Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, Consulting Engineers of Ontario, Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario, Council of Ontario Construction Associations, Canadian Construction Association, Ontario Construction Lien Masters, Ontario Construction Secretariat, Surety Association of Canada and the Advocates' Society.

In addition, we involved the financial sector in our discussions as well, specifically the Canada Bankers Association. I would also like to note that the residential sector provided an important perspective during the consultation process, and very thoughtful insight. We heard from the Ontario Home Builders' Association, the Building Owners and Managers Association, the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario, the Canadian Condominium Institute of Toronto, and the Residential Construction Council of Ontario—again, all very important partners, as we all know, within the residential development sector of the construction industry in our province.

Moving on with acknowledgements, I think it's really important to reference all these groups again because we

know them all and because we speak with them. They have been diligently involved in this process, and I want them to know that we all collectively do hear them. When we meet with them and attend the receptions that they host at Queen's Park, those conversations are meaningful to us. Their input is relevant to the deliberations that take place within the government and with all members. When their work and their input is reflected in the legislation that we are debating today, I think it's important that we do acknowledge them for the work they do.

I do want to also acknowledge the many government ministries as well as the independent agencies that provided a public sector lens to the discussion, because there is a huge public sector element to this conversation, given the billions of dollars that our government is investing in building Ontario up when it comes to our hospitals, schools, public transit and the bridges, roads and highways that are being built in our province. So I want to also thank organizations like the Ontario Public Works Association, the Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships, the Ontario Hospital Association, the Ontario Public Buyers Association, Infrastructure Ontario, the city of Toronto, Metrolinx, the Toronto Transit Commission and York region for their input.

Of course, the education sector was also represented in the consultations that we did—represented by the Council of Ontario Universities, Ontario Public School Boards' Association, Colleges Ontario and the Ontario Association of School Business Officials.

Speaker, I wasn't kidding when I said that this industry is diverse. You start getting a real appreciation of the work that our experts have to do in terms of engaging with all these stakeholders: not leaving anybody behind, making sure they all had an opportunity to provide input and making sure they all were consulted frequently on an ongoing basis as the expert independent review report was being developed and, once that work was done, when the legislation then was being crafted as a result of the recommendations that Ms. Vogel and Mr. Reynolds provided. It has been—and I'm not exaggerating at all, Speaker—a monumental task. It has been a very significant task.

When I got into this file, once I was appointed the Attorney General, I started learning—and I did read the report; I mentioned that a few times. It's a sure cure for insomnia if somebody's having trouble sleeping; not that the report is boring, but the content is very technical. I think they know this. They were surprised that I read the whole thing. I did admit that it took me three sittings to completely read the report, but I had some good sleeps after that as well.

The report is public; it's on the Attorney General's website, and I encourage members to look at it. When you read the report, you really do recognize the complexity of the subject matter. You do recognize the layers and layers of issues that had to be dealt with.

It was impressed upon me by our expert panels and our advisory group—and I'm going to speak about them

in a moment—that the entire scheme sort of hangs together, that everything is interlinked. We've been very mindful, as we're going through the report and working through what recommendations to implement and how, not to do too much going through a menu and picking and choosing. There is a fragile balance that exists in the entire scheme from the beginning to the end, and there is a lot of consensus that has been built. Everybody has done a little bit of a give-and-take to get to the point. We should do our very best to respect that integrity. I think we've accomplished that. Again, in that whole process of taking the report and translating that into policy and then translating it into the drafting of legislation, Bruce and Sharon were really helpful in keeping that balance and keeping that intimate intricacy that exists within this legislation.

The inside knowledge and expertise of each of these groups was invaluable to this review. Their work included identifying 90 separate issues and sub-issues in the areas of construction lien and holdback rules, prompt payment, and dispute resolution. These issues were then clearly set out in an information package that was distributed to the stakeholder community and posted online. They also distributed a survey to industry to better understand their perspective and needs, all of which helped ensure that the proposed changes worked for a wide cross-section of the construction sector. Once all of that input was received, Bruce and Sharon convened an expert advisory group that consisted of lawyers aligned with major groups in the industry who were responsible for providing insight into different stakeholder perspectives as we move forward to craft the legislation.

Speaker, I would just like to take a moment to acknowledge the members of the advisory group, a few of whom, as mentioned, are here today. They're an absolutely impressive group of people who know their subject area very well, who not only brought their expertise but all their respective positions in terms of different groups so that there would be that healthy tension you need to create legislation like this.

I had the opportunity of meeting the group personally at least two times—if not three, but I think definitely two times—just to do a check-in, as the experts from the perspective of Bruce and Sharon, the other stakeholders and my ministry—my staff was working on it—just to make sure that things are on the right track and everybody feels comfortable. I always came out thoroughly impressed by the calibre of these individuals and their expertise, and the positive willingness they were bringing to the table to get this work done, fully recognizing that this is our opportunity to modernize this piece of legislation. They were committed to get that work done.

I want to take the opportunity to thank people like—I'll mention their names and their law firms or their organizations because it's important: Glenn Ackerley of WeirFoulds LLP; Geza Banfai of McMillan LLP; Ray Bassett of Travelers insurance company of Canada;

Glenn Clarke from Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board; Marni Dicker of Infrastructure Ontario; Derek Freeman of Freeman Law Barristers; Duncan Glaholt of Glaholt LLP; Howard Krupat of DLA Piper; Tanya Litzenberger of the city of Toronto; Jeffrey Long from Koskie Minsky LLP; Bernie McGarva of Aird and Berlis LLP; Jerry Paglia from York region; Matt Ainley, who is a construction executive; and Howard Wise of Goodmans LLP. Like I said, Speaker, an impressive group of people who spent a lot of their volunteer time in this process and giving advice through this advisory experts group.

0930

Bruce and Sharon worked closely with the advisory group to develop a report containing concrete, workable solutions to reform Ontario's construction legislation. We released their report, entitled *Striking the Balance: Expert Review of Ontario's Construction Lien Act*, last September.

Speaker, "balance" is absolutely the right word for this report because its recommendations carefully weigh the diversity of interests across the construction industry. Since the release of this report, I have met with 25 industry and stakeholder groups to get more feedback on the proposed changes. I was really pleased with the thoughtful input we received.

As we moved forward drafting the legislation, we also continued to work closely with Mr. Reynolds and Ms. Vogel and the expert advisory group of industry professionals. I found it quite heartening how well we all worked together—government and industry—to find common ground among many competing interests. By keeping the dialogue going, it helped us to ensure that the changes we are proposing today are practical, workable and address people's needs.

For the most part, all of the stakeholders expressed their support for the review process, the report and its recommendations. I am proud to be introducing changes today that not only have their full support but reflect a wide spectrum of input across the industry.

Let's get into the legislation and the different elements in the legislation. As I have mentioned, it has been a long time since the act was last updated—over 30 years now. The industry has changed considerably over this time. As a government, we need to make sure that our laws are keeping pace with that change and make sure we are supporting—not hindering—its growth. That is why it's so important that gaps in construction laws be addressed.

Our bill includes some key amendments which will modernize construction lien and holdback rules. The holdback process was an area that our stakeholders identified that they have had some difficulties with. We heard that most of the construction industry sees the value in maintaining a fund for liens that can be claimed, but we also heard that this can cause funds to move very slowly down the construction pyramid that I spoke about earlier and that there needs to be a level playing field for everyone involved in a project, no matter what their position.

We want to ensure that holdback fees are paid out as soon as the deadline to file construction liens against a project has passed. Every person in our province should be able to plan ahead and know exactly when to expect payment for their work. These changes would give contractors and subcontractors the certainty they deserve and should expect.

We also want to extend the timelines to file liens and start court actions from 90 days to 150 days. This would give contractors and subcontractors more time to resolve disputes out of court and avoid additional legal fees.

Our new proposed legislation would also require surety bonds to be posted on public projects above a certain dollar amount. These bonds are currently used in both public and private projects, but there is no legislation that mandates contractors to post them. By posting mandatory surety bonds, subcontractors and suppliers would be protected and paid in case of a project's insolvency. In addition, specific bookkeeping requirements would be set out to better protect subcontractors if a contractor becomes insolvent and cannot pay its debts.

We want to keep any actions as simple and cost-effective as possible, so our bill proposes that construction lien claims under \$25,000 could be referred to Small Claims Court. This will go a long way in allowing a claim to be resolved quickly and with minimal cost involved.

Our final proposal to modernize the act includes changing its name to the Construction Act, which would more accurately reflect the range of items addressed in the proposed legislation.

Let me now speak about the prompt payment regime, an area that is probably well known to members and an area that was championed by a colleague, the MPP for Vaughan, the Minister of Transportation, who, before being in cabinet, also brought a private member's bill and has been quite a champion of having a prompt payment regime in our province. I want to thank the member for Vaughan for his advocacy on this issue.

Late payment is one of the most urgent and pressing issues facing the construction industry today. When a company does not get paid for its work, it sets off a chain reaction that affects its own payroll and the payments it needs to make to others. As I mentioned earlier, this can be devastating for workers, for businesses, for the entire project. This is actually a problem seen around the world.

In recent years, a number of jurisdictions have introduced legislation to address late payment in the construction industry, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia. If Ontario wants to be competitive on the global stage, it's time we stepped up, which is exactly what we are doing through Bill 142.

Under the proposed legislation, the deadline for making a payment would be triggered by the first submission of a proper invoice. Under our proposal, the proper invoice would clearly state information like the amount owing and the payment terms, and invoices would be submitted monthly, unless the parties set out an alternate arrangement in their contract.

These changes would require both parties to negotiate and set out details before work has begun. This may even help to avoid some disputes in the future. If they do not agree on payment timelines, both parties will have to follow the timeline for payments set out in the legislation.

For instance, once an invoice is submitted to the subcontractor, the owner would be required to pay the contractor within 28 days. That contractor must then pay his subcontractors within seven days of receiving that payment, and these subcontractors need to pay their subcontractors within seven days as well. Payments then flow down the construction pyramid in a reliable manner to workers on a construction project.

This will help to ensure that funds are not held back at the top and that everyone is paid in a timely manner. Knowing exactly when to expect payment allows contractors and suppliers to run their businesses more effectively, make more competitive bids and meet their financial responsibilities in a timely fashion.

In the event that an owner or a contractor fails to make a payment, mandatory interest would be added onto the amount owed. Owners would be able to dispute an invoice by notifying the contractor within 14 days of any amounts that will be withheld from payment. If the parties do not reach an agreement at that point, the contractor could refer the case to a new construction dispute interim adjudication system.

Speaker, I would now like to take a moment to read a press release from Prompt Payment Ontario from May 31, 2017. I do this because Prompt Payment Ontario was a coalition of members from the construction industry that came together to urge the government, to encourage the government, to have a prompt-payment regime in the province.

On May 31, when we tabled this legislation, this press release was issued by Prompt Payment Ontario. The heading of that press release was “Prompt Payment Ontario Congratulates Government on Introduction of Prompt Payment Legislation.”

It goes on to say, “Today, members of Prompt Payment Ontario (PPO) congratulate the Ontario government on the introduction of prompt payment legislation in Ontario. The introduction of prompt payment legislation is a groundbreaking step in the right direction and will help to protect over 400,000 workers across the province. Ontario is the first province in Canada to introduce prompt payment legislation—leading the way for other provinces across the country and the federal government to do the same.

“Delinquent prompt payment has been an issue in Ontario for too long and has various negative consequences on our entire economy. Rampant delinquent payment drives up the cost of construction as contractors have to factor the risk of delinquent payments into their bids and taxpayers are increasingly burdened by the rising costs for important infrastructure projects that are a key to the province’s future economic success. Prompt payment legislation will help our economy thrive and

help our ever-growing number of new infrastructure projects move ahead in a timely and efficient manner.

“We are happy to see that the government is doing the right thing, to solve this problem.” That was said by Ron Johnson, the director of Prompt Payment Ontario, who then went on to say, “Prompt Payment Ontario, and our wide-reaching membership, are hopeful that the government will stay true to their commitment and pass this important legislation in the fall of 2017.” Here we are, Speaker, in the late summer of 2017, debating this bill, with the hope of being able to pass this important bill in the fall.

0940

I wanted to read that because I think, from Prompt Payment Ontario’s perspective, which is an important organization focused on this issue, they really summarized the issue and the impact on workers and our economy quite succinctly, and also to highlight that they have had the chance to be part of these consultations. They’ve had the chance to review the legislation and are supportive of what has been put forward. I think it’s very important to hear from a group of people who have been advocating to have a prompt payment system in our province, not to mention that they highlighted the fact that we are the first province or jurisdiction in Canada do so, encouraging other jurisdictions, including the federal government, to follow Ontario’s lead in bringing a prompt payment system to the province.

I have had conversations with the federal government—I won’t bore you with those—to see that other jurisdictions are starting to get interested to see what Ontario is doing. I have heard from our reviewers and experts as well that other provinces are watching Ontario with the work that we are doing with modernizing our Construction Lien Act to see the opportunities for them to follow suit. They are most welcome to cut and paste if they wish to, if it works for their jurisdiction.

Speaker, PPO also thanked Bruce Reynolds and Sharon Vogel for their work in tirelessly undertaking both the Construction Lien Act review report and ensuring that this legislation was truly reflective of the feedback received in stakeholder consultations. The members of PPO, as they said, are looking forward to reviewing the legislation and to working with parliamentarians in implementing prompt payment legislation in Ontario as soon as possible. They went on to say that PPO would like to thank their various members who have provided ongoing support in this endeavour. Their tireless efforts have helped to raise awareness of the ongoing issues of delinquent payment in our construction sector, and have assisted in a solution. That solution is contained within Bill 142, which is before this House—a very important element of this legislation which I know many members have spoken to me about. As I said, the member from Vaughan, in fact, brought a private member’s bill introducing this concept to our Legislature, which we were able to then build upon and present in Bill 142.

Speaker, let me now discuss the next major part of this bill. There is a lot in it. I’m sure you’ve seen the bill. It’s

fairly lengthy. Adjudication is a critical part of the prompt payment system. It is the key to speeding up the dispute resolution process. It also gives owners the ability to dispute invoices where they feel there's a problem with the work done on a project or with the amount owed. We have seen other jurisdictions implement prompt payment systems without it and, unfortunately, they see the same delays in the court system. Those in the construction industry that have experience with litigation, particularly on large or complex projects, will understand the time and investment that are all too often involved in resolving a dispute in court. In some cases, the process just to get to trial can take up to a year.

The new system we are proposing in Bill 142, if passed, would mark a dramatic change for the industry. In most cases, adjudication will allow these disputes to be resolved in short order, freeing up funds down the construction pyramid. This means that the parties do not have to wait for the issue to move through the court system and they can continue work on the project without delay, which I think is a significant part of this and desired by everyone within the sector. The adjudication system would examine the matter and reach a decision on the amount owed, usually in less than six weeks. If the adjudication decision is that the owner must pay and then the owner refuses to comply, the contractor would then have the right to suspend work on the contract.

Speaker, one important aspect of the new prompt payment and adjudication scheme that I would like to point out is that it would only apply to contracts and subcontracts entered into on or after the relevant parts of the bill are proclaimed in force. As you can see, we have worked hard to make sure that everyone's interests are covered with our proposed amendments and maintain a sense of fairness and balance.

I would like to now touch on some of the key aspects of the proposed system. Adjudication will be conducted by private individuals who have extensive expertise in construction and specialized training in dispute resolution. A private, authorized nominating authority would be responsible for selecting and training adjudicators, as well as maintaining a list of qualified adjudicators. In a dispute, both parties would be able to select an adjudicator from this list who has the most relevant expertise for their case. Adjudicators would have broad authority to consider a dispute as quickly and effectively as possible. Their decision would be binding on the parties on an interim basis to keep the project moving. This means that either party will still have the option of taking the dispute to court or arbitration for a final determination. But if both parties are satisfied with the adjudication, then they could choose to treat the adjudicator's decision as final.

Combined with the proposed prompt payment system, this provides a fast and inexpensive option to resolve disputes while maintaining all the protections of the court system where needed. Adjudication is a critical part of prompt payment, but it could also be used for other disputes that parties want to see resolved by an expert quickly and easily outside of the court system.

I would also like to note that Ontario would not be the first to try out this system. It has worked well in many other jurisdictions, so we've got some experience to build upon. In fact, the adjudication system has been in place in the United Kingdom for about 20 years now. Adjudication in the UK has the respect of both the industry and the courts, and it has been a big success there, having largely replaced costly litigation on construction matters. The adjudication process has been adopted in other common law jurisdictions, including Ireland, New Zealand, parts of Australia, and Singapore, where it has experienced similar success. Speaker, I have full confidence that adopting the same process here in Ontario would make a big difference for the industry and those who work in it.

Speaker, let's talk about the next steps. As with any dramatic industry change, we anticipate that there will be adjustments and tweaks needed down the road, so it's important that we get every aspect of this legislation right. Over the summer, we sought feedback on the bill from stakeholders across the industry. As you may recall, we tabled this before the end of the spring sitting, so summer was available to all stakeholders to actually review the legislation, as drafted and tabled in the House, and an opportunity to give us feedback over the summer months on the actual wording of the legislation. We received a number of submissions telling us what worked for them and what did not. Speaker, our government is working alongside Bruce Reynolds and Sharon Vogel and the advisory group to address these concerns. That work is ongoing.

I am proud of the level of input, collaboration and interest we have had from industry each step of the way. It really speaks to the importance of the changes we are proposing. As this bill progresses through the committee stage, we will be looking for continuous suggestions and ideas from our stakeholders to identify areas for improvement.

This bill contains significant changes for Ontario's construction industry. Not only is it important for the Legislature to get this legislation right; it is also important for the industry itself to be properly prepared for the changes that may come as a result of this bill. I have heard from the industry that it will need time to become familiar with the new rules and make the necessary adjustments to its practices. The industry will also need certainty as to how the new rules apply and advance notice as to when the new rules will come into effect. So the transition period is extremely important, from the time of passage of the bill and its implementation and then all of the regulations that have to be developed. As we know, construction projects are ongoing and we need to be able to transition properly.

0950

I want to say again that this legislation is groundbreaking. It's important, and we have worked very hard and are continuing to work hard to make sure it reflects the needs of the industry.

Again, if the bill is passed I would like to assure the industry that they will have time to prepare for these

changes. This government is committed to providing appropriate advance notice before any of the proposed changes are brought into effect so that there will be no surprises for anyone. Should this bill pass, I look forward to seeing the impact that it makes on the thousands of people and families in Ontario that are supported by this very important sector.

Speaker, the bill before you today is the biggest proposed change to Ontario's construction industry in over three decades, and it marks the first-ever consensus we have reached with industry stakeholders on issues including modernizing lien and holdback rules, prompt payment and adjudication. But the bottom line is this: We need to bring our laws up to date to support the thousands of workers in this important sector and their families. It really comes down to that.

The changes we are proposing will impact everyone involved in the construction industry. From the companies that are involved in large, multi-million-dollar construction projects to the families doing small-scale renovations of their homes, we kept their interests top of mind as we carefully consulted with people across the sector.

I would like to provide one final quote at this time from the International Union of Operating Engineers, better known as Local 793, which represents more than 14,500 members across all sectors of the construction and industrial industry in Ontario. They had this to say about this legislation:

"As a whole, Local 793 is very pleased with the legislation as currently drafted. Your decision to appoint special advisers and have them engage in an open and transparent process of consultation that allowed all stakeholders the opportunity to participate, comment and review the amendments has resulted in a significant achievement that we believe addresses the many interests at stake.

"From Local 793's perspective, many of the changes being tabled will directly assist some of the most vulnerable groups in the construction pyramid, namely those that reside at or near the bottom of the pyramid. This includes many hardworking individuals and companies that live, work and vote in Ontario, of which many are members of Local 793."

It's clear when you hear from all the partners in the construction sector—from owner-contractors all the way down to trades and sub-trades—that there is a very healthy respect for the entire pyramid, so to speak, as referred to, or the entire chain. Everybody recognizes the important role everybody in that chain plays for a construction project to take place, big or small; obviously it's more complex in bigger projects that we see and you and I often talk about this in the House.

The desire to get the work done, to get the project completed and, most importantly, the need for payment for work to take place, from the top to the bottom, in a timely manner, in a prompt manner, is always being highlighted. It's very important, because construction is done by people. It's still a very human-resource-intensive

way of doing work. That's why it creates so many jobs, that's why it's 7% of GDP. Half a million Ontarians are involved in construction. It's such an important key to our economy. I think there's probably somebody in all of our lives who is part of the construction industry.

Making sure that people get paid for the work they do, and that they get paid for the work they do in a prompt manner, is absolutely essential. The fact that it has taken us this long, because of—the complexity in this area of law, I think, at the end of the day, was a motivating factor to get it done. The process to get this done, in my view, has been that secret ingredient—not so secret now—for success that has resulted in us being at this point.

I often asked this question: If everybody thinks that the legislation is outdated—and it has been 34 years since the last changes—and if everybody within the entire pyramid thinks that it is time, why is it that we have not been able to accomplish that? The answer I always got was just that we were never able to find a consensus. We never were able to land in one place where everybody said, "You know what? In the grand scheme of things, with everything being equal, I'm comfortable with this." Those divergent interests always got in the way.

What became clear was that we needed a process—a process, perhaps, that was independent of the government's traditional policy-making process—to get to that point, for two very important reasons. One was the expertise needed in the subject matter area, because it is very unique. It's a niche area which requires technical know-how and expertise, both from the perspective of how the construction sector works and operates, and all the nuances in it from a business practices point of view, but also legal know-how in terms of how things are done here in Ontario, and then, of course, taking that to experiences around other jurisdictions.

Another reason why this file had not moved for such a long period of time was that you needed experts who could bring people together, to bring all that knowledge into one place.

We were successful in doing that. I'm not taking the credit for that success, that somehow we knew it was going to work that way. Thought went into having an independent process. But I think that the people we got—people who brought their expertise, people like Bruce Reynolds and Sharon Vogel—they made it into a success. They were able to not only bring their expertise but also their relationships into this process, by bringing people together who they knew were important in the sector and who trusted them to be honest brokers—people who are good people, who know the industry well and who are doing the work to improve the law. They are independent from the government, so they're not doing anybody's bidding, as the case tends to be in our system—which I'm not criticizing. It exists for good reason, that healthy tension. They were able to separate the traditional government policy-making function, on an independent level, from the expertise they brought and all the different parties' points of view, and then, very methodically and meticulously, work through the different phases in gathering the different points of view, and

seeing where the points of consensus were and the points of discord and then bridging that gap, to the point that they were able to give us an independent report, upon which we made a commitment that we would run with this report and then continue to work with them to make it happen.

