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Mercredi
13 septembre 2017

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 13 September 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 13 septembre 2017

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR WORKPLACES, BETTER JOBS
ACT, 2017

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 12, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It is my pleasure to get up and spend an hour talking about 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.

I was here yesterday and I listened intently to the Minister of Housing and the Minister of Labour, as well as to the member from Nipissing—

Mr. John Yakubuski: Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Right; there you go.

Mr. John Yakubuski: That's me.

Ms. Cindy Forster: That's right.

It was interesting. Certainly from the government's perspective, everything is great and we're doing all these wonderful things for all of these workers in the province. From the PC perspective, they raised concerns about the minimum wage and its impact on small business across the province.

I can tell you that I was part of that whole process, certainly initially when the Changing Workplaces Review started. We tried to participate in that process, which took place over about two years, but MPPs were shut out of that process. If you weren't making a presentation, you weren't even able to be there as an observer. So that led to a long and tedious process where we had to collect the submissions from the various presenters from across the province because even those presentations

weren't available to MPPs as they came out. As MPPs representing your various constituents in your ridings, and your party and your caucus, how do you make decisions on legislation if you aren't even privy to having that information?

After that, we moved on to review those submissions. Then the initial report came back and then the second report came back. Eventually the Liberals decided, during the long, hot summer of 2017, that they would do a Liberal road show. That show was about going out to 10 communities across the province to kind of kick off the election campaign and talk about the good things they were going to do for the workers here in the province of Ontario.

From my perspective and from the NDP's perspective, the legislation just doesn't go far enough. Clearly, the Liberals have had almost two decades—17 years, 18 years by the time we go into the election in 2018—to make workplaces better for the workers in this province, to improve working conditions and to improve the home/work-life balance, all of those kinds of things. They've had 17 years to do it, but they chose not to do it until eight or nine months before a provincial election. The Tories had eight years, actually, before that, to improve the lives of workers in this province, but they chose to freeze the minimum wage. The Liberals as well didn't do very much until the end of their term in terms of minimum wage increases, and clearly did nothing else.

The Labour Relations Act, the Employment Standards Act, none of those acts have been looked at, other than, I would say, during the Mike Harris years. Mike Harris and the Tories went in and actually stripped important things out of the Labour Relations Act, like successor rights, like people terminated during an organizing campaign having the right to go to the labour board to try and be reinstated. Those things were removed from the Labour Relations Act, and that certainly negatively impacted not only organizing in this province but the ability for workers to be reinstated to their jobs and to be able to support their families.

The NDP believe that, although Bill 148 goes in a certain direction which is good for workers, they could have gone much further, and they should have gone much further. So we put forward a package of amendments to deal with during the clause-by-clause back in August, and each and every one of those amendments, with the exception of one or two, were voted down by the Liberal government. Things that would have made the working lives of people in this province better were voted down.

The amendments that we would have proposed were five sick days for every person in this province. In the

government's Bill 148, they are proposing just two paid sick days here in the province of Ontario for workers. That would include anything that you are off work for, so it could be sick leave, it could be bereavement leave, it could be domestic and sexual violence leave—just two days. We heard from a number of medical officers of health and a number of community health centres during our tour across the province that said that two days is not enough.

We saw yesterday, when the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke was here and did his hour lead and wasn't feeling very well because he had a bit of influenza—we said that probably half of this chamber will have influenza by the time the weekend comes, because colds and flus and influenza actually take four to five days for people to recover from. The member is here again today, so we can probably all enjoy that on the weekend. Why the government, which is supposed to be protecting the workers in this province and the people in this province, would only provide for two paid sick days is beyond me, and certainly it was beyond the presenters that were out on our travelling road show in the summer.

0910

The 10 paid days for victims of intimate partner and domestic violence, which would have been provincially funded, was part of Peggy Sattler's private member's bill that she put forward a few months ago—the member from London West. She proposed that there be 10 paid days in situations that occur where women or others are victims of sexual and domestic violence.

I think it's unreasonable to expect that someone suffers an incident of sexual or domestic violence and they can't get a paid day off. We know that in those situations those women are generally isolated for a long period of time. In some situations, they don't have any money. They may not even have access to their own paycheque. So it is problematic to say, "Well, you can have the 10 days off, but you can't have any pay to go along with that."

There was a story that came out of the Windsor public hearings on this issue. The woman who presented was Sue McKinnon. She was the chairperson for Unifor Women's Committee, Local 444. She talked about a friend of hers who was in an abusive marriage with a partner for 23 years. Then she decided that she couldn't take it anymore. It took two more years after that. So for a quarter of a century she was in this abusive relationship. She had no idea where to go; she had no idea what to do. It was not physical abuse, but it was verbal and financial abuse. It was August 26, 2007. She had three teenagers, 14, 16 and 18 years old, who were living with her at home. She left with one basket of clothes, three children and a van. She went to a women's shelter because she feared for her life and she feared for her children's lives, Speaker. Later that night, her partner opened up the gas line and blew up their house, which insurance didn't cover because he was convicted of arson and he was the co-owner of the house.

A week later, she had to get a restraining order because he left the hospital against medical advice. She was

afraid all the time. She was left with nowhere to live and very little money. The debt from the marriage caused her to claim bankruptcy six months later because her part-time wages were being garnished to pay the mortgage for the house that blew up. She was homeless, and for weeks she lived in a shelter. She didn't have any money to find a place to live, but for the kindness of the people in the neighbourhood who knew her children. They managed to find a place that was vacant and allowed them to stay until she was able to pay the rent. She had to call in for a leave of absence from her job to rebuild her life, and she lived on unemployment insurance for three months, which wasn't even covering the waiting period because there was no money coming in during the waiting-period time, that two-week period when you actually have to wait for unemployment.

If any of you have ever collected unemployment benefits: Although the waiting period is two weeks, the federal government does not do a very good job of actually providing enough workers in the system to make sure that you get those cheques on time. I know many workers who often wait six or eight weeks to actually get their unemployment insurance benefits to start.

Anyway, she spent her days going to counsellors, to lawyers, to victim services, talking to anyone who could help her and her children. She had to go back to work, but every day that she went back, she was afraid of losing her job. She had to call in to go to appointments to take care of her kids, who were traumatized, and so was she. Losing a day's pay for someone like her was very discouraging. She was going through all of this domestic violence, restraining orders on her husband, having to get to all of these appointments with her and her kids and then having to worry about, at the end of the day, "How am I going to feed the kids?"

This is a quick quote from her: "I'm lucky I'm one of the survivors and I made it with the help of the women's advocate at my workplace; she helped me more than she knows."

Unions have strongly prioritized negotiating language in collective agreements to protect both the survivors of violence and their co-workers, but we must ensure that the language is carved out in the Employment Standards Act.

That's a little story about why the member from London West's private member's bill, which proposed 10 paid days, is important to victims of sexual and domestic violence. I think we heard from 200, 210 presenters over the 10 days of the public hearings. Probably everyone who spoke to this issue recommended that there be up to 10 days off with pay.

The other thing that the NDP proposed to the clause-by-clause, as amendments to that, was three weeks of paid vacation after the first year of employment, up from two weeks. The reason we proposed that is because there are so many temporary workers in this province, and what we heard from the people who were presenting when we asked them questions was, "How many temporary workers do you think ever last in a job—"

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Seven conversations going on, on that side.

Continue.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker. I was speaking about the three weeks of vacation, which the NDP is committed to, after one year for all workers in this province.

Currently, the Employment Standards Act—and it has provided for many, many years two weeks of vacation after one year and no bump-up after that period of time.

The government, in Bill 148, proposed that you get three weeks of vacation if you've been with the same employer for five years. Well, that is not the reality of working life in Ontario today. There are thousands of temporary workers in this province who will never see three weeks of paid vacation because they're never in the job long enough to actually achieve that. Most people who are in a stable job may already have that in their collective agreement, if they belong to a union. But those workers who are not unionized and who are in temporary or precarious work will never see those three weeks of paid vacation. That is why the NDP believes that our amendment to increase vacation to three weeks after one year for all workers is something the government should have looked at.

The next thing that the NDP proposed, and that every worker, workers' advocate and union who submitted to the changing workplaces panel and who submitted to us during the public hearings—probably, between those two processes, there were over 300 submissions. In every situation, whether it was the Workers' Action Centre, whether it was a union, whether it was a community health centre or a community legal clinic, they asked for card-based union certification for all workers, and it is beyond me why the government did not do this.

The government is now putting a greater divide between sectors of workers in this province. The construction industry, for a number of years, has had card-based certification. It made sense for them. Now the government is saying, "Well, we're going to expand that, but we're only going to expand it to community health workers, some of the service workers in the service industry. We're not going to do it for every worker in this province." The government well knows that workers in unions generally fare better. With a collective agreement, they have representation; they have rights; they have the ability to actually negotiate a collective agreement. It is discriminatory, in my view, that they didn't extend this right to everyone.

0920

Up until the Harris government, we did have card-based certification for every worker in this province, and it worked well for probably 50 years. It was under the Tory regime in the mid-1990s to the early 2000s that the card-check certification process actually ended. The NDP is proposing that the government go back and have a look at that and extend what they've put into Bill 148 so that it actually applies to all workers in this province. It would be a good way to make it easier for people to unionize.

I know that the government heard from employers who were opposed to card-check certification, but there's a saying when you work for a union or are a unionized member: The only employers that get unions are those that deserve them. If you are a good employer and you treat your employees with respect, if you do well by them and they do well by you, then people may not find the need to unionize.

Speaker, I'll tell you, you know that I worked for many years as an organizer with the Ontario Nurses' Association representing nurses and I did active organizing full-time for about a six-year period. In my experience, it was never about the money or the benefits when people actually joined a union. It was always about having a voice and feeling respected by the employer. That is generally what led to people coming forward to join. It often was not about, "Well, that hospital over there or that nursing home over there is making a dollar an hour more." It was about the actual nurses or other health care workers feeling disrespected by the employer.

So I would urge the government to go back and look at Bill 148 and extend card-check certification to all.

What goes along with that card-check piece is the right to actually go to interest arbitration after a campaign, where you're not able to achieve a first collective agreement. That is probably the most difficult part of the organizing campaign when it's over, to try and get both sides at the table and to get that first collective agreement into place. I can tell you that that should be the right for all workers in this province who choose to join a union.

I'll go back to the example, and I've used this before in this House, of CarePartners. CarePartners is a community health organization, for-profit, run by a former registered nurse. I think she's got 14 agencies across the province and makes a lot of money every year in this sector. So the RNs, the RPNs and the support staff at CarePartners in Niagara, in Haldimand, and in Brant joined OPSEU about two years ago. They went into a campaign. They were successful in joining the union. They tried to negotiate a first collective agreement, and they were on strike for 10 months trying to get a first collective agreement. So we have employers in the health care industry who look after patients and clients across this province actually putting people out on strike.

Had the legislation been in place for first-contract arbitration, within a short period of time that would have forced people back to the table to negotiate a settlement. It would have forced Linda Knight, I think her name was, from CarePartners—these people would not have been on strike; patients would not have been waiting for care in the communities of Niagara and Haldimand; and things would have gone much smoother. It's just a tool to make sure that when you organize into a union, you can end up with a collective agreement in a timely way at the end of the day. The parties can then develop a labour relations relationship and they can get on with their lives. The employer can get on with their part of the business, the workers can get on with doing the work, and life goes on and becomes easier for everyone.

Once again, the NDP think the government should go back and revisit card-check and first-contract arbitration for all.

The banning of replacement workers goes along with this. We've seen some very long strikes over the past couple of years. There was, I think, one strike that went on for almost two years, just outside of Toronto. We've had strikes across the province that have led to a lot of disruption. The government should ban replacement workers.

When we did have a no-scab piece of legislation—no replacement workers—strikes were very short. I think the data is that 97% of all collective agreements get settled in any event, negotiated without any strike. Perhaps you take a strike vote. So there is a need to reintroduce that legislation as well.

I want to spend a little bit of time on the temporary worker piece.

The government—the Minister of Labour—talked yesterday about the improvements that they've made to the bill for temporary workers—equal pay for equal work. You won't make less than the person working beside you. But in fact, that is only in terms of wages; it's not in terms of benefits. So you can be working beside someone for two or three years on that assembly line, or wherever temporary workers happen to be, making clothes on a knitting machine—like Jenny, who was here yesterday—and the temporary worker could be making \$5 an hour less than I'm making. In addition to that, I might have health benefits, and I might have the ability for the employer to match my RRSP contributions, or there may be some kind of a pension plan available. But for that temporary worker, there is nothing available.

The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton introduced a private member's bill maybe a year ago, and it would have looked after a number of issues around temporary employees and temporary agencies. That bill, I believe, passed second reading, but of course, it sat in the hopper at some committee and it has never seen the light of day.

There are many more things. If you read the Toronto Star article last Saturday, Speaker, there was an undercover reporter who went into—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A bakery factory.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —a bakery factory for a month. The story is horrific, if you read it. It talks about the underground economy that is happening here in the province of Ontario. Really, the Liberal government isn't doing anything to get rid of those temporary agencies.

In this particular situation, this woman went in, and she had no health and safety training. This was a factory where there had been deaths in the past. People were going to Money Mart to pick up their paycheques. I mean, how could you be working in a factory, with 400 or 500 employees baking for consumers in this province, and you're getting your paycheque in a brown envelope at a Money Mart; you have no health and safety training, even though we have an Occupational Health and Safety Act here in the province, and the government isn't doing anything about it? A newspaper reporter could find out about it. Why don't we have any enforcement?

0930

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: She went undercover.

Ms. Cindy Forster: She went undercover. She was there for an entire month. Although there are some measures in the act around equal pay for temporary workers, those kinds of things, there are many more things that are still missing for temporary workers. I think that just that story itself calls on the government to go back and revisit Bill 148 and maybe put some of these temporary agencies out of business.

The other piece of that is the issue of compensation. The government did not open the workers' safety and insurance board act as part of this Changing Workplaces Review, which is problematic because with temporary workers that are being sent into workplaces where there could be dangers and there's no health and safety training happening, it is very problematic for the workforce. The government, when they were opening up the ESA and they were opening up the Labour Relations Act, also should have opened up the workers' safety and insurance board act.

Yesterday, we had the injured workers in here; the Ontario injured workers group were in. We had Jenny Zhou here. She had worked in a knitting factory here in Toronto. That was one of those situations that if you had temporary workers working in that knitting factory where Jenny worked, they were sent in by an agency and they were injured. That employee has no recourse to collect compensation from the factory where they were working. It all now falls upon the agency.

If I go back to that Toronto Star report, the reporter and other employees who actually worked in that bakery factory said that there was no agency. There was no office. It was a phone in an apartment somewhere in Toronto. They never even saw the agency. They were interviewed over the phone. They got a phone call. They never met anybody from an agency. They never signed any papers to be hired on as a worker like you or I would do when we go in to take a job. There's much more work that needs to be done, certainly, around that.

I want to go back to the issue, as well, of dependent contractors. We had proposed an amendment during the clause-by-clause to update the definition of a dependent contractor under the ESA. The government chose not to do that and Bill 148 failed to do that. That is leaving tens of thousands of workers without real labour relations protections.

We tabled an amendment that would have included a definition of dependent contractor, and it would have given thousands of workers who find themselves in new and unique definitions of employee-employer relationships. I can tell you that both the Liberals and the Conservatives voted that down, so we're leaving a wide swath of workers out there vulnerable, without much protection.

I want to talk about successor rights as well. I talked about that briefly when I started this morning. If I go back to my organizing days and talk about successor rights—and that was something that Mike Harris and the

Tories stripped out of the Labour Relations Act in their day. It's something that the government hasn't really addressed in Bill 148. What happens is—and I'll go back to health care, because that's what I know—in the community, we have all of these for-profit agencies in the community. I'll use an example. I think this was up in Sarnia, where we went up and we did an organizing campaign. I think it was registered nurses in a community setting, so it was like a home care setting, and we organized those nurses. Calmcare was the employer. Well, within a couple of months, before we even got a collective agreement, Calmcare folded. Now ParaMed is in Sarnia, and we had no successor rights, because the Tories had actually removed them from the Labour Relations Act, so we had to go up and organize that group again.

It makes it very difficult in those situations for workers who have a constitutional right to join a union or to even get a collective agreement. Or, they may get a collective agreement—we've seen it at Walmarts across North America, and we've seen it in the banking industry, where a particular Walmart unionizes, and all of a sudden, Walmart says, "Well, I'm going to close in this little community, and that's the end of it." So there's no more union, and the workers have no jobs.

So universal successor rights that actually protect existing collective agreements and representation rights in instances where businesses change ownership were sought by many labour groups and many advocacy groups. I think it applies to this whole precarious temporary workforce, as well. Bill 148 limits this only to building services—so those people who clean, secure, or are in food service—and home care and temporary help agencies.

New Democrats tabled amendments that would have extended successor rights to all workplaces, matching standards in all other provinces across Canada, including Manitoba. We're the only province that doesn't have universal successor rights. The Liberal government, who say they care about the employees in this province and that they're in tune with the workers in this province, are actually discriminating once again, not unlike in card-check certification, by only extending those successor rights to certain sectors.

And I can tell you, it extends far beyond that. The unionized ground workers at Pearson airport have suffered for years. They have a staff that is employed by the more than 300 companies operating out of Pearson airport. Over the years, they've seen long hours, low wages and increases in accidents. The baggage handlers do everything from loading the bags to signalling the pilots on the runway and prepping the air conditioning and water before the planes take off. These people multi-task: They're under pressure, they hoist up to 200 suitcases in a half hour and they race to meet the flight deadlines before starting all over again on the next plane—and you know how many planes go in and out of Pearson.

"Many workers quit after only a few months, because of the low starting wages—less than 12 bucks an hour." Well, hopefully they're going to see this minimum wage increase. They have very tough working conditions. "The

turnover rate among baggage handlers for Menzies, one of the ground-handling contractors at Pearson, was a staggering 160% last year according to the machinists' union, IAMAW, which represents the ground crews.

"Swissport, Menzies' competitor, and the biggest ground-handling contractor in the world, says 400 of its 500 ramp workers, as they're called, quit last year, making it increasingly difficult for companies to do business at Pearson." It's called a "workaholic culture," where supervisors beg workers to stay overtime to help understaffed ground crew.

"Contract flipping is endemic at Pearson, with both airlines and the Greater Toronto Airports Authority ... switching ground handling and security contractors every few years to cut costs, making airport jobs amongst the most precarious in the country.

"Even Swissport Canada supports the campaign for a \$15 minimum wage," with the president quoted as saying, "It creates a lot of instability in the operations" with those low wages, and "we've seen the problem grow." He said that every time a ground handler quits it costs the company \$3,500 in training costs. "With 400 ramp workers quitting last year, he says it cost the company \$1.4 million. 'I can tell you going back to 2014, the problem was in a different category than today. Today, it is serious.'"

So there's another reason for successor rights to be extended to all workers in this province. This is a group that clearly the government is missing.

0940

I've heard rumours, too, around the Legislative Assembly and in the other buildings associated with Queen's Park where there are cafeterias—the Macdonald Block and other buildings—that those workers are perhaps about to lose their jobs. I think they're with Eurest, the contractor that employs the workers. They're going to be doing some major renovations in those buildings over the next few years, so we have workers that are going to be losing their jobs there as well. That is problematic. I raise it as an issue here today because, once again, probably 30% of the work in this province is precarious.

One of the other things that the NDP is recommending is ending the exemptions in Bill 148. There are lots of exemptions, Speaker. There is an exemption under the minimum wage for servers and for workers who are under the age of 18. We know that, in many jurisdictions across Canada, there is no exemption. Why should liquor servers have a different minimum wage than every other worker in this province?

During the hearings—as I said, we went from Windsor to Thunder Bay, right across this province—we heard from many restaurants and bar owners who said, "The tips are good and you have to consider the tips." But we also heard from individual workers. We stayed at a hotel in downtown Ottawa and we went into the bar. We sat and talked to the bartender one evening, my Queen's Park staff and I. We asked this young man—he was about 23 or 24 and this was his full-time job. We said, "What do you make in tips, young man?" He said, on a

good night, that he made 20 bucks. Ottawa is a busy city; people are out doing lots of things. Maybe people come in for a drink. Many of them sign it off to their room and don't leave a tip. He said that some nights he's made zero or he's made \$5.

We heard from some small businesses that are really going to be hurt, perhaps—mom-and-pop businesses—by the minimum wage increase and are going to have to find ways to address their business model to take that into account. The NDP believes that the government should have no exemptions for the minimum wage, and that workers, regardless of whether they're serving liquor or regardless of whether they're under 18, should be paid the same minimum wage as everyone else.

Another example I'll give you is a young woman who has been working in my office. Her name is Caitlin. She left home when she was 16 years old; she's been on her own since. She's a fourth-year political science student at Brock University. She has been supporting herself since she was 16 years old. Why should Caitlin have a part-time job, support herself going into university, pay for her own apartment and her own food and be paid much less than somebody who is over 18 years old and that she's working with? We believe that there should be no exemptions there.

The government is also proposing, in Bill 148, exemptions for collective agreements. Where the government has proposed improvements to the Employment Standards Act, their bill is actually going to exempt workers across this province who have a collective agreement until their collective agreement expires. I can tell you that a number of people came forward to talk about that during the public hearings in the province. I remember speaking to one young man from a labour union who was there. I don't believe he was presenting, but he told me that there are collective agreements in this province that are as long as 10 years now. The norm is probably three or four years, but there are some collective agreements that are as long as 10 years. So why should workers not be entitled to the improvements to the Employment Standards Act for the duration of their collective agreements when every other worker in the province will see those improvements?

Unions were also asking for greater access to information during organizing drives. I don't think that's a big ask. The employer has access 24 hours a day, if they're in a 24-hour operation, or eight hours a day, depending on the model of their business—they have access to those employees all the time. So when a union goes in to do a campaign, they should have some access to employees—to at least the names and email addresses and phone numbers of employees—so that when they're in the campaign they can get to each and every person, just like the employer does. If the employees, at the end of the day, after they've heard the union's story and the employer's story, choose not to join the union, then so be it; but if they choose to, then that's the way it should be.

You'll know, Speaker, that during organizing drives, in my experience, you can start out thinking—I remem-

ber when I organized McMaster Hospital before it was part of Hamilton Health Sciences, down in your riding. You start out and you've got this secret little inside committee and outside committee, and you've got reps on the units trying to figure out how many nurses, in my situation, there were to do an organizing drive. Each one of them comes to you—"Oh, there are 30 on this floor, and there are 20 in this area"—and then you file your application, and at the end of the day you find out, well, you missed 200 people, because there are all these clinics and things that nobody knew about. That's problematic for unions, and it's problematic for workers, frankly, who want to join a union. So I think there should be more access to employee lists so that if people choose to exercise their freedom to join a union they in fact have the right to do so.

The last piece that I wanted to talk about was the—

Ms. Catherine Fife: The temp workers?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes, the temp workers. I wanted to focus a little bit more on the temporary workers. It is really a huge problem here in Ontario. We've heard—back, Speaker, to you—out of McMaster University out of your area and the study that was done about precarious work and the impact of that work on people and on families here in the province, and how people are trying to juggle two and three jobs. That happens, as well, in health care. I spoke about the for-profit health agencies in this province and the impact of that on a number of things today.

We lost a lot of good jobs in the health care industry and in other industries when the PC government was in power. They opened the door for privatization.