It's interesting, Speaker. When I received the report and I finally read it, as I mentioned earlier—of course, I met with Bruce and Sharon, to make their acquaintance and work with them, but then I asked them if we could convene that expert advisory group to come together. The advice I got from every single person around that table—and, by the way, I thought they paid them to say that, but they assured me they did not—was to keep these two people on board as the government works through the report, because—and I will say this because it was said to me—there was a certain magic that was developed in that whole process. The word “magic” was used, and we don't want to lose that magic.

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I made an undertaking and a commitment to the panel that will not only keep Sharon and Bruce engaged in the process from report to policy development to legislation drafting, but also the expert panel as well and their expertise, because they were bringing perspectives from different people. They were making sure that not just one perspective is being heard but all the perspectives are being heard. It was a very interesting process for us to get to the point.

Of course, nothing is perfect in life, and I'm sure everybody would want something a little bit different here or there. I don't think anybody expected where we'd be. In fact, one of the questions posed to me again and again was, “Are you really sure that you will table this legislation in the spring?” I think there were doubters out there who thought that we would not get to the point where we would be able to table the legislation or have it debated in the House.

I am really excited and thrilled that here we are, the second day into the fall sitting. We are debating Bill 142. We have started the second reading debate. I know that there is a lot of interest on behalf of all three political parties and all the members on this piece of legislation. Everybody is anxious to get this second reading debate done so the bill can get to the committee.

I think the committee process on this bill is very important so that we can hear from people like Bruce and Sharon directly. I'm sure they will be able to give us a lot of answers. I caution you: There are no short answers. They know this area inside out. You will be impressed by their expertise, but also with other members of the expert panels and other stakeholders that I mentioned in my remarks earlier.

I think it's important that we get to the committee as soon as possible on this bill so that we can bring the outside voices who have been part of this process for the last two or so years and even longer and get their counsel directly so that we can make the tweaks of the amendments that we need to do—there's always some of that in

the committee process; it's an important part of the process because it's such a technical piece of legislation—and on for third reading. The sooner we can pass it, the sooner we can work on the regulations and the transition phase. As I committed, we will make sure that we give ample notice to everyone as to when certain parts of the legislation will get implemented.

This is one big important step that we are here for today. There are a lot of important steps to come, but we need to make sure we can get it through this House. I very much look forward to working with all the members and again thank our friends for being here and for the work they have done. If we could give them a big round of applause for the work they've done, I'd really appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): You've earned a drink of water after that one-hour presentation.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It was an interesting hour. Right off the bat, I would like to say that the PC Party has long advocated to bring prompt payment legislation to Ontario. We are encouraged to see that.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “Hear, hear” is right. However, Speaker—and there's always a “however”—after telling you that we will be looking favourably on this and we did enjoy the hour-long presentation, I think it all comes down to trust. Being trustworthy is the most important thing. When we hear this party tell us things, we are always skeptical because the things they say never seem to be reality. We worry when we hear the member speak.

I will give you a great example. Just yesterday, the Minister of Labour spoke. He was answering a question from one of his members. He was talking about the economy in Ontario. I will give you the quote from Hansard. He said, “Manufacturing exports are up.” That was his quote yesterday.

Well, sad news, again. I will read you from the Ontario Economic Briefing. The headline is “July Trade Deteriorates.”

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I am speaking to truth. “Exports fell sharply.... Total international merchandise exports from Ontario fell 22% in July over June.”

He talked about the fact that manufacturing exports are up when, indeed, the line is, “Exports have declined while imports have risen,” so he's got it backwards.

Again, I go to the discussion of truth. We need to hear the truth from this party, and that is, sadly, what we don't hear in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents to add my two minutes' worth to the bill before us, the Construction Lien Amendment Act, known as prompt payment.

I don't think you have to look much further than my riding to see a prime example of the government's failure to look after businesses in this province. They built the

Herb Gray Parkway in my riding, and it came to light that the large international company that was put in charge of the build had actually allowed the installation of faulty girders. This is a very dangerous situation. They could have failed and people could have died. The local people in Windsor were alerting them to this fact.

When the multinational company finally decided to do something about it, what they did was they took their toys and went home. By that, I mean they took off out of town and left all the subcontractors without payment. We had long-standing, very reputable companies in Windsor that were looking at going out of business because they had put so much money into the build of the Herb Gray Parkway but never got paid by this multinational company.

Rather than the government owning up to the mistake and saying, "You know what? We're going to try and do something to stop this from happening ever again," they went on to award that multinational more government jobs after they left people in this province without payment.

I think this is something that we see historically, so it's nice to see that the government is now trying to do something around prompt payment. There's still a lot of work that needs to be done as far as taking care of workers in this province. Frankly, all we have to look at is today, where Sears Canada is going to court to try to dissolve their obligation to pay their workers' pensions while taking care of the CEOs and the people at the top. This Liberal government has done nothing to protect those workers or other workers in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's funny how the opposition Conservatives won't talk about the Construction Lien Act. This is a monumental piece of work, mostly done by all the expert panels, the people in the construction industry, legal firms, subcontractors, major contractors. These are the backbone of the Ontario economy that have come to the government asking for a new framework to deal with construction liens in a reasonable fashion: to take it out of the courts, to expedite it. There are win-win situations for everybody, in contracting, people involved with litigation, and the people of Ontario who benefit from the infrastructure.

This is not an easy undertaking. It has taken months and months of work by the volunteer members of the expert panel. I myself am familiar with Jeffrey Long from Koskie Minsky, an excellent lawyer who got great advice from Guido Prezzena in this undertaking. Again, it is something we need in Ontario. It is something that we sometimes don't think enough about, because these construction projects are very complex, whether you do a small construction project around your home or whether you do a massive construction project which takes place in my riding. The largest construction project in North America is taking place in my riding in the building of the Eglinton Crosstown from Scarborough all the way to Mount Dennis. You can imagine the complexity of this kind of work that takes place in Ontario.

In Ontario, we have incredibly talented engineers, skills and tradespeople, and we need this coordinated approach to make sure there's prompt payment. That's why we need to support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Steve Clark: Actually, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence is wrong. Progressive Conservatives want to talk about this bill. We've long advocated for prompt payment legislation in Ontario. I think we've recognized for many, many years that this is one of the most serious issues facing the construction industry in this province, so I'm pleased to be able to speak to it.

In fact, when I was elected in 2010, one of the first groups that I met with here at Queen's Park was the Council of Ontario Construction Associations. I remember having a discussion with them about prompt payment. Actually, in 2011, I asked them if they wanted me to present a private member's bill, and they felt at that time, before the 2011 election, that the government was going to pass the legislation. The Attorney General can correct me if I've got the numbers wrong, but I think, at the time, it was Bill 211 that was tabled before the Legislature. It died on the order paper when the general election was called.

Again, I had that same conversation with COCA in 2013. Again, they politely declined me tabling a private member's bill in favour of the government. I think the bill at the time was Bill 69. The reason I remember this is that I ended up tabling a bill, Bill 70, for regulated health professionals that actually got passed. When I have meetings with COCA now, I point out that unfortunately Bill 69 didn't get passed, but there's Bill 70 on my wall that received royal assent.

I am glad the government is putting it forward. I know that the last time municipalities and school boards put up a fairly significant opposition. Perhaps the Attorney General would like to talk about some of the discussions he has had with those sectors.

As well, he is the government House leader. I am very encouraged to find out, Speaker, through you, if he's going to invoke closure or what type of public hearings he is going to have. I look forward to those questions and comments being addressed in his speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the Attorney General for final comments.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the members from Nipissing, Windsor West, Eglinton–Lawrence and Leeds–Grenville. I heard some substantive comments in members' remarks and some political potshots, and that's fine. But I take those political potshots as inferring that they agree with the substance, so they're just going to politics.

Speaker, there's a reason I spent a considerable amount of time talking about the process resulting in this bill. I don't know about other members, but I trust our experts. I trust their integrity, I trust their expertise and I trust the fact that they have worked very closely with us in developing this bill.

This is a highly technical piece of legislation, and we need to make sure that we continue to work with our experts. The time and the effort and the expertise they have put into it—I think, in respect of them, we should keep politics aside and make sure that we talk about this very important technical bill. These are people's lives we're talking about, Speaker; these are people's livelihoods we're talking about, people who get paid for the work they do and want to make sure that it happens in a prompt fashion.

The challenge we've had, as I mentioned, with the previous bills—and Bill 69 was the bill from the member from Vaughan; I thank him for the work done—is that there was that lack of consensus and it was missing other pieces. What we needed to do is take a holistic approach where we look at modernizing the lien and the holdback system and we look at creating a new prompt-payment system, but coupled with a simplified adjudication process.

The beauty of Bill 142, thanks to our experts, is that we were able to bring all of those very important pieces together—not just take a slice of it, but look at the entire construction sector, the entire system within it, and build a consensus along with school boards and other public and private partners in creating this bill.

I look forward to hearing substantive remarks from members here and in committee so we can pass this bill by third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It's now 10:15, and this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'd just like to welcome the Canadian PBC—which stands for primary biliary cholangitis—Society. We have a constituent of mine, Elisa Applebaum, here in the House today. They're here with us to mark International PBC Day, which took place on Sunday. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today I'd like to introduce, in the members' gallery, Emilia De Simone, who is the mother of page Alessandro De Simone, who comes from the great riding of Oakville. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lorne Coe: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature Patrick Deane, the president and vice-chancellor of McMaster University, and Suzanne L'aberge, the chancellor of McMaster University. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce Jesse Arruda. He is the father of Michael Arruda, one of our pages, and he's in the Speaker's gallery this morning.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming Sheila Wright, a constituent from the beautiful riding of

Dufferin–Caledon, here for the first PBC Awareness Day at Queen's Park, for primary biliary cholangitis. Welcome.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm thrilled to introduce two wonderful people here at the Legislature. We have with us today Andrew Clubine, who is the president of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, and Sophie Helpard, who is the executive director. They do wonderful work in post-secondary. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to welcome Barbara Badstober as a local representative of the Canadian PBC Society. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Today I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park Ms. Jane Waters from Wasaga Beach. Jane is here with the Canadian Primary Biliary Cholangitis Society and for PBC Awareness Day. Welcome, Jane.

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: Please welcome to the Legislature today the mother of page Benjamin Leray, Ms. Hanca Chang.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm also pleased to announce that we have page Rachel Marshall here, a student in my riding, and to welcome her to Queen's Park to be a page.

Ms. Cindy Forster: We're going to be joined here this morning by Willy Noiles, president of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups; Jenny Zhou, an injured worker; Aidan Macdonald, a community legal worker; and probably another 20 injured workers as well as members of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome the Canadian PBC Society to the Legislature today, as well, including a number of my constituents: Gail Wright, Morgan Smyth, Nancy Stewart and Lenore Bennett. They're here with us to mark International Primary Biliary Cholangitis Day, which took place on Sunday. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome one of my constituents from Niagara-on-the-Lake, Mr. Paul Mace. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. David Zimmer: I'd like to welcome two constituents from Willowdale, Sheila Kos and Dorry Korn. Both are here with the primary biliary cholangitis society. Welcome.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would like to correct my record. I mentioned in yesterday's member's statement on childhood cancer awareness that Dr. Corin Greenberg founded the Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario. POGO was in fact founded by her husband, Dr. Mark Greenberg, and Corin joined in 1987. I'd like to apologize for that mistake and correct my record.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): At this time I'm sure the members would join me in welcoming this

session's legislative pages serving in the second session of the 41st Parliament. Please assemble.

We have a little scurrying going on because you're using the pages wisely.

From Oak Ridges–Markham, Adam Pariag; from Oakville, Alessandro De Simone; from Markham–Unionville, Andy Wei; from Whitby–Oshawa, Archana Jagannathan; from Don Valley East, Ariana Hadjiyianni; from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Benjamin Leray; from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Eva Schubert—

Oh, wait a minute. I might have—

Interjection: You skipped four people.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did.

Charlotte Sellner from Chatham–Kent–Essex; from St. Paul's, Cole Banville; from Niagara West–Glanbrook, Duncan VanPagee; from Parkdale–High Park, Emerson Manning; from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Eva Schubert—we get a second time with this one—from the great riding of Brant, Greg Bannister; from Mississauga–Erindale, Javan Mayrand; from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, Michael Arruda; from Scarborough–Guildwood, Milind Patel; from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Nicola Noordermeer; from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Olivia Groskleg; from York–Simcoe, Rachel Marshall; from Pickering–Scarborough East, Rachel McNeilly; and from Eglinton–Lawrence, William Burchell.

These are our pages for this session.

Applause.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): After reviewing yesterday's question period in Hansard, I just want to bring to everyone's attention that accusations cannot be made against another member in the House.

I have listened carefully to the questions; most of them fit within the realm of a reasonable question period, and answers as well, but there are some times where it was going too close to an accusation towards another member. I will be watching and listening carefully and ruling on those as they happen.

I would ask that all members respect the rules that are in the House, and I thank you.

Therefore, it is time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

OPIOID ABUSE

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. I would like to ask her about Sudbury, but I don't need the Attorney General telling me that it is before the courts. We all know it's before the courts. We all know that Liberal ethics and integrity are before the courts. We all know—

Interjection.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation has continued

while I stood, and so now I'm going to give him a warning. The member is now warned.

The banter back and forth is not helpful.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: We all know the alleged bribery is before the courts. We all know that Liberal political corruption is before the courts. So I'm not going to ask about that, because I want a real answer.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier support the member from Kitchener–Conestoga's Illegal Pill Press Act? Will the Premier help put a stop to the use of these machines by drug dealers across Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health is going to want to speak to the details on this, but I want to just assure the House and the people of Ontario that the opioid crisis that has seized not just this province but jurisdictions all over the world is something that we are taking very, very seriously, that we are fighting. We have put literally hundreds of millions of dollars into the front line, into services and supports for the people who are on that front line and who are dealing with this very, very serious situation.

I have had an opportunity to sit down with a number of people who are front-line workers. I sat down last week with the Minister of Health, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the chief coroner to get the best advice, both from the front-line workers and those officials, on what more we could do to fight this public health crisis.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is again for the Premier. While the Premier spends her time testifying tomorrow during the Sudbury bribery trial, the Ontario PC Party is going to continue to fight for better mental health and addiction services.

Research provided by the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network shows that two Ontarians die every day from opioid overdoses. I have always said there's no monopoly on a good idea, and the Premier has an opportunity here. There is a tool kit here for fighting this opioid—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Chief government whip, come to order. It sounds to me like there are a few members who need to be told that they're moving to warnings. It stops.

Carry on, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: There are a number of ways we can combat this opioid crisis. One of those tools in the tool kit is this Illegal Pill Press Act, the idea and the suggestion from the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. Rather than partisan responses, what I would hope is that the Premier would say, "This is a good idea. We're going to look at it; we're going to embrace it. We're going to support the member from Kitchener–Conestoga."

So, can we count on the Premier to do that? Will you help those families that are struggling with this opioid crisis?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I work every day for the people of Ontario, and I will continue to do that, this week and next week and the week after.

I agree that there is no patent on a good idea. It doesn't matter where it comes from. The Minister of Health, in the final supplementary, will speak to that.

Let me just talk for one moment about the things that we are doing, because we do have a strategy. We are working to fight the opioid crisis, and let me just talk about some of those things.

We are providing an immediate \$222-million boost over three years to prevent opioid addiction and overdose. We are adding more front-line harm reduction workers across the province. I heard that from the front-line workers, that they needed that, that they need more numbers in their ranks. We're expanding the supply of naloxone and doing it free of charge. We're expanding rapid-access addiction medicine clinics and access to those across Ontario.

The Minister of Health will speak to the other issue.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: I'm disappointed that I didn't get a response on the illegal pill press suggestion from the MPP from Kitchener-Conestoga.

Another way that we can help with this is by understanding that there's a lack of education, a lack of awareness of just how lethal this is. Just two milligrams of fentanyl is a lethal dose. Pills are flooding our communities.

Right now, the government has this massive advertising campaign. The government advertising budget is now \$57 million, up \$32 million. Instead of using this money for partisan vanity ads that the Auditor General has already criticized, can we not have a commitment from the government to use some of their advertising budget to actually fight the opioid crisis and to actually raise education and awareness on the opioid crisis?

I didn't get a response on the illegal pill press suggestion. This is another solution in the tool kit.

Directly to the Premier: Can we count on her support for an advertising campaign—instead of vanity ads—to help fight this opioid crisis?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, we are investing dollars and working with stakeholders in developing a robust, appropriate—and sensitive, as well—and effective public education campaign. That's necessary. It's impossible to address this comprehensively unless we do that. We're already doing that.

When it comes to pill presses, the leader of the official opposition should know—I mean, he was a federal member of Parliament—that the federal government just passed C-37, which includes a provision that prohibits the unregistered importation of designated devices, such as pill presses.

Frankly, it's overly simplistic, and it fits with their law-and-order approach to this crisis, that they would focus on something as simplistic as pill presses. That's not going to solve this problem. You need a multi-faceted approach, like we have, investing almost \$300 million over the next two and a half years.

I'm still waiting for any good idea that we can embrace that will prove effective. I want to know what the member opposite thinks about safe injection sites as well. Do you support them?

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. A few months ago, the government announced a \$6.7-billion purchase of a foreign energy company. As part of the deal, Ontario decided to get back in the coal business.

While the Premier is testifying in Sudbury at the bribery scandal, Hydro One will go ahead with the purchase of the second-largest coal plant west of the Mississippi. Despite what this government says, there really is only one pro-coal party in the Legislature, and that's your Ontario Liberal Party. The Liberals now own one of the US's top 20 greenhouse-gas-producing power plants. That goes against everything the Premier pretends to stand for.

Mr. Speaker, a very direct question to the Premier: When will the Liberals and Hydro One be shutting down their shiny new dirty coal plant?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I recall, as we shut down the last coal-fired plant and in the run-up to that, I remember—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville will come to order.

Carry on, please, Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I remember, Mr. Speaker, because you recognized, and I know the member opposite does, that the shutting down of the coal-fired plants in Ontario is the single largest initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in North America. I recall a certain Prime Minister—a previous Prime Minister in whose government this member sat—touting how well Canada was doing on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The record of Canada rested entirely on the results that we had here in Ontario shutting down coal and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. That is our record here in Ontario.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: I did not get a response about this decision of Ontario to buy a coal plant.

Not only did the Premier's new purchase come with a coal plant; now the deal comes with what the Sierra Club called "an 800-acre toxic soup waste site." Doug Howell, senior campaign organizer for Sierra said, "One thing ... you ... need to understand is that you're not just getting a

coal plant; you're getting a toxic waste site and all the liabilities that go with it." Howell added that "Avista might be on the hook for \$100 million of cleanup. Where's that coming from? Well, thank you Hydro One...."

Thank you, Premier. You're putting Ontario on the hook for this. Mr. Speaker, how much will Hydro One ratepayers be paying for this coal plant's toxic waste cleanup?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased to rise and answer that question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: —because it just shows the lack of understanding of the energy system on that side of the House, because Ontario ratepayers will pay zero, Mr. Speaker. Just like their plan, it's nothing. There is no plan coming from that side: 194 days since they talked about coming up with some idea on what to do with the energy sector.

What we've done is we've reduced rates by 25%, making sure every family and household in this province actually sees that reduction. Again, Mr. Speaker, zero from that side of the House.

When it comes to Avista, they're a progressive utility by most standards, ahead of the curve on technologies like net metering, EVs and biomass, and this just goes to show how far ahead of the curve we are when it comes to eliminating coal—

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: I get that their talking points on this are, "Attack the opposition. Attack others." The reality is that they bought a dirty coal plant. The Ontario Liberal government that pretended to be against dirty coal is now in the business of buying coal.

Maybe it's that the Liberal members have lost their values. Maybe they no longer oppose coal. But it appears that one Liberal may have a different approach: former Liberal MPP Glen Murray. I wish him all the best on his new career, and I want to ask this direct question to the Premier: Did the former Minister of the Environment resign his seat from cabinet and his seat in the Legislature because he was so disappointed and could not support the government's decision to get back in the business of dirty coal?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Order.

Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know Glen Murray is very proud to say that it was this government that shut down coal plants. That's like taking seven million cars off the road. You know, Glen Murray can actually talk about our energy system being 92% GHG-free. That's something that this government has

done, against what they were saying. Always the "no" party on that side. I know PC stands for "pro coal," Mr. Speaker, and also "no."

But let's talk about a few things that happened. While they are sitting on their hands, plenty has happened in the world. Spring has turned, and summer, and now summer is turning into fall. Our kids have finished one grade and they've started another. Others have graduated high school and gone on to college and university and are getting free tuition, Mr. Speaker.

That's all, again, while they sit on their hands. It's 194 days. They have no idea what to do with energy. They have no idea what to do in this province. We'll continue to govern for the people in Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Ontario Hospital Association called on the Premier to immediately commit to rapid and aggressive new investment in Ontario hospitals. The OHA confirmed, in fact, what I have been hearing all over this province for far too long: The Conservative and Liberal cuts to health care have caused a crisis for Ontario families. People are waiting hours in the ER. They're being forced to spend days on end on stretchers in hallways right here in Ontario's hospitals.

When will this Premier stop the cuts and invest in the health care that Ontarians deserve?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that the OHA issued a news release today and they are calling for more funding for Ontario's hospitals. Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there needed to be more investment in hospitals, and that's exactly why we've increased our investments in health, particularly in hospitals.

In our budget, there was a 2% minimum increase to each hospital across the province, an overall 3% investment—\$500 million in Ontario's hospitals that we put in place. That is an increase.

We have increased funding every single year. But we recognize that particularly for hospitals there needed to be a particular increase, and that's why we put that funding in place.

We will continue to work with the OHA. We appreciate the work that they do.

As I said, we have recognized that there needed to be an increase to Ontario's hospitals. That's why it was in the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That's why the Liberals didn't listen to the OHA and actually reduced the amount that they asked for by \$300 million just in this budget, in the 2017 budget. Perhaps they should rethink when they go to their budget process and actually listen to what those folks are saying.

What did the last Conservative government do? They closed 28 hospitals, fired 6,000 nurses—7,000 hospital beds gone.

When the Liberals came into power, instead of reversing the cuts, they froze health care spending for

four years. For five years after that, they actually stopped increasing to inflation; they reduced the increases to below inflation. They continued to worsen the health care crisis across the province.

Hospitals are overcrowded. Without a major change, we're going to be in big, big trouble.

When is this government going to start implementing the change we need instead of following in the footsteps of the previous Conservative government?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are making multi-billion-dollar investments in the hospital sector, and I'm proud to say that the OHA stands beside us. They're important stakeholders and partners, and we look to them for advice on an ongoing basis.

As the Premier mentioned a few moments ago, in the last two years more than a billion dollars went into hospitals specifically. Over the next 10 years, we're putting \$20 billion into hospital infrastructure, for new beds, for expansions, for redevelopments, for brand new hospitals. There are 34 projects either under way right now or in the planning stage across the province—a 3.1% funding increase. Of course, these are all matters that the third party, in the last budget, voted against.

As we have every single year, we will continue to make important investments, and we're working with our partners, including the OHA, to do that effectively.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families know that our health care system is not working. Nurses and front-line health care workers know that our hospital and health care systems are not working. They know that long-term care is not working. Doctors know that our health care system isn't working. And now hospital administrators are telling the Premier that the health care system in Ontario isn't working. The Premier and the Minister of Health seem to be the only two people in Ontario who don't recognize that the health care system isn't working.

Is this Premier really that out of touch, or is it just not a priority for her Liberal government?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party is correct when she referenced the fact that when the PCs were in government they closed approximately 10,000 hospital beds. They're correct when they said yesterday, I believe, that the PCs fired more than 7,000 nurses when they were in power.

But it's important to recognize that in the five short years when the NDP were in power, they not only closed 24% of the acute-care beds in this hospital—close to the PC record, 9,645 hospital beds were closed by the NDP in five short years—but they closed, unbelievably, 13% of the mental health beds in this province as well. In their last budget, before they were defeated, they actually decreased the hospital funding by 1%.

So we're not going to take lessons. We're going to make the investments that our stakeholders ask us to make.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Ontario Hospital Association said that one of the causes of the crisis in hospitals right now is that there's not enough care available for seniors outside of the hospital setting.

1100

CEO Anthony Dale has called on the Premier and her Liberal government to make investments this year, just to stabilize the urgent situation in hospitals and also other care facilities like long-term-care homes.

What will the Premier be doing this year to make sure our parents and our grandparents have access to a safe place to live where they get the care that they need as they age?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the leader of the third party because I think she has hit on and certainly has recognized, as we do, that this is a complex situation, that there is a continuum of care that is needed, a continuum of care that won't be solved by just one initiative. That means that there are people in acute care beds in our hospitals who do need to be somewhere else.

I had the opportunity to meet with health care advisers and with the Minister of Health last week. We talked about just that: How do we make sure that in every community across this province, where there are people who are in an acute-care bed in a hospital, there is either the support for them to go home or there is a bed in a long-term-care home, or that we find ways to work, for example, with other sectors, with the retirement home sector, to find appropriate beds for these—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Ontario should be able to access the care that they need when they need it; 14 years of Liberal government and they still can't access the kind of care that they need when they need it. Our health care professionals should be given the resources that they need to provide the care to people in this province, the resources that they need to do their job.

Enough is enough. People all over Ontario are suffering at the hands of this Liberal government. The Premier has cut and frozen health care budgets for far too long, and she even refuses to do a broad inquiry into the dismal state of disrepair in our long-term-care system. How can this Premier ever even hope to fix our problems in long-term care if she refuses to figure out what the problems are?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask the Minister of Health to comment in the last supplementary.

We have never frozen or cut the health budget—never. We have increased the health budget year after year after year.

I would just say to the leader of the third party, I recognize and we recognize that this is a complex issue. We recognize that as the demographics shift and as our parents and our grandparents age—and as we age; those

of us who are baby boomers—there is going to need to be a continuum of solutions. This is not a simple fix. There isn't a single thing that we can do.

My mum is going to be 89 in a couple of weeks, and my dad is 91. I can tell the leader of the third party that it's not a simple thing to be with people as they age and to help them find the right place to be. That story is being played out across this province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Obviously, the Liberal government is not up to solving complex issues when they increase the health care budget and they still can't solve the problems in our health care system. Shame on them. This Premier should not be proud of this record.

The care homes that our parents and our grandparents live in are understaffed; that's no secret. Perhaps she hasn't been in one, but they're understaffed and the front-line workers are forced to do too much with too little. Our hospital association is warning that a crisis is coming. A serious crisis is coming if something isn't done immediately about the Liberal cuts.

Why is this Premier so out of touch that she doesn't see that health care is a priority for the people of Ontario, even if it isn't a priority for this Liberal government?

Interjections.

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

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I have to say that I do appreciate the fact that the leader of the third party finally actually did acknowledge that our health care budget increased this year, just like it has every single year since 2003. It has never been frozen; it has never been cut. It has increased year after year after year.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Hospital budgets have been frozen. Absolutely, they have. Be honest.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, that includes—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Leader of the third party, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, that includes our funding. Over the next three years, we are investing an additional \$11 billion into our health care system. That includes, in this year's budget, important investments that will result in individuals being able to see shorter wait times, more long-term care, better staffing, and alternatives to long-term care. We're investing \$100 million into a dementia strategy.

We're making the investments—not where the third party necessarily wants them, but where our stakeholders and patients and Ontarians need—

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

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. A year after I tabled the Ontario Service Dogs Act, those

with disabilities requiring service dogs still await the legislated accommodations that they should already be guaranteed.

While the Premier makes her Sudbury bribery trial debut tomorrow, we will be continuing to fight for the rights of children with autism here at Queen's Park. We will continue to fight for the accommodations that have been denied to a nine-year-old Kitchener boy with autism, Kenner Fee—accommodations that should be guaranteed and yet were denied by the Waterloo Catholic school board and now the human rights tribunal.

Will the Premier join our fight for this vital access and step in to ensure that Kenner and other children with autism don't have their required service dogs taken away from them when they get to school?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for accessibility.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member for this important question. Of course, our government is very committed to continuing to break down the barriers faced by people with disabilities and those needing supports and accommodations.

Whether they're students, adults or people at work, the laws pertaining to service animals are very clear. Accessibility means giving people of all abilities that right to participate in everyday life.

We have standards in place. Organizations must allow a person with a disability to be accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal in public areas. The accessibility standards do not define what type of animal is considered. We know that guide dogs are also covered as part of the Blind Persons' Rights Act. So we have standards in place around service animals. We have laws there.

I know that the Minister of Education will follow up in the supplementary in terms of the issue in the school board in question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Perhaps so, because we all know that, in this particular case, schools are not public facilities and therefore are denied.

AODA regulations already mandate service dog accommodations, as the minister mentioned. The Ontario Human Rights Code speaks to the duty to accommodate persons with disabilities.

Doctors, teachers and international training schools have all testified to the importance of nine-year-old Kenner's service dog, Ivy. Yet Kenner is still denied his service dog at school. What's worse, Kenner is one of many with autism, PTSD, hearing or other disabilities requiring service dogs being denied access.

While Ontarians raise their voices with my petition to open access to registered service dogs and owners, I'm asking the Premier to save us the signing, sending and tabling of that petition. If she believes in accommodations for service dog users, she could step in today. Will she do it? Will the Premier step in and ensure that the public accommodations that Kenner and so many requiring service dogs should be already guaranteed?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I know that this has been a challenging situation for Kenner and his family. While the Ontario Human Rights Commission has ruled in favour of the board in this instance, we expect school boards to consider the needs of students and to put those needs first and foremost in every decision that they make. That includes appropriate accommodations and supports for students in our schools so that they can be successful. That is why we are working to put together accessibility standards for education. That's something that we're in the process of developing.

We want to have programs and supports in place, whether that means individual accommodations, having extra time, physical alterations to the classroom—

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

1110

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the people of this province deserve a government that respects the democratic process, but at the Sudbury trial yesterday, we learned that your party only abides by the democratic process when it benefits them.

Instead of having a democratic nomination race like the local riding association wanted, there was confusion about who would become the candidate. First, there were rumours that Mr. Olivier would be appointed; then, the Minister of Energy was appointed.

Was—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: You were appointed. You didn't even have a nomination contest.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

Finish, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I realize that the government does not want to hear this question, but the people of this province know that the Premier is going to court—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Best comment I've heard; we will.

Try again, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Was the Premier aware that the Sudbury riding association had requested a democratic nomination meeting and not an appointment from her office? It's a simple question.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I would remind the members again, as I did yesterday, that this line of questioning is

inappropriate. This matter is before the courts. The member opposite knows that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I was saying, this matter is before the courts. It would be highly inappropriate to answer any questions in relation to the proceedings that are ongoing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Premier: In exchange for becoming the Liberal candidate in Sudbury, two of the Minister of Energy's former staffers receive paid positions from the Liberal Party. These paid positions are well documented in emails.

Clearly there was a lot of pressure to appease not only the Minister of Energy, but also the riding association and Mr. Olivier. In fact, Ms. Sorbara is on the record with Mr. Olivier: "Of course you recognize the position that we're going to find ourselves in here ... where she's going to have to make a decision around the appointment ... versus, allowing this to go ahead."

To the Premier: Is that why you agreed to the Minister of Energy's demands?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The opposition is fully entitled to waste their time by asking questions that they know are inappropriate to ask in this House because they relate to a legal proceeding.

On this side of the House, this Premier and this government will continue to focus on issues that will result in building a fairer Ontario like raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour so that we have fairer workplaces, like making sure that one third of all full-time students in our province are attending college and university for free, like what we have seen with more new students able to go to college and university—because in the past they were not able to do so—because of the policy changes we have brought forward in making sure that kids from low-income families are able to attend college and university.

These are the kinds of things that the people from Sudbury and from all across Ontario are working for. That's what they expect of their government.

HOUSING POLICY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question this morning is to the Minister of Housing and minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Let me start by congratulating him on his appointment to cabinet.

This summer I had the opportunity to talk to my constituents in Davenport about how our government is helping people get ahead in an ever-changing economy, from the many changes to OSAP and providing free tuition for many families across Ontario to OHIP+, which will be providing over 4,400 prescription medications for free to those under 25.

I've also talked a lot about rent control, and I've heard from families in Davenport that they feel there is a greater sense of stability and fairness in the rental market. Some advocates would like to see the removal of vacancy decontrol, which means that when a unit becomes empty, a landlord can increase the rent by whatever they want.

Speaker, through you, can the minister explain why the government has not removed vacancy decontrol?

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the member from Davenport for the important question. Our policies, like rent control, are designed to create greater fairness and opportunity for the people of Ontario. Thanks to our Fair Housing Plan, all renters—and I repeat, all renters—in Ontario now know their rent is not going to increase beyond 2.5%.

At the same time, our government understands that if more landlords are participating in the rental housing market, there will be more affordable choices available for tenants. Through our plan, landlords will continue to have the predictability and flexibility to negotiate starting rents based on current market values with new tenants as well as with vacant units.

We are going to continue to implement our plan, working hard to ensure that the rental system is fair for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm glad the government has listened to the concerns of the people in my riding of Davenport and enacted the Fair Housing Plan to protect renters across the province from sudden, dramatic rent increases.

Again to the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy: Rental and housing prices are rising in centres of prosperity around the world, including the greater Golden Horseshoe area. One of the primary reasons is because people want to live in great communities like Davenport and Etobicoke-Lakeshore. With more than 80,000 people coming to Ontario each year, it's important that we are able to keep up with the growing demand for housing. People in my riding of Davenport want to make sure that we maintain a healthy supply of housing for the people in Ontario. What is this government doing to ensure that Ontario maintains a healthy supply of housing?

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: Our government, under the leadership of Premier Wynne, is committed to making it easier for the people of Ontario to buy or rent a home. Our plan is to increase supply and rein in speculation. It's about creating stability in the market and addressing affordability.

It's exactly for that reason that our Fair Housing Plan contains a \$125-million program to help stimulate more rental housing. It's why we are freeing up provincial lands to develop up to 2,000 new units of housing. It's why we've created a dedicated housing development group to improve planning timelines, cut red tape and get shovels in the ground. It's why we're working with our municipal partners to get secondary suites on the market as quickly as possible.

Our government, unlike the Conservatives, supports housing in Ontario, and supports social housing, affordable housing and market housing and will work to—

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

Interjections.

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

New question.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the education minister. While the Premier testifies tomorrow in the Sudbury bribery trial, the Ontario PC Party is fighting for child care spaces for children, especially in rural Ontario. Parents whose children were in before- and after-school child care spaces in schools that you closed are scrambling to find another option. I want to know: How many child care spaces could have stayed open if you hadn't shut down all those schools across Ontario?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: To the minister responsible for women's issues and for child care.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm proud to rise today and talk about some of the great work we're doing when it comes to transforming the way we deliver child care in this province. Let's not forget that we are making historic—historic—investments in child care and that we are pledging to move forward with 100,000 new child care spaces.

But I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question, because the early years are important and we want to give children the best start in life. In doing that, our number one priority is to make sure that we are delivering programs that are safe and in good situations for our children. What we are doing is asking our schools to be able to provide parents, where desired, before- and after-school care on demand in the numbers that they require.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: You're right. It is historic and transforming when you close 700 schools across this great province. I'm not certain how it can be safe when there are no places for them to go to. In my riding alone, you still haven't announced if you will reinstate closed schools or what will happen with the licensed before- and after-school and child care spaces at Paisley Central and Beavercrest schools.

I want to know, Minister: How many daycare spaces did you close when you shut down 700 schools across Ontario and how many millions of dollars did you waste shutting them down?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: We know that for most families, the workday doesn't begin and end with the school bell. That's why our government is committing to make sure school boards offer before- and after-school programming for six- and 12-year-olds. It's a commitment we made to families in 2014. Starting in September of this year, we have been delivering. We have been delivering on that promise across the province.

Let me just tell you some of the things that we are doing. We are increasing access for families and children by building on the success of full-day kindergarten. We have created flexibility in the system. We have revised our framework so that we can enhance and build on existing practices. The bottom line is that these families are benefitting from these changes. I believe the last number was that 83% of schools in the province were supplying before- and after-school care to those families when they needed it.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Ms. Cindy Forster: We're joined in the members' gallery today by the Ontario Network of Injured Workers and a number of injured workers in this province.

For many years, the Ontario workers' compensation system has failed workers who find themselves injured on the job. As it stands today, if you're a worker in this province who gets hurt while at work, unable to continue doing that job and reliant on benefits from compensation to meet your needs or your family's needs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I suspect it's to the Minister of Labour, but I need to hear it.

Ms. Cindy Forster: To the Premier, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the Premier? All right, I don't suspect. It's the Premier.

Ms. Cindy Forster: WSIB relies on a policy called deeming; that is, pretending that a worker has a job that you don't actually have to cut your benefit payments. For a government that claims to be so in tune with fairness and so in tune with workers in this province, it has led workers into deeper and deeper poverty.

When will the government put an end to deeming and fix the failed WSIB policies?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the honourable member for that question. The number one priority of the Minister of Labour—the person who occupies that seat—and the Ministry of Labour, as an organization, is to ensure that people who go to work in the morning come home safe and sound at the end of the day to their families. Ontario remains one of the safest places in the world to work. Unfortunately, we are not at zero yet. Accidents do happen; fatalities do happen. And when they happen, the injured workers deserve the respect and the dignity of a good WSIB system that allows them to either return to work quickly or, if that isn't possible, it allows them to live a life of respect and dignity with the earnings that should go along with that.

We have done a number of things to change that over the past few years. The member is right. I think if you go back in years, the system often didn't work. I hope to address some of the things we have done in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Back to the Minister of Labour, then: We need to ensure that workers injured on the job receive the protections and the benefits they deserve. We

have Jenny Zhou with us here today. She spent every day for five years on a knitting machine in a factory here in Toronto. After five years, she was sent home with a long list of repetitive strain injuries: back, severe carpal tunnel. She had surgery, and she could not return to work even though her injuries were confirmed by doctors.

But WSIB was able to cut her benefits, deeming that she could be a Walmart greeter—a phantom job that she could never get nor did she ever have. Jenny went into severe depression. She was unable to get treatment. She suffered from insomnia and she had to sell her house. She now lives in a basement just to make ends meet and she had to apply for CPP.

I ask this government again: When is the Premier going to fix our broken system of compensation and make sure that injured workers are given the benefits and protections that they need?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you again to the member for the supplementary. As I said, a priority of this government is treating people who have been injured on the job with the dignity and the respect that they deserve. We're prepared to make those changes when the case is made that something should be changed.

For example, we brought in full indexation for both partially and fully disabled workers by this January, full CPI coverage that injured workers deserve, and new amendments we've brought forward in this year's budget to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to end benefit clawbacks due to eligibility for Old Age Security benefits for those injured.

Speaker, you'd wonder what those two things had to do with each other. They are improvements to the act, they're improvements to the way that things have been done, they're improvements that have been made to the lot of injured workers in this province, and they are both things that that party voted against.

Now they're standing in the House and telling us about improvements that could be made. When the case is made, and the case was made in 2007—

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

New question.

CYCLING POLICIES

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. I know that one issue that many cyclists face is that they can't ride their bike all the way to work, despite how much they would like to. Hopping on their bike is an important part of their day, but for some, the distance just doesn't lend well to completing their trip this way. That's why I know a number of cyclists who want to bike for part of their trip and take transit or carpool to close the gap.

But right now, many cyclists I talk to don't have this option because the infrastructure to securely store their bike before heading to the next stretch of their trip just isn't there yet. This is a problem, and one that I think deserves action from our government if we're truly committed to promoting cycling in Ontario.

Would the minister please inform the members of this House if there are any plans to provide this much-needed cycling infrastructure?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Of course, I want to begin by thanking the member from Barrie for her question and her ongoing, staunch advocacy for her community and for cycling and transit and highway infrastructure investments right across the province of Ontario.

Just this past spring, our government announced a historic investment of \$50 million to support commuter cycling infrastructure right across Ontario. When we first announced this fund, we launched the Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling Program and promised more news on other programs that will be coming with respect to this unprecedented investment.

Speaker, I'm so pleased to say that today I joined another colleague, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, in Burlington to provide that important update. This morning, we announced that we are making it easier for cyclists to safely store their bikes with eight new bike lockers at each of our 15 commuter parking lots across the GTHA, including the lot at Highway 400 and Essa Road up in Barrie.

This investment and more like it will help ensure that people finish the first and last mile of their trip by bike and encourage even more people to carpool—

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Back to the minister: People in my community of Barrie are constantly looking for new active ways to get to work during the week and to get around the city with their families on the weekend. I'm so glad that the minister recognizes this and is taking important strides towards building a more cycling-friendly province.

In addition to the announcement this morning, we're seeing important progress on a number of initiatives that enable and support cycling in Ontario, including the development of the #CycleON Action Plan 2.0, which will involve collaboration with stakeholders; Ontario's Cycling Tourism Plan; and the Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling Program.

The Minister of Transportation spoke about the carpool lots, including the lot in my community of Barrie, but I understand there was another important announcement this morning. Can the minister inform this House about the steps this government is taking to make commuting easier for cyclists?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I want to thank the member from Barrie for that question.

This morning I was pleased, along with the Minister of Transportation, to make a very important announcement at Appleby GO train station in my riding of Burlington about the future of cycling here in Ontario. Through the commuter bike program, our government is investing more than \$2 million to create 28 bike rooms at 26 GO train stations in the GTA. These bike rooms will be

installed and will provide storage for more than 200 bikes, making life easier and more convenient for Ontarians by enhancing their transportation options.

Speaker, we'll keep making these critical investments because our government knows that investing in cycling infrastructure connects our communities; promotes an active, healthy lifestyle; enhances quality of life; and, simply, because it's the right thing to do. We know too that getting more people on bikes more often is a shared priority with our municipal partners.

1130

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Premier. While the Premier spends her time testifying tomorrow during the Sudbury bribery trial, the Ontario PC Party is fighting for the health concerns of our constituents—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not very helpful when I'm trying to get them to come to order.

Finish, please.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Over the summer, I continued to hear from constituents who told me stories about their health concerns from industrial wind turbines. These people included Norma Schmidt, Carla Stachura, Joan Black and Randy Glazier, whose wife, along with residents at their trailer park, has been negatively impacted by the turbines. All of them have told me over and over how they report issues to the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, and then they do not see any action taken on their files. Clearly, the previous minister either failed in his attempts to try and make a difference or he just gave up.

Will the Premier commit to directing her new minister to ensure that the ministry takes noise complaints seriously and finally—finally—starts taking measures to address the harmful effects?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member opposite for that important question. I know that issues around wind turbine projects continue to pop up every now and then.

I can say, quite frankly, that our ministry takes concerns around wind turbine construction very seriously. Whether it be noise complaints or whether it be potential impacts on water, we take that very seriously because the health of Ontarians is paramount.

We understand that various projects have been appealed. We understand that various projects have been taken to the Environmental Review Tribunal. Consulting with the public is paramount. We make sure that we consult. We make sure that we monitor, and make sure that we stay on top of the issues throughout.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words.

The previous minister committed to coming down to Huron–Bruce to visit with some of my constituents who have reported, over and over again, detailed problems while living close to industrial wind turbines.

For goodness' sake, we all remember that the previous minister even agreed—and I quote—that “No one should have to suffer noise or noise pollution from any source, and certainly not wind turbines in their community.”

In August, I sent the current minister a letter inviting him to visit some of these sites while he's in my riding for the International Plowing Match, but I have yet to hear a response.

Will the minister be permitted by the Premier to accept my invitation and visit with some of the Ontario residents who continue to raise significant concerns about industrial wind turbines?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Speaker, there has not been a single renewable energy project that the party opposite, the PCs, has ever supported here in this House—not a single one. If it were up to them, they would put an end to all the efforts we're making to create a greener and more sustainable province.

But you know what? We remain committed to a cleaner future. I can tell you that thanks to the clean air and clean energy, Ontario has saved more than \$4 billion—that's \$4 billion—in annual health and environmental costs. Unlike the PCs, we're not going to sit idly by. Renewable energy projects are necessary and a crucial part of our low-carbon switch.

Interjections.

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The number of temp agency offices in Ontario has grown 20% in the last decade. Hundreds of thousands of people in this province now rely on these agencies for their paycheques, but the Premier's new labour legislation doesn't go far enough to protect them on the job.