0950

I'll go back to what I know, and that was in health care. Unfortunately, at that time, a lot of the work being done in community health care was being done by VON, the Victorian Order of Nurses, and it was being done by Saint Elizabeth, which were non-profit agencies. Those workers, during those days, were being paid an hourly wage. They had a pension through those agencies. They had cars. Those agencies had cars donated by car dealerships in some cases. They would do charitable fundraising. They had travel time. They would have a patient load just like you would have a patient load in the hospital or in a nursing home.

Today, that health care work is piecemeal. It's like working in a canning factory. I tell you, I worked in a canning factory when I was 15 or 16 years old in Niagara-on-the-Lake, canning peaches and cherries; you name it. Under the Tory model, when they tendered out the work—so I go back to my original story about CarePartners—VONs across the province lost most of their work to CarePartners, a for-profit agency that provides home care in a piecemeal fashion. The faster you can get out of the client's home, the more money you make. For the workers, if you happen to not be able to get out of the client's home quickly, you lose.

I'll give you a situation that actually happened in my own home when my husband was having home care and

he had a PICC line. One day, this young woman came—a nurse—and she was trying to flush this PICC line. Normally it would take five minutes to flush a PICC line. I think she was being paid \$17 for the visit. This is a registered nurse being paid 17 bucks for this visit. She was there for an hour and a half. She made \$17 for an hour and a half, and she had no travel time between.

Interjection: Shameful.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It really is. It really is shameful.

I think that you need to look at some of these things that have happened under the PC government and rolled over to the Liberal government, and the Liberal government has done nothing to end it. These for-profit agencies are still in operation. It impacts not only the clients but it also impacts the workers. It impacts the budget as well because we now have money going to pay profit.

In CarePartners' case, for example, I believe that during that strike that I talked about Linda Knight made \$750,000 that year, I think, right? I don't know how much her company made. Her company may have made \$1 million; I'm not absolutely sure. I don't remember the numbers exactly. But that's money that could have gone to actually reduce waiting times for home care in our province.

I think I want to finish my few minutes by asking why the government didn't open up the Occupational Health and Safety Act either. I think that if you're doing a Changing Workplaces Review and you're actually looking at the Labour Relations Act and you're looking at the Employment Standards Act, you can't separate those things from the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

I spoke about this on Monday, I believe, when I was up for 20 minutes on the wetlands bill. I talked about the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority in my area. It actually flows into your area, Speaker. You have members from Hamilton sitting on that conservation authority. I talked about the widespread harassment. This kind of flows into this bill because we saw, in that undercover Star interview about the bakery factory, the harassment of temporary workers. We know that that is widespread in those kinds of situations as well.

But here at our local conservation authority, where we have about, I think, 40 workers, there was a study done through OHCOW, the occupational health agency that's funded by the province, and 86.5% of the workers actually filled out the survey, and 60% of the workers reported that they had been harassed or sexually harassed or verbally harassed by the management of the NPCA. That falls under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Unfortunately, the legislation that currently exists has no teeth, so while you can report workplace harassment, in fact, there aren't orders that flow out of it. If you slip on water that's spilt on the floor in a hospital and you break your hip, you can file a complaint under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and an enforcement officer will actually come in and write orders and might even fine an agency \$50,000. But if you report workplace harassment, you're harassed more. So you're harassed more by the employer, and, in fact, there are no teeth. The enforcement officers cannot write orders about that.

Now, we've heard that the government is going to hire, I don't know, 120, 130 more enforcement officers. I'm hoping that some of those enforcement officers are going to be to enforce the Occupational Health and Safety Act, because it is direly in need of addressing the kind of poisoned situations like what is happening here at the NPCA. I wish the labour minister was actually here so that he could hear this, but I'll have that discussion with him outside of here.

To wrap up, I'm just going to go back to what the NDP proposed as amendments so that it's clear what we think the government needs to be looking at and needs to address once we finish this debate.

A universal minimum wage with no exemptions for any category of worker, including employees who serve alcohol: The NDP certainly supports the minimum wage at \$15 an hour. We're on record as actually reporting that we would implement a \$15 minimum wage when elected, and I think that was reported in April 2016.

Five paid sick or emergency leave days for all workers, and an additional five unpaid days: I talked about that briefly, about how normally it takes four to five days for people to get over even a common cold. Many workers in this province, particularly with single heads of households—single mothers, single fathers, perhaps working in jobs where they have no benefits—need to be able to take a sick day and recover so that they can get back to work, and, of course, not infect the rest of the workers in their workplace.

Ten days of paid leave for victims of intimate partner or domestic violence, which would be provincially funded: It wouldn't fall on employers to pay, it would actually come out of the government coffers. If the government, if the Liberal government is really concerned about victims of sexual violence and domestic violence, then they should pony up the money and make sure that that is available to people so that they can get out of those situations.

Three weeks' paid vacation after the first year of employment, up from two weeks: People have had two weeks' paid vacation as long as—listen, I've been working for, I think, 45 years, full-time, and that has never changed that I can remember. So I think it's time that people working in all kinds of situations, working in precarious work, working 12-hour shifts, working in dangerous situations, get three weeks of vacation after one year. The model that the government has introduced would be three weeks after five years; although it will work for some people who are in stable employment, it certainly is not going to work for the 30% of employees and workers in this province who are in precarious jobs.

1000

Card-based certification for all workers: I think it was the number-one ask for every group and every individual from the workers' side who either made submissions to the Changing Workplaces Review, made submissions to various ministries, made submissions during the public hearings and gave their testimony during the public hearings. The government needs to go back. The NDP

believes that it is discriminatory to only offer this to certain sectors.

The government talked about how, “Well, this is for workers who don’t see each other. They’re not in the same workplace. They don’t get together. It’s hard to organize.” Well, there are all kinds of sectors like that. I think about the IT sector and virtual home offices where people never see each other. I think this can apply to probably 70% of jobs today. Nobody is working in that traditional office setting anymore, either, and so I think that we need to take another look at card-based certification for all workers.

The banning of replacement workers: I talked about that at length, about how it prolongs strikes and how only 3% of all collective agreement negotiation processes go into a strike. It is not a far jump for the government to ban replacement workers.

Defining in the ESA “independent” and “dependent contractor,” capturing millions of workers; ending the exemptions for collective agreements; and successor rights to prevent contract flipping: We know that that happens in many sectors as well, not just the areas that the government is proposing for it to be in.

Greater access to information during organizing drives—and the last piece, of course, is the minimum wage: Servers and people under the age of 18 should be paid the same as every other worker in this province with respect to what the minimum wage will be.

With that, Speaker, I am done. I hope the government has been listening and that they go back and revisit Bill 148.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the member from Welland for her very thoughtful, meaningful presentation. I just want to say that this is a very significant piece of legislation. It’s the first time in over 25 years that the Labour Relations Act has been modernized, and we’re also updating the Employment Standards Act, so it’s quite significant. As you know, the bill has already gone out to 10 different cities across the province, with very meaningful deputations from people from all walks of life. There were small business owners, big business owners, chambers of commerce, union representatives, people representing the \$15 and Fairness campaign—and a lot of good recommendations. There was criticism and there was praise. It was a very, very thoughtful number of deputations.

Plus, this was preceded by two years of the Changing Workplaces Review, where they brought in unions and they brought in employers. It was a very significant review, and this is what it culminated in: is legislation, Bill 148.

I know the NDP is saying it should go further. I remember—I think it was in Kitchener—the chamber of commerce in Kitchener came in and had a quote saying that if this Bill 148 passes, this will make Ontario the most radical, left-wing jurisdiction in the Western world. That was the quote. I do not know if you were there, Mr. Speaker.

We’re basically trying to do something to ensure that this wage gap that exists in Ontario, the income gap—there are a lot of people doing very well, and God bless them, but there are a lot of people that work two or three jobs and still can’t make ends meet, put food on the table and pay the rent. We’re trying to at least get them to be able to—they want to work. We’re trying to help them.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to congratulate the member from Welland.

As a former mayor—you can certainly tell you were a former mayor. You had good, thoughtful planning in your presentation. It really was very detailed and very thoughtful and well-presented, so thank you for that, member from Welland. You did a great job.

You opened an hour ago with the fact that there was a road show. You and I both sat, along with the member to my immediate left here, who can barely speak today—thankfully—and what we heard in North Bay was a good example. You talked about the fact that we were on a road show and that here was a chance for the government to listen to the many people from all sides who presented.

I watched our local Cogeco news that evening, and I can say I wasn’t all that shocked at the interview—because I witnessed it myself. The one person from the business community who they interviewed said, “Here, I was nervous to come and present to this committee, and all of the Liberal members never even looked up once. They had their heads down on their BlackBerrys the entire time.” That was his first time ever—shaking; I remember watching him. I’m not surprised that that was his entire interview: that he said he felt like he was talking—on one side, there was nobody listening; they never once looked up. That was the hearings. That was the road show that you were referring to. So it’s no surprise, then, that we come back here in the Legislature, after this, to the mess that we’re in today.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It’s always good to take my seat once again on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

On this bill, I’m very much looking forward to engaging with a lot of the community members and organizations throughout Algoma-Manitoulin, to hear from them in regard to the challenges. I’ve engaged with them over the course of the summer.

I do want to commend the member for Welland for her dedication over the course of the summer. It took a lot of work and it took a lot of time to go out and listen to a lot of the delegations that were there. In her comments, you hear the frustration, not only that she felt, but that stakeholders felt—and we just heard it from the member from Nipissing as well—that people felt when they came and gave their words as far as what they thought should be included in this. She touched on a variety of issues: the minimum wage, the victims of domestic violence. These victims—just think of the courage that they have to build

up within themselves in order to take that step, to make that decision, in order to better their lives. For there not to be an opportunity for them to step away, get into a safe environment, and providing them with the framework that they require—it's just unfathomable that it's not in this bill.

Card-based certification, the anti-scab legislation: I'm looking forward to having my full comments about this, to talking about the personal experience of my son, who is in a union environment. Thank goodness that he's in a union environment and that he has a dad who was a union representative before, who has been helping him through this process.

I do want to tell the member that when she brought up the comments of not having included the Occupational Health and Safety Act as part of the discussion on this bill, I noticed there were some nodding heads on the government side. There's still a potential and there's still an opportunity there. We would like to see those changes be included and make sure that those individuals are included in this legislation.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this morning to support Bill 148.

I want to thank the member from Welland for her thoughtfulness and also for sharing some of those critical incidents from the paper and other stories with us this morning.

I want to correct the member from Nipissing in his comments this morning. I was in North Bay, and I was taking notes the entire time. So for him to accuse this member of reading her BlackBerry the entire time—that's not correct. I know it is not fair for the member to accuse the government. Furthermore, that's not true, okay? I was taking notes.

The more critical piece about this particular proposed bill is the fact that for the first time we are making significant reform when it comes to labour law. This is a good thing. The other piece is, I'm very pleased to hear from the third party supporting the bill when it comes to the issue of—I won't call it a minimum wage increase—a living wage to ensure that the most vulnerable are given equal opportunities.

I am very disappointed that, to this day, the official opposition party continues to challenge and oppose the bill that ensures all Ontarians have fairness—and, most importantly, the concern that people consistently said. The member from Nipissing never spoke this morning about the young person who came before the committee in North Bay supporting the university students, okay?

I was in North Bay; I was in London; I was also here in Toronto for those public hearings. For the member opposite to accuse this member—

Interjection.

Ms. Soo Wong: That's not true. That's absolutely not true. I know, because some of those witnesses came to me to thank me for listening. So for him to accuse this member: That's not accurate.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to thank the members from Eglinton–Lawrence, Nipissing–Pembroke–Renfrew—oh, you didn't speak, did you, John?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I thank you anyway—Algoma–Manitoulin and Scarborough–Agincourt for your comments.

I missed two pieces that I wanted to touch on. I won't go into any detail, but—deeming. The WSIB Act should have been opened as well to deal with that issue of deeming. If the government does nothing, people are going to see a reduction in their compensation benefits. As the minimum wage goes up, their benefits go down and they move further and further into poverty because they don't necessarily have a job. They are phantom jobs to deem you, to cut benefits, right? So there's that piece.

Then there was equal pay, equal work. We heard from university professors across the province. There's nothing in the legislation that is going to assist those contract university professors who are making 40% less than tenured professors because we didn't change the definition to “similar work” in the legislation.

I want to say that work has become much less stable over the last 20 years under the Liberal government. In fact, part-time jobs have increased by 20% under Kathleen Wynne. I don't think that the Conservatives are going to fix that either. Certainly Patrick Brown has stood with Stephen Harper and he stood with Tim Hudak when he announced the 1,000 job cuts in the last election. He supported Stephen Harper along the way. But it has taken the Liberals 17 years, just going into an election campaign, to actually bring forward reforms that they could have brought forward in a much shorter period of time.

I ask you to look at the NDP's amendments and make real improvements for the workers in this province. If you really care about workers and if you're really in tune with workers, some of these things wouldn't be too difficult for you to achieve.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. It's time for introductions. We have with us a former member, Jane McKenna, who represented Burlington in the 40th Parliament. Jane, welcome; thank you for joining us.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Jacqueline Dobson, a great community member and a good friend. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to acknowledge page captain Rachel McNeilly today, and here with her in

the gallery are sisters Theresa and Kat McNeilly and their aunt Linda Durant. Welcome to Queen's Park, and congrats to Rachel.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to welcome in the members' gallery Jennifer Franks, the former director of the Augusta Ballet and chair for membership and engagement at the Gardiner Museum; and Andrew Vittas, faculty of industrial relations at Queen's University. Welcome.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just want to welcome Houman Tahavori, who is here in the gallery with us up above. He's a wonderful volunteer and one of the young emerging leaders in Etobicoke Centre. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: While it is not an introduction, I would like to encourage members to attend the Ontario organic council reception this evening. They will of course be serving all things Ontario, and we would love to see members of provincial Parliament join us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you; an introduction to a group, which is fine.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome, from Bruce Power, the world's largest nuclear power plant, Taylor McKenna, who is here in the members' gallery.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We have, from Ontario Good Roads, Rick Champagne, Scott Butler, Antoine Boucher, Rick Kester, Chris Traini, Rob Burlie and Rick Harms.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Also from the Ontario Good Roads Association today, we have Tom Bateman from the county of Essex. Welcome, Tom. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: From my riding of Barrie, I would like to welcome Roman Plawiuk from the Organic Council of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do have an introduction. In the Speaker's gallery today with us are the 10 interns for the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme. Please join me in welcoming Daryl, Matthew, Cassandra, Josef, Danielle, Ana, Shireen, Harmeet, Jaskiran and Mackenzie, and also the director Peter—he's not there, so I'm not introducing him.

The interns will spend the next 10 months working with MPPs, who are thrilled to have them here in the assembly. I personally have had interns, and I can tell you that it's a great experience. I urge all eligible members—which the Speaker is not—to participate in this exceptional program. Welcome to the interns, and thank you for being here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Today the Premier is testifying before the Sudbury bribery hearings, where Liberal ethics and integrity are on trial. Given that leadership starts at the top, few are surprised to hear reports suggesting ethically

questionable dealings leading to the approval of a GO station in the minister's own riding—a \$100-million GO station that a Metrolinx business case had already rejected. Yet when Metrolinx said no, the minister approved it himself in a news release.

Mr. Speaker, a simple question: Did the minister override Metrolinx for his own personal political gain?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I appreciate the question from the member across the way. I have spoken on this issue in this Legislature a couple of months ago in response to a question from that same member. I've also had the opportunity to speak to the issue publicly on a number of occasions. I will repeat now what I've said in the past on this issue.

Firstly, from my perspective as Minister of Transportation but also as someone who has lived and worked in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area my entire life, I believe fundamentally that it's extremely important for governments at all levels and of all stripes to invest in critical transportation and transit infrastructure as communities grow and evolve. We will see, in parts of the GTHA, as that member knows, explosive growth over the next number of years, and we want to make sure that we're building in the right place at the right time.

What I've said in the last number of days, of course, is that Metrolinx is not to engage or enter into any contractual obligations with respect to either the proposed Kirby GO station or Lawrence East GO station. I understand that Metrolinx will be conducting work in that regard. That was in media reports earlier today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes, back to the minister: Speaker, there is something seriously wrong when the minister is approving backyard GO stations that Metrolinx in fact warned would drive commuters out of their train seats and back onto the road. Even the Toronto Star's editorial board strongly condemned this minister's decision, saying, "Politics rather than good policy has determined transit decisions in this region. Politicians, with little or no regard for the evidence, declare what's to be built, often in a crass effort to garner votes." Who is the politician they speak of? That would be the Minister of Transportation.

Will the minister come clean and admit that the Star was right and that this was just a crass effort to garner votes?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I appreciate the follow-up question.

First, what I didn't mention in my original answer but will say now is that, among other things and notwithstanding the fact that I do passionately believe in the importance of investing in transit infrastructure as communities, including my own, grow and evolve—again, there will be explosive growth in this particular part of York region over the next 10 to 15 years—I think it's also important to note that the proposed Kirby GO station is roughly 10 kilometres away from the riding in which I intend to run in next year's election campaign.

At the same time, as I said in the second half of my answer to the first question, I have now sent a letter to the

chair of the board of Metrolinx to stipulate explicitly that Metrolinx is not to enter into any contractual obligations or essentially spend any money on either the Lawrence East or Kirby GO stations until the Metrolinx staff and board are satisfied that stations both at Lawrence East and Kirby are justified. I understand that the chair has responded with a letter saying that they will have that work completed by their February 2018 board meeting.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the minister: The minister should just come clean here today. No further review or ministerial assurances that he'll listen to Metrolinx's station recommendations going forward can cover up questions as to why he didn't listen to those same experts when his direction tried to drive us backward. Continued attempts to dance around political-influence questions only breed more concern for Liberal ethics and corruption of the process.

That same Toronto Star editorial declared that if the minister "can't demonstrate to Ontarians that that is not" politically motivated, "he will have left no doubt ... that he is unfit for the job." Can the minister explain: Was this decision politically motivated, or is he simply unfit for the job?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I've now served in my role for about three and a half years as Minister of Transportation. I've taken many questions from leader Patrick Brown and the member from Kitchener-Conestoga in this Legislature on transit and transportation. And I have to say that I have never heard that member question my fitness to serve when I and our government invested in Kitchener-Conestoga with the GO station at Breslau. I didn't hear Patrick Brown or the member from Kitchener-Conestoga suggest that I didn't have fitness to serve when we doubled the gas tax for 99 communities across the province of Ontario to support public transit. I didn't hear that member or any member of the opposition complain when we invested in highways in the north, LRTs in Hamilton, subway expansions in every corner of the GTHA—

Interjection.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex, come to order.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I didn't hear any of those members complain when we talked about building GO stations in Stoney Creek, for example; investing in critical cycling infrastructure. I only hear it today—

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. New question.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Yesterday when a reporter asked how business should handle their labour reforms, he responded, "I

think they could look at pricing." The Liberals actually want to raise prices across the board. Everything is about to get more expensive.

By just how much money does the minister want to raise the price of everything from gas to groceries?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that question. What I want to raise is the standard of living for people who are working 35, 40 hours a week or more, working two and three jobs and still not being able to get by.

What I want to know is—I know where the third party stands on this—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: —I know where the government stands on this. I don't know from day to day where that party across stands. I don't know where the member stands. He's telling us yesterday that the Leader of the Opposition supports \$15 an hour; the Leader of the Opposition tells us that he doesn't support \$15 an hour.

We stand firmly in the corner of working people in the province of Ontario, who are working hard, as I said, 35, 40-plus hours a week and still can't pay all the bills. We're going to change that. That party needs to support us on this.

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the minister: This statement from the minister is further evidence that the Wynne Liberals are out of touch with small businesses and families. Their reckless approach to the minimum wage is that it's their way or the highway. They refuse to listen to any independent experts who are advising them to exercise caution—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ancaster, come to order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The chamber of commerce and the Financial Accountability Officer have weighed in. The Liberals have ignored their independent advice, advice that warns that these measures could actually hurt Ontarians and lead to job losses of between 50,000 and 185,000 jobs. Why does all Ontario have to suffer when the Liberals try to gain votes?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: We know there's a long list of opinions on this issue and there's a long list of studies and a long list of literature. It comes from Ontario, it comes from across Canada and it comes from across the entire continent. The Leader of the Opposition and the labour critic can try and ignore those studies.

We've had 53 economists step forward; people who were fellows of the Royal Society of Canada and two former presidents of the Canadian Economics Association—one who was used by Jim Flaherty and the Conservative government—have stepped forward and said that Ontario is on the right track.

This government knows that it's on the side of working people in the province who are working, as I said, 35, 40, 50 hours a week—

Interjection.

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

Finish, please.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's time that the minimum wage in this province reflected the reality of what it costs to live in this province. It's time for the opposition party to come clean on where they stand on this issue.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the minister: When faced with that evidence from the FAO, the minister chose to double down. He said, "The moral and economic evidence supporting this fundamental belief is without question. We will not back down from this commitment."

Actually, the moral and economic evidence says otherwise. First, morally speaking, the FAO confirmed that this plan does not target "low-income families," and "raising the minimum wage would be an inefficient policy tool for reducing overall poverty."

Second, the economic evidence from the FAO shows a minimum of 50,000 job losses, while the chamber of commerce says it could be as many as 185,000.

Why is the minister ignoring the real, moral and economic evidence? Why not stop being so reckless and conduct their own economic impact analysis?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: As I said, Speaker, you can go out and you can find a variety of opinions on this issue. We've looked at them all.

What I'm saying is, it's not good enough to claim your support of a \$15 minimum wage, as the member has done personally, and then not have any plan, and have a leader who's saying he's going to vote against it and have a labour critic who says he's going to vote for it. It's not good enough for the Leader of the Opposition to say, "I don't think anybody in Ontario can live on \$11 an hour," and then not propose to do anything about it.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker.

There's a bill before the House that proposes to raise the standard of living for 30% of the people who live in this province. The opposition party either votes for it or against it. I hear they're voting against it. They should come clean.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Deputy Premier. This morning, the member from Nickel Belt and I joined Noah Irvine, a grade 12 student from Guelph, who lost both of his parents to mental illness. In fact, he and his grandparents, Donna and Ross Irvine, are with us in the chamber today.

He is here to call for the creation of a ministry of mental health and addictions in Ontario. Since the loss of his

parents, he's been advocating for an end to the mental health care crisis in Ontario. Having a ministry dedicated to mental health and addictions will go a long way to ensuring that mental health care gets more resources, more funding and the focus and attention that it absolutely deserves.

Will the Liberal government commit to this important step in helping people who are suffering and don't have access to the services they need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First, let me say hello to Noah and his grandparents and say, I think on behalf of the Legislature, but certainly for me personally and as Minister of Health, how sorry I am that you have been through such a tragic personal experience. I want to not simply acknowledge that but also applaud you for your courage and your leadership.

Applause.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The leadership that Noah has shown to this province and to the country in the face of such enormous personal tragedies I think is really inspiring to all of us. I look forward to speaking directly in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I've heard from so many people who need urgent care. In fact, I'm sure that every single member in this Legislature has heard from people who urgently need mental health care and addiction services, but they're stuck waiting months and months on waiting lists. I've listened to parents who are trying desperately to get mental health support for their kids, but thousands and thousands of children cannot get the care that they need. And I've heard tragic stories, like Noah's, of families who have suffered so very much because their loved ones could not get the mental health services that they need in their province.

Why won't the Liberal government commit to giving struggling Ontarians the help and care that they need?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We are committed to mental health. In fact, there can be no health without mental health. I view them—I think we all do—as two sides of the same coin. When we look at physical health and mental health, they are two sides of the same coin.

We need to invest in and pursue with vigour and intent to the same degree our efforts on mental health as we do in physical health in this province, and we have a long way to go. We have a long way to go.

1050

We have benefited from many sources, many experts, those with lived experience as well as experts across this province and this country, to help us shape our investments. We have created—and this is the third year where we have a mental health and addictions leadership advisory council chair, Susan Pigott, who provides advice directly to me on an ongoing basis on what investments we need to make. That has resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars of new investment that specifically target those areas where we know where the pressing need is and where we need to make a difference.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Everyone who needs access to mental health care and supports should be able to get it when they need it, and that is not happening in this province; it's not happening today under this Liberal government. If the Liberal government and the Minister of Health refuse to commit to creating a ministry and helping Ontarians, what exactly is the government planning to do to fix the mental health care crisis in this province? Because the efforts to date have not been adequate and they have not been effective.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think the entire country recognizes that our efforts as a nation have not been adequate or sufficient, whether it's the federal government, whether it's the individual provincial governments, territorial governments, municipal governments. But there has been a societal change. The stigma that still exists has been lessened. The recognition of political leaders that these investments need to be made, that recognition exists.

We have a long pathway in front of us, and I want to applaud the NDP for coming forward, because I understand and I agree with and I believe in their motivation. It's the same as mine: to create an environment, a health system, a society where there is no stigma against mental health, individuals suffering from mental illness, and where we do make the investments on par with physical health and we do see it as part of the same whole in terms of the person's being. There can be no health without mental health, and my commitment to Noah and his grandparents is to achieve that goal.

Interjections.

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

New question.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Deputy Premier. Seven years ago, MPPs from all parties came together on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. They heard heartbreaking stories from across our province and they made urgent recommendations seven years ago for changes to help save lives in this province. It has been seven years, and those urgent recommendations have not been implemented. My question for the Acting Premier is simple: Why?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We deeply appreciated the work of the individual MPPs who sat on the select committee, and the many hundreds if not thousands who were part of a process that provided that good advice. Within this Legislature today, there are a number of MPPs who sat on that select committee.

In fact, just about 10 days ago we had the inaugural cabinet committee meeting of the new mental wellness table that is comprised of cabinet ministers and MPPs to give an even higher priority to our mandate on mental

health. One of the first orders of the day, in fact, was to look at some of the specific recommendations within that select committee report. We have now, through the advisory council as well as this committee, I think, the experience, expertise and determination to make a further difference.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It may be that a committee got together 10 days ago, but seven years ago the recommendations came forward, and now, seven years later, the mental health crisis in Ontario is even worse than it was then, not better. The Wynne government, like the Conservatives before them, has swept problems under the rug and allowed mental health care to slip through the cracks for far too long in this province. When will the government take action that is needed and, actually, action that was recommended seven years ago to help people struggling with mental health and addictions in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Even as recently as this year's budget, we made a significant 140-million-new-dollar investment in mental health services, a budget that that party voted against. That included—and they're saying "children's mental health." It included the creation of youth wellness hubs, which provide a wraparound support service for children and youth up to the age of 25 across this province, those integrated services that are so important to restoring wellness.

We were the first province in the entire country to do so, to fund structured psychotherapy, therapy such as cognitive behavioural therapy, which has highly proven effectiveness and can be delivered through a number of disciplines and has a dramatic impact, particularly for those who have mood disorders.

These are the sorts of investments that we made this year that that party voted against.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Mental health and addictions care in this province must be a priority, not an afterthought. Not an afterthought. We need to bring it out of the shadows and give mental health care the attention and the focus that it needs to be able to provide the kind of services and the kind of care that people in crisis and that people overall deserve in order to be well in the province of Ontario.

One crucial way to give mental health and addictions care is to have a stand-alone, separate ministry: the ministry of mental health and addictions. That's what we would do, Speaker, if we were in government. We are committed to creating a ministry of addictions and mental health. Will this government do the same? Will they make that commitment today?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to—I believe it's being debated during private members' business tomorrow afternoon. I do know that the party opposite looked to their sister NDP in British Columbia, which a couple of weeks ago announced a stand-alone ministry on mental health and addictions. I applaud, understand and agree with their motivation. It's to make sure that we have integrated, coordinated care.

We have more than doubled our investment in mental health. It's just plain wrong to suggest that this government isn't absolutely committed to prioritizing mental health in our investments, whether it's in supportive housing or whether it's in youth services. There are a myriad of investments that we have made, approaching a quarter of a billion dollars over just the last several years alone. We are committed to this.

I look forward to the discussion tomorrow, because I think that any discussion about mental health, particularly in this Legislature, is important and positive and helps to reduce and eliminate the stigma that's still out there.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Laurie Scott: To the Minister of the Status of Women: It's clear that this government would rather have us focusing on issues like cannabis than on fighting human sex trafficking. I spent the past two days at an excellent conference on human sex trafficking hosted by the Ontario Provincial Police in Barrie. It was a gathering of some of the best experts working to address the ongoing crisis that now reaches every corner of Ontario. But, sadly, not one minister bothered to show up.

It's the same story across the province. Police officers, community organizations and individuals are working day and night to stop traffickers and to save the lives of victims without adequate provincial coordination, information or resources. Mr. Speaker, how can the Wynne government claim to be acting on this issue when they don't even bother to show up?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today and talk about this very important issue. I want to thank the member opposite for this important question.

I want to start out by saying that we on this side of the House will not take accusations of being inactive when it comes to actually getting out there and doing the job. I am not going to go through the list of things that we did this summer, but I can tell you that I visited the Canadian border institute. I also talked to people across the province about various issues when it comes to women and women's issues and sexual violence and harassment.

Absolutely, human trafficking is a devastating crime that violates human rights, and I want you to know that we are working hard every day to put a stop to it and to help survivors and to put in place the pieces that they need in order to heal.

1100

That's why we launched an across-government strategy to end human trafficking. I'm not sure. Perhaps, the member opposite isn't aware that we did this. We absolutely did it last—

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: Again to the minister: It's time to stop the shell game. What do we see on the ground? Ministers missing in action, delays in the rollout of funding for victim services, under-resourced police departments. They've had years to act but have little to show for it,

except for press releases and conversations. That just doesn't cut it.

Mr. Speaker, does the government not see how important this issue is, or do they just not have it in them to lead this fight against human sex trafficking?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I am happy to talk about what the government is doing on this side to help the survivors of this deplorable and brutal crime. Let me start by telling you that we don't just talk about it; we move money forward and we move money into actual pieces that are building support and services. Let me tell you, enhanced funding of \$6.65 million to 47 community-based partners—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Both sides, come to order, and the member from Dufferin-Caledon.

Finish, please.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: It is easy to sit on that side and criticize and wander around, talking about how we're not doing anything. We are doing something. We're working very hard with our partners. We're not just listening; we're actually putting our actions into words and into actual legislation: \$72 million, working with all of our other ministries to deliver a strategy that will take care of this problem on a real, fundamental basis.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Acting Premier. Earlier this year, Sears Canada filed for creditor protection and began the process of closing stores and liquidating assets. So far, 59 locations have been closed and nearly 3,000 jobs have been lost. We have a Sears in Oshawa and our community is watching anxiously.

Now, Sears Canada has filed a petition to terminate its vastly underfunded pension plan, leaving thousands at risk of losing their pensions. There are 18,000 retirees who depend on this pension plan.

What does the government have to say to the Sears pensioners who are worried about supporting their families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. It's certainly an issue of great concern for all of us when any company is faltering on their commitments. We've done this on a number of other occasions. Ontario is the only province that offers a pension guarantee.

We've recognized that the assets of the pension must be supported. We are working to ensure that Sears, which does remain an operating company at this point, is continuing. FSCO, which administers the PBA, including the pension benefits guarantee, is also monitoring the situation. May I add that it does not affect the assets in the pension plan.

We are taking the steps necessary. In the supplementary, I'll advise more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Back to the Acting Premier: This government is failing pensioners. Last year, the Pre-

mier—actually, everyone in this whole House—supported my motion to protect pensioners by prioritizing them during bankruptcy proceedings. Now the Premier is saying that there isn't a role for government. Now she doesn't seem to think they deserve her help.

Why did the Premier go back on her word and decide that pensioners should be left to fend for themselves?

Hon. Charles Sousa: That's total nonsense. The member opposite recognizes exactly that the federal government is in charge of the prioritization of pension assets.

We, on this side of the House, through our reforms, are increasing the pension guarantee. We've made reforms to support our pensioners and retirees. We've taken the steps necessary in our last budget around this very issue, which you did not support—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance, wrap up, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We're continuing to do our best to support our pensioners and retirees. We're taking the steps to reform our pensions all across the province to protect their interests. The member opposite knows that, and she voted against them.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Yvan Baker: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Growth. Minister, Amazon recently announced that it wants to open a second North American headquarters, and has opened the bidding to large cities in North America. Amazon said that the campus will cost up to about \$5 billion and will create up to 50,000 new jobs.

Now, I know from my business experience prior to entering politics that as the presence of companies increases in a particular sector, this also increases the likelihood of investment from other companies in that sector, so the winning city in this case is not only going to attract the 50,000 jobs and the investment, but it could attract additional investments in the years to come.

I actually think this is a great opportunity for Ontario. I know there's a lot of buzz about Amazon being able to locate its headquarters here in Ontario. Minister, could you tell this House and the people of Ontario what you are doing and what we are doing to attract Amazon here to Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is absolutely right: This is a huge and exciting opportunity for Ontario. We recently created our Ontario Investment Office, and they are already fully engaged on this, working closely with our municipal partners in developing what will be a compelling pitch for Ontario.

Allan O'Dette, our Chief Investment Officer, is working closely with Ed Clark and a group of Ontario business leaders on this very important initiative. We're going to leave no stone unturned on this. We're going to fight for this investment. We're going to do what we need to do, to do everything we can to land it.

I have no doubt, because of the investments we've made in our people, because of the investments we've made in driving and transforming our economy, that Ontario is the best location for this, but let's stay grounded on this. We're asking an American company now to make an investment of a head office, a significant investment, outside of the United States. In the current climate, this is going to be challenging, but we're up to that challenge and we're going to do everything we can to try to land this for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Minister, for that answer.

As you know, prior to being elected, I was in business. I was a management consultant, and one of the things that I did when I worked in consulting was to advise companies on important investment decisions like the one Amazon is about to make about its second headquarters.

I know from experience that there are many criteria that companies consider. One of the most important criteria that they consider when expanding their business is knowing that they will have access to skilled workers, the talent they need to grow their business. In fact, Amazon has indicated that it is trying to attract and retain talent focused in the software development and related fields.

You mentioned in your response to me just now that we have fierce competition for this bid. With all the cities and jurisdictions competing for this kind of investment, what are Ontario's competitive advantages, and what can we do to attract businesses like Amazon to our province, to Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member hinted at it: Because of the investments we've made in transforming our economy, because of the investments we've made in growing one of the most talented workforces anywhere in the world, Ontario already is a global tech leader, and that gives us a leg up. Just ask companies like Facebook, Thomson Reuters, Google, IBM and many others that have located offices here in this province. We're second now only to the Silicon Valley when it comes to the number of ICT companies. That's 20,000 companies doing business here in the province of Ontario. We graduate 40,000 science, tech, engineering and math students.

And we're not done. We continue to make investments in the new economy. We're investing in AI, autonomous vehicles, 5G technology, quantum computing and cybersecurity. Because of the investments we're making, we are growing this economy in the new economy, and I have no doubt but to say that Ontario is the best location for Amazon and any other company that wants to get ahead in this global economy.

TAXATION

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Acting Premier. While the Premier herself is spending time testifying today at the Sudbury bribery trial, the Ontario PC Party—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock for a moment, please. We're weaving in and out of getting

close to mentioning people's attendance, and that is not an acceptable practice in the House. Find another way to say it, please.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, the Ontario PC Party is going to be here today defending small businesses, farmers and health care professionals. That's why, a month ago, I wrote to this government about the federal Liberal government's recently proposed changes to professional corporations and the unintended negative impacts it will have on patients, taxpayers and doctors.

This government has spent three years in an aggressive attempt to contain physician costs, to the extent of imposing unilateral cuts and using heavy-handed tactics designed to embarrass doctors. These federal cuts are another attack on doctors. It has to stop.

1110

Will the Acting Premier and the Minister of Health tell their Liberal friends that enough is enough?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the member opposite recognizing that the federal government has taken upon themselves a bill to look at small business and the corporate taxes that go for consultants and others, and the sprinkling effect. We're allowing the federal government to do its job. We, ourselves, will be in constant contact and recognize that it will have an impact on many of us here in the province of Ontario as well as across Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Acting Premier: These federal Liberal changes will create financial barriers for doctors to make investments in their practices. In addition, the changes will negatively impact the retirement planning process and, most importantly, will make it very difficult for doctors to continue to pay staff and office expenses during absences such as maternity leave or illness. This government gave the doctors the ability to incorporate in lieu of fee increases. If the federal tax changes go through, it will have massive financial implications on the province, and patient care will suffer.

Will the Acting Premier call Prime Minister Trudeau today and tell him to stop his Liberal download of costs to our health care system?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite is requesting and asking about an item that is in the federal government's purview. We recognize that impact.

But I can tell you what we can do in this House and in this Legislative Assembly: I can ask this member why he doesn't support the tremendous amount of increases that we've provided for our health care, the amounts we've provided to support more doctors—

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Yakubuski: Attach a note to a new pair of socks; he'll get it right away.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time. I might have gone to a warning because he knew that I had quiet.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite and the other member who asked the question have the ability to support our initiatives that are progressive and enable us to support doctors. They're voting against those measures. They've done so consistently. We will continue to support our doctors and our health care by investing more in them. That we control on this side of the House.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Good morning. Criteria for Ontario's disaster recovery assistance program were written in the last century. Sewer backup claims during torrential rainfalls aren't covered. In our area, we had more than 6,000 homes flooded recently. The Minister of Municipal Affairs took a look and says that few of them will qualify under the existing guidelines. Well, duh: Let's change the guidelines.

Speaker, climate change is real. Torrential downpours causing sewer backups are the norm in this century. When will this government accept this and change the rules so people can get some help as they try to recover from natural disasters?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Thank you to the member for the question. He's accurate. I had the opportunity to be in Windsor yesterday for the second time within a year, unfortunately, related to significant flooding in that particular community.

At the heart of his question is private insurance for sewage backup. Before I made the comments publicly yesterday and last week when we activated the program, I checked: It was made known to me that insurance is broadly and readily available for sewage backup in these instances. I don't think that most of the public would expect the province of Ontario and all of their taxpayers to be supporting or paying for something for which there is private sector insurance readily available. At the end of the day, the program is there to deal with overland flooding. The reason it deals with overland flooding—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Since I'm not 100% sure, I think somebody avoided a second time.

Hon. Bill Mauro: The reason the program is structured the way it is structured is to deal with overland flooding, and that is because there is no readily available private sector insurance to deal with that particular issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, some private insurance companies have cut off people without warning. Some of them cap claims at ridiculous amounts.

Municipalities have been building better sewers for years. Windsor's mayor says that floods from this last storm caused \$175 million in damage in his city alone. Such storms are hitting all across Ontario. The evidence is in. We need a decision.

When will this government do the right thing, change the guidelines and offer real hope for people affected by natural disasters?

Hon. Bill Mauro: We recently changed the program to relieve local municipalities of the requirement to have a local fundraising effort and a committee, so we've made it better already.

At the heart of the issue, this is ultimately about infrastructure. I would say quite openly and proudly that there's probably not another provincial government in this country that has a better record of investing in infrastructure, including in cities like Windsor, since we came to government in 2003. The most recent example of that is the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund, first announced by the federal government as a 50% federal-50% municipal fund, except many municipalities would not have been able to tap into that. I worked very hard, along with the Minister of Infrastructure and our Premier, to bring 270 million new dollars into that fund—the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund—from the federal government to help our municipalities, even more than we have been for a great number of years, to deal with their infrastructure issues. At the end of the day, that's what this is about.

I made the point, Speaker, that we all have a role to play. Individuals can avail themselves of programs that are available; municipalities need to plan their communities appropriately and invest in infrastructure; and the province and the federal government also have a role to play.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Part of our government's plan to build a fair and open economy is enhancing quality of life by investing in the schools, hospitals, roads and public transit that people in Ontario expect and deserve. But we know that provincial governments alone cannot make 100% of the investments needed to address the existing infrastructure deficit and accommodate future needs. The federal government needs to be at the table as a reliable and flexible partner.

In my riding of Kingston and the Islands, I have had the opportunity to see first-hand the results of the federal-provincial partnership on infrastructure. Hello Future at St. Lawrence College is a project supported by the collaboration between the provincial and federal governments through the Post-Secondary Institutions Strategic Investment Fund. This successful partnership will help St. Lawrence College reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy usage on campus, which will result in positive impacts.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could he please provide the House with what the lay of the land is for federal-provincial relations on infrastructure in this province?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member from Kingston and the Islands is absolutely correct: Ontario is best served when different levels of government work together. We are glad finally to have a federal partner at the table with

a plan to spend \$186 billion nationally on infrastructure. While it is less than the \$190 billion that Ontario alone is investing, it is a level of investment we haven't seen from the federal government in a generation.

We worked very closely with the federal government on its phase one investments, which have resulted in over 1,300 clean water and waste water projects and over 600 public transit infrastructure projects. We have just started negotiations to bring an additional \$11.8 billion of federal investment to Ontario.

As the Premier said at the Council of the Federation meeting in July, Ontario wants the federal programs to be flexible and to build on our existing joint investments. It is critical that we work together—all orders of government—to get this right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My thanks to the minister for his response.

I'm glad to hear that after decades of underinvestment under previous governments, we finally have both a provincial and federal government committed to spurring economic growth and enhancing the quality of life by investing in infrastructure. It's already clear that the productive relationship that Ontario has built and fostered with the federal government results in every riding across this province, including every riding held by a member of the opposition, receiving that advantage.

I myself have had the chance to work alongside my riding's federal member of Parliament, MP Mark Gerretsen, to announce some of the projects the minister mentioned. While we have made significant progress on the infrastructure file, we know that the work is far from over. There is always more work that can be done.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please give the House insight into next steps for negotiations with the federal government?

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Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. Our government is making the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history, an unprecedented \$190 billion over 13 years, and we want to maximize every dollar. That means working with the federal government to align spending wherever possible.

Next week, I will be co-chairing a meeting of Canada's infrastructure ministers where we will continue discussions on phase two investments. We are advocating for programs that respect past investments and existing priorities. We are optimistic that the federal government's commitment to some additional flexibility will occur. Negotiations are expected to continue through the fall and winter, with the goal of concluding by the date set by the federal government: March 2018.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario are best served when all orders of government work together.

WASAGA BEACH

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. For years I've been contacting this government over and over again about the deteriorating

condition of the beachfront in Wasaga Beach. Various issues have been identified, including overgrowth of vegetation, care of the washrooms, piping plover nesting areas, and the list goes on and on. Residents are concerned, tourists are concerned, the town is concerned, yet nothing is being done by your government. Over 2,300 people have recently signed a petition asking the government to fix these issues.

Wasaga Beach is a jewel in this province. The Guinness Book of Records calls this beach the longest freshwater beach in the world. From a provincial standpoint, I cannot understand why more attention is not being given to its proper care and maintenance.

Will you do the right thing and commit to finally resolving these issues?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you to the member for the question. I had a very good meeting with Mayor Brian Smith and the councillors from the area that looks after Wasaga Beach this summer at AMO. I can tell you that we provided some information back and forth together.

Number one, I did compliment them on 10 years as a Blue Flag designation for Wasaga Beach in this province. That's something we can all be proud of. Some of the beach items that the members brought up are beach raking and secondary park plan management; we discussed funding etc.

What I would like to say to this member is that there is a secondary beach plan that's been put in place. Ontario Parks continues to work very closely with the municipality. I know that all the gate receipts, which help provide for the services in any Ontario park, are put into this area. We continue to work with them. I'll address some of the details in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: In the letter I received from you just the other day about the lack of proper maintenance of the beach, you offered me a tour with park staff. Well, I don't need a tour in my own riding, Minister. It's insulting. You're the one who needs the tour. Local ratepayer associations have been asking for years that a minister actually come up and look at the beach and look at the concerns.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Brown has been there twice recently. For the first 15 years of my life, our family had a cottage at Wasaga Beach. I've lived there full—

Interjections.

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

Please finish.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I've lived there full-time for the past 25 years and recently I sent you pictures, actual pictures, of what's going on now, of the deterioration and degradation of the beach. My constituents and I don't appreciate getting the same form letter from you and previous ministers every time we raise our concerns. Frankly, we're

just tired of it. People in my riding want these issues addressed.

So, Speaker, I ask the minister: Will she join me on a tour and meet with the town—

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

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I've not only been to the beach several times in the summer but I visited in all seasons, including the winter.

I know that the secondary beach plan that we've been working very hard on, again, ascribes to the values of the Blue Flag designation. There are areas of that longest freshwater beach area that remain ecologically intact. We have the piping plovers that are nesting on that area and, recently, with the new secondary plan, we're allowing some light raking in that area. We're also allowing some reclamation of some of the beach sand that has gone away from that area to be put back on the beach. But one of the reasons we have vegetation on beaches is to prevent erosion so that we can maintain that fine sand there.

We are very proud of the work that they've done, and if that member and that party over there would help to vote for the investments that have been contained in our provincial budgets in the last few years—

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

New question.

BEVERAGE ALCOHOL SALES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Finance. The area around Larder Lake has about 1,000 residents. The town has one gas station, one co-op grocery store, two restaurants, several tourist lodges and campgrounds and, until recently, it had one LCBO outlet. In a northern Ontario tourist town, an LCBO outlet is an anchor store. Due to circumstances beyond anyone's control, LCBO could no longer stay in their current location. But instead of moving locations, they got out of Dodge. They abandoned the town. They abandoned the residents.

In response to our inquiries, the president of the LCBO stated, "There are other areas ... that are underserved where we can better allocate resources. While it is not as convenient, Larder Lake residents can purchase ... alcohol in Kirkland Lake and Englehart or online..."

Kirkland Lake is 27 kilometres away, Englehart is 45, and there is no Internet service in half the places. Does the minister agree with the president of the LCBO that maximizing profits for the LCBO should be the only basis on deciding where to locate a store?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. I also appreciate and applaud your advocacy and the letter you sent to both the LCBO and myself, recognizing the impact it has on your community as well as other communities across the province that do not have an LCBO.

I appreciate the fact that many do want the retail outlet to exist, recognizing the positive impact it has on a community. We also recognize that one of the reasons we came up with online delivery is to facilitate those communities that don't have access to an LCBO. Some of them do take an agency store and other aspects to provide service and convenience to consumers. It's also one of the reasons we've expanded into grocery stores and other means by which to expand distribution across the province.

But I appreciate your question. I know we are looking at ways to try to facilitate the community as they're impacted by this decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the minister: According to the president of the LCBO, rural Ontarians travelling 27 to 40 kilometres one way for service is reasonable. With this ratio in mind, many other outlets in my region are at risk. In fact, many outlets throughout rural Ontario are at risk under that ratio. The province, through the LCBO, has a social responsibility to all Ontarians, including rural Ontarians. Will the minister work with me and actually restore that social responsibility to the town of Larder Lake and ensure that all rural Ontarians in the future also have the benefit of the social responsibility of the government through the LCBO and aren't abandoned?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, the member talks about social responsibility and taking the precautions necessary to support our communities and our citizens who are not only looking for alcohol, but want to be doing so in a socially responsible way by having something like the LCBO and their staff to provide that service.