Just last weekend, we were reminded in the media of the squalid and dangerous conditions that many of these workers face—some, like 23-year-old Amina Diaby, losing their lives because they had no other choice but to work in unsafe conditions.

Will the Premier commit to doing the right thing by amending Bill 148 to better protect temporary agency workers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I thank the leader of the third party for her very important question. Yes, we're as concerned as you are when it comes to the growth in temporary help agencies in the province of Ontario.

Let me say right from the start, Speaker: Anybody who loses their life at work, anybody who is seriously injured at work—our thoughts go out to them. It's something we try to prevent on a daily basis.

The investigation on that, obviously, is still under review. I'm not sure if charges will be laid or not; I'm not

sure of that process. It's something we should be talking about.

What we want to do is ensure that temporary help workers' rights are protected while they remain on the job. What we've done through the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, Bill 148, is to ensure that these workers are paid the same as their full-time counterparts when they're performing essentially the same work. They're given at least one week's notice when the assignment ends early. And they have access to a more fair and transparent organization system should they choose to organize.

I'll address others in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, today in Ontario, too many shady companies contract out risky work to temp agencies, because our laws are written so that if a temporary employee is hurt on the job, the company isn't held fully responsible—

Interjections: Shady? Shady?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yes, I call that shady.

Our laws make it easy for unscrupulous employers, unscrupulous companies, to save money by hiring temporary workers and allowing them to get hurt, instead of investing in permanent employees and training them properly.

Why is this Premier willing to let families, who are already struggling just to get by, risk their lives in dangerous workplaces in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: As I said earlier, we have Bill 148 before the House. We made the unusual move of taking it out to the public after first reading because we know that people have a lot to say on these issues. If we get the right input from those members of the public, we can do what needs to be done.

A lot of it is enforcement, as well—employment standards officers. What we're proposing to do at the Ministry of Labour is to hire up to 173 more people to go out and proactively inspect premises, perhaps like the one that was mentioned in the Star. We can get into 10% of the workplaces in Ontario on an annual basis—that's something that we're unable to do right now—with the hiring of those people.

There are a number of changes that will impact on temporary help agencies—in the past. They all come out of the Changing Workplaces Review. The third party referred to that review as a waste of time. I don't think anybody in this province believes that that was a waste of time.

CANNABIS REGULATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Attorney General. We are all very much aware of the large number of illegal dispensaries that are selling cannabis. They're popping up all over the province, especially in the GTA. The police will shut them down, and sometimes the very next day they'll open up again.

The federal government, as we know, has tasked the provinces to determine their own regulations and ap-

proach to retailing cannabis once it has become legalized. I know that in my community of Beaches–East York and others across the province, we all have questions and concerns about the impacts of this coming federal legislation legalizing cannabis.

Speaker, can the Attorney General please clarify what the government is intending to do to shut down these dispensaries, to keep these dispensaries shut down so that they don't continually pop up? And will the Attorney General explain to us the role that his ministry is playing in—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Attorney General?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member for the important question. Ontario is proposing a safe and sensible framework to regulate recreational cannabis within the province. Even as it becomes legalized, cannabis will remain a carefully controlled substance in Ontario subject to strict rules when it comes to both lawful use and retail.

Our aim from the start has been to protect youth, promote public health and road safety, focus on prevention and harm reduction, and eliminate the illegal market. What we have proposed is a retail model that takes a sensible, controlled approach of new stand-alone cannabis stores and an online retail channel that will service the entire province.

Speaker, we also are sending a very clear message to pot shops that have opened across our communities: They are operating illegally now and they will be illegal under the new rules. They will be shut down.

We were heartened to hear a statement from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police which said, “Our preliminary review of the proposed legislation is that the government of Ontario has heard and responded”—

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

Supplementary.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to particularly thank the Attorney General for the incredible and important work that he is doing on this file. It's a very onerous obligation that the federal government has passed down to provinces, and I believe the Attorney General and this government is taking an excellent response in order to reflect the concerns of Ontarians.

I know that the Attorney General's office has done extensive consultations over the summer, including an online survey to gauge the public's interest in how we should best retail legalized cannabis. I know that members of my community are pleased to hear of the safe and sensible approach the government is taking to how cannabis can be legally retailed in the province of Ontario and how they can purchase marijuana. Combating the illicit market is key to keeping our cities and our most vulnerable as safe as possible.

On July 1, 2018, we are hearing that there will be 40 new stores open for distribution along with online delivery access, which is extremely important. Will the minister explain how the government will decide on the new locations—

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd also like to thank the member from Beaches–East York for the question. Minister Naqvi and I and our colleagues have been working diligently on this strategy. As you know, the federal government is set to legalize recreational cannabis next July, and we're working hard to be ready. We've consulted widely on a retail strategy to ensure we get this right.

Since our announcement, our safe and sensible approach to the retail distribution of cannabis has received support from Addictions and Mental Health Ontario, from MADD Canada, from the Canadian Cancer Society and from labour groups. That's because the LCBO has a strong record of selling a controlled substance in a socially responsible way, and their experience will be indispensable as we establish 150 stand-alone retail outlets by 2020, as well as online delivery.

We'll have ongoing discussions with municipalities regarding the rollout of these retail stores. We'll continue to engage with municipalities and other partners from across the province as we site 150 stand-alone stores. Together, we are going to do away with illicit activity and close down—

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

FLAG-RAISING CEREMONY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Etobicoke Centre on a point of order.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Point of order, Speaker: I just wanted to make everyone aware that the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Ontario Provincial Council is hosting a Ukrainian Heritage Day flag-raising today at noon at the courtesy flag pole. All members are welcome.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour on a point of order.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Point of order: I just wanted to correct my record. Indeed, charges have been laid in the case that was referred to. The matter is before the courts, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question period being finished, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to ask the members to welcome some very special guests who are with us here today. With us is Justice Joyce Pelletier, who chaired the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province as a result of the legislation that was passed by this House. We also have with us Chief Electoral Officer Greg Essensa, who was very instrumental in helping the

commission, and also Dr. Michael Pal, who is a professor of law at the University of Ottawa and one of the commissioners who was part of the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission. I ask the members to please welcome them all to Queen's Park.

Thank you for your service.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: There's a gentleman sitting in the visitors' gallery. I've never met him and don't know who he is, but he took his afternoon to come and see us, and I want to welcome him here to Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's the hybrid of what I used to do. I used to say, "And thank you, to the rest of you who haven't been introduced, for being here." I appreciate it. That's good.

Therefore, it is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure this afternoon to invite everyone here in the House and those of you watching to the 100th International Plowing Match and Rural Expo. It's being hosted in Huron county this year near the village of Walton. This is a wonderful way to come and embrace the very best of rural community as well as to have an increased awareness and better understanding of food production in Ontario.

This match is historic for many reasons. It's the 100th match, but also, for the first time in many years, the inside and outside exhibitor space has been completely sold out. We have a record number of competitors in the plowing competitions. There is so much to be offered.

The local host community has done such a beautiful job pulling a program together. They've had 40 volunteer committees working diligently for the past three years to make sure there's something for everyone.

To give you an example: You don't want to miss the competitive plowing. There are going to be motocrossing exhibitions. There are going to be dancing tractors, which you don't want to miss. There is going to be live music: We have the Mudmen, the Next Generation Leahy—for those of you who might put the pieces together, that's Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy's family—Eric Ethridge and George Canyon. We have amazing exhibits that showcase not only the best of our countryside but of our coastline as well.

I look forward to seeing all of my MPP colleagues on opening day. It's going to be a match that truly is historic, as I mentioned before.

ANNIVERSARY OF NDP IN NICKEL BELT/SUDBURY EAST

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today, I am so pleased to invite everyone to the 50th anniversary of the NDP in Nickel Belt/Sudbury East.

It all started 50 years ago, in 1967, when Elie Martel was elected in what was then Sudbury East, which became Nickel Belt. He served for 20 years until his daughter Shelley Martel was elected in 1987 and also served for 20 years. I was elected in 2007. Floyd Laughren also represented Nickel Belt for 27 years. Speaker, do you know of any other riding in this province that has stayed in the same hands for half of a century? Well, we don't. But we are very happy to be able to celebrate with friends and foes.

Local actor and performer Stef Paquette will bring us back to 1967, from the peace and love movement and bell-bottom pants all the way to the present time's tweets and Instagram. You will enjoy 50 years of music, art, movies, a bit of politics, I must say, and lots of laughs. Former leaders Stephen Lewis, Michael Cassidy and Howard Hampton will also take part, as well as current NDP leader Andrea Horwath and many of my MPP colleagues that are here.

The celebration is on October 14—it's a Saturday—in the Steelworkers' hall in Sudbury. You can see me for tickets or call 705-692-1097. It will be a great party. Hope to see you all there.

BIG ON BLOOR FESTIVAL

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about the anniversary of a great festival that happened in my community of Davenport.

This past June, the BIG on Bloor Festival of Arts and Culture turned 10 and marked this milestone with an expanded program that drew thousands of people from all across the city to come and experience Bloordale. BIG on Bloor remains a festival that celebrates Davenport as one of the most artistic ridings in the province. In fact, there were over 100 artists from around the world who participated in this year's festivities.

With live music, performances of dance and theatre, murals, and a brand new outdoor art fair, the neighbourhood was alive and showcased all of the great art and culture that Davenport has to offer.

And art wasn't the only thing that brought people together to Bloordale in Davenport. Over 100 shops and vendors lined the streets, showcasing the fantastic food, beautiful jewellery, and delightful arts and crafts that are made in our community.

I want to thank the organizers, volunteers and sponsors who helped to make this festival such a success. It truly is a testament to the Bloordale community that BIG gets bigger and better every year. I invite all members from across the province to join us next year in my riding of Davenport, to shop, eat, and experience and enjoy Bloordale.

NATURAL GAS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I am happy to report that the Ontario Energy Board has approved natural gas to service more of Perth-Wellington. We're told that natural gas will come to Milverton later this fall, and to Rostock

and Wartburg by the middle of 2018. It may have taken a while but it's still good news.

I want to acknowledge the township of Perth East—Mayor Bob McMillan, the council and staff—for making it happen. Years of hard work are paying off.

I would also like to thank Union Gas for advancing this proposal at the Ontario Energy Board and working with the township to overcome obstacles along the way.

I was pleased to support this proposal from day one. We wrote to the OEB, the MOE and the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, and to the Premier.

This is why this is so important: Along with propane and diesel fuel, natural gas is a vital part of our energy mix, especially for those of us living in rural and small-town Ontario. To extend service to Perth East is just common sense. It will lower energy costs for hundreds of residents and business owners, and make our community a more attractive place to invest.

It is encouraging that this government is coming around to the benefits of natural gas. Until recently, they wanted to ban natural gas altogether, under their so-called climate change action plan.

Again, I congratulate the township of Perth East and everyone involved in its successful application.

FLOODING IN WINDSOR AND ESSEX COUNTY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Two weeks ago today, Windsor and Essex county once again faced an incredible amount of rainfall, which resulted in a lot of our constituents' homes flooding. A number of basements were flooded. Right now, it's up to 6,000 and still counting. By comparison, in the flood last September, there were about 3,000 homes that were flooded.

Officials are warning that there could be further delays with garbage collection, although over the weekend we did see 26 garbage trucks come in from Toronto, so we have to thank Toronto and other municipalities who have collaborated with Windsor and Essex county to send the extra garbage trucks down our way. More than 4,000 tons of garbage has been hauled away, and this is only some of the garbage so far. They're having a difficult time keeping up, as more and more people have to rip out items from their basements and put them out at curbside. We've seen an increase in the number of rats that are out in the neighbourhoods now. They are thinking it may take up to five more weeks in order to complete the collection just from the flood.

Speaker, many of these homes were flooded because of sewer backup, and unfortunately, under the disaster recovery assistance program through the province, they will not be covered to have any of their belongings replaced, and their private insurance either will not cover it or they had their private insurance taken away from them after the last flood.

Our municipality spent a great deal of time with other municipalities, trying to coordinate garbage pickup. It would have been nice if, in the future, the four different

ministries that were contacted would have coordinated the effort.

1510

JAYESH PRAJAPATI

Mr. Mike Colle: Five years ago this Friday, a constituent of mine, Jayesh Prajapati, who was working at a gas station at Roselawn Avenue and Marlee Avenue in my area, was tragically run over and dragged to his death while doing his job. He left behind his wife and 11-year-old son. Finally, the police made an arrest of the accused, who had been on the run for a number of years. This week, the trial of the accused begins down the street, on University Avenue.

All of this could have been avoided if the minimum wage worker was paid properly, didn't have the stolen gas taken out of his pay, and if there was a system of prepayment at the pump, which, in British Columbia, has totally eliminated gas and dash.

Let us hope that the death of Jayesh Prajapati is not in vain, that justice will be served and that, finally, we come to our senses in this province and protect vulnerable minimum wage workers who risk their lives when they work at a gas station.

OPIOID ABUSE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The opioid crisis in Ontario has hit my riding, as well as many others, very hard. We had 15 fentanyl-related deaths, which, thankfully, have been curbed since the introduction of the Patch for Patch program, the focus of my private members' bill that was adopted into law back in 2015. But clearly, more must be done.

The town of Mattawa passed a resolution recently, backing a call seeking provincial support to deal with the opioid crisis at a local level. Their resolution called for the province "to enhance our local response ... by ensuring all places that support vulnerable people ... as well as all first responders ... have access to ... naloxone ... and training in its use." It echoes the call from our caucus and our leader, Patrick Brown, for "a provincially funded public opioid education campaign." The town of Mattawa notes that Ontario has witnessed 13 years of increasing deaths due to opioid overdoses, and numbers show a 19% increase in 2016.

Communities across the province need support. We are eager to see how the government's response translates into action and help at the local level with this crisis.

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Mr. James J. Bradley: I welcome—as I'm confident that many in Niagara Peninsula will—the introduction of Bill 139, the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act. On the aspect of conserving watersheds, we will be requiring municipalities to consult with the public when considering amalgamating conserv-

ation authorities. We are going to enable municipalities to set the term of a member's appointment and replace members as appropriate, being assured that there is much more accountability taking place than was the case in the past. This was brought about as a result of extensive consultations undertaken by the ministry to ensure that that, in fact, would happen—that the information was available and the public had input.

Through our proposed changes to the Conservation Authorities Act, we're aiming to strengthen oversight and accountability, to ensure decisions about Ontario's natural resources are made in accordance with modern expectations for participation and transparency.

Oversight of conservation authority operations is a responsibility of the board; however, there are situations where a ministry review is necessary. We're proposing to enhance the ministry's authority in these situations by enabling the minister to require the conservation authority to disclose or publish information on programs, services or operations. This would help shed light on perceived issues with conservation authority decisions and ensure access to information.

We're also requiring them to broaden the scope of their bylaws to include codes of conduct and conflict-of-interest guidelines.

THE GIVING TREE UNIONVILLE

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to talk today a little bit about The Giving Tree, which is based in Unionville. It's to raise the awareness of children about their community and to advocate any of their concerns. They're having the second annual Celebration of Hope this Saturday at 9 a.m. at the Millennium Bandstand in Unionville.

It's going to be a busy time in York region. There's also the Thornhill Village Festival. People can walk over, ride their bikes over—there won't be parking in the middle of the festival as usual, so try to make it over without a car if you can.

I just want to say that kids in York region have gotten very engaged, not just through their schools but through community groups like this.

Shanta Sundarason is the founder of The Giving Tree—I asked her, and she did get the name from one of my favourite Shel Silverstein books; you guys may recall The Giving Tree. It's about the circle of life and a tree and giving back to a little boy.

I'm just going to give one example. There was a pond in Unionville that had been a skating destination for decades, and Markham city council decided to stop the skating because of liability concerns. The kids went and spoke at council on their own behalf and got the skating ban lifted. So I'm really proud of the kids.

There's going to be an unveiling of a tree-stump seat, from a tree that was cut down by a developer. They're raising awareness this Saturday about the fact that many trees do get cut down when there's construction in our communities and it's very important that we replace these trees.

Thank you very much for the time to highlight it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated September 12, 2017, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Ms. DiNovo from the Standing Committee on Estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 60, your committee has selected the estimates 2017-18 of the following ministries and offices for consideration: Treasury Board Secretariat, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Energy, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 15 hours; Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, 15 hours; Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Infrastructure, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Transportation, seven hours, 30 minutes; Office of Francophone Affairs, 15 hours.

Pursuant to standing order—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received, and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SIMCOE DAY ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LE JOUR DE SIMCOE

Mr. Barrett moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 150, An Act to proclaim Simcoe Day / Projet de loi 150, Loi proclamant le Jour de Simcoe.

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. Toby Barrett: The bill proclaims the first Monday in August in each year as Simcoe Day.

Further to that, John Graves Simcoe was the first Lieutenant Governor of the province now known as Ontario. He was also a member of the British Parliament, a colonial administrator, an army officer and a commander of the Queen's Rangers during the Revolutionary War.

Although Simcoe laid the foundation for Ontario, many residents know little about the man. The city of Toronto recognizes Simcoe by naming the first Monday in August Simcoe Day. This act would extend this recognition across the province by requiring any civic holiday on the first Monday of August to be named Simcoe Day.

SILVER MERLE CORPORATION ACT, 2017

Ms. Forster moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr69, An Act to revive Silver Merle Corporation.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

1520

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (PTSD BENEFITS), 2017 LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (PRESTATIONS POUR ÉTAT DE STRESS POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

Mr. Natyshak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 to expand the entitlement to benefits under the insurance plan for posttraumatic stress disorder / Projet de loi 151, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail pour élargir le droit à des prestations pour un état de stress post-traumatique dans le cadre du régime d'assurance.

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. Taras Natyshak: The bill amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, to expand the application of the section 14 entitlements to benefits under the insurance plan for post-traumatic stress disorder to nurses, health care workers providing close assistance to first responders, and workers other than police officers who provide police services or support the work of persons who provide police services.

It is an opportunity for this House to right a wrong, and I look forward to the debate.

REPRESENTATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2017 LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA REPRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE

Mr. Naqvi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 2015 and certain other Acts / Projet de loi 152, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale et d'autres lois.

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 Representation Statute Law Amendment Act, 2017, if passed, would implement the recommendations of the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission. This includes amending the Representation Act, 2015, to include two additional electoral districts in the geographic area occupied by the current ridings of Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay.

In addition, the bill seeks to refine the attendance rules related to political fundraising and to enable nomination contestants to receive contributions to pay outstanding debt creditors after a nominee has been selected.

Finally, the Representation Statute Law Amendment Act, 2017, proposes that the Election Act be amended to provide legislative authority for the Chief Electoral Officer to share information from the permanent register of electors with the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. for electoral purposes.

PETITIONS

WASAGA BEACH

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Faye and Ron Ego for distributing and collecting 2,300 names on this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the town of Wasaga Beach relies on the largest freshwater beach in the world to attract visitors and drive its economy; and

“Whereas the town does not have traditional industry for jobs and employment and relies on tourism to maintain its business core; and

“Whereas the areas of the beach maintained by the province are in poor shape, overgrown with weeds and other vegetation; and

“Whereas the provincial government has been promising for years to replace old, vault-style washrooms with modern facilities;”—these aren’t flush washrooms, the old, old, old washrooms—“and

“Whereas Wasaga Beach is one of the most popular summer tourist destinations in the province of Ontario;

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

“To ask the government to take immediate action to properly maintain beach areas under its control in Wasaga Beach and that funding be provided as soon as possible to build new, modern washroom facilities to better serve the needs of the community and visitors to the beach.”

Again, Mr. Speaker, I think there are 2,300 names here and about 400 more to follow.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition calls on the government to:

“Conduct a full inquiry into seniors care in the province of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas upwards of 30,000 Ontarians are on the wait-list for long-term care (LTC); and

“Whereas wait times for people who urgently need long-term care and are waiting in hospital have increased by 270% since the Liberal government came into office; and

“Whereas the number of homicides in long-term care being investigated by the coroner are increasing each year; and

“Whereas, over a period of 12 years, the government has consistently ignored recommendations regarding long-term care from provincial oversight bodies such as the Ontario Ombudsman and the Auditor General; and

“Whereas Ontario legislation does not require a minimum staff-to-resident ratio in long-term-care homes, resulting in insufficient staffing and inability for LTC homes to comply with ministry regulations;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act in the best interest of Ontarians and conduct a full public inquiry into seniors care with particular attention to the safety of residents and staff; quality of care; funding levels; staffing levels and practices; capacity, availability and accessibility in all regions; the impact of for-profit privatization on care; regulations, enforcement and inspections; and govern-

ment action and inaction on previous recommendations to improve the long-term-care system” in Ontario.

It’s my pleasure to present this petition, affix my signature and give this to page Greg.

ICE MACHINES

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly to establish and enforce cleaning and hygienic standards for commercial ice machines.

“Whereas ice machines are found everywhere throughout the health care system, including long-term-care facilities and hospitals; and

“Whereas numerous bacteria and viruses are known to contaminate ice cubes, including cholera, typhoid fever, salmonella, legionella, E. coli, shigella, hepatitis A and norovirus I and II; and

“Whereas the lack of regulation increases the probability of consuming ice from ice machines with unhygienic levels of bacteria and/or viruses, putting public safety at risk; and

“Whereas individuals consuming ice from a contaminated ice machine in a hospital or long-term-care facility are at a greater risk due to potentially weakened immune systems; and

“Whereas the inherent risk and rate at which both bacteria and biofilm grow inside ice machines have caused other countries to mandate the cleaning of ice machines; and

“Whereas there are currently no mandates or guidelines on the frequency or thoroughness of cleaning for institutional ice machines in hospitals, long-term-care or other health care facilities;

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

“That the province of Ontario establish and enforce cleaning and hygiene standards for all institutional ice machines in provincially funded and/or operated facilities.”

I agree with this. I leave it with page Duncan.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas County Road 43 is a critical link between the town of Kemptville and Highway 416;

“Whereas the municipality of North Grenville is one of the fastest-growing communities in eastern Ontario and expanding County Road 43 to four lanes is essential to support current and future economic development and residential growth;

“Whereas up to 18,500 vehicles per day travel the two-lane roadway, creating congestion and, increasingly, putting the safety of motorists, cyclists and pedestrians at risk;

“Whereas the municipality of North Grenville and united counties of Leeds and Grenville have for several years identified the County Road 43 expansion as a

priority and have completed the environmental assessment and design, making the project shovel-ready;

“Whereas, during this time, North Grenville and the united counties made repeated requests to many ministers and senior government officials for provincial funding to offset the \$25- to \$30-million project cost;

“Whereas the Ontario government is aware the expansion is not feasible without support, but funding criteria for provincial infrastructure programs have excluded the project for the last five years;

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

“Make the County Road 43 expansion project eligible for provincial infrastructure programs and immediately provide funding so work on this important project to enhance public safety and support economic growth can finally begin.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature. I send it to the table with page Nicola.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France G linas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario.