I know that Larder Lake, from my understanding, was closed as a result of safety issues, and I'm not sure as to the details why it was so, but I will continue to look into it and I recognize the impacts it has on any community that doesn't have access to an LCBO. They, of course, have access in other ways, and to some that means travelling longer distances based upon their location and the remoteness of their communities. But it is something that we are considering, we are looking at and, again, thank you for the question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, last year the Premier set an essential goal for this government: to make everyday life more affordable for the people of Ontario. While our economy is doing well, not every family is seeing that impact on their personal budgets. The cost of electricity had become a concern for many in my community. I heard from many people in the most rural parts of my riding, like Gores Landing, Morganston and Stockdale. I know the people of Ontario were eager to see the government take action.

1130

This spring, our government took a big step forward in ensuring that our clean and reliable electricity is afford-

able to everyone in Ontario. The fair hydro plan, passed last session, is a 25% reduction, on average, to all households in the province—no loopholes, no exceptions.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: When did the fair hydro plan begin to lower bills, and how will it help households across the province?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I want to thank the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for that question and, of course, for all of his hard work that he does day in and day out for his constituents.

Our government inherited an electricity system that was in disrepair. We invested \$50 billion in rebuilding the system and eliminating dirty coal from our generation mix. However, we asked one generation alone to pay the freight of these investments for everyone before and after.

That's why, this spring, we took action. We passed legislation which has, since July 1, lowered electricity bills by the full 25%, on average, for every household in this province. Under our plan, rates will increase no more than inflation for the next four years.

We're proud of the work that we've done and we're putting our plan into action to make life more affordable for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister, for that response. I know that this has been a positive initiative for the families and small businesses in my riding and indeed across the province. I can testify that I've seen the difference in my own bill. The 25% reduction, on average, will help to curb electricity costs for the people of Ontario across the board, while other programs provide the type of support that keeps our province fair and competitive.

However, there are also other elements of the government plan that provide additional support to particular communities who need it. Many low-income Ontarians take advantage of the Ontario Electricity Support Program, the OESP, which provides an on-bill subsidy for those who qualify for the program. I understand that under the fair hydro plan, the government has expanded this program.

Could the minister provide more details on the programs that are being expanded for the benefit of those who need it the most in our province?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, I just want to acknowledge the work that this member has done to talk about those who are vulnerable in his community and right across the province.

With our government, over the summer, the OESP program, for example, that helps vulnerable consumers has been expanded by 50%, with a maximum credit of now \$900 a year. And a special credit for those with unique electricity needs offers a maximum of \$1,300 a year.

Another program that was expanded over the summer under our fair hydro plan is designed to lower delivery rates; it's called the RRRP. This program provides a substantial subsidy that lowers distribution costs for those in the most expensive-to-serve areas of our province.

While the opposition chose to vote against expanding these programs to help people, I'm pleased to say that our fair hydro plan is providing real and substantial relief for everyone in Ontario.

INDIGENOUS LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Acting Premier: From August 10 to September 4, Labour Day, the main thoroughfare of Caledonia was blockaded, putting businesses and homeowners through psychological and economic hell. More specifically, many customers faced a six-mile detour, businesses lost 25% to 60%, and staff were let go or had their hours cut. Homeowners expressed concern about property values and compromised service from firefighters, police and ambulance. However, on September 1, your government announced it was standing down from dealing with the Caledonia blockade.

Acting Premier, what steps have you taken to arrange compensation, as has been done in the past, for Caledonia and area homeowners and area businesses?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Hon. David Zimmer: The member opposite is quite correct: There was a blockade that was put up a couple of weeks ago. Our ministry, the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, took that situation very seriously, as did the Six Nations elected council and the Haudenosaunee Traditional Confederacy.

I can assure the members opposite and everyone in this House that after a series of negotiations with First Nations, with the Ontario Provincial Police and with the various ministries that blockade was peacefully ended. I want to congratulate and recognize the hard work of the Ontario Provincial Police in working in a way that was respectful of the Six Nations, the Haudenosaunee and the government of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to allow the supplementary.

Mr. Toby Barrett: This past month was a nightmare yet again for people in the Caledonia area, and I've dealt with many ministries.

On September 2 a local newspaper reported that when a fire was set on the Southern Ontario Railway in Caledonia, a Caledonia fire truck was not allowed to pass through the barricade, not allowed to put it out.

On September 4, Labour Day, police attempted to secure Haldimand county Sixth Line at the bridge. Again, to quote another local paper, they "were sent away by protesters and ordered to take up a position further back, which they did."

We've seen this film before—no firefighters, no police, no customers in the stores. Caledonia now worries: "When will this happen again?"

Acting Premier, my question is: Are you working with the federal government, as has been done in the past, to compensate residents of Caledonia?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you again for that question. The point here is that 10 years ago there was a situa-

tion in Caledonia that went on and on and on, and there were real issues of public safety. This time, there was a blockade that went up and issues developed. But the point, again, is that all persons involved in the resolution of that blockade, be they police, fire responders, first responders, the ministry of indigenous affairs or the Ontario Provincial Police—it was resolved peacefully. That's progress. That's in the spirit of reconciliation.

We will continue to deal with issues involving matters that First Nations raise, wherever in the province. We will deal with them in a respectful way and in a peaceful way to a constructive resolution.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of the Status of Women concerning human sex trafficking. This matter will be debated—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's called respect.

This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Kitchener–Conestoga has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Transportation concerning GO station approval. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Question period being over, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I see that in the members' gallery there are a few representatives from the Ontario organics council. Just a reminder to members and staff that there will be a reception later on this afternoon. There's some good news that's going to come out of that reception. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I like teasers. That's good.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TERRY FOX RUN

Mr. Bill Walker: On Sunday, September 17, all of us, regardless of our ability or age, will have an opportunity to take part in the annual Terry Fox Run. For some people I know, this year's Marathon of Hope will be a special way to mark Canada's 150th birthday.

When our beloved Terry Fox set out on his Marathon of Hope in 1980, running a marathon with one leg every day that lasted 143 days and 5,373 kilometres, it was, in all honesty, considered wild—crazy, actually. But Terry

was motivated to show all of his strength, will and determination. Soon, his motivation to want to reach out and help others inspired people around the world. His tenacity and courage also made him a hero to countless Canadians, including myself.

For me, it's important to remember who Terry Fox was and what he stood for, which is to always inspire hope in people. He inspired me, like he has so many other people, and this is why I showed my appreciation by organizing the Warton Terry Fox Run for 10 years. I'm proud to say that the run continues, thanks to many dedicated volunteers.

This month, as we mark Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, we are reminded of our opportunity to build on Terry's hope and to continue his journey, which to date has raised over \$750 million worldwide, from Canada to Vietnam to the United Arab Emirates.

I mentioned in Monday's member's statement on childhood cancer the amazing work of Dr. Mark Greenberg, who founded the Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario. I previously talked about David and Maureen Jenkins' Maggie Project and Neal Rourke's work with the Coalition Against Childhood Cancer and with the Advocacy for Canadian Childhood Oncology Research Network. There is no shortage of people who follow in Fox's footsteps. So I encourage all of you to join in the fight and help build a world free from cancer. It is my hope that we will soon, for the dream of my hero Terry Fox, find a cure. "Somewhere the hurting must stop."

FIRE SAFETY

Ms. Cindy Forster: A Tim Hortons Smile Cookie can go a long way in raising fire safety awareness. Until Sunday, \$1 from every Tim Hortons Smile Cookie bought in Welland will be donated back to the Hope Centre for the 2017 Smile Cookie Campaign. The centre hopes to raise \$20,000 for the Port Colborne Fire and Emergency Services' smoke alarm program, helping to make sure homeowners have working smoke alarms. The campaign kicked off after a fatal fire claimed the lives of a family of four last December, including a two-year-old boy and his 15-year-old sister.

After meeting with the Port Colborne fire chief at a CKTB round table last spring, I asked the Office of the Fire Marshal how much government-paid advertising goes toward fire safety and public awareness. It turns out that the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services doesn't compile that information. Worse, they didn't have any data on smoke alarm compliance for Ontario homes either. Between 2011 and 2015, almost half of all fires in Ontario were residential. Between 2006 and 2015, fire fatalities increased from 72 to 83. Of those, 12 of the alarms didn't operate and 14 had no alarms.

I stand today to call on the government to put fire safety awareness first and make sure it isn't offloading their responsibility to our non-profit community agencies, who could use those dollars elsewhere.

Lastly, to the Hope Centre: Thank you for your invaluable and remarkable services as you continue to provide for our communities.

COLUMBUS CENTRE

Mr. Mike Colle: During the summer, the North York Community Council unanimously rejected an application submitted by the Toronto Catholic District School Board that called for the demolition of the Columbus Centre and replacing it with a new facility. It was totally rejected by the council, and I support that rejection because this application by the Catholic school board destroys a centre which is the historical and heritage home of the Italian Canadian community in Toronto. In fact, it also houses the world-famous Carrier Art Gallery, the Alberto Di Giovanni Library and the architecturally significant rotunda.

I implore the Minister of Education to support the community, support this cultural centre and support the North York Community Council as they reject this application which calls for the demolition of the heart and soul of the Italian Canadian community. Keep our Columbus Centre, keep our Carrier Art Gallery and the library, and ensure that the sacrifices of hard-working Italian Canadians are not forgotten in Toronto, for they built this centre and they don't want to see it demolished by the Catholic school board.

ORGANIC LABELLING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Later today, I will be co-sponsoring a private member's bill with MPP Tabuns that will ensure confidence in organic labelling across Ontario.

Many of you will be familiar with the federal organic standard, the Canada Organic Regime, for organic products sold across Canada. The Canada Organic label ensures that products with the logo are accredited as organic. However, the standard does not apply to products sold exclusively within Ontario. Five other provinces—Manitoba, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Quebec—have addressed this inconsistent use of the word "organic" by adopting their own provincial standard.

Consumers and producers often pay a premium for organic products because producers have gone through an arduous accreditation process. Consumers need confidence that they are truly buying organic when they pay for it. When consumers lose faith in the quality of organic products, organic farmers and businesses lose.

This important legislation advocated for by the Organic Council of Ontario has found support from the three largest farm organizations. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario and the National Farmers Union of Ontario all agree that Ontario needs to look at an organic standard to ensure consumer confidence.

The organic industry is growing in Ontario. It is time for Ontario to ensure that consumer and producer confidence in organic labelling can remain strong.

CANADIAN STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Ms. Catherine Fife: In less than two weeks, hundreds of student leaders and advisers from across Canada will come to Waterloo for the 33rd annual Canadian Student Leadership Conference, the CSLC.

Taryn will be a student spirit leader at the upcoming conference. She shared that “hosting CSLC in Waterloo region means that I get to share my home with people who don’t yet know how beautiful this place truly is. The conference theme is ‘StartUp Leadership’ in a region that lives innovation and has creativity at its core. Having CSLC in my hometown means giving delegates the same feeling that I received last year, a sense of home away from home.”

I’m very proud of the leadership role that the Waterloo Region District School Board and local educators have taken on to ensure the success of this “StartUp Leadership” conference. It is truly an opportunity to showcase all that Waterloo region has to offer, from three exceptional post-secondary institutions to a vibrant cultural scene and a welcoming community. I know that the students will be inclined to stay and return once they have experienced what we lovingly refer to as #KWawesome.

As the MPP for Kitchener–Waterloo, it was a pleasure to encourage the government to invest in this national conference. I believe that investing in these student leaders will positively impact communities across our province and country. I look forward to welcoming the student leaders to Waterloo, and I can’t wait to engage with them during the two workshops that we will be leading on women and politics. Thank you to the organizers, the billet families and the volunteers.

FEAST OF NAYROUZ

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to take a moment to recognize that this past Monday, the Coptic Orthodox Christian community celebrated the feast of Nayrouz, signifying the beginning of the new year. The feast of Nayrouz commemorates historical martyrs and confessors of the Coptic Orthodox Christian faith.

September 11 marks the beginning of the Coptic calendar year and coincides with the rising of the waters of the Nile River, bringing irrigation to the crops and spreading blessings to the land. It is a time of celebration, prayer and reflection, a time to honour the sacrifice of those who gave so much for their religious beliefs.

The origin of Coptic Orthodox Christianity is in Egypt, but today, worldwide, there are about 18 million to 22 million followers. Many of them live in our communities.

1510

In Ontario, we know that diversity is our strength. We want our province to be a place where every person of every faith and background feels welcome and secure.

From all of us here at the Legislature, we wish all of those celebrating the feast of Nayrouz happiness, good health and prosperity in the new year. Nofri Shai.

CAP-AND-TRADE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: In the spirit of open and transparent government, two municipal councils in my riding have adopted resolutions with regard to the government’s cap-and-trade legislation that went into effect at the beginning of this year.

The townships of Bonfield and Chisholm have adopted a resolution that echoes the concerns first raised in New Tecumseth. It requests that “the government of Ontario insist that all bills from companies supplying products derived from carbon-based fuels ... to Ontario residents show the carbon” cost “on a separate line of the bill.”

It goes on to demand “that the province of Ontario be required to annually report ... the proceeds” to Ontario citizens.

It’s only fair, if Ontarians are being asked to accept a heavier burden, that it is explained to them in detail how their money is spent and why. You would think that the kind of transparency being asked for by Bonfield and Chisholm should be seriously considered, yet this government balks. There is no good reason for it, other than this government has something to hide again.

EVENTS IN NORTHUMBERLAND– QUINTE WEST

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me pleasure to talk about this past summer. Like every other member from all three parties—and, I guess, an independent now, I have to remember—I’m sure we all have busy summers when we’re in our constituencies. I can tell you that this past summer, just the last three or four months, I visited many, many establishments and communities. We talked about our government’s commitment to help them with their festivals and fairs.

Speaker, allow me a few minutes to talk about the Ontario150 community capital grant to the municipality of Trent Hills, for building and repairing the Campbellford tennis courts, and the \$16,500 to support the Scottish Irish Festival in Trenton, which was just this past weekend. I know that if I keep on going, I’m going to be an honorary Scot, so I’m working hard. I am working hard, Speaker.

Of course, in two weeks, Brighton Applefest is in my hometown. It’s one of the biggest festivals. I was able to bring them the good news that, through Celebrate Ontario 2017, they were able to receive \$8,175 to help them promote this fantastic venue.

Speaker, I have a whole list—that's just the beginning—but time has run out. It was a busy summer.

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

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Michael Harris: More than 32 years after planning began in 1989, and more than a decade after the Liberal government announced its approval in 2007, the Wynne Liberals have once again delayed the completion of the vital expansion of a new Highway 7 to Guelph. The new completion date? Well, according to the ministry's new southern highways program release, it's an undetermined time, "beyond 2021." Given the track record, the continued delays come as, frankly, little surprise.

When I asked the minister, in an order paper question, the names and titles of all dedicated staff on the Highway 7 expansion, he could only give me one name, one single staff. Speaker, that's unacceptable. Years after it was first announced, the two-lane road remains the only option for more than 22,000 drivers a day, and they are asked to wait beyond 2021 before resources are allocated towards the completion of this highway?

Waterloo region residents are concerned and outspoken on this matter, and they have a right to be. They have been let down once again by the Wynne Liberals, just like they have failed to actually deliver on the two-way, all-day GO promise.

This stretch of Highway 7 is stuck in gridlock, and costs are only going up, the more the delays continue. Having cars, trucks, people and goods parked in traffic does nothing to help our local and provincial economy. I echo the sentiment of Waterloo region residents and the thousands of drivers who are plagued by the gridlock on Highway 7, and I call on this government to stop gridlocking the construction of Highway 7.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I always indicate, I thank all members for their statements, and I also thank members for not heckling during statements—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Including the person who just heckled.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to standing order 111(b).

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. McNaughton does present the committee's report. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: No, thanks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 111(b), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

PETITIONS

PHARMACARE

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm very proud to introduce this petition today, which reads:

"Universal Pharmacare for All Ontarians.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas prescription medications are a part of health care, and people shouldn't have to empty their wallets or rack up credit card bills to get the medicines they need;

"Whereas over 2.2 million Ontarians don't have any prescription drug coverage and one in four Ontarians don't take their medications as prescribed because they cannot afford the cost;

"Whereas taking medications as prescribed can save lives and help people live better; and

"Whereas Canada urgently needs universal and comprehensive national pharmacare;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support a universal provincial pharmacare plan for all Ontarians."

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Adam to bring to the Clerk.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: 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."

I will sign this petition and send it to the Clerk.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

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

“Whereas Bill 94, Highway Traffic Amendment Act (School Bus Camera Systems), 2017, will make it easier to get convictions for drivers who do not stop when lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended on a school bus; and

“Whereas responsible governments must update laws as new technology is developed; and

“Whereas numerous states and provinces are already leveraging new technology to convict drivers who put children in danger while Ontario falls behind; and

“Whereas municipalities including the city of Mississauga have passed resolutions in support of Bill 94; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has had three years to conduct consultations after a similar bill was initially introduced in 2014 and thousands of children are put in danger each day due to low conviction rates;

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

“To call Bill 94 to committee so it can be strengthened with input from the Ministry of Transportation and other experts engaged in ensuring student safety and to pass Bill 94 into legislation in order to protect our children from motorists who disobey school bus safety laws.”

I approve of this petition, Speaker. I’ll sign my name and give it to Javan.

1520

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I’m happy to present this petition from the people of Gogama. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Highway 661 is a three-kilometre secondary highway which links the town of Gogama to Highway 144 and is in extremely poor condition throughout the entire winter season; and

“Whereas Highway 661 is an essential highway which all emergency vehicles, school buses and other vehicles, including snowplows, must travel into and out of” on a daily basis; and

“Whereas the low standard of winter maintenance of this highway, always snow-packed and icy, creates a serious public safety issue, putting at risk the lives of the area residents;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Increase the winter maintenance standard for this single-access highway into Gogama to ensure that the residents have safer access to their home community.”

I would like to thank Rachelle Durocher from Minisinakwa Lake for sending me this petition. I will sign it gladly and give it to Will to bring to the Clerk.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I sign this petition and give it to page Benjamin.

SEWAGE TREATMENT

Ms. Sylvia Jones: “Whereas in 2006 the ministry of environment estimated that 18 billion litres of untreated or partially treated sewage was bypassed into local water bodies;

“Whereas in 2006 there were 1,544 and in 2007 there were 1,243 separate bypass incidents of untreated or partially treated sewage reported to the provincial government;

“Whereas weather events regularly overwhelm local sewage systems meaning sewage is bypassed into local streams, rivers and lakes;

“Whereas these bypasses can include untreated human waste, micro-organisms, disease-causing pathogens and toxic chemicals;

“Whereas the ministry of environment already collects information from municipalities on sewage bypasses, but does not make this information available to the public;

“Whereas Ontarians deserve to know promptly when untreated or partially treated sewage is released into the local waterways that they sail, canoe, kayak, boat and swim in;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to adopt Bill 141 without delay.”

For obvious reasons, I support this petition and give it to page Emerson to take to the table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“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’ll affix my name and send it to the table with page Eva.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: “Whereas lack of access to dental care affects overall health and well-being, and poor oral health is linked to diabetes, cardiovascular, respiratory disease, and Alzheimer’s disease; and

“Whereas it is estimated that two to three million people in Ontario have not seen a dentist in the past year, mainly due to the cost of private dental services; and

“Whereas approximately every nine minutes a person in Ontario arrives at a hospital emergency room with a dental problem but can only get painkillers and antibiotics, and this costs the health care system at least \$31 million annually with no treatment of the problem;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in public oral health programs for low-income adults and seniors by:

“—ensuring that plans to reform the health care system include oral health so that vulnerable people in our communities have equitable access to the dental care they need to be healthy;

“—extending public dental programs for low-income children and youth within the next two years to include low-income adults and seniors; and

“—delivering public dental services in a cost-efficient way through publicly funded dental clinics such as public health units, community health centres and aboriginal

health access centres to ensure primary oral health services are accessible to vulnerable people in Ontario.”

I approve of this petition and I will give it to page Rachel.

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.”

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Michael.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the government is undertaking significant labour reforms with Bill 148 and changes to the minimum wage; and

“Whereas the Financial Accountability Officer highlighted the potential for 50,000 job losses directly linked to the government’s initiative; and

“Whereas key stakeholders such as businesses and chambers of commerce have come forward, requesting a full economic impact analysis of the government’s planned reforms;

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

“To undertake a full economic impact analysis of Bill 148 and the government’s planned changes to the minimum wage before proceeding with them.”

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Adam.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition that reads:

“Health Care You Can Count On.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for all Ontarians—no matter who they are, or where they live—the health of their family comes first, and it should come first for the government of Ontario, but unfortunately Liberal political self-interest comes first;

“Whereas 1,200 nurses have been fired since January 2015;

“Whereas hospital beds are being closed across Ontario; and

“Whereas hospital budgets have been frozen for four years, and increases this year will not keep up with inflation or a growing population;

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

“Stop the Liberal cuts to hospitals, and ensure that, at a minimum, hospital funding keeps up with the growing costs of inflation and population growth, each and every year.”

I couldn’t agree with this more. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Cole to bring to the Clerk.

1530

SHINGLES VACCINE

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas one in three Ontarians will experience shingles in their lifetime; and

“Whereas shingles is a painful and stressful condition; and

“Whereas a vaccine is available for preventing shingles and is recommended for all seniors; and

“Whereas the shingles vaccine is currently not covered by OHIP;

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

“To ensure the shingles vaccine is covered under OHIP for all Ontarians.”

I agree with this and will pass it off to page Greg.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the Legislative Assembly and the Ministry of Community and Social Services:

“Whereas the Ontario government’s 2014 budget included a commitment to address the wait-list of more than 12,000 adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding, and some of whom have been waiting more than 20 years; and

“Whereas since the spring of 2014 the number of adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding has grown to more than 14,000; and

“Whereas there is currently no available funding to plan for a respectful transition from the family home to a home of choice in the community; and

“Whereas more than 1,450 Ontario parents over the age of 70 continue to provide primary care to their adult child; and

“Whereas currently adults with developmental disability must go on the crisis list before they receive residential funding, often resulting in a loss of choice, dignity and community; and

“Whereas family-created housing prioritizes dignity, choice and community inclusion for the resident living with disability as well as providing long-term cost savings for the province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Community and Social Services to address the growing wait-list for adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding and provide stable funding opportunities for family-created housing.”

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

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

Point of order?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I think we have unanimous consent for me to introduce a bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Tabuns is seeking unanimous consent to revert to introduction of bills. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ORGANIC PRODUCTS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017

SUR LES PRODUITS BIOLOGIQUES

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 153, An Act to regulate the labelling and certification of organic products / Projet de loi 153, Loi visant à réglementer l’étiquetage et la certification des produits biologiques.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member has an opportunity to make a statement.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This bill enacts the Organic Products Act, 2017. The act prohibits the marketing and labelling of products as “organic” unless they’ve been certified as organic in accordance with the act.

Again, I want to thank my co-sponsor, Ms. Jones.

VISITORS

Mr. Jim McDonell: Point of order, Speaker, to introduce Tom Manley, Ian Turner, Eric Payseur and Jill Guerra from the Organic Council of Ontario. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We'll let that go by. It's not really a point of order but okay, I'm being nice.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONSTRUCTION LIEN AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 12, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Before I begin, I would like to seek unanimous consent to defer our lead, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nipissing is seeking unanimous consent to defer their lead. Do we agree? Agreed.