“Whereas the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions delivered its action plan seven years ago; and

“Whereas less than three of the select committee’s 23 recommendations have been acted upon; and

“Whereas the committee’s primary recommendation is the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, an organization responsible for overseeing all mental health and addiction services in Ontario;

1530

“Whereas an opioid crisis continues to spread across our province; and

“Whereas stigma still exists around mental health and addiction, holding individuals back from seeking care, and those who do seek treatment wait far too long for services; and”

They “petition the Legislature Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Consolidate all mental health and addictions programs and services for all regions of the province under a stand-alone ministry of mental health and addictions.”

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

WATER FLUORIDATION

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: This is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas community water fluoridation is a safe, effective and scientifically proven means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas recent experience in such Canadian cities as Dorval, Calgary and Windsor that have removed fluoride from drinking water has shown a dramatic increase in dental decay; and

“Whereas the continued use of fluoride in community drinking water is at risk in Ontario cities representing more than 10% of Ontario’s population, including the region of Peel; and

“Whereas the Ontario Legislature has twice voted unanimously in favour of the benefits of community water fluoridation, and the Ontario Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Municipal Affairs and Housing urge support for amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and other applicable legislation to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory and to remove provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

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

“That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to introduce legislation amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and make changes to other applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I agree with this petition, I put my name to it, and I send it with page Rachel.

HUNTING AND FISHING LICENCES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many fledgling enterprises and/or outdoor enthusiasts are being negatively affected by the current moratorium that MNRF has placed on the ability for outlets to be able to process requests in paper format for hunting and/or fishing licences; and

“Whereas the moratorium on the appointment of new licence issuers has inconvenienced hunters and fishermen/fisherwomen that do not have access to the necessary Internet services to be able to apply online and are unable to get to a business that has the capacity to submit a request via hard copy; and

“Whereas this has delayed and/or prevented sales for the ministry for said licences, and hindered the enjoyment of the sports of hunting and fishing for some as well as inconvenienced businesses trying to promote the sports in their given area;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature to call on the government to cease the moratorium and allow for newer business operations to issue hunting and/or fishing licences through paper application until the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has decided on how they will alter the licensing processes.”

I agree with this, affix my name to it and give it to page Eva.

DISASTER RELIEF

M^{me} France G linas: I would like to thank Brenda Crites from Capreol for signing this petition.

“Whereas at 2 a.m. on March 7, 2015, a Canadian National train derailed just outside of Gogama;

“Whereas this derailment caused numerous tank cars carrying crude oil to explode, catch fire and spill over one million litres of oil into the Makami River;

“Whereas the fire spewed toxic black smoke for over 24 hours, spreading ash and residue throughout the surrounding area;

“Whereas no one has given a clear answer on whether or not the fish caught downriver from the derailment site is safe to eat;

“Whereas this was the third CN northern Ontario derailment in a month”;

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Help the people of Gogama and Mattagami First Nation get just and fair compensation from CN.”

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

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Arthur Potts: 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 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.”

It’s an excellent transit idea. I believe in it totally, sign my name and leave it with page Rachel.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas since 2006, the Auditor General of Ontario had been responsible for reviewing all government advertising to ensure it was not partisan; and

“Whereas in 2015, the Wynne government watered down the legislation, removing the ability of the Auditor General to reject partisan ads and essentially making the Auditor General a rubber stamp; and

“Whereas the Wynne government has since run ads such as those for the Ontario Pension Plan that were extremely partisan in nature; and

“Whereas the Wynne government is currently using taxpayers’ money to run partisan hydro ads; and

“Whereas the government did not feel the need to advertise to inform the people of Ontario of any of the many hydro rate increases; and

“Whereas history shows that the Wynne and McGuinty governments have increased ad spending in the year preceding a general election;

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

“To immediately reinstate the Auditor General’s authority to review all government advertising for partisan messages before the ads run.”

I fully support this, affix my name and send it with page Will.

MISSING PERSONS

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

“Whereas Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; and

“Whereas police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; and

“Whereas this impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; and

“Whereas this legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and

“Whereas negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law;

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

“We ask that the Attorney General’s office work with the office of the privacy commissioner to implement missing persons legislation that grants investigators the opportunity to apply for permissions to access information that will assist in determining the safety or whereabouts of missing persons for whom criminal activity is not considered the cause.”

This province needs this law, and it’s my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Collingwood General and Marine Hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space;

“Whereas a building condition assessment found the major systems of the hospital will require renewal within the next 10 years;

“Whereas substandard facilities exist in the emergency department; there is no space in the dialysis department to expand, and there is a lack of storage and crowding in many areas of the building; and, structurally, additional floors can’t be added to the existing building to accommodate growth;

“Whereas there is no direct connection from the medical device repurposing department to the operating room;

“Whereas there is a lack of quiet rooms, interview rooms and lounge space;

“Whereas Collingwood General and Marine Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

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

“That the government immediately provide the necessary funding to Collingwood General and Marine Hospital so that it can build a new hospital to serve the needs of the community.”

I certainly agree with this petition and I will sign it.

1540

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR WORKPLACES, BETTER JOBS ACT, 2017

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

Mr. Milczyn, on behalf of Mr. Flynn, moved 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. Rick Nicholls): I now turn it back to the Minister of Housing to continue debate.

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Labour.

I'm very proud to rise for the second reading of Bill 148. As the Minister of Housing and minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, but also as the former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, I know why these reforms are so badly needed. I've personally heard the stories of people who are anxious about their future and their children's future. They told me and my colleagues about how they feel they can't get ahead. Well, I'm confident that the changes our government is bringing forward will bring fairness and opportunity to working people right across the province of Ontario.

Our proposed legislation comes at a time when Ontario's economy is outperforming any other province in Canada. Over the last three years, Ontario's real GDP growth has outpaced all of our G7 competitors. Unemployment is at its lowest point in years, while employ-

ment is forecast to increase over the next few years. Exports and business investments are also increasing, and household incomes are rising. We're in the midst of the largest infrastructure investment program in our province's history.

All of this is encouraging, but the truth is that some in this province are still struggling to make ends meet. While our businesses are expanding and creating wealth, not everyone is feeling that prosperity. We all know that the world we live in today is very different from the world of yesterday, and so are our workplaces. Over the past several years, worldwide trends and those unique to Ontario have changed the way in which our workplaces operate.

We are seeing accelerated advances in technology giving rise to new products, services and whole new industries. This is the so-called sharing economy. We're seeing the rising prominence of the service sector and the shift away from manufacturing—again, changing the employment landscape for many of our employees. We're seeing increased globalization and trade liberalization, which, among other things, put pressure on employers to reduce costs and to boost productivity and innovation.

We're also seeing a change in demographics in the province as baby boomers retire and new Canadians come into the workforce. How we respond to these changes will play a key role in determining how well we protect employees while encouraging more economic activity. In a time like this, with the very nature of workplaces rapidly changing, we need to make sure that our most vulnerable employees are protected and treated fairly.

Two years ago, our government appointed two special advisers to oversee broad public consultations with Ontarians, to consider how our labour and employment laws could be amended to address these changes in the workplace. The Changing Workplaces Review's special advisers heard from hundreds of employers and employees across our province. The special advisers heard that some of the current employment standards rules create “a great deal of uncertainty, anxiety and stress, which undermines the quality of life and the physical well-being of a wide swath of workers in our society.” Mr. Speaker, that's why I stand before all of you today to talk about why this bill is so important. Let me start by outlining some of the proposed major changes that would benefit Ontarians.

Our government is proposing to increase the general minimum wage to \$15 an hour by January 1, 2019. The reality is that one out of 10 workers in our province earns the current minimum wage of \$11.40. Meanwhile, three out of 10 workers earn less than \$15 an hour. This includes millions of people, many of whom are supporting a family, making car payments, trying to save for an education and paying their daily bills. They work very hard every day to try to get ahead, but they feel they've been left behind. Increasing the minimum wage will make a real difference in their lives.

If passed, the increase would be phased in over the next 18 months, rising to \$14 on New Year's Day, 2018, and to \$15 on January 1, 2019.

The special minimum wage rates for liquor servers who regularly receive tips or gratuities; students under 18; hunting and fishing guides; and homeworkers would increase by the same percentage as the general minimum wage.

After that, the minimum wage would once again rise annually with inflation, just as it does now.

Mr. Speaker, we hear stories every day about people who are struggling to get by. You hear about the mother making the current minimum wage who has to work the overnight shift on call, to support her two children. After paying for food, rent and babysitting, there is nothing left over. You hear about the restaurant worker who would like to go back to school but is now working two jobs just to put a roof over her head. You hear about the worker who works minimum wage but still has to use grocery vouchers so that she can put food on her family's table.

So I ask, Mr. Speaker, who is helping people like her, like all of these people? This legislation, if passed, would help people like them, giving those who work hard a chance to get ahead.

The second part of our plan is to ensure that workers, including part-time workers and, importantly, temporary workers, receive equal pay for equal work.

There are still workplaces in this province that pay some people less for doing exactly the same job as others do. Paying people the same wage for doing the same work is the essential definition of fairness. The proposed amendments would, if passed, enable employees to request a review of their rate of pay if they believe that they are not receiving equal wages to other employees.

Differences in the rate of pay for employees performing the same work would be permitted in limited circumstances, including if the difference is based on a seniority or merit system.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation, if passed, would also help ensure that temporary help agency employees are paid equally to employees of the agency's clients when performing the same kind of work.

These changes would also protect the employees from reprisal for inquiring about their wage rate or asking another employee about their wage rate.

Another area that this proposed legislation addresses is the scheduling of work. Some workers have little or no control over the hours that they work, with many of them receiving their schedules with little advance notice. Last-minute changes or cancellations are often made, which creates further uncertainty. Imagine being a student who set your work schedule around your class schedule, only to have it changed at the last moment; or a single mom who worked her babysitting and child care around her work schedule, only to have it changed at the last minute. We have reports about this happening all over the province.

What studies have shown is that such uncertainty can lead to greater work-family conflict and stress, not to mention adverse health effects. Uncertainty over scheduling can also make it hard for employees to find the proper child care, to further their education, or to have a second job. It can also be hard for employees to arrange for transportation to and from work.

At the same time, we understand that in some sectors, there needs to be flexibility in scheduling. That's why we are proposing to establish fairer rules for scheduling that give greater certainty to workers while maintaining predictability and flexibility for employers.

Generally speaking, an employer would now be required to pay three hours at the regular rate of pay if they cancel a shift with less than 48 hours' notice. Employees would also have the right to request schedule or location changes after having been employed for three months, without fear of reprisal.

1550

Employees who regularly work more than three hours per day but upon reporting to work are given less than three hours must be paid three hours at the regular rate of pay.

Employees could refuse to accept shifts, without repercussion, if their employer asks them to work with less than four days' notice.

When employees are on call and not called into work, or are called into work for less than three hours, they must be paid three hours at their regular rate of pay. This would be required for each 24-hour period that employees are on call.

These proposed changes, if passed, would give employees more certainty while giving businesses predictability over shift scheduling. I have no doubt that this would lead to healthier and more productive employees.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, there are often times in life when we must deal with hard realities such as the illness of a family member. Imagine dealing with these tough personal crises and worrying about losing your job. That's why this legislation, if passed, would also ensure that employees have the right to take up to 10 days of personal emergency leave a year, two of them paid, if the employee has been employed for at least a week. Currently, personal emergency leave applies only in workplaces with 50 or more employees. If passed, this provision would apply to all workplaces and would help more employees protect their own health or care for their family members while protecting their job.

The proposed legislation would also prohibit employers from requesting a sick note from an employee taking personal emergency leave. When you're sick with a cold or flu, you should be at home recuperating. The last thing you need to be doing when you're feeling sick is trying to get a note from the doctor's office. In fact, the Ontario Medical Association has called for an end to sick notes for quite some time. We have listened.

We're also proposing to increase family medical leave to up to 27 weeks in a 52-week period. Family medical leave allows employees to care for certain family

members who have a serious medical condition and are at risk of dying. The leave allows them to care for and support their loved ones without worrying about whether they would still have a job when they get back. It's just the right thing to do. When loved ones are in a serious condition, it's only right that we're able to spend time with them, as we never know how much time they have left.

Another circumstance that everyone hopes would never occur, but unfortunately sometimes does, is being addressed in this proposed legislation. This bill, if passed, would create a new, separate leave for someone who has suffered the terrible tragedy of losing a child. We're proposing a leave for child death from any cause of a period of up to 104 weeks. The proposed amendments would also establish a separate leave for crime-related child disappearance for a period of up to 104 weeks. An employee would have to be employed for at least six consecutive months to be entitled to these leaves.

Again, this is simply the right thing to do. As a father, I can't imagine going through that circumstance, and I would certainly want to know that when anyone loses a child and they need time to heal, they would be given appropriate time to heal. To provide unpaid job-protected leave for employees while they mourn is the humane thing to do.

When one of our sons or daughters goes missing in relation to a crime, we need to direct our attention to what matters most, which is finding our child again. The last thing somebody would need to worry about is whether they would have a job to come back to.

Ontarians work very hard every day and are a testament to why our province has some of the best and most productive workplaces in the country. We also know how important it is to have some time off from work to spend time with loved ones and friends, to rest and relax. We all need time to rejuvenate and enjoy the fruits of our labour.

Ontario already currently provides nine public holidays, and presently, employees are entitled to two weeks of vacation time with pay. The proposed legislation, if passed, would ensure that employees are entitled to three weeks of paid vacation after five years of service with the same employer. The proposed changes would come into force on January 1, 2018. This actually will bring Ontario into line with other jurisdictions in Canada. Most other provinces and the federal level start with two weeks of paid vacation and increase it to three weeks after a period of employment. In fact, Mr. Speaker, employees in Saskatchewan start with three weeks of paid vacation and receive four weeks after a decade of employment.

It doesn't make good economic sense for Ontario to continue providing one of the least generous vacation entitlements in the country. These proposed changes would enable our employees to be more productive and make our workplaces more competitive and attractive in the global economy.

We are also taking steps to make sure that workers are properly classified and not incorrectly treated as

independent contractors. Under our existing legislation, if you are an employee under the Employment Standards Act, you may be entitled to employment rights such as minimum wage, overtime pay, public holidays and vacation pay. Our proposed legislation would, if passed, prohibit employers from misclassifying employees as independent contractors. This is intended to address cases where employers improperly treat their employees as if they were self-employed and not entitled to any employment standards protections. This proposal helps ensure that everyone gets the benefits they deserve.

We're also modernizing the rules around unionization and making changes to ensure fairness in union certification and the collective bargaining process. That includes the extension of card-based certification to three vulnerable sectors—the temporary help agency industry, the building services industry, and the home care and community services industry—as well as the extension of successor rights to the re-rendering of contracts in the building services industry.

It also includes eliminating certain conditions for remedial union certification when an employer engages in misconduct, making access to first-contract arbitration easier, and adding an intensive mediation component to the first-contract arbitration process.

Ontario has been a leader in job creation these past few years, and our economy has been growing faster than any other province in Canada. It's the workers and businesses across this province who have worked together to make that happen. And for our part, we are working hard at attracting investments and good companies to our province. But, Mr. Speaker, just as the Premier has said, we also know that it is businesses that are the real job creators in this province, and that is why we are committed to creating an environment in which business thrives. We understand that our government's role in building a prosperous economy is to ensure that we have a competitive tax system, a smart and dynamic business climate, modern infrastructure, and a skilled and healthy workforce.

One of the elements employers look for when making the decision to relocate or expand their business is proximity to a well-trained workforce. So we know that in today's economy, we have to protect our workers and to ensure that they also thrive. We must continue to protect and nurture the competitive edge we have in Ontario. The competitive edge we have in Ontario is our people. That means keeping employees safe and helping to ensure a more fair society.

There is a direct correlation between a business' commitment to its employees' well-being and its ability to spearhead more innovation, establish a better reputation and build morale in the workplace. The truth is that supporting workers is good for business. It's good for the bottom line, it leads to more productive workplaces, it saves time and money by avoiding lengthy workplace disputes, and it also builds the reputation of a great company.

Many companies across Ontario have already created these fair workplaces because they know that's good for

business. We're continuing to support them as well. It's a top priority of this government to ensure that everyone benefits from increased economic growth.

1600

We will continue working with all of our partners—business, labour and others—to ensure we continue growing the economy and the province in a balanced way. That means ensuring that the most vulnerable of our workers are protected, most especially in a time of prosperity. No one should get left behind in our economy.

As we move forward together, let us commit ourselves to fair workplaces and better jobs. Let's continue building up our province so that we can have a brighter and better future and a stronger and more prosperous Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): To continue debate, I now refer to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to be here today. I rise, obviously, in support of Bill 148, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017, which I hope meets with the approval of the House.

This is an issue that has certainly consumed the Minister of Labour for the past two-plus years. I think most people will agree the reason for that is that the world of work that was around when the Employment Standards Act was last taken a serious look at—and the Labour Relations Act—was in the mid-1990s.

When you think of the world of work in the mid-1990s—it's almost pre-email, cellphones were large—there were all sorts of things out there in the world of work that simply don't exist anymore. One of those things is the expectation that I certainly had as a young man—and I think a lot of people who were entering the workforce in the 1990s or the pre-1990s would have seen that the expectation was a permanent job. The expectation was a full-time job. It would have benefits. It would have a pension. You might change that job two or three times in a career.

But the world of work has changed. The economy has changed. Globalization and other pressures have been brought to bear on the Ontario economy and those workplaces that existed in the mid-1990s have changed. But the rules haven't. The rules we had in place are still from the 1990s.

So we had two advisers who went out—we appointed two very experienced people in the field of employment law and labour relations, one a former judge, both very experienced lawyers, who were really well regarded by the employment community. They went out and consulted with the people in the province of Ontario and they came back to us with some findings. They came back and said, "This is what the people of Ontario said."

It has been a long consultation in the Changing Workplaces Review that led to what we have before us today. That's why I'm so happy to stand for second reading of the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act. I really think what we're doing as a result of this is standing up for the most vulnerable people in our society and helping ensure fairer and much better workplaces for employers and employees alike.

I know that not everybody agrees with this bill—and that's the beauty of the Legislature, we all get to air our views on this. Certainly the opposition parties have let us know how they feel about this bill in its current form. And there's some support, I understand, at committee, and some would not support it. I think the Leader of the Opposition has stated very, very clearly that he would rather we not raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour this way. He doesn't believe that part-time workers should be paid the same as full-time workers, he doesn't believe that all workers should get paid sick days, and he doesn't believe that workers should get suitable notification when their own schedule changes at work. He has clearly signalled that at this point in time he plans to vote against that, and that's fine and we understand that.

Let's be clear about what that approach would mean. It means more people would live in poverty, more families will continue to struggle to put food on the table and shoes on the kids' feet. It would stagnate the Ontario economy for years to come.

What we have in front of us and what's before the House right now, we believe, is a path forward that's going to protect workers in a way that also supports business in Ontario. We don't believe, on this side of the House, that being fair and being profitable are mutually exclusive. We believe that the two things can coexist.

We recognize that, in the nature of work, just maintaining the status quo from the 1990s simply isn't good enough in 2017-18 in the province of Ontario. It has been 17 years since we did a comprehensive review of the Employment Standards Act. It's even further back for the Labour Relations Act—more than two decades since its last review, and as I outlined earlier, a whole lot has changed since then. There has been a shift, I think, to the service and retail industries. Technology has changed the nature of that work and the skills that are needed to do the jobs that simply didn't exist in the 1990s.

As a result of these societal changes, what we've seen is an increase in non-standard employment. This has led, we think, to some employees being left behind in what is clearly a growing economy and a very successful economy. The issue has become a centrepiece issue of vulnerable and precarious work. Some employees find themselves continuously in temporary jobs, part-time jobs or always looking for that stable job.

I was talking earlier about my expectations as a young person entering the workforce. What young people entering the workforce today are often confronted with is temporary work, part-time work, seasonal work, contract work. They attempt to leave home and get started on their own. The contract runs out, the rent money runs out, and they're back at home again. It's one of those things.

We often used to equate the minimum wage as a student wage. I think, for the most part, Ontarians agree with that. It's a learning period. It's a probationary period. It's a chance where you learn how to work, how to be a team player, how to show up on time, how to wear a uniform and those types of things.

It has changed right now. More than 30% of Ontario workers were in precarious work in 2014. That's 30% of

Ontario workers earning less than \$15 an hour. Of those 30%, 50% of those people were between the ages of 25 and 64—students no longer, Speaker. These are people who are trying to raise families. These are people who are trying to run a household.

Over the past 30 years, as well, part-time work has grown to represent nearly 20% of total employment. This trend is not unique to Ontario alone. It's not just isolated to Ontario. We're seeing it in a lot of other jurisdictions as well, including our neighbours south of the border. Many people now have to work several jobs or work on contract or in unstable positions with unreliable hours of pay.

There's not just a moral imperative to do something here; there's an economic imperative to protect some of the most vulnerable employees in the province of Ontario. We believe, on this side of the House, that if you protect all Ontarians, you create opportunities for everybody and our economy will grow stronger.

I think if we work together on this—and I mean the parties in the House and, obviously, business, labour and all those people who are a partner in a healthy economy—we can give families hope and confidence about the future and we can build a just society where everybody has a chance to get ahead. That's exactly what's behind the legislation, and, if it's passed, that's exactly what it would accomplish.

What the bill reflects—along with the amendments, we made the unusual move of sending it out after first reading so that Ontarians could have a say in this. Normally, bills go out after second reading. The committee has looked at it. Some people from all sides of the House—and I thank them for that—gave some of their free time in the summer—perhaps that otherwise they would have spent with their families—to travel the province of Ontario and to talk to people about what their advice was on this bill, what concerns they had and what they liked about it.

Minister Milczyn, I think, really touched upon some of the more progressive proposals that are contained in the bill. Many of these proposed amendments respond to the recommendations that came forward from the Changing Workplaces Review in the first place. That was a very extensive review. It included public consultations and heard from people from all walks of life, many of them sharing personal stories that they've gone through.

1610

The advisers met with more than 200 groups in person and received well over 300 written proposals. They talked to labour groups, obviously; they talked to large manufacturers, HR providers and physicians. They heard personal stories from people who have to work more than that one job, or two jobs often, in order to get by—those people who found themselves eternally working for what were supposed to be temporary help agencies but often in the same company; and they heard from small business owners in the province of Ontario who outlined some of the challenges that they would face.

They heard about the effects of contract work. They heard about precarious employment and how that impacts

on individuals and their families as well. They also heard from businesses. They were talking about how they needed operational flexibility. They talked about the need to manage costs.

The two people, I think, who really should be thanked for this, Speaker, are the people who spent about two years of their lives, C. Michael Mitchell and John C. Murray, for their hard work and for the final report they delivered to us. I think they did a very good job with the consultation.

What that consultation did for me is it solidified the idea that we all share a common vision: a future of much healthier, safer and fairer workplaces so that Ontario can remain competitive well into the 21st century, taking into account the fact that we're now dealing with global competitiveness issues we didn't have before, that we've got trade deals that didn't exist before. A whole host of other pressures are being placed on the Ontario economy—and economies around the world. We're not alone in this. But we know that any change must take into account the needs of employers, and we also must maintain a competitive business environment.

So our government is focused on investing in people, in businesses, and really focused on fighting for that stronger economy and for those good-paying jobs that we want all members of our families and our neighbours to have. But from the beginning, Speaker, we've been very, very cognizant that this would be a big change, that this would be something that was necessary but something that was going to take the best of everybody to make sure it was accomplished. So we're continuing to listen to those experts. We found that those experts represent a wide range of interests. There are so many parts to this; it's a very complex issue and it impacts on all segments of our economy.

Once again, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, I think, did an excellent job. They held public hearings on Bill 148. As I understand it, as they were travelling, they managed to get to 10 communities around the province of Ontario. They visited Ottawa, Niagara Falls, Windsor, Thunder Bay, so they were in every corner of the province.

Interjection.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Kitchener-Waterloo—nobody goes anywhere without going to Kitchener-Waterloo, I understand, Speaker.

I want to thank everyone who participated for their input on this very, very important bill because it really took, I think, a team approach to get it done. And as a government, we've listened. We saw what came back from those hearings, we incorporated some of the feedback into the proposed legislation and we made what I think are some very, very important changes that weren't in the existing bill but that we introduced as a result of that.

There are thousands of women each and every year who suffer or experience pregnancy and infant loss, and that can be from a miscarriage or that can even be from a stillbirth. Many of us have known someone who has

faced such a tragic loss, and that's often been experienced in silence and in isolation, the person thinking they didn't have anyone to turn to, that nobody would understand what they were going through. Often that takes time. That takes time to heal, emotionally and physically, and often it's best that during that period that somebody should not be at work. Some people can go and obviously some people cannot. Our proposed legislation now would extend pregnancy leave by an additional six weeks for someone who's had a miscarriage or the tragedy of a stillbirth. What that does is it gives the birth parent additional time to recover from the pregnancy loss. We're also proposing to extend the parental leave so it aligns with the new federal employment insurance benefits rules, which is something that has happened in the past. Obviously the province is the authority that grants the ability for the job-protected leave, and often it's the federal government, through the Employment Insurance program, that funds that leave.

We're also proposing a new job-protected leave of absence without pay if an employee or an employee's child has experienced domestic or sexual violence, or has been threatened with the same. When someone or their child experiences such an ordeal in their lives, they need the time to seek remedies and they need some time to help manage any trauma that may have been experienced as a result of that. When such an incident occurs, the last thing that somebody needs to worry about is whether their job is protected during that period.

This leave would be taken for the employee to seek help for themselves or for the child. What we envision this covering is things like medical help, perhaps, for physical or for psychological injury, or maybe seeking help from a victim services organization. It could include counselling. It could be psychological counselling; it could be other professional counselling. They may have to move, Speaker. They may have to move on a temporary basis or even on a permanent basis. Also, they may need to avail themselves of help from law enforcement agencies or from the field of legal services. It could be that there are legal proceedings that follow this, as well, that are related to that domestic or to that sexual violence.

We began this process because social and economic concerns are affecting vulnerable employees and precarious employment more than they ever have been in the past. We knew that in order for everyone to prosper, we also needed to be supportive of business in this changing economy. That's what this legislation, if passed, would accomplish. It's about fairness for all sides—not only for employees, but for businesses as well that play by the rules. The vast majority of employers in the province of Ontario play by the rules. They're smart enough to know that you treat your employees well and they work well for you. It really is making sure that we honour those people who play by the rules, but it's also about creating a level playing field where employers who obey the law aren't undercut by those who think the laws were written for somebody else and that they don't apply to them.

To protect those businesses and the workers who work for those businesses, we're taking action to step up enforcement of the Employment Standards Act, to ensure that nobody in province of Ontario is able to skirt a law that everybody else is obeying. We intend to amend a regulation under the Employment Standards Act to increase the maximum administrative monetary penalties for employers who don't comply. The proposed changes in the bill would also allow the ministry to publish, including online, the names of individuals found to have contravened the act, the penalty they received and some information about the contravention.

Speaker, there are instances in which some employers are found to have contravened the act and are ordered by the ministry's employment standards officers to pay wages to their employees. These proposals would help ensure that all necessary measures are taken to ensure that even with that ruling, employees get what they are rightfully owed. When you work hard for promised wages, it's quite understandable that you expect to receive those wages. It's only fair.

Along with this proposed legislation, our government is also conducting some other initiatives to support fairness at work. For example, the Ministry of Labour is planning on hiring up to 175 additional employment standards officers. What these individuals will do is investigate claims and conduct inspections in order to determine compliance with the Employment Standards Act.

By investing in enforcement, we can get to more workplaces in the province of Ontario, and we can focus on the high-risk sectors where we know that the majority of the complaints come from. This really allows us to further increase awareness amongst those good, law-abiding employers in the province of Ontario and have them understand what it means to comply with the act and what they need to do in order to be in compliance. Because I know that the vast majority of employers in this province want to be in compliance.

Employees deserve to be paid for the hours that they work. We expect to be paid in this House; our family members expect to be paid as well. What we need to do is continue to do all we can to ensure that those Ontarians receive the entitlements that they have earned.

We know, as I've said, that the majority of businesses are law-abiding and they want to do the right thing. Many businesses in the province of Ontario in fact go far beyond and far above these proposed standards. These are minimums. These measures would help level the playing field for those good businesses. These initiatives, along with our proposed legislation, would really make a positive difference in the lives of hard-working Ontarians.

Speaker, a lot of us define ourselves by the work we do. Most people these days spend more time with their co-workers each day than they do with their very own families. So we need to ensure that people's experience at work is a beneficial one.

1620

The workplace environment is changing at an unprecedented rate as our businesses compete in a global

economy that brings with it new challenges on an almost daily basis. When we first started this process almost three years ago, I thought I would hear from lawyers, perhaps from heads of corporations and labour leaders. And that was true. But the issues we're addressing with the Changing Workplaces Review and with Bill 148 are also the issues that very ordinary people talk about when they're sitting around the kitchen table.

As parents, what we want to ensure and what we want to believe is that our children will be better off than we are. It's the way it has been for generations, so we need to be able to say the same for the next generation. But for many families, this just isn't the case as it stands today. Many of our children will go on to post-secondary education. They will go to university; they will go to college; they will go into skills training, perhaps. They get a good education, but sometimes they struggle to find those good jobs. Often, in the jobs they do find now, we are seeing a trend towards part-time work and contract work. For others, the working world is even tougher.

So what does this mean, Speaker? What do we need to do about it?

Well, it means if we don't do anything, if we think the status quo is good enough, then there's a real danger, I think, that the next generation—that would be our children and our grandchildren—will be worse off than we are today. The dreams that we had as young people could one day be out of reach for today's youth, unless we act. I remain hopeful that we can still make those dreams become realities, which is why this legislation is so badly needed.

In the end, Bill 148 is about answering this question: What do we want work in the province of Ontario to look like? It's an examination of our collective values and of what matters to us here in Ontario. It's about protecting the competitiveness of our businesses, the ones that operate within the law and the ones that already respect the rights of workers. It's about making sure that that playing field is even for everyone to prosper.

On this side of the House, we don't believe that anybody in the province of Ontario who works 35 or 40-plus hours a week and who maybe has two or even three jobs should not be able to afford the basics.

There's a huge campaign out there called \$15 and Fairness. It's not confined to Ontario, by any means. It's right across Canada. It's right through the United States. What it is basically saying is that there's a growing inequality of income in the province of Ontario and throughout the continent of North America. There are a number of us doing very, very well in society, who can afford to pay our bills, who can afford to make investments, to go on holidays and drive a nice car, and there is a growing number of people, even in a growing economy like Ontario's is today, who simply find themselves falling behind and who aren't getting their fair share. I think what they are saying, to all levels of government—I think you saw it in the United States in the last federal election. They're saying to all levels of government that it's about time, for those hard-working

people in Ontario who just go to work every day and want to support their families, that we paid a little bit of attention to them.

We don't believe that anyone in Ontario who works full-time should be struggling to pay their rent, should be struggling to put food on their table or even to take care of their family, especially at a time when the provincial economy is doing so well. The moral and the economic evidence that supports this fundamental belief is without question. So when I hear people saying that we shouldn't be doing this or that the status quo is good enough, I simply do not buy into that. I believe that shows a disregard for the working people of the province of Ontario.

People move to this province from all around the world. Many of us came from somewhere else ourselves, or we come from families that came from somewhere else. We came here because it was that land of opportunity. It was a place where if you worked hard, your rights as a person and as a human being were respected, your rights as a worker were respected, and you were paid fairly.

Together, what we are trying to do is to make sure that those people who are living at the lower end of the income scale are able to buy the basics, are able to pay the rent, are able to buy shoes and clothing for their kids, are able to put food on the table, are able to get through a month without the money running out.

Think of the impact that this has, Speaker, on the overall economy. What this would mean is that 30% of the people who work in the province of Ontario would be earning more money. This isn't money that's invested offshore; this isn't money that is invested in trust funds. Somebody earning income at this level goes right back into the community that week and spends this money. This goes into drugstores and supermarkets; it goes into places where people buy the basics, where they buy the diapers for their kids, where they buy the shoes for their kids, where they buy the food for the family table. It goes into a lot of small businesses that exist in the province as a result of working people having some money in their pockets to spend. I think it was Henry Ford who said that he wanted to pay his employees enough money so that they could all go out and buy Ford vehicles. It may be simple but there's some sense to that.

What we're seeing in Ontario is growing income inequality and it's time we did something about that, because if we allow that inequality to grow, the outcome or the forecast for the province simply would not take advantage of the huge potential that Ontario still has.

Now, this isn't the only thing we're doing, though—as much of it talks about people who are living at the lower end of the income ladder. Those people too would now qualify under OHIP+, for example, for free prescription drugs for any child, including an adult child under 25. What we've done is expanded access to child care because certainly people have told us that in order to get to work, they need to make sure their kids are able to spend their days in a place they think is safe, where they know they'll be well cared for.

We have the basic income pilot, a pilot project in the province of Ontario that I think a lot of people around the world are looking at—seeing if there's something we can do to ensure that people have the basics.

We've got the Fair Housing Plan and the fair hydro plan. We're seeing people's hydro bills reduced by 25% in the rural areas; I understand as high as 40% for some people.

We're building a province where real opportunity and greater security is not just in reach of those people who are at the upper end of the income scale. We need to make sure that it's within the reach of everybody. We believe that gives everybody hope. It doesn't matter whether you're rich or poor, you have access to post-secondary education and skills training.

We find that a lot of young people recognize the income level they come from. They look at their mom or their dad and they say, "It looks like we don't earn an awful lot of money. Maybe I'm not a kid that's going to university." They're making those decisions in elementary school. They're counting themselves out before they even get to high school. What we're saying with the free tuition plan we have in place is that you don't have to count yourself out; you shouldn't count yourself out. The fact that your parents may be at the lower end of that scale is no reason to count yourself out. We're going to make post-secondary education available to everybody in Ontario whether you're rich or poor. That applies to prescription drugs as well. What we're trying to do is make it easier for families to get by in Ontario. It's that simple.

I opened my remarks by saying that we used to think of the minimum wage as a student wage. There weren't a lot of adults who were earning the minimum wage when I grew up in the 1980s and 1990s. But now we're seeing an increasing amount of people between 25 and 64 on minimum wage pay or under \$15 an hour. The fact of the matter is, there's nowhere in the province of Ontario where you can raise a family on \$11.40 or \$11.60 an hour. It just is not possible.

Now, the minimum wage was frozen by a previous government for nine or 10 years at \$6.85. We've raised it nine or 10 times since we've been in office—I think 10—and we've raised it by 70%. But during that period of time, employment has grown by some large degree. We went through 2008-09, and if you look around the world, you look across the country, you look throughout the United States, you'll see that we went through a period of varying degrees of austerity where people tightened their belts a little bit. We all pulled in a little bit and tried to get through what was the biggest economic crisis that I have been through as an individual. I've heard about the Great Depression, but I didn't live through it. This was the greatest economic crisis that I had ever seen. That caused, I think, a lot of people to retrench a little bit. It caused people to pull back a little bit.

1630

I want to tell you that I spent the afternoon with a group of people called the Better Way Alliance. The

Better Way Alliance is a group of very profitable small and large businesses, investors, people who run retail, people who run manufacturing, people in construction. What drives them is profitability, as it should be, but also, treating their employees well is something they really care about. Their aim is to provide real evidence that you can run a business in the province of Ontario and you can pay people a living wage. You can do both, and both can be successful: the business, and the employees themselves.

There was a gentleman named Helmi Ansari. Helmi, as I understand it, used to work for a big multinational corporation. He decided to leave that world, and he started his own business. He paid people minimum wage because he could. He said that one day, he went to visit—either by invitation or just by dropping in—some of his employees. He went to their homes, and he didn't like what he saw.

He said, "I went home, Kevin, and I couldn't sleep at night." He said, "I was running a good, profitable business, but I couldn't sleep, knowing that my employees, who served me well during the day, were going home and living in conditions that simply weren't fair."

What he did was he came back and he raised his wages. He raised them well above the minimum wage, and he found that the payback that he got from his employees was far beyond anything he'd invested in that minimum wage. They became more productive. There was no turnover. People wanted to work there. The employees that worked there were telling other people that they should work there. People were talking to the customers, saying, "This is a great place to work. You should buy more of this product." Basically, it grew his business.

Some people would find that to be a contrary message, that you couldn't do both of those things—you couldn't possibly grow your business or, as a result of raising your wage to a living wage, you couldn't possibly have a better business. But that's exactly what happened to Helmi Ansari in Cambridge.

I had met Helmi before. I went to visit his company. Today I was able to meet a lot of other people just like Helmi. It's a growing movement in the province of Ontario. It really speaks to what Bill 148 is all about, and that is saying, yes, there's the economy; yes, there are good business practices; yes, there are the economic considerations; yes, there are things like cost containment and productivity and all those things. But there's also the relationship that we have with each other as human beings, which is just as important.

By paying your employees well, you're actually investing in increased profitability in your own company. You get a better return on your investment. You're able to go home at night and sleep, when it comes to Helmi's case. He was saying that he felt very, very selfish for doing that. He'd just paid people more money. But he said, "It was worth it for me to put my head on the pillow at night and know that my employees were living the life that I would like to think they were having as a result of

that.” He is up to 10 employees now, and he started very, very small.

When you see those types of stories, you know that what we see is there’s a lot of other companies around the province of Ontario that pay far above the minimum wage. They are profitable companies. They do a great business. They’re employers of choice: People want to work for those companies. When they put postings out there, for example, when those job postings go out there, they get hundreds of applications, because they’ve built a reputation as being a place where people want to work. It’s a place where you’re valued, where you feel treated well. That’s what we would want to see for all businesses in the province of Ontario.

There has been a growing trend—when I talked about the expectations in the 1990s and the expectations today, there were temporary help agencies around in the 1990s, the 1980s, the 1970s and the 1960s, and they served a good role, I think. For somebody who for some reason just needed to work for a few months, it was great to be able to go to any one of the temporary help agencies.

But what we have seen, what has replaced that now, is some workforces are entirely temporary help agency driven. There may be a few executives who are employees of the company, but everybody else is hired through a temporary help agency for what is essentially a permanent job, and the future of that is just grim. You think of where that takes you, when you think of that in terms of growing income disparity in the province of Ontario, where a report just came out and said that the top 50% of people in the province of Ontario share 81% of the wealth and the bottom 50% are left to share 19%—and that’s growing. You wonder why people don’t have any hope when they see that type of a change, and you wonder why Bill 148 is so popular with the public—it’s because if it’s not them, it’s their kids, it’s somebody they know, it’s somebody that they worked with. It’s somebody they know is working as hard as anybody else.

Ontario has got a reputation for hard work. It has been what has drawn people from Europe, from Asia, from South America—from all continents. They know that if you come to the province of Ontario, if you put in the hours and you put in the work, you can prosper in this province. We need to make sure it stays that way. We need to make sure that people at all levels on the income spectrum are able to prosper in the province of Ontario—because it really is that feeling of hope.

The immigrant story—often, as you move to a country, you move to a place like Canada and like Ontario, sometimes you do the work that other people don’t want to do. Somehow that’s when you get your foot in the door. But you know, as a result of that, that your family is going to prosper, that your kids are going to go to college even if you didn’t. That’s what has grown this province. What we are seeing is that being diminished. We’re seeing increased use of temporary help agencies. We’re seeing minimum wage being applied to positions where it just wasn’t applied before.

It seems to me that in some respects, some people in our society have almost become disposable; they’ve

become viewed as units of production. That’s not what I think business in the province of Ontario wants either. The vast majority of people in the province of Ontario want a society in which people have money to spend, so people can put money back into their businesses, they can buy their products, they can buy their services. When the money keeps circulating, the economy gets stronger.

The ironic thing is that when we told the advisers to go out for the Changing Workplaces Review, we said, “Don’t look at the minimum wage. Look at the Employment Standards Act, and look at the Labour Relations Act. We think we’re doing okay on the minimum wage.” We had a process in place that I still support and would apply to the changes that are made here.

On April 1 of any given year, what we do is take a look back at the consumer price index for the preceding year. We tell employers that that will be the new minimum wage. It’s applied on October 1 of that same year; it’s fair and it’s predictable. But what we found is, when we established that base four or five years ago now, we established it too low. We established it at a point where somebody could still work 30, 40 or 50 hours a week in the province of Ontario and still live in poverty. That’s not the Ontario I think any one of the parties here really supports.

I know there are varying opinions on the bill. Some people think it goes too far, and some think it doesn’t go far enough. It’s our intent to work with small business, with the chambers of commerce in the province of Ontario. I know the Honourable Brad Duguid and my seatmate the Honourable Jeff Leal, the minister responsible for small business, have been tasked with coming up with some assistance for transition, because we know this is challenging. We know it’s challenging, but we know that it bodes for a better future.

The vast majority of economists that I have heard from have spoken in favour of this. They’ve said that Ontario is on the right track. When I read the editorials in the papers, the changes to either the temporary help agencies, the changes that would bring in sick time or the changes that would just treat employees with the dignity and the respect that any one of us would want for ourselves or would want for our family members will be strengthened by the passage of Bill 148.

1640

I’m hoping that we enjoy the support of all members of the House on this. A lot of work has gone into this. You’re looking at about three years of consultations. It’s something that I think would make us proud—that we’re able to pass this and make sure that everybody, regardless of your income level, is treated fairly in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: Soon we’ll have our critic for labour, Mr. Yakabuski, have his one-hour speech regarding Bill 148.

I want to take just the couple of minutes that I have to provide questions and comments to talk about the hearing

in Kingston on July 13. As most in the House know, and many outside the House know, this bill went out at first reading with the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. I was lucky, at the Kingston meeting on July 13, to have four constituents make presentations—three of them, actually, from the village of Westport. I had Todd Stafford, the president of Northern Cables in Brockville, a large job creator. But the three from Westport were Robin Jones, who's the mayor of Westport and the warden of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville; Terry Cowan from the Cove Country Inn in Westport; and Neil Kudrinko who runs an independent grocery store in Westport and also a fine foods shop.

It was interesting to have three constituents from a small community—Westport is a village with about 700 people. It's the smallest municipality in Ontario that provides water and waste water services. The Cove and Kudrinko's are two of the largest employers. Both Terry Cowan and Neil Kudrinko expressed concern about the speed with which the minimum wage will be increased and their ability to adapt. Both of them used the percentage of 32% and also talked about the issue of dealing with banks, because their net income would be, basically, in a negative position.

It's very interesting to hear the minister not address many of the comments that were brought up in committee about what the government is going to do after all of the consultation, all of the public hearings, and how they're going to deal with that. I'm very concerned about the minister's comment about raising prices earlier today. I had hoped that he would have addressed that in his speech, but maybe that will happen later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to have a couple of minutes on Bill 148. I'll get my hour tomorrow or sometime this week.

I want to just use this two minutes to thank all of the people who came out and presented during the public hearings. In particular, I wanted to do a shout-out to Deena Ladd at the Workers' Action Centre and to the folks from ACORN. They were out in every community that we visited. They are the ones who have been lobbying not only the government but all of us for years for a fair wage for workers in this province. They're non-profit agencies who work with very little financial resources, and they work for the greater good of people who are in low- or lower-middle-income situations.

So, the bill—we certainly support many parts of it. There's still more work to be done, and I think our leader, Andrea Horwath, spoke to that this morning. The issue of temporary workers: Although it is addressed in some ways within this bill, the government still has the opportunity to make some more amendments after these debates and before we go into clause-by-clause in the next reading.

If you read the Toronto Star article on the weekend, there are thousands of people working in temporary situations, and WSIB is reporting that those people

working for temporary agencies in a variety of sectors are in the top 10% of injuries of any workers in this province, even though they only make up 2% of the entire workforce in the province.

There's more work to do on this bill, and I'll talk about that when I'm up next.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Il me fait plaisir de participer au débat sur le projet de loi pour l'équité en milieu de travail et de meilleurs emplois. Le projet de loi, s'il est adopté, aidera significativement la société ontarienne et beaucoup des résidents d'Ottawa-Vanier. Nous savons que l'opposition officielle ne soutient pas ce projet de loi, mais je veux m'exprimer ici en appui au projet de loi.