We'll now go into a 20-minute rotation. The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise for the next 20 minutes to speak about Bill 142. This is called the Construction Lien Act. Right off the bat, let me say that the PC Party has been a long-time advocate to bring prompt-payment legislation to Ontario. Let's start by acknowledging that right off the bat so there's no question of how I'm going to be speaking on this bill.

I'm going to speak a lot about some technical issues here. The acts that are affected include a long litany: the Condominium Act of 1998, the Construction Lien Act, the Courts of Justice Act, the Land Titles Act, the Limitations Act of 2002, the Mining Act, Ontario new home warranties, the plan act, the Protecting Condominium Owners Act of 2015, and the Registry Act, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act of 1997—actually, let me correct one. After the Mining Act, I meant to say the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act. Those, in effect, are the acts that we're going to be talking about.

It's great to see it this year. It's unfortunate it really has taken so long to get it here, for a litany of reasons, Speaker, whether it has been prorogation, the dissolution of the previous Parliament—all kinds of reasons have come into play as to why we're here yet again, standing up talking about the Construction Lien Act. But it is here, and again, I just want to reiterate that the PC Party has been a long-time advocate to bring prompt-payment legislation to Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You okay? Okay.

Smaller liens claims being moved to Small Claims Court provides an avenue for smaller contractors to recover money owed from larger prime contractors without needing to use the adjudication process, which is designed for larger projects and, quite frankly, for corporations. The spirit of the bill is indeed supported by stakeholders from across all sectors of the industry.

Speaker, while the essence of the bill strikes the right balance between all sectors, it appears there still may be a need for greater flexibility in terms of the timelines. I think that's really one area that we could look at: the timelines to reflect the varying size and scope of projects in the industry. I guess the simple, modern-day expression would be that sometimes one-size-fits-all doesn't necessarily apply. Nonetheless, the spirit of the bill is certainly supported by stakeholders from across all sectors of the industry.

Some contractors indicated they want to see adjustments in those timelines of payments to allow more flexibility for the varying size of projects and for the varying size of companies. In my riding of Nipissing, when we have town halls and opportunities to have contractors and other stakeholders visit us, this is an issue that does come up. When you look at the overall economy of Ontario, here's where the fact that you have this Construction Lien Act is so important, because all the other forces appear to be, in this day and age—so many of them are against businesses in Ontario. This is an opportunity to bring some peace in one area.

Speaker, in Ontario—we've talked many times here—the forces that are against these businesses include amongst the highest all-in energy rates in North America. Those are things that affect businesses, or when you've got the highest payroll taxes in the country affecting businesses. These are the local concerns.

1540

When the local contractors come in and talk to me, they say, "Vic, we've had it up to here with red tape and all the other things. This is one that needs to happen for us." At home, they generally don't talk about the adjustments to the timelines. That's more what I hear amongst the stakeholders when I'm here in Toronto, in my Queen's Park office. But at home, it really is all about, "Look, get this done. I know we've been trying to see this being done over the last six years, seven years. So get it done because we need to move on to other issues that are really hurting us as businesspeople in the economy of Ontario." It's the economy that has been created. At home, when you've got deterrents to business, you've got people who are throwing their hands up and just saying, "Well, maybe I'm not going to stay in business any longer."

So I think it is important that we move on this and we have this kind of a debate. I hope you'll hear debate from all the parties that are—I think we're ready to do this, to be quite frank, Speaker.

When I meet with these contractors, it's interesting. I am going to veer off course slightly, Speaker, and rein me in if it's—but it involves the construction sector.

Another issue that they've been talking to me about is the holdback. Although it's not included in the Construction Lien Act, it's just an interesting avenue that we should be talking about one day for the construction sector. A 10% holdback is what I'm referring to. If you're the first person in, you're digging the foundation, and the project is scheduled to be a year long, you're not going to get paid your holdback until the end of this. And when you've got delays—and I can think of a few projects that have happened lately, where there's a delay, two months, six months—and you're the guy who put the forms in and poured the concrete, you're the first person, you're the first company there, you're the longest waiting.

So one of these days we should be looking—and I bring this up, Speaker, under the spirit that this is what the contractors who came in to talk to me about the Construction Lien Act also said: "Vic, here's another issue that's of critical importance." I would hope that we could have a communication one day about what we are going to do about that, because it's so critical and so important that the businessmen and businesswomen who own these construction firms, especially the small firms—some are slightly larger than mom-and-pop firms. They just can't afford that 10% holdback, knowing that until the last window is wiped and the last blade of grass is put in, they don't get their 10% holdback; they can't make application for their holdback. So that's an area that I'm hoping that we'll look at positively. I promised the contractors who were in to see me last week in my office in North Bay that I would bring this up when I had a chance to speak to the Construction Lien Act.

Speaker, the bill itself contains three major components: the prompt-payment regime; the creation of the authorized nominating authority to manage the new adjudication model created under the act; and the third part which outlines the adjudicative process.

Now we're going to get a little bit tongue-twisty into the real details of it. Under prompt payment, parties would be free to agree to a timeline for the submission of invoices. If they fail to do so, monthly payment terms would be implied. The owner would be required to pay the general contractor within 28 days of the receipt of a proper invoice. If there is a dispute about the amount owed for deficiencies in the work, the owner would be permitted to deliver a notice of non-payment within 14 days following receipt of the invoice. Any undisputed amounts must be paid.

Now, Speaker, only a half-hour ago, 45 minutes ago, I had a meeting in my office with a local contractor who came here to my Queen's Park office because there's a project that was built and he has had to put a lien on the project. It's for several hundred thousand dollars. I know the guy; he lives down the street from me in Corbeil, where I live. He's a great guy. We've known each other since we were young. It's big money. His comment was, "Hey, I'm the guy who's out here and I've got to fight a battle here." So there are small companies that need this, and he happened to be one who was in my office, certainly far less than an hour ago, talking about this very issue with a very specific company. It has to happen.

The general contractor would be required to pay the subcontractor within seven days from receipt of the payment from the owner. General contractors would be required to notify subcontractors of non-payment by owners and make an effort to enforce payment. They would then be entitled to defer their payment obligations to subcontractors.

So you can see what's happening. It affects everybody all the way down the food chain. The contractor, who has the bigger job, and he has many subcontractors—all the way down, these people are left waiting. They've got employees to pay and mouths to feed, and this is what's happening.

The seven-day payment period would continue down the construction pyramid. For instance, a subcontractor would pay another subcontractor within seven days, and so it goes down this chain or pyramid.

An adjudication process would be available to resolve disputes quickly on an interim basis. So we've got some one-offs here that we can look at.

The remedies for contractors and subcontractors who do not receive payment include mandatory interest for late payments and the right to suspend work if the matter is referred to adjudication and the payer does not comply with the adjudicator's determination.

There are a lot of technical words here and a lot of technical things happening. But I can tell you—from the contractor I just met with in my office—there's a long litany of bills that need to be paid all the way down the food chain, and we need this kind of a process. We need this construction lien act put in so that we can manage this process and make some sense out of what's happening and get these people paid all the way down the line.

There's the authorized nominating authority. It's a private body. It's designated by regulation as an authorized nominating authority, an ANA. They would provide training and certification for adjudicators. We just can't have somebody unfamiliar with the industry and the sector, who maybe doesn't quite have all the nuances required to be able to adjudicate this. So there's training and there's certification for these adjudicators, and they maintain a registry of qualified adjudicators. Again, it's important that you can go online or open a book and know who you can contact.

The ministry is currently developing a process for the selection of a private entity to be designated as the ANA. That's going to be important, as well. The Society of Ontario Adjudicators and Regulators, SOAR as it's called, is currently contemplating putting themselves forward to be considered for the role of the ANA.

With respect to adjudication, these would be informal. The parties would be free to establish a process by contract, or use a default process if there's one in place that everybody likes. That will be available in the regulations. The adjudication would be used to resolve payment disputes that could result in a project delay, including disputes about the valuation of work, how much you owe, what it's worth, payments, set-offs against amounts due. The adjudicators would be experts who have had

extensive experience in the construction industry, and who have experience or training in dispute resolution. As I said earlier, the authorized nominating authority would provide training and certification for these adjudicator positions. Not everyone is going to become an adjudicator. You really do need to be a subject matter expert in order to be involved, and that's fair.

1550

There are some other clauses that tell you that if, after adjudication, the party owing money refuses to comply with the adjudicator's decision, the party eligible for the award would be entitled to suspend further work under the contract. We can see that there are some mechanisms in place to encourage everybody to attend adjudication and follow the adjudication's ruling, if "ruling" is indeed the right word in this case. The adjudicator's decision would be enforced in the same manner as a civil arbitration award under the Arbitration Act of 1991.

Basically, there is no right of appeal from the adjudicator's decision but a judicial review would be available based on a number of grounds, including adjudicator bias or a decision on a matter other than the matter referred.

So again, I think the careful consideration over the many years of putting this together—it sounds, Speaker, like we're going to get it right, like all these thoughts have been developed fully fleshed out. Whether or not the person owing money complies with the adjudication, the parties may continue to pursue ordinary legal remedies, so they're not stopped from that as well. That will help address the dispute, if they feel that's what is left for them.

There are time limits for preserving a lien that would be extended to encourage parties to adjudicate first. It's trying to bring conflict resolution to the Construction Lien Act, if I can use that.

Time limits would be extended, as I said. If the parties are satisfied with the adjudicator's decision, they may agree to treat the decision as final: "That's it. We can stop and call it a day and be able to take the decision."

As I opened earlier, this does mark the third effort to bring prompt-payment legislation through the House. Both of the past attempts have died on the order table, as I said. Whether it was an election being called—with another election on the horizon, we don't want to see that happen. The last one was halted because there was an election on the horizon. We're seven months and days away from the writ being dropped and we're hoping that this can move along before that. It wouldn't be very good to be here again for the fourth time. I know the member was concerned about why I was pushing this so hard. I guess my answer is, we just don't want to see history repeat itself and be standing here again with the same issue, giving the same discussion and the same talks.

Speaker, I know that there are some issues. The written decisions of the adjudicators would be provided to the parties but might not be made public, so there's no case law to help in future disputes; that's an area we might want to look at. There is no ability to appeal an adjudicated decision, but you can still take it to court;

that's an issue. There is no requirement to report back to the House regarding the activities or the outcomes resulting from the decisions of that authorized nominating authority. We'd like to learn, is what we did working? So maybe there should be some kind of a reporting mechanism back to the House. That might be productive and helpful.

The ability to have the minister responsible for the act designated as an interim authority does raise a concern about the ability of the government to be involved a bit more directly than this more open procedure should be. That's a bit of an issue, but nonetheless, we're here and we're debating this, and hopefully we're going to see this move forward.

I think the bottom line is that there should be a clear framework for complaints and appeals provided for those attempting to register with the authority. I think the business community will want to know, "What are we getting into before we buy into it?"

So, Speaker, that's a bit of a brief synopsis and a few specifics about how we feel on this topic, and I thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Before I move on, since it's early in this session, I'll remind members: There have been several today, and mostly senior members, who are not acknowledging the Chair when they leave this chamber and come in. We have been told that that's not playing cricket. So we would suggest that you acknowledge the Chair when you come in and out of here.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I listened attentively to the member from Nipissing's 20 minutes on this piece of legislation, Bill 142. It's interesting, because I remember very clearly that in 2013, the member from Vaughan had brought forward a private member's bill around prompt payment following our by-elections. My private member's bill had to do with prorogation, because we were only here for 11 days; his had to do with prompt payment, and it went all the way to committee. It was moving forward, because promises had been made.

It got to committee. We were supporting it, around some amendments at second reading, and were prepared to vote for it. At that time, the Liberals walked it back. They walked that piece of legislation back and said, "You know, it needs some fine tuning." The PC Party and their critic of the day read a prepared statement in committee and indicated that they were not prepared to support it either.

Remember, this was the minority government. This was a minority setting, so we could have, if the New Democrats and Conservatives had worked together, gotten it done. So when the member from Nipissing, who went through a lot of the technical details, as he is very good at—there is obviously some big politics at play around prompt payment. But what I want people to understand is that New Democrats are committed to seeing a stronger bill.

This Bill 142, obviously—a report was done, some voices were listened to, but the missing piece in this

legislation continues to be enforcement. You can design a piece of legislation with the best intentions, but if you do not have the oversight, if the enforcement is not clear, if there is no power or force behind the legislation, then people will still not get paid, and people and businesses in this province will still be hurt by a piece of legislation which does not meet its goals.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened intently, as well, to the member from Nipissing, and I think I agree with most of the remarks that he made. There was a bit of concern about the length of time it has taken to bring this bill forward. It has been over 30 years, but it's quite a large bill. It's a very large bill, and there are a lot of changes being made in it. Actually, the new name of the bill is An Act to amend the Construction Lien Act, and it's a very large bill.

I just wanted to point out that last fall, the government met with 25 key stakeholder groups and an expert government advisory group in the construction industry to hear their feedback. The government continued to work with Bruce, Sharon and the advisory group throughout the drafting of the legislation—they were a consulting group—and we got a lot of feedback. The Attorney General also individually met with over 30 different stakeholder groups.

It has taken us 34 years to get to this point. Until now, no one has been able to achieve consensus on these proposed changes. There is broad consensus with this bill, and the government intends to go through full debate at second reading, take it to committee, hear from the stakeholders and others, and then bring it back here for third reading. I have every confidence, and the government does, that this bill will get its full vetting, and that it will come through here and be voted upon. If there are any amendments changed, those changes will be added, and then the bill will be voted upon and become law.

It's good news, and I think that as the debate goes on, we'll hear from others as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

1600

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm privileged to rise today in the House and comment. Our member from Nipissing has put through a very interesting perspective on the bill, pointing out a few things. This is the third time this bill has come before the House. Our party is supporting it. So we hope that it doesn't die on the order paper again because it is something that is required.

In any industry, there are always cases where the province needs to step in to make sure that our smaller contractor family is fairly compensated. With the existing system, we see bankruptcies; we see long-term bills being renegotiated just to get payment. That's not right.

We do have some concerns. He mentioned there is no appeal process. There is also the issue with no public disclosure of the decisions. But we're looking forward to working on this, through committee, to put through some

of the changes that we would like to see, that we believe would make this bill stronger and easier to administer through the public.

Again, we're hoping that we don't see this bill die again. The government talks about the need for this. The best way of showing that need is actually to move ahead with it and to see that this is one of the priorities, this bill that they've tabled.

It's a large bill, as the member opposite said. There's a lot of good stuff in it and a lot of questionable stuff. We're looking at the minister responsible to be designated as interim authority—any time there's interference, we worry about that.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to be able to have a few moments to speak about the legislation, Bill 142, the Construction Lien Amendment Act, that's before us today.

The debate is really just beginning on this bill. We've heard already and we've seen for the last number of years that construction workers are asking for this to be put forward. This could have been done years ago, but the Liberals backtracked on one of their own bills that had already passed second reading.

We know that contractors and people who are doing the small jobs, the construction jobs, on the construction sites are the ones who pay the biggest cost for this. They're the ones who aren't getting paid on time. We've seen it very clearly in Hamilton with the building of Tim Hortons stadium, our Ticats stadium, where the ripple effect just continued all the way down the line and people weren't getting paid for the work that they were doing. It doesn't just hurt the company owner; it hurts the people who are going to work every day, punching the clock and coming out without the paycheque at the end of the day.

One of our biggest concerns is the lack of enforcement that we're seeing within the bill as it's currently written. We're hoping, as the bill moves forward and moves on to committee, that changes will be made to ensure there is an enforcement process that is put into this bill, because we can put as much legislation before this House as we choose, but without the enforcement piece, nothing is ever going to be done because there will be no action when it actually hits the street.

People who go to work deserve to be paid.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I do want to thank those who spoke on the construction lien act: the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Scarborough Southwest, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and Hamilton Mountain.

The member from Hamilton Mountain talked about that stadium. It reminds me of when, just shortly after my election in 2011, I was made energy critic, and we were thrust into this gas plant thing. At the time, the gas plant facility was still being feverishly built, because there was lots of discussion about it being cancelled. Here I am, a brand new MPP, and we're thrust into this. When the

project was halted, our phone here at Queen's Park was just deluged with people trying to get paid. It was the first time that it had occurred to me—I mean, I'm a lifelong entrepreneur and former business person, but I was never involved in that massive of a project. We were talking about, as it turned out to be, quite a significant amount of money. All the way up and down the line, whether it was one of the largest contractors who was calling or somebody who needed a paycheque that day, they all called, and they called our office, because we were thrust into this gas plant scandal. I think that was probably the biggest wake-up call that I had as a brand new member, thinking, "I'm brand new. What would I know about what the role of an MPP was going to be?" Here we were, caught in the middle and trying to see that these people were paid, paid quickly and paid fairly. Here we are, some years later now, hopefully going to pass a bill that would help that.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I seek unanimous consent to stand down the third party lead on Bill 142.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Niagara Falls seeks unanimous consent to stand down the lead on the bill. Do we agree? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm really pleased to speak today on Bill 142, the Construction Lien Amendment Act. In my opinion, this is an important piece of legislation, which may be long overdue to many workers and contractors in the province of Ontario.

Before I begin with the details of why this legislation is important, yet, in its current form, certainly not perfect, I would like to talk about the real reason why we are here addressing the issue of prompt payment with this piece of legislation. It's about workers—workers who go to work every day and perform a job, whether they be electricians, plumbers or labourers. They give up their time, Mr. Speaker, and you can relate to this; they work hard and they do their best all the time, yet, when Friday comes, they don't get paid.

Would you come to work and be the Speaker of the House and not get paid, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely not. So why should any construction worker in the province of Ontario—

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm not going to touch that one.

Why should anybody in the province of Ontario go to work for a contractor, and then, on Friday, when they're expecting to get paid, they don't get paid? Where do they get the money to pay for food for their family, for clothing or for their mortgage? Why has this been sitting here for so long? Why has this gone on for three years for workers? I hate to tell you, the Liberals and the PCs know full well that workers in the province of Ontario haven't been being paid for a long, long time.

This issue was so important that the people from Prompt Payment came to my office two weeks ago and asked us to support this bill and move it along quicker.

Then, two days later, after I talked to the Prompt Payment people, who have fought this for a few years, I had a roofing contractor call me and say, "We performed some work up around the Hamilton area, and we've never been paid. It's gone on for six or seven months." Do you know what was in jeopardy? Never mind the workers not being paid—do you know what else was in jeopardy? That entire business was in jeopardy, because they were owed around \$30,000 to \$40,000.

That's why this bill is so important. It's about the workers—let's not forget that. That's why we're sitting here. At the end of the day, the people in this province that have been advocating for prompt-payment legislation have been doing so to protect workers.

I've spoken to many people in the communities in my riding—Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake—about prompt payment. During those conversations I've heard a lot of different stories that highlight the need for prompt-payment legislation. However, every story comes back to one central theme: When people or contractors are not paid for the work they complete, it always comes around and lands on the backs of workers in the province of Ontario, and frankly, I feel that's not fair. I think everybody in this House should feel the same way.

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As many of you know, I have for a long time in my career advocated for protection and advancement of workers in my community and in this province. As you know, Mr. Speaker, over my time as president of Local 199—it's now called Unifor; at that time it was CAW199 and before that it was UAW; it's had a number of names—and over my time on Niagara Falls city council, and now in my role as MPP, protecting working people has been my main priority for most of my adult life. Actually—and this is true—one of the main reasons why I ran in 2014 was the need to stand up to the reckless proposal of the PC Party to throw 100,000 workers out of a job. If you can imagine, they proudly ran on that. They also ran—

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: The one thing I'll do in this House, Mr. Speaker: I'll always tell the truth. Some other people should try it.

If you can imagine, you were going to throw 100,000 people out. But also, during that same point in time—this is what happened—when the leader was asking me to run, I said, "No. I love being president of my local union, quite frankly. I love being a city councillor." But because of that, because of the fact that they also wanted to sell off Hydro—nobody wants to admit it on that side now, three or four years later, but they did. I have the documents to prove that as well—including OPG.

There are many reasons why I wanted to represent the people of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake, but standing up to the attacks on the working people in my riding was the main reason. Frankly, I decided I couldn't sit by and let them hand a world to my children and my grandchildren that was worse than the one I grew up in.

I think it's important that we are all reminded why acting on prompt payment is essential to protect working people in the province of Ontario, because, really, at the end of the day I hope we can all agree that workers deserve to be paid for the work they perform. Nobody—and I mean nobody—should go to work and work for free. It's only fair, isn't it? It's really the most basic level of protection a worker can receive, to be paid for the work they perform. I know that some of you may say that in most cases this is a contractor or a subcontracting company that is not being paid for work, not the worker. But, as I previously stated, it always seems to fall back on the worker.

Mr. Speaker, I know you know this. As I said, we have spoken with many people in our community about this problem, and after speaking with the local skilled trades union members, they brought another important issue to our attention when people are not paid for contracting work they have completed. They told us—and this is interesting—that they have had cases where some of their members were working for contractors who had not really withheld their pay but their benefits and their benefit packages. So the money got paid, but their benefit packages weren't taken care of.

So what happens? You go to get a prescription or you go to the dentist, or your daughter goes to get a prescription or goes to the dentist, and then you find out that the contractor never paid for the benefits, so they have no benefits. It's a big issue. It's probably one that a lot of people here didn't know. Why? Because the contractors haven't been paid, and they have stated they don't have enough money to make the benefit contributions. So when you take a look at it, sometimes it's the worker who doesn't get paid, and then if he does get paid, he doesn't have any benefits for his family.

Mr. Speaker, imagine that. What if the worker is unaware that the contractor isn't making the benefit contributions? He goes to the doctor, gets a prescription and then learns at the pharmacy that his benefits aren't working, he has no coverage. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a little off the subject, but you know—you worked at Stelco—that happened to retirees at Stelco, where Stelco had the benefits cut off of their retirees, and they went to the drugstore and found that out.

This is the same thing. That is the type of situation that workers in this province can find themselves in. How unfair a situation is that? I suppose if the people of Ontario had full universal pharmacare, the worker wouldn't have to worry in this particular situation. But that's an entirely different issue that we'll discuss over the next little while.

The issue regarding benefit payments was actually brought up during the committee hearings on a previous prompt-payment bill in 2014. The presenter, from Wilkins and associates, a third-party administrator that does benefits and pension plans for Ontario construction industry workers, said this: that the "2013 statistics for our Ontario construction trade plans pointed out six things. In that time frame"—this is over six things they

pointed out—"19% of the contributions due to the health and pension plans were received late; they were delinquent. Hundreds and hundreds of hours were collectively spent by trustees, administrators and their councils dealing not only with trying to obtain these contributions, but with frustrated employees who found they were without coverage or that benefit coverage was jeopardized because their contributions to their benefit plans and their pension plans were not received on time."

Again, I'm glad you're here today, Mr. Speaker, because you know that this happens in some of our workplaces, where if it goes longer than 30 days and you don't know that you've been cut off, it takes that much longer to even get reinstated on your benefits. Meanwhile, you may need a prescription filled from the doctor; you may have to go to the dentist—you have to wait that time until it gets reinstated. That's with construction workers who just want to go to work and get paid what they're rightly owed.

"In the submission"—and this isn't my submission; it isn't a party submission—"there are two examples, but those two examples provide six points. In one point"—and this is a company—"we spend \$328,000 just in legal fees to collect about \$1.5 million in outstanding contributions. Those assets could have been better spent providing the benefits that those plans are supposed to provide, as opposed to paying legal expenses."

"Pension calculations"—and I know there is lots going on with pensions today in our society; you just have to look at Sears and what they are doing to workers—"are often delayed for individuals." This is an example that the company used: "90 individuals who were retiring had their pensions paid late or had to be rerun because all of their pension contributions had not been received at the time they were retiring. In some instances, their first pension payment was actually delayed because they were waiting for outstanding contributions from their employers." I know, Mr. Speaker, that you understand that part. Imagine: You retire July 1, expecting to get your pension cheque, and it's delayed because your employer hasn't paid the money. So now you don't have a job and you don't have a pension.

This is real stuff, and it's sad that it's going on in the province of Ontario.

"Vacation pay payouts—these plans have vacation pay—are late and are not received on time by the members. We had an example of an employee who actually died"—I'm going to read this again. "We had an example of an employee who actually died and was out of benefit and did not have life insurance coverage because the company had not paid the contributions into the trust fund on time." Think about that. "With a lot of work and effort, we did have the insurer pay that ... insurance claim"—can you imagine what that family would have gone through during that time when they had lost a loved one?—"but there was a financial hardship for the family as they waited for us to prove to the insurer that the individual should actually have been insured had contributions been received on time."

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As a union rep and a president, I've gone through those situations. It's not easy to convince the insurance company to fix it, and I compliment whatever that insurance company was, that they did.

The legislation was not drafted overnight. It was constructed out of the tireless work of the advocates across the province, and I think it's important that we recognize their hard work. While I know that many skilled-trade groups in Ontario have been working for years to have the government act on issues with prompt payment, I think it's important that we recognize the hard work that Prompt Payment Ontario has also done. They did a great job of speaking with MPs, speaking with the members of the government, and communicating to the public the importance of addressing this issue.

They also did a wonderful job of bringing together some of the great facts on prompt payment. I wanted to share some of those facts with you today, Mr. Speaker.

Here is some of the information directly from Prompt Payment Ontario that highlights the problem we face:

"Construction is a primary driver of the economy." Think about this: It employs "434,000 Ontarians (6.4% of Ontario's workforce). Yet delinquent payment in construction is rampant..." I want you all to hear that again. I'm glad the labour minister is here, because I know he'd be interested in this. "Yet delinquent payment in construction is rampant and a growing problem. Trade contractors are commonly made to wait for periods of four months or longer to get paid for work that has been certified as being complete."

I know the labour minister knows what that is: They have to sign off on the job. Yet they're waiting for four months, after they sign off on the job, to get money. This is wrong in the province of Ontario, Minister.

"The existing law in Ontario, the Construction Lien Act ... is costly, cumbersome and inaccessible to 80% of the construction industry (small and medium-sized family-owned companies consisting of 20 or fewer employees)—it addresses non-payment as opposed to delinquent payment, and the lien rights of many in the industry will expire long before they realize they will not get paid."

I think this gives you a good scope of the issue. More importantly, they go on to describe the real problems that delinquent payments create in the construction industry, which goes beyond just the worker protection that I mentioned previously. Here are some of the points that I outlined:

—Delinquent payment drives up the cost of construction as contractors have to factor the risk of delinquent payments into their bids. That's very interesting.

—Delinquent payment strains cash flow, especially for a small business. I gave you an example of a small business, a roofing company, that may have to go out of business because of it, because they still have to meet payroll, they still have to pay their bills, they still have to pay their taxes and they still have to pay WSIB premiums

and other costs, to the point of forcing some businesses into insolvency.

—Delinquent payment stymies new job creation and restricts investment in apprenticeship training—the construction industry accounts for roughly 40%, and this is an important stat, Mr. Speaker, so I'm going to read it again: the construction industry accounts for roughly 40% of all apprenticeships—as trade contractors must limit their payroll commitment to meet cash flow expectations.

The apprenticeship part is very, very important. I'll say this to the Minister of Labour: One of the things that I think more and more of our young people should be into is apprenticeships. We should do everything we can to encourage them, male and female, to get into apprenticeships.

—Late-payment practices erode the level playing field as those who maintain honorable practices are put at a disadvantage.

There have been some major issues in our construction industry due to delayed payments. One glaring example that has been talked about already, as the public witnessed, was the building of the new Hamilton Ticats stadium. Both my colleagues from Hamilton have talked about that. The building of this \$140-million stadium saw some—I would say many—serious delays which resulted in delays in payments made by the lead international contractor that impacted down the chain until individual masonry workers and electricians weren't paid for hundreds of hours worked. And you know that, Mr. Speaker. They came and saw you right in your office, I believe, my colleague here.

That's what goes on in this industry—not once, not twice, all of the time. We've got an obligation—I've only got about 30 seconds left—to fix it. We have to make sure that if a worker goes to work in the province of Ontario, on Friday he can expect to get paid. That's what this should be about, and making sure that our small and medium-sized businesses, when they do the work, get the cash flow back into the business, so they can keep those people working so that they can feed their families and keep the economy going. That's what this bill is about.

I've got lots more to do, but I'm sure I'll get a chance to talk again. Thanks, Mr. Speaker, for listening intently. I appreciate it.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened very carefully to the very thoughtful comments made by the member from Niagara Falls. I agree with a lot of what he said. Workers who work should expect to be paid.

This is a very comprehensive bill, as I mentioned earlier in this House. It's called An Act to amend the Construction Lien Act, but it also permits that when this is finished, the bill will be renamed the Construction Act. So it's a very comprehensive bill. We're covering a lot of things.

One area I want to focus on is the need for workers to get paid. The proposed legislation in front of us that

we're debating right now includes measures that would, if passed, support the industry and workers, including:

- creating new prompt-payment rules to give contractors and subcontractors certainty about when to expect payment;

- extending the timelines to file liens and start court actions from 90 days to 150 days, giving contractors and subcontractors time to resolve their disputes outside of court and avoid initial legal fees;

- requiring holdback funds to be paid as soon as the deadline to file liens has passed so contractors and subcontractors know when to expect payment; and

- creating an adjudication process to speed up dispute resolution and prevent disputes from delaying work on construction projects.

The government wants to make sure that subcontractors who work on a project get paid for the work they do.

This has gone on for a long period of time. We've done a lot of consultation to get this bill right. It's going to go committee and it will come back for third reading. This time we're going to get it right, get the bill passed and make it law.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: This particular bill, Bill 142, An Act to amend the Construction Lien Act, 2017—this is the third crack at trying to get this bill passed in this Legislature. Unfortunately, the previous two times, the Liberals had elections and/or prorogation and so on.

We've been a long-time advocate to bring prompt payment into legislation in Ontario. We support that. Again, we did hear that when you do the job, you should get paid to do the job, unless, of course, you've done the job incorrectly, maybe like building bridges upside down, and then still awarding that company a contract for a bigger, better job.

Interjection.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: You're more than welcome on that.

Smaller lien claims of \$50,000 being moved to Small Claims Court: I think that's a good idea, simply because it provides an avenue for, in fact, smaller contractors to recover money, because small contractors rely on that. When payment is dragged out, there's a good chance that—they have other jobs on the go as well, and if they're constantly borrowing, there's a chance that these small businesses will go out of business. And if it's not for lack of payment, then it's probably due to other issues that this Liberal government is imposing, such as maybe a carbon tax, maybe the high hydro rates, or whatever—things that make it difficult to do business.

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So we support the fact that it's going into Small Claims Court. I think it's a good idea. Again, it may inundate Small Claims Court somewhat. But let's get the process moving. Let's get these people what they deserve, and that is, they deserve to be paid. We support that.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to congratulate my colleague the member from Niagara Falls on his 20 minutes on this bill, Bill 142, the construction lien act. He raised a lot of good points about the costs being inflated for small businesses—having to add contingency funds and extra costs to make up for the times when they're not getting paid on time.

This is something that has been going on forever in this province, and something that could have been dealt with years ago. As we know, this is the third time this bill has been before us. The government did not see fit to make sure that workers are getting paid in this province when they do a day's work. Now we have an election before us, and once again here is this bill before us. I guess they're hoping that it will help them when it comes to election time.

I want to touch base again on Tim Hortons Field and the large consortium that built that project—instead of having it done in a local manner, making sure that local people had those jobs—a P3 project that wasn't necessary, that could have ensured that it was public dollars feeding into our economy. Keeping that money here in our economy was a missed opportunity. We're still seeing issues at the stadium. I was there on Labour Day. I looked up, and the ceiling was dripping all over the place. Yes, it was raining outside, but there were actual pipes hanging out of the ceiling where the work was shoddy, not done correctly. We know of electricians who lost hundreds of hours of pay that they had to fight for, to be able to gain the dollars that they had earned. That's not right.

Let's get this bill forward and ensure that when workers go to work they're getting paid for the job that they do.

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

M. Shafiq Qadri: Merci, monsieur le Président. C'est mon plaisir de parler devant vous, mon ami. J'ai le plaisir aussi de soutenir le projet de loi 142, modifiant la Loi sur le privilège dans l'industrie de la construction.

Comme vous le savez, il régleme la façon dont les paiements sont effectués dans l'industrie de la construction et établit la certitude raisonnable que ceux qui ont fourni des services ou des matériaux pour l'amélioration d'un bien-fonds seront payés pour leurs services.

Le projet de loi modifie la Loi sur le privilège dans l'industrie de la construction de façon à établir un système de prompt paiement assorti de délais de paiement clairement définis pour toutes les parties intervenant dans un projet de construction. Les différends qui ralentissent le paiement pourront être réglés dans le cadre d'un nouveau processus d'arbitrage hors du tribunal.

Of course, there are many things attached to this bill. As my honourable colleague from Niagara Falls quite rightly stated, prompt payment for work that has already

been completed—having, of course, a number of individuals who work in the construction industry in my own riding, I do hear this. And of course, I would also salute the folks from Prompt Payment for their very, I would say, logical, convincing and persuasive lobbying and information sessions that they brought to the attention, I think, of all members of Parliament. I think it's a result of their efforts that we're all here today, essentially unanimously, going after this particular bill, in support of it.

With respect, though, Speaker, I would just like to know if the fourth party is also going to support this. That, of course, would be the Trillium Party, the party that is composed of the splinter group from the current Progressive Conservative Party. There seems to be a growing number of individuals who don't seem to feel that that party represents the right in this province. I'd be interested in knowing what the Trillium Party of Ontario also has to think.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Niagara Falls has two minutes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I will touch on my colleague from Hamilton's remarks again because she touched on a very important point. We know that the Liberal government spent \$9.2 billion more on P3s. There's no better example than Ticats stadium in Hamilton on that issue. Not only was it not done on time, the place fell apart. They couldn't open it on time. The Ticats actually had to play a few games in Toronto, I think. But more importantly, that's a perfect example where you utilized a Spanish company that contracted out to a contractor that contracted out to a contractor. And who suffered? Does anybody know? If the Liberals were listening to me they'd know that the workers suffered. That's who suffered in the Hamilton thing. We can always play another football game, but when you don't get a paycheque and you can't provide for your family, that's a lot more important than a leaky pipe.

I just want to say to my colleagues from the Liberal Party, what you're not talking about—it was raised a little bit—is enforcement. How do you put a bill together that has no enforcement? You can't enforce it. What are you going to do? Are you going to hope that people can afford to go to court?

We're glad that this has come forward. We're looking forward to it going to committee. We'll bring amendments forward to make sure that there's some form of enforcement in the bill. Because if you don't have enforcement, it's not worth the paper it's written on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The minister for innovation, science and research.

Hon. Reza Moridi: You have it right, Mr. Speaker, though the order is a little bit different. It's research, innovation and science.

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

Hon. Reza Moridi: No problem, Mr. Speaker.

It's a great pleasure to rise in this House and speak to Bill 142, the Construction Lien Amendment Act. I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, the MPP for Barrie and the MPP for Trinity-Spadina.

As we all know, the construction industry is the engine of the economy. Our economy is much dependent upon the construction industry. It's very important to recognize that Ontario's construction industry employs more than 400,000 people in various sectors of the industry. Also, there are many, many other industries which are very dependent upon the construction industry. In fact, 7% of our gross domestic product—GDP—is dependent upon this particular industry.

Not only is the construction industry important for our economy, but people who are in this business are building homes for our residents, for our citizens. They also are building factories, roads, bridges, hospitals, universities, schools and so on and so forth. They are key to our well-being as a society.

In order to ensure that this critically important industry continues to grow and thrive in the province of Ontario for years to come, we need to make sure that our province's construction laws are up to date and modernized and also reflect today's realities. When a company does not get paid on time, it sets off basically a chain reaction, and this impacts not only receiving funds from the contractors, but also it impacts their own people, their own employees and also their own suppliers. It's very important for them to get paid on time.

Any delay in paying companies and the people who do the construction work also impacts the projects as well. It disrupts cash flow to contractors and subcontractors and it makes delays in construction projects. So it's very important that they get paid on time.

The proposed legislation includes measures that, if passed, would support the industry and workers who work in this industry, including:

- creating new prompt-payment rules to give contractors and subcontractors certainty about when they expect to be paid;

- extending the timelines to file the liens and to start court actions from 90 days to 150 days, giving contractors and subcontractors adequate time to resolve their disputes out of court and avoid additional legal fees;

- requiring holdback funds to be paid as soon as the deadline to file liens has passed, so contractors and subcontractors would know when to expect payments; and

- creating an adjudication process to speed up dispute resolutions and prevent disputes from delaying work on construction projects.

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If passed, the legislation and the regulatory changes which are going to happen would come into effect in a phased approach, beginning in 2018. The changes that this legislation would make would basically modernize the construction lien and holdback provisions, including extending the timelines to file liens and to start court

actions, and requiring that holdback funds be paid once the deadline for filing liens has passed. It would also change the name of the Construction Lien Act to the Construction Act.

This legislation, if passed, would ensure that the construction industry remains a driver in our economy for years to come. If passed, the legislation and regulatory changes would come into effect in a phased approach, beginning in 2018.

The proposed changes are intended to modernize the province's legislation and speed up the payment and resolution process in the construction industry. This could mean reduced legal costs for small contract disputes such as home renovations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I guess we're sharing our time, are we?

The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: I'm very pleased to speak to this bill, and to add my support to Bill 142, the Construction Lien Amendment Act. In fact, I believe that, if passed, this act will be renamed the Construction Act, which I think is more appropriate.

Just take a look around where we are. All this construction is taking place. In my riding of Trinity–Spadina and across the province, we know that contractors and subcontractors are working hard, but unfair things do happen.

If you take a look at the legislation, the Construction Lien Act was created in 1983. That's a long time ago. That's over 30 years ago. I know that over the years there have been minor amendments to the act, but a full review has never been done before.

In 2010, Ontario amended the act at the request of a few key stakeholders. These changes included broadening the definition of "improvement," clarifying the rights of sheltered lien claimants, clarifying the lien process for condominiums and the right to cross-examine those who have registered liens.

But a lot of things have changed, like I said earlier, since 1983. The construction laws that worked for the industry back then just aren't cutting it today. Construction projects and the payments process 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 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 a long time before contractors get their full payment.

Think about this: These are Ontarians who, most of them, start working at 7 o'clock in the morning, and they've got to go back to their families, to support their families. They've got a mortgage to pay, as well. So it's completely unfair for them not to get the full payment for the work that has been performed.

I also want to speak to the consultation part of this bill because I've heard in the House a member across talking

about, "What's the delay?" I think it's fair to recognize that, last fall, the government met with 25 key stakeholders, stakeholder groups and expert advisory groups in the construction industry to hear their feedback on the report.

The government continued to work with Bruce and Sharon and the advisory group throughout the drafting of the legislation. In addition, the government requested feedback on Bill 142 over the summer and received a number of submissions with recommendations on how to improve the legislation.

The review convened more than 30 meetings that were attended by over 60 key interest groups, hosting many lively and spirited discussions. They also received over 70 written submissions. The Attorney General also individually met with over 30 different stakeholder groups.

It has taken us 34 years to get to this point. Until now, no one has been able to achieve consensus on these proposed changes—until now. But I'm happy to report to the House that, in general, all stakeholders expressed support for the review process and the report and its recommendations.

I think the time is now, and I urge all members of this House to express their support for this bill. Let's get it passed. Let's get it done.

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker. One of the first groups that visited me when I was elected was the construction groups, and this was the topic of our discussions. So I'm very pleased that we've gotten this far.

The bill before you today is the biggest proposed change to Ontario's construction industry in over three decades. As with any other dramatic industry change, we anticipate that there will be adjustments and tweaks needed down the road, so it's important that we get everything just right.

Over the summer, as my colleague said, we sought feedback on the bill from stakeholders across the industry and received a number of submissions telling us what worked for them and what did not. Our government is working alongside Bruce Reynolds and Sharon Vogel and the advisory group to address these concerns. We're proud of the level of input, collaboration and interest that we've had from the industry each step of the way. It really speaks to the importance of the changes that we're proposing.

As this bill progresses through the committee stage, we will be looking for continued suggestions and ideas from our stakeholders to identify areas for improvement. This bill contains revolutionary 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. We 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. It marks the first-ever consensus we've reached with industry stakeholders on issues including modernizing lien and holdback rules, prompt payment and adjudication.

The bottom line is, we need to bring our laws up to date to support the thousands of workers in this important sector and their families. Everyone has spoken here that it is not right that the person at the bottom of the food chain is the last to get their payment, and we want to fix that.

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

We have a quote here from the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario. They indicated their support for the recently introduced legislation from Attorney General Yasir Naqvi that updates and modernizes the Construction Lien Act.

“We are pleased to see the government is listening to the industry in addressing important issues that have been raised over the past several years,” said Patrick Dillon, business manager.

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“We have been advocating for changes that require prompt payment on construction projects. This new legislation finally addresses those concerns....” That's good news.

The other issue that I wanted to go over was that both the other parties, the official opposition and the third party—we've been hearing from them today how they both always supported the prompt payment and have been trying to work on that for a while. What they fail to realize is that to potentially enact a groundbreaking piece of legislation like this, you need unified support from the entire industry—the construction trade, the workers, the unions and everyone—and the government.

That is something that our government has worked tirelessly on, with countless consultations with a variety of different sectors, as you heard Minister Naqvi detail yesterday. We've worked hard to gain that unity within the industry, and for the first time in over 30 years, have the chance to update a piece of legislation that is well overdue for an update. We need to make sure that it is keeping up with an industry that makes up 7% of our GDP and employs almost half a million people in this province.

This legislation will have a real impact on the families of Ontario workers. This is literally a groundbreaking, once-in-a-generation piece of legislation, and, hopefully, the opposition will support it.

Mr. Han Dong: Hopefully.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Hopefully, they support the workers of Ontario. I didn't think I heard that very clearly, coming from the other side of the floor.

The official opposition: Their leader is going all over the province, calling on our government to support On-

tario workers. Here we have legislation that will do just that, and yet they are not in support of this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I can say that from the time I was a town councillor, this was an issue that came before me, with not only construction companies coming in to talk about projects our town was involved with, and some of the subcontractors and the issues they were having, but workers would come in to talk about the exact same things. That carried on, Speaker, when I became an MPP. Some of the first people who came in to see me were workers who were not being paid, and some of the companies who employed them who had similar issues.

Over the years, as my fellow MPPs have pointed out, there have been a number of minor amendments to the act, but a full review has never been conducted, and it was really about time. In fact, as has been pointed out, the Construction Lien Act was created way back in 1983.

We know that, certainly in my community and right across Ontario, the construction industry is a main driving force in growing Ontario's economy. In fact, in 2016, we're told that the construction industry supported some 400,000 jobs, and that was responsible for about 7% of the province's gross domestic product. That's nothing to be sneezed at. That is a significant impact on wealth creation and job creation in this province.

It goes without saying—and I go back to the many conversations I've had with contractors and with individuals—that delays in paying companies and people who do construction can have a devastating effect on not just construction projects but the workers and the suppliers who are involved. I've heard that a number of times in my office.

Our work here will help to ensure that the construction industry remains a driver in Ontario's economy, a driver of our economy—that 400,000 jobs, and growing; that 7% of gross GDP, and growing. So it's important that we get this going and we get this right.

I think the MPP for Barrie pointed out that there are a lot of organizations, a lot of groups and a lot of individuals that we need to pull together to make sure that we get agreement around this legislation, because it affects so many different players. I can tell you, Speaker, I'm really happy to say that, starting last fall, the government met with 25 key stakeholder groups and an expert advisory group from all sectors. We posted and requested formal feedback on this bill, Bill 142, over the summer. We received a significant number of submissions with recommendations on how to improve the legislation. The review of the legislation convened more than 30 meetings and we had over 60 key interest groups attend those meetings, so a significant impact. I can also say that that the Attorney General individually met with over 30 different stakeholder groups.

It's taken us 34 years to get to this point and, until now, no one has been able to achieve consensus on the proposed changes. I'll say that in general, all stakeholders expressed support for the review process and the

report and the recommendations. So I look forward to the smooth sailing of this legislation.

When I look at all of the areas in this legislation—and they're all important—one of the ones that really leaps out at me is the prompt payment. When someone does work, they should be paid. And they should be paid in a timely manner, and that is one of the key areas, obviously, that this legislation is addressing. The proposed changes include important measures to help ensure prompt payment for construction projects.

It also deals with late payment. It's one of the most urgent and pressing issues facing the construction sector today. Again, I go back to my days as a town councillor and early days as an MPP. I heard that time and again. When a company doesn't get paid for its work, it sets off a whole chain reaction of effects: its own payroll and the payments it needs to make to others like suppliers and all the people that it supplies. As Minister Naqvi mentioned earlier, this can be devastating for workers, for suppliers, for the entire project. That's just one of the many reasons that I look forward to all-House support for Bill 142.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to get up in the House and speak to Bill 142, which is known as the Construction Lien Amendment Act, but we know it as the prompt-payment act. It's long overdue. There have actually been three different forms of this bill that have come forward over the six years that I've been here.

When I was elected in October 2011, one of the first meetings that I had in November when the House was sitting following that election was with the Council of Ontario Construction Associations' Ian Cunningham. He was talking to me about the need for this type of legislation because there were lot of subs out there that weren't getting paid by the general contractor in a reasonable amount of time.

I was quite supportive at that time, and I know a number of members of the caucus were supportive at that time, and still are, of prompt-payment legislation. There are a few concerns about the legislation that the government has drafted and presented here to us to discuss during debate in the Legislature. But clearly, there is a problem in Ontario with the subcontractors being paid in a timely manner.

I don't think there's a better illustration of exactly how serious this problem is than companies that are working on green energy projects, the renewable energy projects. Since I've been the energy critic over the last eight months or so, I've heard from many, many companies that have done work on these renewable contracts, from putting up the fences to hooking up the wires to bulldozing the land to prepare for solar and wind installations. They've poured hundreds of thousands of dollars or more of their manpower into these projects and then they never get paid. They don't get paid and, as a result, a lot of them have gone broke. They've gone bankrupt as a result, so we really need this legislation. Prompt-payment

legislation has been needed since I arrived here six years ago. We just have to make sure we get it right so it works for all involved

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, as I talk to this bill.

I thought it was interesting when my colleagues from the Liberal side said that the time is now. When I took a look at the history of Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act was introduced in 2014 by the current Minister of Transportation as a private member's bill. The legislation was supported by the House. It was also supported by members of the construction and trades industries. So when you stand up and say that this is the first time parties came together, I don't know any company in the province of Ontario that doesn't want to get paid. If there is one, they can put their hand up. I thought that was interesting.

1700

Here's what else they did. We had 16 presenters over the span of two days, and just when they were ready to do clause-by-clause—because it was so important in 2014; people weren't being paid—guess what they did? They shut it down. They stuck it to the Minister of Transportation—I don't know if that's the right word. Sorry; I'll rephrase that. They gave it to the Minister of Transportation. He didn't know anything about it. Our party was shocked that it happened.

So when you stand up and say that the time is now, I don't think you're anywhere close to being right on that one; the time was in 2014, when you had the support of everybody. Here we are, a number of years later. Do you know what has changed in those years? Workers still aren't being paid. They're still not getting their benefits; they're still not being able to take care of their families because they are not getting paid on payday. Do you know what it is? Do you know what has changed?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The member from Trinity–Spadina seems to be in quite deep dialogue across the floor.

Mr. Han Dong: He was talking to me instead of the Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, guess what? You're supposed to not talk to each other. It's supposed to go through me. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Wayne Gates: You're absolutely right, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for that.

Here's what has changed in four years: The rules on how you donate to campaigns have changed, so corporations can't donate to the Liberal Party. So who can't donate to the Liberal Party anymore? EllisDon—that was the real reason why that was shut down. And I don't know how much power EllisDon has; I know they're friends of the Liberal Party.

That's what changed. They didn't care about workers; they didn't care about families; they didn't care about small business; they didn't care about big business.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: Many, many years ago, when I started my working life out of university, I worked as a commercial banker for the Bank of Nova Scotia. My job was to lend money to mid-sized and large companies. Most of what commercial lenders do is that they lend to companies who are looking to finance what's called their receivables—companies that have gone out and done work but not yet gotten paid by their customers. So the bank provides a line of credit to finance that, to provide them with the cash they need in the interim until they get paid.

I can't tell you how many companies would approach us at the time and ask for help financing receivables. They were in a situation where they weren't being paid within a reasonable period of time. Some of those companies were in the construction sector and some of them were not, but a lot were in the construction sector. The period of time that a lot of these companies had to wait was incredibly taxing on them and required them to come to the bank and ask for money that in some cases we couldn't lend simply because the payments sometimes didn't arrive or didn't arrive for a very long period of time.

I share this with you to say that the amount of time that some companies in the construction sector have to wait is far too long. It puts a disproportionate weight, a disproportionate emphasis and disproportionate demand on the smallest businesses in these sectors. These are the businesses that turn into the large businesses and these are the businesses that employ a lot of people—the majority of people—in Ontario and in this sector and create a lot of jobs.

This is not just about protecting the small businesses; it's not just about doing what's right—although it is. It's also about protecting the jobs, the employment and the well-being of the people who are employed at those companies.

I'm proud of this legislation. I think it makes good common sense, and I take exception to the remarks of the member of the NDP who would suggest that we do this because one or another company isn't donating. This is a government that stands for doing what's right for people, and this is a great example.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the presentation this afternoon from the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science, and also to the member for Trinity–Spadina, the member for Barrie and the Minister of the Environment, all of whom filled a 20-minute slot for the government side.

I think it's important to point out that the Conservative Party in this Legislature has been a long-time advocate to bring prompt-payment legislation to Ontario. The fact is, I believe this is the third time that the legislation has been introduced in this House with respect to this issue, and it seems that the government is unable, for whatever

reason, to get it passed through the House. We would wonder how this process is going to unfold.

The Legislature is back in session finally after the summer break. There's an election on the horizon. We would look to the government to proceed with this debate and send it to a standing committee of the Legislature, hopefully before Christmas, so that we can hear from the general public, hear from the interest groups that may have suggestions and ideas to improve the bill, and that we can proceed and see this through. I think it is important that the Legislature does its job with this bill and works with the public to ensure that every aspect of the bill is in the public interest.

We know that the bill is supported by stakeholders from all sectors of the construction industry, and I think that's important to point out, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that over the course of this debate we will hear good ideas. I would hope that the government side will listen to the observations of the opposition and be prepared to consider and listen to our amendments when the bill goes to committee. As we know, in many cases when we bring forward amendments in committee, the government has been at times unwilling to listen to good ideas from the opposition parties, whether it be from the official opposition or from the third party, and that's unfortunate.

Obviously, we need to do our job as opposition, and the government needs to do its job. We would encourage the government to listen to the opposition as this bill continues, and hopefully we'll see it pass this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister for Research, Innovation and Science has two minutes.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh, okay. The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Speaker, for recognizing me. I want to thank the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, the member from Niagara Falls, the member from Etobicoke Centre and the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for their feedback on the debate.

I just want to point out that Bill 142 needs consensus in the industry. We've gone through a thorough consultation period. I think, on the government side, we have been very responsible when it comes to this very serious matter.

I heard the member from Niagara Falls making, I would say, allegations, actually, in this House. I would caution him to be very careful in trying to hint that this bill somehow has to do with donations and the changing of the donation rules. I want to remind the third party of the word “cornerstone.” That was the code name for the project. Of course, that's another debate.

We have to be very careful in the choice of our words in this House, because we may be used to political attacks in the House during debates and during question period, but it's going to affect third parties out there, companies that are doing good business, supporting job creation and so on and so forth. Without evidence, I think these types of allegations should not be used that freely in this House.

I also want to say that as the PA to the minister of higher education, day in and day out, we go into colleges and we go into schools and we talk to students and ask them to go into trades. We need to give them a fair playing ground when they graduate and when they enter a work environment that's going to be fair when it comes to payment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, and good afternoon to you. Welcome back to the fall session, of course.

It's been close to about four years since the introduction of legislation to ensure prompt payment to contractors in Ontario who are forced to wait sometimes four months or even much longer. I know many of my colleagues from around the Legislature spoke at great length about that today. I hope to lend my 20 minutes to that today.

I recall, of course, the time—and I know the member for Niagara spoke to the fact that the Minister of Transportation formerly had tabled a bill back on this some time ago. We were in fact right before committee going through clause-by-clause, as it was making its way through the legislative process, and it all of a sudden arbitrarily was stopped, basically. It was years, frankly, since then that we've seen any movement on this.

Of course, we've all had suppliers and contractors in our local communities speak to the importance of just getting paid to do what they've already done in a realistic time frame. We know that these contractors and suppliers—they do just that. They build things; they supply materials. They're not banks, but oftentimes that's how others treat them. Of course, years after, they're now seeing something come to fruition. While we do see the potential light at the end of the tunnel here in the form of Bill 142, An Act to amend the Construction Lien Act, many of them wonder what has taken so long.

Much as contractors have been made to wait for payment while those who benefit from their work drag their heels, they have been equally delayed by this government's dithering, which has seen the Liberals embark on prompt-payment legislation three separate times, with past attempts dying on the order paper due to either an election call or prorogation. With another election on the horizon, we're very hopeful that we can move forward before history has a chance to repeat itself all over again.

As COCA, the Council of Ontario Construction Associations—I know my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings spoke about his meeting as a new parliamentarian with their representative Ian Cunningham when he was a member—notes in their prompt-payment backgrounder: “One of the most serious problems facing the construction industry is the endemic plague of late payments. Contractors are often forced to wait 120 days or longer to receive payments for work that has been completed and certified. This has a very drastic effect on the industry and on the broader economy. It leads to

lower levels of employment in the construction industry, less investment in apprentices and training, reduced investment in capital and equipment and inevitably drives up the costs of construction.”

Speaker, where I come from, if you do the work, you should get paid. I can tell you that there are many in my area who feel the same. The stack of letters I've had sent to me from local contractors only grows higher with each additional failed attempt to push prompt-payment measures through. Many of them have continued to ask me why it hasn't been a priority for the government to finally ensure the fairness that prompt-payment legislation would in fact provide.

We all know, Speaker, that when it comes to the government getting paid, you had better believe that they expect it when they ask for it. But on the other side, it's not so much the same. Many of them have continued to ask me why it hasn't been a priority for the government to finally ensure the fairness that prompt-payment legislation would provide.

I've heard from so many great contractors in my area: Kappeler Masonry, Ball Construction, Dordan Mechanical and the Grand Valley Construction Association. I know that unfortunately we had one of those contractors succumb—fall victim to, frankly—the fact that they weren't getting paid. Some of these contractors—I know we heard earlier about the Hamilton Tiger-Cats' field, Tim Hortons Field, and the problems that have ensued there. I know that the payment has dragged on at some of those projects right across the province, in fact.

We're talking about multi-million-dollar projects here. We're not talking about, perhaps, a small bathroom renovation or a supply of construction materials here or there—a bag of concrete. We're talking millions of dollars, tens of millions of dollars, in fact. All of them have been impacted by the lack of prompt-payment legislation—the teeth—and they're all continuing to wait for the government to finally move on the legislation it brought forth two years ago.

GA Masonry wrote me—and I talked to Bill last night: “The existing inequity imperils employment and apprenticeship growth, and inhibits the ability of small and medium-sized contractors to invest in machinery and equipment, as well as bid on additional work ... that means fewer jobs and slower economic growth.”

Speaker, I still have my backgrounder and support letters from when this legislation failed to pass in 2013. Emails from November of that year highlighted how vital contractors needed to have these measures passed. Emails from Kappeler Masonry indicated, “As a business, nothing is more important than our cash flow. When it becomes uncertain, every decision we make becomes more risky and more costly.”

This time around, I've had further letters and emails, like the one I received from Russ Straus of St. Agatha. If you'll indulge me, Speaker, I'd like to report on some of what he wrote. He said:

“As your constituent and a supporter of Prompt Payment Ontario ... I am writing to you to thank the govern-

ment for undertaking the Construction Lien Act review and announcing the subsequent introduction of legislation in spring 2017. As part of the recommendations from the CLA review, prompt-payment legislation will help trade contractors and suppliers to run businesses with more certainty, provide more competitive bids and meet financial responsibilities in a timely fashion. In short, it will dramatically improve the productivity of Ontario's construction industry. The instruction of prompt-payment legislation, as part of the recommendations presented by Reynolds and Vogel, will help trade contracting businesses, employees and their families, suppliers, and the economy as a whole."

He goes on to say, "Prompt payment is about fairness, where small businesses are not faced with undue risk from higher up the construction chain, simply because someone has the advantage of purchasing power. Trade contractors could refuse to bid on those jobs, but for them, the more important question is often about putting food on the table and keeping their team employed. It is a tough choice to make.

"It is important for you to understand that the industry has declared its support for the CLA review report and that the totality of its recommendations must be adhered to without undue change. Every stakeholder group has had to compromise its position to some degree in order to reach consensus, but according to public statements the ... report has achieved that consensus and must be respected. Changes or exclusions to what has been presented in the report will be seen as bargaining in bad faith and will not be supported."

He goes on to add, "It is my hope that prompt-payment legislation reflects the recommendations made in the Construction Lien Act review report, in particular the following six items:

"—submission of proper invoice to trigger the timing for the payment terms of 28 days to the prime contractors and a further seven days from the prime contractor to the trade contractor;

"—the terms of contract between the prime contractor and subcontractor mirror those terms found in the contract between the owner and the prime contractor...;

"—timely dispute resolution;

"—the right to suspend/terminate work for non-payment or non-compliance with decision from dispute resolution"—of course, with costs—"and in the interim to implementing a dispute resolution process, the right to suspend/terminate work will remain with due notification;

"—notification of payment by the owner;

"—ensuring trades have either the money that they are owed or their lien rights.

"Moreover, it is essential that the drafting process is transparent. In particular, timelines must be made apparent to ensure the government is held accountable and remains on track for the promised spring introduction and subsequent passing of legislation in fall 2017."

We are in, of course, the fall of 2017. We have been so close to that goal line before. Multiple times have we

been there. I remember, as I stated before, the previous bill being actually in committee—clause-by-clause—and being yanked. But we all know how things happen around here. We have a multitude of legislation already on the books. We hear of more coming down the pike before we get to what will likely be a spring election held next year, and timing will move fairly quickly.

He goes on to say, "If the government is unable to present something at that time, our faith in the government to do the right thing will be lost." He has a right to be concerned because, of course, we have been here before. Finally, he adds:

"The construction industry is key to Ontario's growth. It is trade contractors and their employees who do over 80% of the work to build the structures and roadways that make economic growth possible. I believe it is time for fairness and I look forward to seeing it" in this legislation.

"Sincerely,

"Russ Straus

"St. Agatha."

I want to thank Russ for his letter as a small business owner and contractor in the region of Waterloo. He knows first-hand that his first and foremost priority should be to be employing good employees and delivering a good, high-quality service, that being construction in our community. He just expects that when he does that, he will be paid promptly or in a timely fashion, knowing that there are materials and labour. As our friend next door talked about earlier on, they have to pay their employees at the end of every week or every two weeks, with benefits, and it's only fair that you provide payment for the work made.

1720

Of course, on this latest prompt-payment initiative we see before us today, again, to be clear, we on this side of the House have long been proponents of seeing this through, unlike—and I was really unsure of the previous comments by the government members on this. We have championed, in fact, the prompt-payment call for years. I know my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has spearheaded that effort for our party under our leader, Patrick Brown. That's essential so that contractors provide payment for that work.

Just so we understand exactly what we are talking about, Speaker: According to the latest edition of this proposed legislation, the prompt-payment timelines start with the delivery of a proper invoice from the contractor to the owner. To be considered a proper invoice, among other things the invoice must include the typical information: the contractor's name and address, the amount payable, and the contact info of the person to whom it is sent. It must also state the period during which services and materials were supplied, and the authority—including contractual authority—under which the services or materials were supplied. The invoice must also have a description, including quantity, of the services or materials that were supplied and the payment terms. Further, the parties can agree via contract on additional requirements for a proper invoice.

Unless the contract provides otherwise, proper invoices have to be given to the owner on a monthly basis. While an invoice can still be subject to review by a payment certifier, the act will prohibit any contractual provisions that require approval of the certifier before an invoice is considered a proper invoice.

I was speaking to a good friend of mine in the mechanical business. They've got some pretty significant jobs here in the city of Toronto—millions and millions of dollars alone just in the mechanical work. I believe, on one job, we're talking about almost \$10 million.

As the project proceeds, there are oftentimes change orders and new things added and things subtracted. There needs to be a way that the owner, the contractor—the general for the sub—and then suppliers all have a mechanism to ensure that the work that gets done and gets approved will finally get paid for.

On the owner's side of the equation, according to Bill 142, the owner must pay the contractor's proper invoice within 28 days of receipt. The owner can only defer payment if, within 14 days of receipt of the invoice, the owner gives a notice of dispute to the contractor.

We all know that, at times, on projects small or large, there will be instances when the owner—and they duly have that right to question, perhaps, the quality of the workmanship, the fact that they may or may not have followed the scope. The engineer may have raised some concerns about the end product when it was commissioned. So we have to give owners that ability to challenge an invoice, but I believe that that “14 days of receipt” will be appropriate. Of course, the notice must set out the amount that is not being paid and all of the reasons for non-payment.

So that gives you an idea of the very basics of the prompt-payment measures we're talking about here today.

All of that said, while we do continue to support prompt-payment measures and moving forward, there are always some areas of concern that must be highlighted in order that we get this right, through committee work and further legislative debate.

Today parties have stood down their leads, but I know members of all three political parties have had an opportunity to get some initial comments in with regard to the legislation. It sounds like, at the outset, most of us—in fact, all of the opposition parties on this side of the House—including the government, will be supportive of this initiative. We know and we've heard for such a long time—and I want to congratulate Prompt Payment Ontario, a collective of employer groups, trade unions, suppliers, construction associations. For years they have collectively kept this issue in front of all parliamentarians. It's not often you get a collective of employers, contractor associations, trade unions and suppliers coming together to rally for one issue. I definitely want to commend them on their aggressive lobbying, frankly. It's because they know the impacts first-hand on their members, companies and employees. When work is done and they're not paid, they see what the results of that actually are.

As I mentioned before, one of the folks who wrote me succumbed financially, predominantly because of the issue that they weren't getting paid for the work they had done. Bills have to be paid, and if you don't pay your bills, your credit rating goes down and your ability to borrow or even be bonded is less and less. That limits the ability for those contractors to then go out and get new work at higher volumes. Again, contractors and suppliers are not banks; they're contractors. And too often, owners are in fact using those contractors as a bank, and that's just not right. It's not fair.

Again, kudos to Prompt Payment Ontario. We all remember the ads on TV that were broadcast, putting a frank message in front of people. I think clearly that had a definite payoff for them, the fact that we now see this here today.

While we all support prompt-payment measures and moving forward, of course, there will be further concerns and we look forward to hearing those throughout this debate. I know my caucus colleagues will be highlighting a number of areas for possible attention as we move this ahead. Of course, the lack of public notice on written decisions of adjudicators definitely is one of those issues that we heard about. As the bill currently stands, written decisions of adjudicators would be provided to the parties involved but would not be made public, thus leaving no body of case law to help or assist in future disputes. For lawyers here or for others, precedent-setting case law is important when making decisions down the road.

We ask why there is no ability to appeal adjudicated decisions and no requirement to report back to the House regarding the activities or outcomes resulting from the decisions of the authorized nominating authority. We'll be further addressing the ability to have the minister responsible for the act designated as an interim authority, as it raises concerns about the ability to have government pick and choose winners and losers and potentially affect the outcome of decisions regarding government projects.

And finally, with the government delegating powers to require training and certification of parties in order to participate in a lucrative sector, which already requires previous experience in the field, we will be looking for a clear framework for complaints and/or appeals provided for those attempting to register with the authority.

Bottom line, the fact is that jurisdictions right across the world have got this right: 49 states and even our federal partners have prompt payment for publicly funded infrastructure. It's time to make this a priority. It's time for prompt payment here in Ontario. I thank you for your time. I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I always like standing up and making some comments after my colleague. I noticed that when he was speaking, he talked a little about his leader, so I thought it was important because it was in my original presentation but I didn't get to it. I want to be clear that our caucus supported the concept of prompt payment and we know that it needs to be addressed.

Our leader, Andrea Horwath, stated—and I think it's important to get this into the record—“Prompt-payment legislation will create more construction jobs, encourage greater use of apprentices, enable more investment into machinery and equipment and lower the cost of construction. The construction industry as a whole pays the price because contractors have to factor into their bids the cost of financing late payments, and that in turn tilts the playing field and means fewer contractors have the financial resources to compete. It doesn't just stop with us—the trade subcontractors. It goes to our subs-subs, suppliers, manufacturers, employees, labour organizations”—like IBEW—“their benefits plans”—which I spoke about extensively when I had the opportunity to speak about how they're not getting paid their benefits, and they show up at the pharmacy and they can't get their prescriptions filled; I mean, that's just terrible—“and government, which should be involved, because it goes to the tax regime as well.”

1730

I want to close my couple of minutes by saying again that this is what workers deserve in the province of Ontario. I believe they deserve their wages, their benefits and their pension contributions. Nobody in the province of Ontario should have to work for free.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened very carefully to the remarks from the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

The government is taking this bill very seriously. The name “Construction Lien Act” will disappear, and the new title for the bill will be the Construction Act.

I just want to point out a few other changes here.

This piece of legislation is very important, and we want to get it right. Over the summer, we sought consultation and feedback from stakeholders across the industry. We received a number of submissions telling us what worked for them and what didn't work for them in the construction industry.

We are also working alongside Bruce Reynolds, Sharon Vogel and the advisory group to address these concerns. We're getting input from lawyers as well as specialists who deal with this kind of legislation.

We are proud of the level of input, collaboration and interest we've had from industry each step of the way. It really speaks to the importance of the changes we're proposing.

This bill will proceed, after second reading debate here, to the committee stage, and at that time we'll hear from stakeholders. There will be, I'm sure, suggested changes from the people who come and present at committee, and from there any possible changes will be done at committee. The bill will be brought back here for third reading and we'll discuss it again. As usual, we have full discussion when we bring forward legislation; the government has always done that here. At that point in time, any other changes, including prompt-payment changes, will be made.

The bill is very, very comprehensive. We want to get it right. Some people say it's our third attempt. There was a lot of work done here, and the ministry has done a lot of work to make sure this gets done properly.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I always like to stand and comment on my colleague the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. He brought up a lot of good points, and one of them was that our small businesses are not banks. They can't continue to fund some of these larger contractors that come out and utilize them as banks. Times are tough, you know?

It's interesting. I hear from the member opposite that they have been meeting over the summer and listening. Let's hope that they're going to do more than just change the title of the bill. That really doesn't do very much.

We've seen time and time again, when we've met through committee, that both opposition parties come up with some realistic and helpful amendments, but we rarely see them incorporated into any bills. Some might say that the government may not believe in them, but we've seen that the government has a history sometimes of bringing bills back numerous times. This is the third time this one has been back.

I remember, with the telecommunications bill, one of the amendments we tried to push through, with advice from the industry—the government spoke against it. Why? The amendment “made no sense.” When they brought the bill back the next time, that was incorporated in the new bill. So I would have to think that in that case, they did take our advice. But of course, they wouldn't incorporate it into the bill; they had to wait until it failed. I think at that time it failed because the government prorogued after the gas plant scandal. When they brought it back, they incorporated this amendment.

So we'll wait and see. There will be, I'm sure, lots of comments from the industry. We need to listen to that feedback and actually incorporate it into the bill where appropriate. We're hoping to see more from that, and maybe the government will do more than change the name.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon. It has been an interesting debate, because as we reflect back on the path that this piece of legislation addressing prompt payment has come to the floor in 2017—there has been some revisionism, I think, based on the history that actually happened in here.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga spoke about the importance to businesses and to contractors. We share those beliefs. But I was in that committee room in 2014 when the PCs stood down their support of the prompt-payment piece of legislation—and they were totally entitled to do that, because so did the Liberal Party. The Liberal government didn't support their own member, the member from Vaughan.

All that aside, we do have an important piece of legislation before us. I think the member from Kitchener–

Conestoga and I would agree that it's important for government to pay their bills on time as well. Surprisingly enough—maybe not for you—this government does not actually have a good record of promptly paying the contractors who do work for the government.

In fact, their whole record on infrastructure can be called into question based on the public accounts that came out last week. It's very interesting; based on those public accounts, it turns out that this government has failed to spend a staggering \$9 billion that they allocated for infrastructure over the last three years under this Wynne government—\$9 billion that was allocated in the budget and was supposed to be spent on infrastructure, but was not spent. Yet, they say they had to sell Hydro One. Well, that Hydro One money went somewhere, but it certainly didn't go to infrastructure. The numbers in the public accounts tell the real story.

Let's get this piece of legislation done. Prompt Payment Ontario has done a good job lobbying. Let's finalize it, but let's make this piece of legislation stronger.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I definitely want to thank all of those who happened to chime in on my initial 20 minutes on what is clearly an important topic for employers, of course.

Employers are, frankly, under attack right now. You see what's happening south of the border: We hear about reduction of red tape, lowering of corporate business taxes, making it more of a jurisdiction to make investments in. But we're going in the other direction.

I read with interest today that the NDP, who have talked a lot about the increase to the minimum wage, have now all of a sudden had an “aha” moment and are talking about the fact that this legislation, Bill 148, has been perhaps moved quicker than what should have been and that we need to consider the impact to business.

Of course, today we're talking about a bill that directly impacts a lot of small, medium- and large-sized businesses when it comes to paying their bills or actually being paid for the work that they get done. On and on, we're seeing through Bill 148 more prescriptive changes in terms of how they'll be able to do their business.

I look forward, obviously, to having my opportunity to speak to Bill 148 as it stands, but today we're talking about prompt payment. As I've mentioned, we've got 49 states in the United States—and even our federal government partners—that have prompt payment legislation for publicly funded infrastructure projects. Of course, Australia—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes, that's right; the new program—Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the European Union as well. It's time that our province follows suit. It's time for prompt payment here in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand on behalf of the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane—and in this case, also on behalf of my NDP colleagues—to make some comments on Bill 142, the Construction Lien Amendment Act, 2017. Since this is the first chance I've had to stand since we've come back since the summer, I have a couple of comments.

We've witnessed some very serious weather events across the globe; specifically, our neighbours to the south. My occupation before I came here was a farmer. Farmers—specifically, livestock farmers—during those hurricanes, during drastic weather events, not only have to worry about their own families, but they also worry about the well-being of their livestock and of their crops. That's an incredible toll.

1740

On the dairy farm, we went through a couple of blizzards where we had some big-time troubles. That was before we had our own electric generating capacity. I can only imagine what those people went through. I think we should take a moment just to think about what the people who actually produce our food have to go through to protect their livestock so that we can all basically eat.

I'm going to bring that back to this. There's going to be a lot of construction going on in those areas in the States and some here as well, around the Windsor area.

I've been here since 2011. Before I got here, my office was on the buddy seat in my tractor cab; I never had an office. I remember the prompt-payment legislation was one of the first issues that I really had to think about. Because I came from a dairy farm, quite frankly, I didn't understand it. I didn't understand the problem behind it.

That's one of the strengths of this Legislature: We all come from different parts of the province, different parts of the economy. Because of our supply management system in this country, dairy farmers are guaranteed to get paid. If a processor defaults on their payments to the marketing board, that default is pooled and the individual farmer doesn't really feel it directly. If a processor defaults, it does not lead to the possibility of the demise of the local dairy farm. That's an incredible strength in our supply management system, something a lot of people don't understand.

Having always been in supply management, it took me a while to get around prompt-payment legislation, because I also sold things directly—meat, grain and cattle. I'm sure every businessman in the province, in the country, has occasionally run into a deal where they didn't get paid. Usually, when you're an independent business person, you make the decision that you just don't deal with that person again, right? Once burned, twice shy.

So it took me a while to understand what prompt payment was about. I commend the Prompt Payment Ontario folks who were here lobbying, but I also had to talk to some of my local contractors, and actually not very long after, some of my local contractors ran into the exact problems that we were discussing. To my surprise, they were dealing with public contracts, with public

buildings. Somehow, having never dealt in that part of the economy, I couldn't understand it, because to most people who aren't involved in the construction industry, you would think the safest job to have is working for a public entity or a contract that comes from the government. It turns out that it's not that safe at all.

Then I had to understand, okay, so if you get burned once, why do you guys or why do you companies enter into the same predicament again? It was a pretty simple answer: They're dealing with the lifeblood of their companies, and you just can't sit on the sidelines and not bid on contracts when these contracts don't come up every day. You can't just say, "Well, I might not get paid for a year, so I'm just going to sit this one out." When the people who are offering these contracts are the biggest construction kings in the province and their contracts are for the provincial government or entities controlled through the provincial government, you just can't sit those out because you need to keep your business going.

Sometimes the people offering these contracts are the only game in town. You either play with them in their sandbox or you don't play in the sandbox at all.

Quite frankly, what I have learned and what we have seen is that the big contracting firms and the big construction firms—not all, but some—do this as a way of financing their projects, because the longer they take to pay their subs and their workers, the longer they can keep the money in investments or the more projects they can bid on themselves. It's an incredible predicament to be in.

In my riding, I think of Miron construction and of Steve and Jenny Nychuk, who have construction firms, bid on these contracts—what they thought was a sure thing—and then end up having to fight for their businesses. That just shouldn't be. Having been a businessman my whole life, I wondered how it could be.

Prompt payment: I'm sure my colleagues who were elected at the same time as I was thought, "Well, this is a no-brainer. Of course." On the flip side, I've built buildings and I've constructed things. Quite frankly, I paid within 30 days. The bill came, and I paid within 30 days, because it's my reputation, but also, if you don't pay, you don't get those people to work for you again. It's not rocket science.

I thought, "You know what? Maybe the government isn't as convoluted as I thought it was. This prompt-payment legislation comes forward. It makes sense. Let's do it." Well, I've been here since 2011, and we're still talking about it.

Do we support this legislation? This legislation isn't perfect. It's a big step forward. It has taken a lot of work from the Prompt Payment people. The government is talking about consultation. They're definitely into long-term consultation and multi-year consultation. But it's still fascinating how this legislation took so long to come to fruition.

I understand, and people who are actually working in the sector—contractors, subcontractors, workers—understand very well, and the government should understand

very well. But over the iteration of this legislation, there has been a lot of politics—and not politics in a good way, but politics about the money and the power of who pulls the strings in the construction industry. You could feel the ebb and flow of who was lobbying the hardest at any one time. I sincerely hope that that ebb and flow doesn't start in earnest again, because when you bid on a contract, your company and your workers do quality work and you submit the bill, you should have a reasonable expectation to get paid so that you can pay your bills and the economy can roll.

One of the members of the official opposition said that contractors aren't banks, and that's true. They shouldn't be banks. But for a long time in this province, they have been treated as banks, to the detriment of those families and businesses. It was common knowledge, and yet it continued. I hope, at this point—I'll repeat—that the wheels of politics don't grind and let these people suffer for even more years and let the economy suffer for even more years.

As you know, Speaker—as we all know—we are inching closer to an election. It would be a tragedy if this bill was held up unduly. There are things we can do better in this bill. There is no such thing as perfect legislation. This bill is a step forward. The main players in the Prompt Payment organization and the subcontractors are in favour. From what I have heard today, there is a very good possibility that we could work together and get this through.

1750

I would like to make one thing clear: If something happens that this legislation is held up, it certainly won't be this corner of the House that it's coming from, because we have always supported this legislation, and we will continue to support the principle behind prompt payment.

This isn't rocket science. This is business. Businesses of all sizes operate within the parameters, within the rules that are laid out. When the rules and the legislation leave major loopholes, that you actually aren't forced to pay subcontractors in a reasonable time frame, then why would big business do it? Because there's more money to leave it in investments than to actually pay your people. Again, that's not rocket science. That is how business works. That's why the free market, without any regulation, wouldn't be very good for the economy. You need regulation. Do you want to overregulate? No. Overregulation is stifling. But for people who propose that our province can run without regulation, they would be sadly mistaken.

This is an example of good regulation, of fairly good regulation. But this bill has a few big holes. One of the big holes is that it is very—what's the word I'm looking for?—very lacking on the enforcement part. This also isn't rocket science. If you have a regulation that doesn't really have an enforcement vehicle, what is the regulation really worth? If you have a speed limit sign but no one ever gets pulled over, soon—not everyone—the people who are prone to stretch the limits of the regulations

won't obey the speed limit sign. So with this legislation lacking obvious—it has the regulation but without the enforcement, so it's still to be seen whether it actually will be effective.

The folks who are dealing with this, who are dealing with sometimes payments taking years, are desperate, and I can understand why. Because if you're running any type of trade and you've got employees to pay and those contracts are out there, you're going to continue to bid, you're going to continue to do the work and you're going to continue to borrow because you know that eventually you're going to get paid. Hopefully you're still in business by then. But if there's no enforcement, then this legislation might not actually help them nearly as much as they're hoping.

The spirit of this legislation is good. The spirit of the first prompt-payment legislation was good. The spirit of the second one was good.

Interjection: Lots of spirit.

Mr. John Vanthof: The spirit and the intent.

The question is, is the actual intent to enforce this legislation there? That's an open question. It really is. Because the same forces—I can't do Darth Vader impressions. The same forces of evil that stopped this legislation the first two times, or three times or whatever, are still out there. Perhaps they're just looking at a different way of skirting this legislation.

Some people could think, "Well, no, that will never happen." Well, really? Why was the legislation scuttled? Why was it scuttled? Why, in previous iterations, did both of the other parties vote or withdraw their support?

Because this legislation makes sense. It does what it's supposed to do. It helps workers. It helps small contractors. Yet both the government and the official opposition at one point withdrew their support. Obviously, there was something at play. Whatever scuttled this legislation last time is still out there, and it could very well just be planning a different method of attack.

If people out there are saying, "Oh, well, politics, you know? It's not that"—it is. There's much more to the political system in this province than just the people talking here. The fact that this government has sat back, at least since I've been here, and not tackled this issue tells me that now they're coming in like a white knight: "We are so in favour of prompt payment. This is going to solve it all." Well, this could have solved it all since 2011, since I've been standing here, and before.

Yes, we are inching closer to an election, and I sincerely hope that this is passed before the election. If the current governing party runs all over and takes credit, that doesn't really even bother me, as long as the regulation and the enforcement is there, because that's what government is supposed to do.

It's nasty that it seems, as we inch closer to the election, that that is when the government takes the time to work on issues that actually matter to working people, to business owners. This issue—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I hear a few people heckling on the government side. This could have been done seven

years ago. This could have been done in the last administration of the Liberal Party—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Why didn't you do it when you were in power?

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: So now we are being accused that when we were in power, before there were cellphones and the Internet, we didn't tackle this issue. This issue probably wasn't as prominent. I don't know; I wasn't involved in politics back then. But I've been involved in provincial politics since 2011, and it certainly existed in 2011. That side was in power, and they proposed something, got people excited and then backpedalled as quickly as they could.

Now, just before this election, they're putting the gas to the same thing, and they're saying that when the NDP was in power, we didn't do it, in—when were we in? In 1990? Folks, we were having a good debate until they started throwing stuff like, "Well, you could have done it in 1990." They've been there for 14 years and have yet to move on this.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. And I thought Marchese was good.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of the Status of Women. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

1800

Ms. Laurie Scott: As I told the minister earlier today, I spent the last two days at the Ontario Provincial Police conference on human sex trafficking in Barrie, which hosted smart, dedicated, brave people who convened to address the ongoing crisis that affects every corner of Ontario. Police, victim service providers and experts talked about the daily grind they face in the war against human sex trafficking.

Sadly, what's missing at these meetings is proactive leadership on the part of the provincial government. Earlier today, the minister told me she has a plan, but she didn't even bother listing what they're doing. She also keeps assuring everyone, "We're working on it," but the people on the ground—those who are actually doing the heavy lifting in this fight—aren't seeing the action that they say is needed.

The government announced their anti-human-trafficking strategy in June 2016. They finally got around to launching a call for proposals from victim services providers this spring, 2017, and that closed on May 18, 2017. Government officials said they would review the applications by June, but then applicants heard that it would be July, then August. I don't think they have even heard back yet, and we now are in September. How many victims could have been helped in that time?

Some of these organizations had to resort to applying for Trillium grants—Trillium grants—because they can't get support from the ministry in charge. That's shameful, Mr. Speaker.

Let me remind you that this Legislature unanimously passed Bill 96, the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, three months ago, but the government has yet to act on it. No regulations have been tabled, and so no victims have access to the remedies that I originally proposed in the Saving the Girl Next Door Act nearly two years ago. That is also shameful.

When I was in Kingston this past July, I learned that there are only two police officers focused on human trafficking on the ground—and that's only part of their responsibility. So you can imagine, for a large city of over 160,000 people, the two officers can't even investigate human sex trafficking full-time.

There is a serious lack of housing, which forces victims to stay in the hands of their exploiters.

There is still a lack of coherent provincial coordination. Everyone is just so overwhelmed. They are doing what they can, but without effective support from this government.

A few weeks back, I met with police and victim service providers in Timmins, where I was shocked to learn that no one from the provincial government has spoken to them about their circumstances. That's unacceptable, especially considering that our northern communities are particularly vulnerable.

I constantly bring this to the minister's attention, because I am speaking on behalf of the first responders, victim services, activists and victims who are desperate for help. The minister really needs to start listening to the people on the ground and ask, "What more can we do for you?"—not keep referring to news releases for over a year.

These are real lives—real children who are suffering. The people on the ground tell me that they want to do more to save these lives, but they just don't have the resources.

I'm not really interested in hearing the minister list what they've done on paper, referring to press releases from a year or two years ago. What I care about is helping those devoted people who are fighting, day in and day out, who don't take breaks, who are on call 24/7. They are the ones out there, day to day, who are trying to save our children from this horrible abuse.

It's time for the minister to finally do what is right: Make the fight against this evil of human sex trafficking a genuine priority—and I can't say how evil it is. It is so

evil. Will she tell the people on the ground when they can expect to see the money and training that they so desperately need, that some have applied for and haven't heard back on? They are struggling every day to save lives.

I await the minister's response.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of the Status of Women has five minutes to reply.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, in answer to MPP Scott's question, yes, unfortunately I was not able to attend the Barrie conference on human trafficking earlier this week. Why? Because I was here instead, at Queen's Park, for the first day of the opening of the fall session, doing my job as the minister responsible for early years and child care and the first Minister of the Status of Women, working for the protection, equality, and empowerment of women. That includes working to put an end to the terrible crime of human trafficking.

Human trafficking impacts the most vulnerable in our society, and I'm proud our government is making a strong commitment to protect those most at risk. Our human trafficking strategy and our new Anti-Human Trafficking Act are important steps forward in helping survivors reclaim their lives and heal. Supporting survivors and protecting those at risk is absolutely the right thing to do. That is why I would like to thank the Barrie, Ontario, OPP for their anti-human-trafficking conference on Monday and Tuesday. I want to recognize and thank the 200 law enforcement, social service workers, court service workers and survivors who attended for their tireless hard work toward ending this crime.

I would also like to take this opportunity to raise another important point for MPP Scott. This conference you refer to in Barrie was funded and made possible due to a Civil Remedies Grant Program. Along with the anti-human trafficking legislative changes made last session, we made two regulatory changes, one which allows community organizations that support survivors of trafficking to now apply for grant funding under the Civil Remedies Act. So I thank you for asking me about this conference in question period, because it is absolutely more evidence of the work that we are doing daily in the fight against human trafficking by our government, and it is well under way. We funded that conference.

I want to take a moment now to review for MPP Scott the legislation the government enacted as part of Ontario's strategy to end human trafficking. Last fall, we introduced and passed legislation that will increase protection for survivors and those at risk of human trafficking. The Anti-Human Trafficking Act, 2017, statutes allow individuals to apply for restraining orders against human traffickers to protect themselves or their children from traffickers. They also make it easier for victims of human trafficking to gain compensation from those who trafficked them in order to restore and rebuild their lives. And it proclaims February 22 of each year as Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

At this point, I would like to thank MPP Laurie Scott for the work she did in bringing attention to the problem

of human trafficking with her bill, Saving the Girl Next Door. But our strategy is much broader than creating a task force or the legislative changes proposed by her bill. That's because the complex crime of human trafficking requires a comprehensive, cross-government approach, which is what we are doing with this strategy, with strong collaboration and coordination of services. Absolutely, that takes time to do and to coordinate, but the work is getting done.

It is unfortunate that MPP Scott continues to reference the Saving the Girl Next Door Act in the media and at events, where it is being quoted as the act that passed into law last spring. Here is why: This is potentially creating confusion in the minds of the people we are most trying to reach, those survivors we are most trying to help and those people we want to be able to help in terms of being able to access support. Human trafficking survivors and those who work in this area to help and heal them need to be able to directly go to the sources of the support. So that is not only unhelpful; it can be hurtful to the cause of fighting human trafficking. It creates challenges and confusion for those trying to access support to call it by another name.

Speaker, we all want an end to human trafficking. We all seek clarity, truth, commitment and hard work to put an end to human trafficking. From now on, let us also be clear that in this province, under this government, we are protecting survivors under the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, 2017 and the anti-human trafficking strategy of 2016. Using the correct name for the legislation makes it easier for survivors to access support. We are creating a province where human traffickers are brought to justice and survivors have access to the services and supports they need to heal and rebuild their lives.

Let's work together to save and heal lives.

1810

GO TRANSIT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given to him by the Minister of Transportation. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: I asked for this late show debate due to my complete dissatisfaction with the response I received relating to three separate questions to the Minister of Transportation on what he calls “historical details” surrounding his office’s approval of a \$100-million GO station in his riding, Kirby station, that a Metrolinx business case had already rejected.

Specifically, I was seeking clarity as to why a minister of the crown would seek to use \$100 million of Ontario taxpayers’ money to fund a GO station in his riding that Metrolinx expert studies warned again and again would drive commuters out of their train seats and back on the road.

The details surrounding the decision revealed by FOIs by the Toronto Star and my office indicated a twisted trail of backroom discussions and ministerial pressure that demanded the minister’s answers—a trail that began with the poor performance of Kirby and Lawrence East in Metrolinx’s commissioned analysis, with the Kirby business case suggesting that the station would slow GO travel to the point that riders would head back into their vehicles and on to the road.

Here is how the FOI trail moves from there. On June 9, 2016, Metrolinx CEO Bruce McCuaig met with the minister and briefed him on a list of 10 stations that Metrolinx staff would recommend for approval. Lawrence East and Kirby stations were not on the list. McCuaig reported in emails to the Metrolinx chair, “My interpretation is that” Del Duca is disappointed that Vaughan stations weren’t on the list. McCuaig also reported that he was “trying to see if there is a credible way to improve the business case” for stations in Vaughan.

On June 15, 2006, the Metrolinx board held a private, in camera meeting in which they approved 10 new GO stations and did not approve Kirby or Lawrence.

On June 16, Metrolinx received copies of a draft press release from the MTO that the ministry would use to announce the new stations, including Lawrence East and Kirby.

In follow-up internal emails, Metrolinx officials expressed flexibility around Lawrence but again stated Kirby should not be approved. I’ve got an email here; this is from Bruce McCuaig to Deputy Minister Steven Ball. He goes on to say, “Steven, I see that there is a news release announcing the Kirby” blanked out “station. Has a decision been made that I’m not aware of? Bruce.”

Seriously, this is how they do business over there.

In follow-up internal emails, Metrolinx officials again expressed flexibility around Lawrence, but again stated that Kirby should not be approved. After conversations with the MTO on June 19, McCuaig issued a revision to the report going before the board that the list for approval now included Kirby and Lawrence East.

So the questions remain, Speaker, as to why the ministry approved stations that were clearly facing rejection, what role the minister played, and how much the ministry convinced Bruce McCuaig to stand down.

Fast-forward to this summer, and as the sordid tale has emerged, instead of answering the questions taxpayers deserve—this is taxpayers’ \$100 million we are talking about, ready to be spent on a station that analysis indicates will hurt, not help, commuters. Instead of answering these questions, the minister has turtled, issuing letters and statements indicating further analysis is needed, and is attempting to wash his hands of it.

So today, when I asked about the decision, much as the minister did with Ben Spurr of the Toronto Star, who has done fantastic work on this, instead of owning up to what role he played in the costly decision-making, he chose to reference the Metrolinx review of the stations,

indicating that there will be no Kirby station unless the Metrolinx analysis indicates a need.

As I noted earlier today, no further review nor the minister's assurances he'll listen to Metrolinx station recommendations going forward can cover up questions as to why he didn't listen to the same experts when his direction tried to drive us backwards.

Of course, I'm sure, as I'll hear the parliamentary assistant next, whose riding, of course, shares part of Waterloo region as well as our ongoing transit delays with my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga—she's well aware that while the minister is being questioned as to prioritizing \$100 million for a GO station in his backyard, we in Waterloo region continue to wait for promised but continually delayed vital transportation services: all-day, two-way GO, initially promised ahead of the last election for five years, then 10, while commuters are left waiting for the train.

Then there are the Highway 7 delays I was speaking about earlier this afternoon. When it was first promised by this government in 2007, it was supposed to be completed three years ago. Speaker, they hadn't even got a shovel in the ground three years ago, and now we hear it won't be completed until an undetermined date beyond 2021. And here is the minister somehow overriding clear Metrolinx analysis to get a GO station in his riding.

I'm hopeful the PA understands the concerns of Waterloo region residents, who want to know how he can get away with it. So, Speaker, I'm hopeful that tonight perhaps the minister has filled her in and will allow some insights as to why Metrolinx was overruled, who ordered it to be done, and exactly what role the minister played.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The parliamentary assistant has five minutes.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, I always look forward to any opportunity when I can talk about how we are improving transit in the province. I look forward to offering you some facts, as opposed to misinformation.

Now, during my time, I want to add to the minister's answer—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry. You'll have to withdraw that "misinformation" statement.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I withdraw.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I want to add to some of the comments made by the minister earlier today on the approval of new GO stations.

The minister made it clear this morning, as he has on numerous other occasions, including in a recent letter that he wrote to Rob Prichard—he is the board chair of Metrolinx—that these stations require additional work. This includes more technical and planning analysis, environmental assessments, preliminary and detailed design, and extensive community engagement.

The minister also went further, by recommending that Metrolinx not enter into any contractual obligations until

relevant staff and the board are satisfied that the updated land use planning information, finalized RER service concept for the Barrie corridor, station design, cost and local transit services justify the station.

The chair recently wrote back to the minister, confirming that Metrolinx would not move forward prior to getting that necessary information.

But, Speaker, I want to touch on the minister's final answer, because I believe the member for Kitchener–Conestoga would benefit by hearing about the progress in our region.

Our Minister of Transportation, in his three years serving in that position, has made numerous announcements on transit and transportation infrastructure investments right across the province.

In Waterloo region—we'd be here all night if I listed every single one, but here's a quick account of some of those important investments. Of course, a top priority for our region is two-way, all-day GO train service. We now have an agreement in principle with CN to shift freight traffic off the Kitchener line to a bypass. The GO train schedule last fall doubled the number of weekday trips in and out of the region.

We now have enhancements to GO bus service, including a new express bus that runs all day between Kitchener and Bramalea. Commuters are telling me that they love this; it's working for them.

And as the minister mentioned earlier today, as part of the plan to add 12 new GO stations, Kitchener is going to see one of those stations, with a new large parking facility. That is in the member's own riding.

To connect all of this, we've committed to \$43 million for a new downtown transit hub. This is where the new light-rail transit system is going to connect with GO services.

Our municipal partners are thrilled by the investment that the Liberal government is making. It's really unfortunate, though, that the opposition party voted against this. He voted against all of these projects in our region.

Speaker, here's a great quote from the Waterloo Region Record newspaper, from April 4 of this year, on what these investments mean for our community:

"Other improvements are coming—like the electrification of some tracks, a GO station in Breslau and a downtown Kitchener transit hub that connects bus, light rail and train services.

"While commuters who rely on GO trains will applaud these developments when they're all in place, the gains that accompany better rail links between Kitchener and Toronto will be enjoyed by the entire region."

Speaker, this government was first at the table, with \$300 million for the region's new Ion LRT. He voted against that. We can't wait to see it go into service.

In May, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga might recall attending a very exciting announcement on high-speed rail. Our \$15-million investment for a comprehensive environmental assessment, which is under way, is going to deliver on this very critical investment. The

member attended this announcement, but we now know that the Conservative leader does not support high-speed rail, and that is very disappointing to the people of my community, our municipal leaders and those in the high-tech sector.

Speaker, I want to give a quick mention to our various road projects included in this year's budget. We're replacing bridges over the Grand River on Highway 401. I was there for an announcement for a new Holland Mills bridge in Kitchener–Conestoga. He voted against that. We're widening the 401 from six to 10 lanes between Kitchener and Cambridge, so he can get home to his kids sooner, but he voted against that.

All of these transportation projects in Waterloo region and across the province show that we have a clear commitment to advancing better transit. But when members on the other side of the House do not support the Ontario budgets—the budgets that pay for the projects—that's a disappointment. On this side of the House, we're working with our local partners to move forward with these great transit projects.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1820.

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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
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
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