In a good and booming economy like Ontario, it is essential that all workers reap the benefits of this economy. We must ensure that workers who contribute and make this economy are treated fairly. In my view, it is unfair when people who work 40 hours a week live below the poverty line. It is unfair when people who work part-time and do the same job as full-time workers are paid less per hour. It is unfair when people are sick and are too afraid to take sick days. And it is unfair when health and safety standards are not followed.

It is our job to protect all workers, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill. It's crucial to address the growing income disparity between the rich and the poor, and we certainly want to support small businesses in adapting to this transition.

Selon moi, le projet de loi est essentiel pour une société juste, une société équitable qui veut que tous et toutes puissent participer et bénéficier de notre économie. Il me semble que c'est notre devoir à tous de nous impliquer dans ce débat, de faire ce qui est bien à faire et de soutenir ce projet de loi.

Je vous remercie.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 148, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act. I just want to start off by suggesting—and I've had people come out to me over this issue who have never really come out and addressed their concerns to me at all. Most of what they're talking about, again, is the reckless speed at which this government is trying to implement something.

The business community is certainly not suggesting, and we're not supporting, that people don't need a good living wage. Certainly, at the end of the day, we support a \$15 minimum wage. But it has to be done in a timely manner. It has to give people the ability to adjust their business. At the end of the day, the fiscal accountability officer has just come out with a report suggesting that there could be 50,000 jobs lost because of the speed at which they're going to implement this. So this isn't just us, Mr. Speaker. This is a third-party resource of this Legislature that is suggesting that.

The minister has suggested that an option is to raise costs. Well, how is that really helping out the average

consumer or the average person out there trying to make ends meet with everything that could increase across the board?

The other alternative is certainly—and I've heard this from business people—"The reality is that I'm either going to have to raise costs or lower hours and lay off people"—lower the number of hours people are getting and/or lay them off totally. How is that truly helping people at the end of the day?

The Minister of Housing suggested that this is to make our province more competitive. We have the highest energy rates in the country. At the end of the day, the Liberals have raised rates between 300% and 400%. Whether it's at the home, whether it's our seniors on fixed incomes or our business community, they're saying, "This is the most challenging thing to pay. I cannot keep up with my bills." They want to say they gave a 25% decrease. They forget to say that they raised your bills 300% before they did that.

We know that life is harder under the Liberals. We know that this is challenging. We certainly, at the end of the day, believe there are better ways that we could do this. We want to make sure that people have the ability to have a good living, absolutely. But we have to do it with conscience, to understand—as the fiscal accountability officer says, do a full financial impact analysis and let people know what's coming at them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the Minister of Labour for final comments.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank all members who spent some time passing some comments on the opening remarks that myself and Minister Milczyn made on Bill 148, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act.

Speaker, the concerns are there. The concerns are real. The concerns have come as a result of consultations that were held around the province by people who know an awful lot about employment standards and know an awful lot about labour relations. The two of them, very esteemed individuals, spent a lifetime in those fields. They went out, they heard from Ontarians, they came back and they gave the government advice.

What we've done is taken that advice and turned it into Bill 148. Along the way, what we realized is that 30% of people in the province of Ontario are trying to get by on less than \$15 an hour. At the end of the day, you either agree with that and think, "Well, that's just okay," or we need to do something about that, Speaker. We need to put those people, who are working as hard as you or I are, who are working as long as you or I are, in a position where they're able to pay their basic bills.

1650

You agree with that or you don't. This side of the House agrees with that. I think the third party agrees with that and would like us to go even further, if I understand the comments. It appears that the Progressive Conservative Party did not agree with that. I don't know why, because I can't understand it. I think it's a basic tenet of what it means to be a Canadian and what it means to be an Ontarian.

This is the land of opportunity. This is the land where you can go, you work hard and you live in a society where you can pay your bills, where you can feed and clothe your kids. People often move from other corners of the world to Ontario because they can't do that where they come from. They move here because this is a place where they can do better. We need to ensure that we're able to do better. Bill 148 is going to allow us to do that. I would urge all members of the House to find a way to support this bill.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 148 this afternoon. I have an hour to speak to the comments earlier from the Minister of Housing, Minister Milczyn, saying that people with a cold shouldn't be at work. I'm here because that's the schedule for the speaking. I'm not sure how it's going to work for an hour. The old voice might crack a little bit.

I did want to start by pointing out to the minister, who talked about the consultative process—I don't know where to start because I have to pick out a few things that he said that were somewhat less than accurate. He said that as a result of the consultative process, they arrived at Bill 148, which encompasses the increase in minimum wage. The Changing Workplaces Review never, ever discussed the minimum wage—never discussed it. I want to make that very clear to the minister. It was never part of the discussion. Those experts he paid to come up with the conclusions—they never discussed the minimum wage.

In fact, the minister is chastising Progressive Conservatives for wanting to exercise caution in the implementation. He's chastising us. He says that either you believe in supporting workers or you don't.

We certainly believe in supporting workers. As a person who came from a business environment and owned a business, I can attest to that, and I have former employees who would agree with me.

Having said that, when the minister talks about the implementation of the minimum wage and that if you don't support exactly what they're talking about you don't support workers, he's going to have to have some chats with the Financial Accountability Officer. I will get to that report in due course.

The minister is going to have to have a discussion with himself. I don't know whether he got a lightning bolt or knocked off his horse on the way to Oakville, aka Damascus, and came to some epiphany on the minimum wage only recently, for the crass political considerations that we have accused them of, but the discussion about a \$14 and \$15 minimum wage has been going on for some time. The minister has, on many occasions, defended what is still the current policy—because this is not law yet—of affixing it and tying it to the consumer price index.

In fact, I have a number of quotes that the minister—I also have the Premier. Let's start with one of the ones from the Premier.

“Premier Kathleen Wynne said it is fair to base future changes on the consumer price index since it is a key indicator of how the economy is doing and would offer some predictability for businesses”—predictability for businesses.

“‘It takes the decision out of the realm of political whim and puts it into the realm of some kind of relationship with the way the economy is growing,’ she told reporters in Ottawa....”

“Despite the mounting pressure for a \$14 minimum wage”—at that time—“Wynne is worried about the impact on business of such a big hike.

“‘I know that there’s a call for \$14 (but) we have to move very carefully, because this is about making sure that we retain and create jobs.’”

That’s Kathleen Wynne, in the *Toronto Star*, January 27, 2014. This was at a time when Mr. Naqvi was the minister, but I’m going to leave him out of here for now.

This is Minister Flynn: “However, in the past, increases to minimum wages have been made on a very ad hoc basis. They’re subject to the political process of this place, and we feel, on this side of the House, that that’s not fair to workers. They didn’t know what their hourly wage would be from one year to the next. It was unpredictable for businesses that couldn’t plan for the future and it was really based on the political whims of the party that formed the government at that particular point in time. That’s why this government has introduced this legislation to remedy that and to index the minimum wage as we move forward.”

That was Minister Flynn on October 20, 2014, during second reading debate on Bill 18, which established the consumer price index as the vehicle for determining what the increases in the minimum wage would be.

Further, from the minister: “We’ve heard from experts, we’ve heard from workers, we’ve heard from business. They want stable and predictable increases to the minimum wage in this province. We’ve had recommendations from the Minimum Wage Advisory Panel and they advised the government on the best approach: to tie future minimum wage increases to inflation. And that’s exactly what we’ve done.” Minister Flynn, Hansard, during oral questions, September 30, 2015.

Again: “‘It’s important for people to know that there is a consistent, transparent and fair approach to setting the province’s minimum wage that ensures workers receive annual increases that keep up with inflation,’ Labour Minister Kevin Flynn said in a statement Friday.

“‘It’s also important we provide predictability to businesses so they can prepare for annual wage increases. This helps to build a more prosperous economy and a fairer society for all.’” *Toronto Star*, March 19, 2016.

Minister Flynn, more recently, on October 5, 2016: “We’ve put predictability into the system and stability into the system, and it’s working.”

“‘We’re trying to make sure that people are earning a decent living, we’re also trying to ensure that employers have predictability,’ Labour Minister Kevin Flynn told reporters at Queen’s Park on Wednesday, adding that the minimum wage is due for review in 2019.

“Flynn said he realizes the \$15 wage appeals to people.

“‘When you dig down a little deeper into the issue though, you realize it’s got ramifications that go beyond that first initial political appeal,’ he said. ‘There is actually an awful lot of economic forces at play.’”

That was the CBC on January 19 of this year, when he opposed a \$15 minimum wage.

Then I read from Mike Crawley in the CBC. He writes, “Barely four months ago, I asked Premier Kathleen Wynne how open she was to the idea of boosting Ontario’s minimum wage to \$15 an hour. She was rather unenthusiastic.

“Despite activists pushing the government for a sharp increase from the current minimum wage of \$11.40, Wynne defended the existing system of nudging it upward once a year by the rate of inflation.

1700

“‘We’ve got a really good process ... that actually depoliticizes the increases to the minimum wage,’ Wynne said on Jan. 19.

“‘That is the responsible way to move forward. It is very important to me that we have a predictable and sustainable way of seeing increases to the minimum wage.’”

That was just on May 31.

Then I have one more, from Minister Flynn, from oral questions on the May 4, 2017:

“‘What we did a few years back is that we got all parties that were interested in this around the same table. We established a process. We set a foundation for the minimum wage. We got opinions from organized labour, from business, from poverty advocates, from everybody—from the workers themselves. We got everybody who was interested in this issue around the same table. We put a process in place that, for the past few years, has worked very, very well.’”

That was Minister Flynn in oral questions on May 4 this year.

As I said, where was the epiphany? I suspect the epiphany came from the political advisers who said, “‘We’ve got to do something drastic. We’ve raised the cost of living. We have hurt people in this province for 14 years. We have driven down their spending power, because their wages have not kept up with the cost-of-living increases that we have inflicted on them,’ whether it’s hydro prices, whether it’s fees, whether it’s health taxes. All of these kinds of things that this government has foisted upon the taxpayers, wage earners of all levels—high-, medium- and lower-wage earners—has had an impact on their ability to buy the goods and services that the minister says everybody is entitled to. They should have a basic living; everybody should be able to afford it. But in Kathleen Wynne’s Ontario, it has become increasingly unaffordable.

So the political masters decided that on the last day of the Legislature, June 1, they would table a bill that, yes, rewrote the Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations Act. Many of the changes in that bill, we have

no problem with them. I really question the minister implying today that Patrick Brown was against this or against that, when Patrick Brown has not even commented on those sections of the bill. He hasn't commented on those sections of the bill, so why would a minister of the crown make a statement that claims he knows the position that Patrick Brown has on a particular issue when he has yet to comment on it? That is not in keeping with the responsibility of a minister, in my estimation, Speaker.

Everything that I have said, that I have attributed to Minister Flynn, he has actually said. Those are quotes. He makes statements that Patrick Brown has said something that Patrick Brown has never said.

What did Minister Flynn say today? When I travelled the province—I was on that committee that travelled the province and heard from so many different businesses and representatives about the rapid increase. It's about the rapid increase. We have never said we are opposed to a \$15 minimum wage. What we have said is that you need to take a step back and ask yourself whether the timetable is right.

Even in British Columbia, which doesn't even have a Liberal government—it's got an NDP government—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: NDP-Green.

Mr. John Yakabuski: NDP-Green, but it's an NDP government. Even they have said they're going to slow down the implementation, because they recognize that the damage that could be done would actually cause the opposite effect of what they're trying to do.

The effect that they're trying to do, of course, is to help lower-income people, but if it's implemented too fast it actually works against lower-income people because it costs them jobs.

They're slowing it down in British Columbia because they recognize that their implementation was too fast. What we have asked for, Speaker—we proposed an amendment at clause-by-clause, and I asked for the same thing yesterday in question period. I asked the minister to commission a third-party independent economic impact analysis to determine what the effects of making this kind of change in this period of time would have on Ontario's economy and on the jobs of the very people they're purporting to protect.

Of course, he refused and danced around the issue and got all political. He talked about how we don't care—you know, that typical Liberal response when they don't want to deal with the actual issue. They didn't deal with the actual issue for years. If the \$15-an-hour minimum wage was so important to them, why didn't they do it last year? Why didn't they do it the year before?

All of a sudden, on June 1, without any—it was never part of the report, the Changing Workplaces Review. They threw it out there because it was strictly a political manoeuvre.

But I want to say, again, back to what the minister himself actually said—smaller printing on this; I'll have to put the glasses on. The minister was being asked in a scrum today about the Financial Accountability Officer's

report that shows that at least 50,000 jobs will be lost as a result of the minimum wage hike. A reporter said, "You just said there's a number of things that small businesses could do in order to prepare for a \$15 minimum wage. What are those things?"

Minister Flynn said, "Well, I think they could look at pricing, obviously that's one thing that obviously any business would do."

What the minister is saying is that in order to adjust for the minimum wage increase, businesses should simply raise their prices. On the surface, if you lived in a bubble, that might be possible. But there is a tipping point for everything. The minister earlier used the word, "globalization" and how that has changed things. Yes, it has changed things dramatically. The economy that we exist in is not the economy of the 1970s, 1980s, the 1990s, etc. We live in a very internationally competitive economy. We have to compete for everything that we get.

If Ontario simply has the price of everything raised, it will lessen its competitive status, both nationally and internationally. Businesses can make the decision to build, establish, expand or leave in their best interests. If businesses feel that Ontario is not the place to establish and/or expand, then they will not come here. They will not expand if they're here, but they can also make the decision, as many have, that they're leaving Ontario and moving elsewhere.

I think it's kind of—not "kind of"; it is irresponsible for the minister to make that kind of statement: "Just raise your prices." Well, if that was simply the case, if that's the way you want to conduct economics, then why stop at \$15? Why not make it \$25? Why not make it \$30, and we'll just keep raising the prices of everything else to cover it off? But everybody knows and every economist knows that that is not possible. It is not feasible and it is not practical or pragmatic in a global economy. Globalization does not allow you to build a fence around your jurisdiction and act as if what you do here has no effect anywhere else or what they do has no effect here. It just doesn't work that way.

1710

When the minister makes those kinds of comments, I can't get into his head and figure out what he was thinking, but I can certainly ask the question: What were you thinking when you make a comment such as that? "Just raise your prices." If it was as easy as that, then we'd all be doing quite well—everybody—because the prices would just keep going up and everybody would make more money. But it doesn't work that way.

It's not going to work that way, according to so many businesses that we heard from at the committee. Even the businesses that came that were not opposed to \$15 an hour, they were opposed to a 32% increase in those wages in a year and a half—well, actually less than a year and a half because it really will be a year, because it will be the increase on January 1, 2018, and the further increase on January 1, 2019; so really they will go up 32% within a year.

Their question was, “How are we supposed to adjust? How are we supposed to prepare for this?” Well, I say again, the government should be doing an economic impact study. They ignored every piece of testimony that came from small businesses at that committee because they are fixated and focused on doing what they believe is the best political manoeuvre for them prior to the June 2018 election. They’re not concerned about the effect on jobs across Ontario; they’re only concerned about the effect on their jobs in the Liberal caucus and the election in 2018.

In the absence of them doing an economic impact study of their own or an impact analysis of their own, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce commissioned one. I can’t speak to the accuracy of their findings. I wasn’t involved in the study. But if the Liberal government wants to question their findings, then they should do a study of their own, commission a study of their own that tells us something different. But this is the only study that was specifically commissioned post the tabling of Bill 148.

The Liberals have quoted studies from other jurisdictions and quoted 50 economists who all signed a letter, none of whom have ever worked in the private sector and none who work in the private sector. The majority work in the academic bubble of universities. They’re not job creators. They’re not job retainers. They’re theoretical economists. And they cite them as the so-called experts.

The chamber of commerce commissioned the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis to do a study. It was released in August and the findings are quite startling. As I said, I won’t comment as to whether the numbers are absolutely accurate because that’s not my field of expertise, but the numbers that they released should give anyone reason to pause and ask, “Is this something we want to do immediately? Is this something we want to rush out the door?” But then, all you have to do is look at the motivation of the Liberals and this is something they want to rush out the door, even though it was never discussed in the Changing Workplaces Review, which I will repeat more than once when I speak to this bill.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis state that the impact will be a \$23-billion hit to business over the next two years alone—\$23 billion. Some 185,000 Ontario jobs will be at immediate risk over the next two years; 30,000 of the jobs at risk are youth under 25 and 96,000 employees at risk are expected to be women. There will be a 50% increase to inflation for this year and the foreseeable future. The cost of everyday consumer goods and services will go up by \$1,300 per household on average each and every year.

Now, those three findings alone—a \$1,300 annual hit to the average household, a \$23-billion hit to businesses over the next two years and 185,000 jobs being lost, so many of them young people and women—in the face of that, the government did nothing. It takes this report and basically files it in the recycling bin—not interested, not

concerned. Why? Because it takes away from their single goal, which is to campaign on this next year.

I see some of the members of the House in here today who were also on that committee. They travelled and they heard the same testimony that I heard. They were asked so many times to pause and slow this down, to do that analysis so that it can be implemented in such a way that the injury to Ontario’s economy is minimalized, not maximized, as the calendar that they’ve already indicated they’re going to go by is 32% essentially within a year. January 1 to January 1 it will go up 32%.

I met with people from my riding, Dan and Trina Worner, who run a small RV resort on Lake Doré. They were in my office for over an hour and a half, which is a long time for you to have a meeting with a constituent, as people in this House will know. But I felt compelled to allow them that time to articulate in the clearest possible way the effect that this was going to have on them and how precarious their business and the future of their business was or would be upon the accelerated implementation of these changes.

1720

I’ve talked to youth who have said, “Why are they doing this? It’s going to hurt me. I’m going to be the one who’s not going to get a job next summer in Barry’s Bay,” or Renfrew or Pembroke or Killaloe or Owen Sound or Peterborough. They’re going to be hurt, the young people who will not be offered a job for the summer. That’s going to have an impact. The chamber of commerce report supports exactly what I’m saying here, that so many of these jobs that are not going to be here are going to be youth, disadvantaged, women. Why are you attacking those groups for your own political gain?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Those are the same women who are coming into my office and crying—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, order. Member from Davenport, come to order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You’ll have your chance, I say to the member for Davenport. Make sure you make all your points within that period of time that you’re allotted, because I’m certainly going to try to make mine.

That’s just one business. But they will not be hiring young people at their resort. Full stop. Not going to happen. That’s one place.

You know, one of the most compelling testimonies at the hearings—and I see some of the members here that were there—was by a gentleman by the name of Mark Wafer.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Mark Wafer; I know him very well.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You know him very well?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Yes, from Tim Hortons.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Tim Hortons hires—his was one of the most compelling testimonies I have ever heard at a committee. Let me read some of his testimony:

“My name is Mark Wafer. Good afternoon, committee members. Thank you very much for inviting me to speak to you. I’m a Tim Hortons restaurant owner with stores in Toronto. My wife and I have been in the chain for almost

25 years. I'm also a proud member of the Great White North Franchise Association, the official franchise association for Tim Hortons owners.

"Over the past two weeks, you've heard many different opinions of the bill that's in front of you today. As a business owner with 250 employees, I have grave concerns about how a \$15 minimum wage would affect my operation. But today, I would like to speak with you about how this bill in its current form could and probably will do considerable harm to the lives and livelihoods of Ontario's most vulnerable workers: those with disabilities.

"By way of background, I'm not only a restaurant owner; I'm recognized as a leader in inclusion. I believe in real jobs for real pay for people with disabilities. My wife and I have employed over 160 workers with disabilities in the last 25 years. Today, 46 of our employees have a disability. That's 17% of our workforce. As a keynote speaker on this subject, I travel across the globe encouraging corporations to become disability-confident and to include workers with disabilities in their own hiring practices. It is working."

He goes on to say, "The unemployment rate for Ontarians with disabilities is over 50%." And he goes on to say, "Ontario is now a leader in encouraging employers to hire people with disabilities. The future is bright.

"However, ladies and gentlemen, this could all unravel very quickly with the stroke of a pen if Bill 148 is implemented in its current form. Knowing that business will reduce labour, who gets cut first? The answer, of course, is those employees who do not generate revenue—the most vulnerable workers, those with disabilities and youth. This is the unintended consequence of an unprecedented minimum wage increase."

When you have someone such as Mark Wafer—who has won numerous awards, and the minister who knows him well can attest to that, for his support and treatment of the most vulnerable workers—raising the alarm bells, raising the spectre of concern about the rapid changes to the wage increases in Ontario and how that could affect those people—he is just saying what we've been saying.

The Liberals want to live in some sort of a dream world. They think that businesses are going to be faced with 32% increases in costs and they're not going to somehow try to act in a way to mitigate the effect—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Member from Davenport, second time.

Mr. John Yakabuski: If you want to accuse Mark Wafer of things, I say to the lady from Davenport, you go right ahead. I'm telling you what he said. You were there.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: He didn't call them vulnerable people.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm quoting. This is from Hansard.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: They're capable people.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am quoting from Hansard, I say to the minister. This is Hansard, from Mr. Wafer's testimony. This was his presentation.

So when he raises the spectre of how that would affect the vulnerable people, you should take notice. You should take notice, because he is—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: They're not vulnerable people; they're capable people.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Those are not my words, Minister. Those are Mr. Wafer's words.

He was asked a question, and he talked about those with disabilities in his operation who are working at entry-level positions, "cleaning parking lots, cleaning the dishes and cleaning the dining room—jobs that are very, very important, but that don't necessarily have to be done on a regular basis. Those jobs would be the easiest ones to cut first." That was his answer to a question.

One of his last responses was, "The concern I have is how quickly we're bringing it in: \$14 in six months, \$15 in only 18 months. It doesn't give us enough time to plan. The emails that I'm getting from Ontario retailers, and from Alberta because they have the same situation right now, say, 'What do I do with the people who have disabilities who came to me from an agency? What do I do? I can't afford to keep them now.'"

It's interesting that the Financial Accountability Officer was taking almost a similar position when he said—and this is an independent officer of the Legislature. This is not a hired consultant. This is an independent officer of the Legislature appointed by us—the Financial Accountability Officer. He weighed in and released a report today, commentary on the changes to the wages: at a minimum, a net loss of 50,000 jobs, with those job losses concentrated among teens and young adults.

"However, there is evidence to suggest that the job losses could be larger than" estimated. This is the FAO. "Ontario's proposed minimum wage increase is both larger and more rapid than past experience, providing businesses with a greater incentive to reduce costs more aggressively."

1730

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Did you read what he said further down?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I've read the whole report. You can pick and choose what you want. He also comments on, when the minister is talking about raising people out of poverty, that this is a very poor policy and vehicle for doing just that. The Financial Accountability Officer points out that while there are workers making the minimum wage, they do not necessarily come from homes that are living in poverty. They could be a secondary income. They could be a student. But only 25% of the people who are earning minimum wage today, he points out, are actually living in poverty—only 25% living in an impoverished household.

It's a report, as I say, from an independent officer of the Legislature. The government can disagree with it if they want. They will pick and choose parts of it that they want to hear about, but on balance, any member of the government on that side would have to say that this is not an endorsement of your schedule and your plan for

basically raising the minimum wage by 32% in a 12-month period, given that it's going up to \$14 on January 1, 2018, and to \$18 on January 1, 2019.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Fifteen dollars.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Pardon me; what did I say?

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: You said "\$18."

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh no, not \$18—\$15. Let me correct that record.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I had 2018 on my mind there, Speaker—\$15.

Mr. Bill Walker: Don't give them any ideas, Yak.

Mr. John Yakabuski: "Don't give them any ideas." Fifteen dollars on January 1, 2019—too many numbers.

You have two reports. One of them says "185,000 jobs over the next two years," and the Financial Accountability Officer says "50,000 jobs." We're talking about trying to help the most vulnerable workers, those on the low end of the wage scale. Then you have youth saying, "I'm worried I'm not going to have a job next summer. I had a job this summer, but the people I work for are already saying, 'There will be no student jobs next summer—not going to happen. If we're going to be paying these kinds of rates, we're going to hire adults.'"

How is that going to affect the ability of families and youth? Our pages aren't in the job market yet, but they will be shortly, in a few years. What is it going to mean for the job prospects for them in the summertime? For as long as I wanted when I was younger—I never had a summer that I didn't have a job. I always had a job. A small business is one of the biggest job creators, but they're not going to be creating those jobs if they can't afford to.

My colleague from Leeds–Grenville spoke today about—I'm just looking for that; I can't find it—Cove Country Inn in Westport. That was the first testimony we heard in Kingston. He just talked about how "a 32% increase in just over a year to a major portion of our budget is unrealistic and will result in many bankruptcies or closures."

See, their income comes in in a short period of time, but for their expenses—they have to get banks to help pay the expenses year-round. Their concern is the banks are going to look at these businesses and say, "Oh, I don't know if I'm going to be as willing to advance them the monies that we would have in the past, given that the profit and loss statements are not going to look as attractive as they might have in previous years."

"The proposed 32% increase to our wages," he's saying, "in our budget is more than our net income has ever been in our 30 years of business and much, much more than our net income of the last five years."

He said, "We have weathered many storms, but the worst threat in 30 years to our beloved Cove's existence comes from a place meant to help us: our government. Please step back, rethink, and reconsider this minimum wage proposal."

That was Terry Cowan from the Cove Country Inn in Westport. As Mr. Clark, my colleague from Leeds–

Grenville, has said, Westport is the smallest municipality in the province that has waste water and water services. It's only 700 residents.

We also heard that very same day from Kudrinko's—

Mr. Steve Clark: Neil Kudrinko.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Neil Kudrinko, also an award-winning businessman for his work on environmental advancement, reduction of usage of power, innovation in trying to make his business as efficient as possible from an energy and an environmental point of view, and a real champion in the town. He talked about how this could create food deserts. He used the term "food deserts," where places like Kudrinko's are gone and people from Westport would be forced to drive to the nearest large municipality, which would be Kingston, just in order to do their grocery shopping, because businesses like his could not exist and could not survive the onslaught of the speed of this implementation.

This is not me speaking or my colleague from Leeds–Grenville. These are real people—the backbone of our economy, small business people. I agree with Minister Flynn when he says that the majority of them are hard-working and law-abiding and want to do well, but they also want to do well by their communities.

If you go to a small community, and whether you're the club at the school or whatever it is—the service clubs or anybody else—and they're looking for help, they're looking for donations, they're looking for support. When you see the fundraising drive that goes on in a small community, where do they always turn to? Where do they always turn to spearhead those drives? It is almost certainly the small business sector of those communities, the ones that have their heart and soul invested in that community. They are part of that community. They share their lives with the people who work for them and the people who walk through that door. They're not there simply to extract revenue from that population; they are there to serve, to provide a needed service, a needed product for a population that requires it.

1740

Some of them are generations old. Some of them are new; many of them are new. But they're no less invested because they moved to a small community or they grew up in that small community. That is where they believe life is best, and the people who live there with them also share that view. They want to spend their time and their lives there. They want to work and earn their living there. They want to raise their children or they have raised their children or grandchildren. That's home to them.

What we're saying to a lot of those small businesses across Ontario, with the stroke of a pen, as it was said in one of the testimonies, is that we're changing that dynamic so rapidly and so drastically that you might not be able to exist there any longer; you may not be able to adjust.

When the minister says today—I want to make sure I get it right because, unlike him being willing to misquote Patrick Brown, I'm not going to misquote the minister. When the minister was asked by a reporter, "Minister,

you just said there are a number of things that small businesses could do in order to prepare for a \$15 minimum wage. What are those things?”, Minister Flynn replied, “Well, I think they could look at pricing. Obviously, that’s one thing that any business would do.” So he’s saying to the Neil Kudrinkos of the world, “Just raise your prices.”

The ability for the Walmarts of the world to absorb some changes is far different than Kudrinko’s or, in my case, the Metro in Barry’s Bay, or Valu-mart. It’s highly different, the ability for them to absorb these kinds of increases and remain competitive. If they can’t remain competitive, slowly but surely their business shrinks to the point where it cannot survive. There’s a minimum amount of revenue that has to come through a business in order for it to operate. Once it drops below that, all of a sudden, doors start to close, businesses are shuttered, and people have to move. People have to go to the next big town—the city of Kingston.

Let’s just take those two businesses. You’ve got the Cove Country Inn and you’ve got Kudrinko’s, the two biggest employers in Westport, the two biggest businesses, and all of a sudden, they’re not there. How much longer do you think there’s a Westport? Or does Westport become like so many other ghost towns?

If you look at Ontario’s history and do the background of the back roads maps, you see where there are ghost towns. The railway used to go through there or they were a bustling town at the turn of the century, but they don’t even exist. There might be an old church there; there might be an old schoolhouse that has been abandoned; but the place no longer exists. Is that what we’re trying to do to small business in rural Ontario with this bill? I don’t know.

I also heard testimony in Ottawa from my riding—Calabogie Peaks, Paul Murphy; an absolutely moving testimony about how this could affect his business. Paul runs a ski hill. He relies on the people from Ottawa as one of his prime markets. But people from Ottawa have a lot of choices about where they do their skiing, and most of Paul’s competition is on the other side of the border, in Quebec. If his rates aren’t competitive, they’ll go there. The drive is similar, or less, even, certainly for some of the hills on the Quebec side. They don’t pay the price for hydroelectricity that Paul pays. He’s already at a competitive disadvantage as a result of the mismanagement of the electricity system by the McGuinty-Wynne government. Now he’s being told that he has to be subjected to a whole new environment of costs.

I don’t know how many people here ski or not, but if you’ve got the choice of six or so hills within a similar distance, and one of those hills all of a sudden has priced themselves much higher than the others, I don’t know where you’re going to be skiing, but I think I know where you’re not going to be skiing. That’s the conundrum that faces Paul Murphy at Calabogie Peaks.

He’s also the biggest employer in the municipality. He’s got a hill; he has trails and motocross and stuff like that during the summertime. He employs some people

year-round, but clearly, his biggest business is in the wintertime, for the skiing.

What I’m saying is, again, why wouldn’t this government look into the faces of those small businesses, look into those organizations, and ask them, “Is this really necessary in this period of time?”

I’m just going to give you a number of quotes from people who made submissions, not necessarily to the committee orally, but written submissions as well.

Ontario Tender Fruit Growers represent over 250 growers across Ontario: “Our industry will need to rapidly increase the cost to the consumer for fresh local fruit.” So your senior citizen who is living on a fixed budget and working on only a Canada pension has to pay more for nutritious food. “We project that the non-ad price of \$3.99 for a basket of peaches today will need to be approximately \$6.99 in 2019. Some farms may not be able to make the investments needed to compete and will simply close.”

Blue Spruce Resort, in Dwight: “We’ve been in the hospitality business for 63 years. Our business cannot sustain these dramatic increases overnight and they will deal a severe and possibly fatal blow to our resort business.”

Exeter Produce and Storage Co.: “Exeter Produce will have to look at ways to eliminate 45 jobs by 2019.”

Veri Hydroponics, in Exeter: “Veri Hydroponics will have to look at ways to eliminate 20 jobs by 2019.”

Bayview Wildwood Resort, in Severn: “We have provided jobs for youth for over 100 years, and for many of them, our resort was their first real job. It is very sad that we will not be able to provide that experience for as many youths going forward. I have no recourse but to change the nature of my business and reduce my labour force. I am considering technology alternatives to replace jobs in my workplace. I will also have to increase my rates.”

1750

Advanced Design Solutions, in Stratford: “We typically employ between 110 and 160 people. As a result of this bill, we are now urgently pursuing options of automation to eliminate any employees we can. We are now actively investing in moving work to an American jurisdiction that is a lot more business-friendly.”

There is no shortage. A McDonald’s franchisee: “In the end this bill will only end up hurting the very people the government is trying to protect—young workers. I will not be able to ensure that I can continue to offer such an important opportunity for young people if the minimum wage increases by so much so quickly.

Home Care Ontario and Hamilton: “Bill 148 will negatively impact the delivery of home care to Ontarians and their families who receive publicly funded and privately retained service. It will also lead to increased use of the broader health care system at a time when government is trying to contain health care expenditures.”

I spoke to a home care provider in Ottawa who said that this was going to mean a million dollars to their business. They’re one of 50 in Ottawa; that’s \$50 million

for home care in Ottawa. Extrapolate that across the province of Ontario: That's \$700 million across the province of Ontario.

The government wasn't thinking. They weren't talking to each other. It's time to think. It's time to do that economic impact analysis, so we all know.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was interesting to listen to the member. He certainly did not have his usual enthusiasm, and I think it is because he's sick and had run out of medicine before he had run out of his one-hour lead. But it looks like he's starting to fix this right now and catch up. I guess that's a good segue to say why it is that workers need paid sick leave. For a lot of people who are sick, they do end up going to work. I come from health care. I know exactly what happens when a sick employee comes in to work. Your entire workforce will get sick quickly. So I'm looking at the PC caucus there and looking at who is there. I bet you that by the plowing match, we hear a whole lot more of this raspy voice and we see a whole lot more of you carrying your box of Kleenex around, because he came to work when he was sick.

For a lot of workers it is not an option: The thought of going a day without pay is impossible. They are already stretched to the limit. They're already at the breaking point in trying to make ends meet, and having a day without pay is not something that they could ever afford. Not to mention the fact that if they could afford it, it could put their employment at risk, because there is also no protection for those workers. We had an opportunity to change this. The NDP put forward amendments to the bill that would guarantee that every worker would get a minimum of five paid sick days. Unfortunately, the Liberals voted that down. I don't wish any harm upon anybody, but, Yak, maybe you could go over there with your box of Kleenex and show them what happens when sick employees come to work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I very much enjoyed the opportunity to listen to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and his comments in the opposition's leadoff hour of debate on Bill 148. I appreciated it most because it very clearly places them in the position that that party is going with respect to this bill, that they do not have the back of low-income workers in the province of Ontario. They're turning their back on low-income workers.

What I found particularly distressing about his remarks is that he would come forward to repeat and advocate on behalf of a person who came and spoke at the hearings, a person who was out to target developmentally delayed, handicapped people as being the first people he would fire under this regime, to somehow suggest that these people are less valuable in the workplace. I just find it incredible that he would make that a part of his remarks, to highlight someone who would be targeting developmentally delayed people as a way of reducing their costs in their business.

I see an abdication of the responsibility of the opposition party, because they were out on the 10-day tour—which we did after first reading—of all these cities. After 10 days of touring and hearing all these people speak, one amendment? Actually, there were two amendments: One was the same amendment because they got the wrong section and they had to withdraw it. Of all the things that they heard on the other side of the House, they came forward with one amendment? That just strikes me as incredible.

Then he would go on to quote the Financial Accountability Officer, who said that there could be a job loss of up to 50,000 employees. But the FAO said, "At the same time, higher labour income and household spending will boost economic activity, leading to some offsetting job gains." You can't have it both ways. He agrees it's the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to our member for that one hour. It was a very detailed and very passionate description of what we heard in the committee that travelled those 10 days. What we heard, quite frankly, was not pretty.

It was backed up recently by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and then only this morning by our own Financial Accountability Officer, who talked about, yes, there will be more money available, but the net loss after that extra money is put into the economy is still 50,000 jobs. Fifty thousand people are going to lose their jobs. We know that now. And he says that the job losses will be concentrated among teens and young adults. Knowing that 50,000 people are going to be put out of work by this plan, they still plan on going ahead with it. I can't even begin to understand how you would do that, knowing that you are going to cost 50,000 people their jobs.

It says that a "quarter of the ... labour income would directly benefit low-income families." This would be—and I'm quoting here from the Financial Accountability Officer—"an inefficient policy tool for reducing overall poverty."

He also says that prices are going to go up. Of course, we heard from the labour minister today that that's what you should do: just raise your prices. Well, the FAO says that prices are going up and a minimum of 50,000 people are going to lose their jobs, mostly teens and young adults. "Job losses could be larger than the FAO's estimate," he says.

Knowing that you're going to have 50,000 people, minimum, put out of work, and they're still going ahead with it? I can't even believe this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: First, I want to say welcome back to all our colleagues. This is my first opportunity to say that to everyone. It's great to see everyone in good form.

This was certainly was a topic of conversation during the recess around my riding. Just meeting people

everywhere who wanted to know what the ramifications are of this policy and were wondering why the government was taking the approach that they did. Certainly, I spoke to a lot of groups associated with agriculture production, toured some greenhouses, who, among other things, are worried about the impact on their industry through the increase in minimum wage.

These are folks that will readily tell you that they are prepared to pay a living wage, and in most cases, they do already. They value their employees, who, we all know, are, by and large, temporary foreign workers, migrant workers, who have come in and who have been with these greenhouses for generations, actually. They are family members, so you hire the father, you hire the son and then the grandson. It's really an important component of production there, but compounded by issues around increased hydro costs, regulatory burdens and failures in infrastructure management in southwestern Ontario. They are wondering how they're going to be able to make it, without any acknowledgement from the government that that is the position that they're in.

There is a lot left here for this government to address in our communities. We wonder if they actually were listening at all when they consulted with our communities. We certainly understand that there are pressures on both sides. Most definitely, an increase has to happen, but in consultation with those who are going to be directly affected.

1800

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for final comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the members from Nickel Belt, Essex, Nipissing and Beaches–East York for their commentary.

I must say to the member from Beaches–East York, to attack Mark Wafer is pretty rich. He should read the entire testimony. This guy is recognized as someone who is a champion for people with disabilities. He never said he was going to be cutting their jobs; he said their jobs are going to be cut across the industry as a result of this. But the member for Beaches–East York should pay more attention and get the whole facts. Mark Wafer is a champion for people with disabilities and has been recognized as such. I know Minister MacCharles would know that.

It takes me back to what I am trying to say, but he also said, in his testimony—Mr. Wafer—that to do this without an economic impact study is simply irresponsible. He says, “Consultation is going to be vital. The fact that the government went ahead with Bill 148 without doing a cost-benefit study, I think, was wrong. I think that we need to fix that now.”

That's what we have been calling for from the start. From the very first day the bill was tabled and we were asked questions, we implored upon the government to conduct an economic impact analysis to determine what the results and what the effects of this bill will actually be.

We only had so much time. We only really talked about the increase in the minimum wage, and that is really the biggest change in the bill there. There are many other changes in this bill that we support. But an economic impact analysis must be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank everyone for an excellent debate this afternoon.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

SCHOOL SAFETY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Whitby–Oshawa has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Minister of Education with regard to violence in classrooms. The member from Whitby–Oshawa has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant—in this case, the parliamentary assistant—may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member from Whitby–Oshawa. The floor is now yours, sir.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise today as the associate critic of education to discuss an issue that is unfortunately becoming more common in Ontario schools. Violence in Ontario's classrooms is putting our students and education workers at risk. No one should feel that their personal safety is at risk, and our schools should be a place of health and safety. At the same time, we should also be supporting students of all abilities in the classroom. This issue has become so prevalent in some schools in the region of Durham that teachers have been issued Kevlar-based clothing.

Now, I've had the opportunity to speak with several parents from the region whose children have been directly affected by violence in the classroom. For one mother, her child now suffers from anxiety as a result of the school environment and, as a consequence, it can be quite challenging to convince her child to go to school. For other parents, they question how their child could possibly feel safe when they consistently see education workers wearing Kevlar equipment.

Over the course of the summer, I took the opportunity to meet with several teachers' federations and associations. Each of them told me that violence in the classroom is one of their prime issues. For example, according to a survey from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, 89% of teachers in Ontario's Catholic schools have either experienced or witnessed some form of violence at work. Weapons are involved in 15% of violent incidents in schools, more than three quarters of which were classroom objects.

But, Speaker, violence in the classroom is also growing in Ontario's public schools. I recently met with

the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation to discuss a survey they had conducted of their members, and the findings were equally shocking: 30% of their members indicated they've received no training related to workplace violence; 41% of OSSTF's local leaders surveyed indicated that the number of violent incidents reported has risen; and perhaps most jarring, 55% of members indicated that their employer often pressures them not to report a violent incident.

Also, in January of this year, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario issued a call to action to address violent incidents in schools. This call to action included recommendations to the Liberal government: stronger funding and resources for special education; a comprehensive approach to supporting children's mental health; proactive supports from both the Ministries of Education and Labour to ensure school board compliance with health and safety legislation; and better health and safety training for education workers.

Given these collective findings from Ontario's school systems, there can be no doubt about the magnitude of the problem of violence in Ontario's classrooms and the need for demonstrated, meaningful action. This is ultimately why I raised this issue last May, and why I will continue to do so inside and outside of this Legislature.

I'm talking about the need for more services to address children's mental health as well as the need to ensure that funding for special needs is also allocated to front-line support services, to help ensure the success and well-being of every student.

Classrooms are meant to be places of learning where teachers, like my daughter, encourage their students to explore the many parts of the curriculum. At the end of the day, teachers should be able to teach, students should not be afraid to go to school and parents should be confident in their children's safety and opportunity to receive a high-quality education.

Speaker, Ontario schools are in distress. Education workers are doing all they can, but do not have the appropriate supports.

I'd like to thank the teachers' associations and federations for helping to build and maintain a culture of health and safety.

In closing, I want our education workers as well as our students of all abilities, when they enter into a school, to feel safe. We owe them no less.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to thank the member from Whitby–Oshawa for his comments. I agree with him that any incidents of violence have no place in our school system, and it's unacceptable to all members of the school community, including students, teachers and education workers. They are entitled to be in a safe environment, Mr. Speaker. We agree on that.

I was a school board trustee for some 11 years, and we always had violence to a certain degree in our schools. It's always unacceptable. As a school board trustee—we had measures in place. We had incidents where we try to

protect our workers within our schools to make them feel safe, but we got pushback at times from parents because we don't want our schools to look like an armed camp and we don't want the attire that the support workers within our schools wear to look intimidating to students. We know that over time equipment has changed and society has changed and safety is of paramount importance to us.

Mr. Speaker, I know the member is alluding to more support. I would like to let the member know that the Special Education Grant is projected to be approximately \$2.8 billion in 2017-18. This represents an increase of approximately 2.5% since last year—and we'll never decrease spending. It has always increased exponentially from year to year.

The member opposite will be happy to know that the Durham District School Board, which encompasses a part of my riding, is projected to receive over \$98 million in funding for special education only for the 2017-18 school year. It is important to note that this funding is enveloped so that it can be put towards protecting and improving special-education programs, services and equipment, ultimately providing more support for students and staff.

For this coming year, we are providing an additional \$290 million targeted for additional teachers and educational workers to support special education and other staffing priorities. This includes the hiring of approximately 25 additional teachers and 51 additional educational workers for the Durham District School Board, resulting in more staff to support students with special-education needs and students at risk.

I'd also like to let the member be aware that irrespective of what the opposition or the third party may think, Ontario has one of the best school systems in the world. Actually, three weeks ago I had the opportunity to meet with Senator James Rosapepe from Maryland, and he came here to see what Ontario is doing so well and why our education system is top-notch. I asked him why he came to Ontario. He said that there are three jurisdictions, Thailand, Denmark and Ontario—Ontario was closer to Maryland so he came here to see what we are doing right. So whatever the naysayers may say, we all should be proud of the system we have in Ontario, and we should build Ontario up.

Having said that, we know there is a problem. I, like the member, have met with support workers, educational assistants and parents over the summer and they told me that a part of the problem is not only staff—staffing is not the issue; it's training. To that end, we are working with the working group on provincial health and safety to strengthen knowledge and access to information for staff on violence prevention, as well as ensuring reporting requirements are easy to access for staff. We are also providing training, and we'll provide additional training as required. So that's a key component: training. As one educational worker said to me, "An increase in staff would only allow kids to have more of us to beat up or to spit upon."

The crux of the matter is that we need more training for support workers, and that's the way to go. So, Mr. Speaker, we're working on that, and we know it's a problem. As I alluded to earlier, our support workers and our teachers should have a very safe environment, as well as our students, when they enter the classroom. So I agree with the member that it's unacceptable, the degree of violence in the classroom. It's something that the gov-

ernment is addressing, and it's something that we should all work together on and find out solutions to the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House now stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1814.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac
Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Hon. / L'hon. Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Hon. / L'hon. Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of International Trade / Ministre du Commerce International
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Seniors Affairs / Ministre des Affaires des personnes âgées
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
MacLaren, Jack (IND)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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 / Président: Vacant
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Ann Hoggarth
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 permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Granville Anderson, Lorenzo Berardinetti
James J. Bradley, Wayne Gates
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Amrit Mangat, Jim McDonell
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Ross Romano, Monique Taylor
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
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

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
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

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Grant Crack, Jennifer K. French
Ted McMeekin, Lou Rinaldi
Mario Sergio, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Lorne Coe, Bob Delaney
Vic Dhillon, Joe Dickson
Harinder Malhi, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley