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Mercredi
18 octobre 2017

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Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 18 October 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 18 octobre 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 October 4, 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?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It is my pleasure to speak to Bill 148 this morning.

Small businesses are the backbone of Ontario's economy. They create 75% to 80% of all the jobs in Ontario. Government should make policies that support small businesses, not policies that will harm small businesses, but Bill 148 does just that. It will bring great harm to many small businesses across Ontario and great harm to the economy of Ontario.

According to the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis, this new bill will result in a \$23-billion cost for Ontario businesses, and small businesses will bear the brunt of this. A study done by the TD Bank estimates 70,000 jobs may be lost; the Financial Accountability Office has determined that 50,000 jobs may be lost. The people most likely to be laid off are those who need the jobs most: students, teenagers, young adults and recent immigrants.

I have spent a lot of time speaking with business owners over the past few months in my riding and I would like to share some of the stories with you. Dave Rowe owns a Sobeys store franchise in Kanata. Most of his employees are minimum wage workers. There are 100 Sobeys stores across the province. Sobeys Ontario projects their labour costs will increase by \$20 million; for Dave Rowe, his labour costs will increase by \$200,000. He says that he will have no choice but to reduce hours in order to try to keep the price of food

from rising. He fears this will mean a reduced level of service to his customers.

This bill will hit the restaurant industry especially hard. The average pre-tax profit for a restaurant is 3.4%. One Ottawa-area restaurant owner said the increase in minimum wage is going to cost him over \$37,000 in servers alone, but he fears the real cost will be much higher.

He believes there will be upward pressure on kitchen wages as well. Only two of his employees make less than \$15 per hour, and they are dishwashers. His cooks, who are skilled workers, have begun expressing a desire for higher wages because they do not think it is right or fair to earn the same wage as an unskilled worker. All of these pressures will likely amount to an increase of \$88,000 per year.

He will have to increase the prices of the meals he serves. Right now, a pint of beer costs \$9.40. When the \$15 minimum wage kicks in on January 1, 2019, the new cost of a pint of beer will be \$12.70. The restaurant owner fears that he will lose customers because people will not go out as often, and when they do go out, they will purchase less and tip their servers less.

But it is not just the too much, too soon minimum wage increase that will harm his business. He is also very worried about the new regulation that will force him to pay an employee for cancelling their shifts within two days of their scheduled shift. The restaurant industry requires a certain number of servers per customer in order to ensure they can deliver the best service. The problem is that customer reservations are not always reliable. This is especially true when it comes to large groups. He explained that big groups cancel at the last minute all the time. They book for the maximum number of people in advance and then confirm a smaller number of people the day before. The restaurant owner makes schedules and books his servers' shifts weeks in advance, but when final reservations are confirmed, he can end up having 30 fewer customers than he thought, so he will have to cancel a server's shift.

Restaurant owners need the flexibility of being able to bring in more or less workers on short notice to be able to run an efficient, effective and profitable business. Is it fair to make a business owner pay their employees for three hours of work when their own customers cancel at the last minute? If these cancellations happen only twice a month, it will cost this business owner an additional \$1,000. This is in excess of the \$88,000 he will already be forced to pay because of the increase in minimum wage.

It is no wonder why all of these changes have made him reconsider whether he will renew his lease when it is done in 2019. He may just close up shop. You see, Mr. Speaker, while the government argues that this bill will be good for workers, the end result may be they will have no jobs at all.

Another Ottawa-area business owner, France Brown, started her pastry bakeshop business five years ago in her home in Kanata. She sold her baked goods at farmers' markets. Her business has done well. She rented a commercial space six months ago and grew her business. She now has four and a half employees and business is good.

But there is a problem. Bill 148 will increase her labour costs by 32% in one year. France will have to reduce her employees' hours for her business to survive. France will have to do more work herself, and she already works very long hours. She had ambitions of opening two more stores in the Ottawa area, but that dream is now gone. The \$15-per-hour minimum wage is more than her business can bear.

0910

The owner of a local retail supply company has a healthy, successful business. He said that half his employees are paid minimum wage. He told me that Bill 148 will cost him an additional \$100,000. The wintertime is a slow time for his business, but he has always been able to keep all his employees working for the winter. This winter, for the first time, he will have to lay off many of his minimum wage employees because he cannot afford to keep them on. He said that the workers will collect employment insurance from the government for the winter. Bill 148 will cause these workers to make less money, not more.

The city of Seattle passed a \$15-per-hour minimum wage bylaw a few years ago. The result has been that small businesses have laid off some workers or reduced hours. The consequences for workers have been fewer jobs, less hours and no increase in net income to the workers. It has been a failure. Ontario should learn a lesson from Seattle and cancel Bill 148. It will hurt businesses. It will hurt workers. Government should stay out of business.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to respond. I can read you a letter from Carolann Paquette in North Bay. She says,

"Good morning Vic,

"I just want to ask if you can pass a message to" the Premier.

"Thank her for the hike in minimum wage ... now my boss had to cut back my full-time hours to account for the increase.

"Now I'm going to get less than I was before.

"Not a very good decision.

"I have children ... now I'm worried even more how ... I'm going to make ends meet." I promised Carolann I would read her letter.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I know the member from Barrie doesn't enjoy hearing from my riding members, but I am reading Carolann Paquette's letter.

I have another letter from Rahn Plastics in North Bay. They are in favour of many aspects of Bill 148; however—I'm quoting from their letter—"a 32% wage increase is not financially sustainable for all companies. It must be done in a way that won't devastate or break companies. The goal is to have workers employed, but this drastic increase will cause job losses for sure! This will not only affect minimum wage workers but it will offset a chain reaction for other more senior workers as well." It goes on to say, "Should minimum wage be increased? Absolutely, but it needs to be done in a way that won't break businesses."

These are two of the many letters that I have received. They back up what we've heard from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, what we've heard from the TD Bank, who tells us of the devastating losses, and from our own Financial Accountability Officer, who talks about the 50,000 people who will lose their jobs.

Nobody is arguing about job losses; what they're arguing about is just how many tens of thousands will lose their job.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning to you.

I listened to the comments the member made, and he's correct in a few things. Yes, it will be hard on small business as the minimum wage comes in and as some of these changes come through. However, if you don't help them, if you don't put the programs in place in order to support small business, as we had proposed and as we have been talking about for many years—it is no surprise, coming from the NDP, that we've been talking about an increase in the minimum wage. Nobody should be surprised about that. When we've talked to small business, a lot of small businesses—and I've heard all three parties saying that everybody knows that the minimum wage has to go up. The biggest problem is that the minimum wage has been stalled since the late 1990s at a rate that has not been at all respectful of the workers who are in this province. So yes, it's going to be a challenge. But to eliminate some of those challenges or to assist small business with those challenges, you look at few programs that we've talked about when we had our election platform in the last provincial election. One of them was: You create a job; you get a tax incentive. Go figure. If you create a job, you get a little bit of help. You get an incentive in order to offset those costs. Also, you look at reducing the small business tax. Small businesses are really challenged; everything has been downloaded on them, so you look at reducing that rate. That will help them. Getting hydro under control will help them as well in order to bring in more opportunities for employment in order for them to secure their future so they can thrive, so they can be part of the community.

I hear what many are saying: The challenges are there. Of course they will be. But it's our role as parliamentarians to provide those incentives, to provide those programs in order to make the transition a lot easier on small business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I appreciate the comments from the member from Mississippi Mills. He certainly expressed his point of view, which this place is all about.

I just want to remind him—we mentioned Sobeys. I know that the national president of Sobeys of Canada—it's called the Empire group—made a very dramatic statement where he said that they are going to be able to do right by their workers, and that they're not going to take out any of this change on the backs of their workers. That was an amazing statement by someone who is the head of a national company like Sobeys, so credit to him for saying that.

I also want to mention that this is about 1.6 million Ontarians. They don't want handouts; they want to work. That's what it's about. Yes, there are going to be challenges; we all know that. But what about the daily challenge the 1.6 million people have who work part-time, temporary, contract, running from job to job—what about them? Do they not need some consideration? And what about the labour protections they're going to get in this legislation: equal pay for equal work; you get more protection for vacation pay. Because right now, a lot of temporary part-time workers are treated like second-class citizens in the workplace when they do the same thing. In this bill, there's an update of the Employment Standards Act. That hasn't been done in 20 years. That's what it's about too. Sure, it's about business, big and small, but it's about 1.6 million Ontarians who work sometimes as caregivers, cleaners; they work in the service industry. They also deserve some consideration, and it's about time they caught up to the rest of us.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this particular bill. You know, we've heard that with this minimum wage increase, we're looking at a 32% increase by January 1, 2019. Well, I have some very serious concerns, because the former Minister of Economic Development and Growth—sorry, I guess he's still the minister. He talks about how the province is growing. He should come to the riding of Chatham-Kent and talk to the people there who have lost their jobs. Throughout the province, we have learned that there has been a decrease in jobs in the manufacturing sector by 28%, so as he talks about all the new business that's coming into Ontario, talks about the headlights, I'm sorry, Speaker, but I'm not seeing headlights; I'm seeing tail lights, and they're moving fast.

My biggest concern is the young people of today, because today's young people—we're supposed to be having opportunity for jobs for them, and they're looking at it and saying, "Where are the jobs? Where are the jobs

going to be?" This government can talk about education and free education, but they're closing schools, and as a result of that students are in jeopardy. And of course, then there aren't any jobs. We've got a strike going on right now as well. Maybe these students should be coming to the government and asking for a rebate. Of course, the government will say, "Well, there's no rebate because we didn't charge you in the first place."

0920

My biggest concern, though, again, is the fact that there are numbers that have come out that, in the next two years, we could be losing up to 165,000 jobs if this goes in, because small businesses cannot adjust quickly enough. I have some very serious concerns about them. On top of the hydro rates and everything else going on right now, small business is going to die, and it will be as a result of this government's failed policies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to thank the members who commented, especially the member from Algoma–Manitoulin—very thoughtful comments. I agree with him that the best way—I'd like to say, we all would like to see workers make as much as they can. To do that, we need a healthy economy.

We do all recognize, I believe, that small business is the backbone of the economy. It creates 70% to 85% of the jobs. Incentives to small business are an excellent idea, and I agree with him on that. Hydro bills are too high—and all of the various things that currently are going on that do hurt business. There's a certain federal element that wants to tax the heck out of small business. Certainly, in my riding, I have an information meeting tomorrow night to speak out against that, because that's going to hurt small business in a very severe and major way.

Any time government creates an impediment to small business, it ultimately goes down the chain to the workers at the lowest end and they are the first ones to get hurt. We need to realize that small business needs to be healthy so they have the money to be able to pay higher wages to workers. That is the best way to raise wages, and the only way that it will be done sustainably.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 148, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act. I think everyone that has spoken since this announcement has come out is in favour of a higher minimum wage. The reality is how quickly they're doing it and the impact on businesses; 32% or 38% over 18 months is just too much, particularly for those small businesses that had no idea this was coming and have no ability to flex. I think, at the end of the day, it's a lot of spin. It's saying that we're trying to help those people, but at the end of the day, when you're suggesting you want to get people ahead in life and you do things like this, we're fearful that it's actually going to be very detrimental to the very people that they're saying it's going to help.

Every industry—public, private, non-profit—is sounding alarms about the negative outcomes of this bill's tight timelines. Will workers really get ahead? Will they really decrease personal debt loads?

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has warned that the tight timeline around Bill 148 threatens jobs and Ontario's ever-rising cost of living. Specifically, the OFA has said, "The cost of everyday consumer goods and services will go up by \$1,300" per family "on average each and every year."

Is that helping or hindering? This outcome should absolutely raise concern. It runs counter to every poverty reduction plan in Ontario, as families living on the margins will find it harder and harder to put food on the table and cover their everyday expenses. In other words, there's a very high likelihood that whatever gains are made in the wage bump will be annulled by the corresponding hike in living expenses, and everyone will actually be impacted in a negative way.

Labour costs in the farming industry in Ontario can account for more than 50% of production, so farmers are very concerned with prepping for a wage increase of 21% by 2018. The question becomes, how do you absorb the tight timeline? Do farmers transfer the costs of production on to consumers, or do they actually themselves try to absorb the entire production cost increase? Without a fair and realistic plan, the OFA foresees a reduction in domestic food production. That's not good for any of us. And that, too, runs counterproductive to the Liberal promises made in 2013 to increase Ontario's food production growth rate and create 120,000 jobs by 2020. It just won't happen.

We hear the agriculture minister in this House always giving the fluff, and how supportive he is of that industry. Where was he on this issue? Why wasn't he out listening and hearing from the people actually on the ground that are telling him that this is very concerning? The accelerated and tight timeline around minimum wage means that the Liberals' pledge to the agri-food sector will be annulled. What's worse, it will also make our farmers and agri-food businesses less competitive and it could, in fact, threaten Ontario's food security, as well as undermine the sustainability and variety of agricultural products available to Ontarians.

You can't have it both ways. You can't say that you're promoting and you're supportive and then do things like this and stand in this House and vote for it—when he knows very well that the whole industry, the whole Ontario Federation of Agriculture, is saying, "This is wrong. It's way too fast. Slow it down." Yet I haven't heard him once in this House say that he would even consider that type of an approach.

The fast-tracked implementation will ultimately eliminate jobs in rural areas and diminish economic development opportunities in Ontario, according to the OFA. I think the food producers have very valid concerns, and the government must take these serious negative effects of their reforms under consideration. The only way to do this is to subject each and every proposed reform in the

Changing Workplaces Review to an economic impact analysis. If they had done this, you would hope that they wouldn't have gone ahead, at least in the manner they are, and steamrolled it without any thought process to what the impacts are going to be.

Moving to the child care sector, child care centres are also warning of the tight timeline around Bill 148 and how it threatens daycare affordability.

Kids & Us Community Childcare and Family Education Centres runs six non-profit child care centres, 11 before- and after-school programs and three Ontario early years centres in my riding alone. With 83 staff, the tight timeline with Bill 148 will translate into a \$233,500 hike to their budget. Is that going to be a good thing? Do you think kids are going to get more attention or less attention? Where does that money come from when their funding is virtually frozen?

Executive director Michelle Knott writes, "We're regulated for minimum staffing requirements and so we cannot reduce staffing as a cost-savings measure ... and so we will be left with no choice but to increase child care fees on parents."

Again, those same parents who they're suggesting are going to get a better life because of this wage increase are actually going to get hit in their wallet right after this becomes law.

What is the support this government will provide to every parent who won't be able to afford that hike in their child's care daycare fees? Child care is already expensive and is pushing a lot of family budgets to the limit. Ontario families are, in fact, grappling with the highest daycare fees in the country.

Knott says, "We do not oppose an increase to minimum wage, however an increase should be graduated in to afford these non-profit child care centres the time to adjust." That's what we've been saying all the way along.

Let's turn to the high school sector. High school co-op teachers have also expressed concern, as have the students. I was just speaking to a grade 10 civics class in Owen Sound, and the students there are very concerned about what's going to happen to them. Where are their part-time jobs? Where are their summer jobs? They are very, very concerned about this initiative. I've never really seen them get as excited about something as they are, but it's because it's actually going to have a detrimental, negative impact.

One of those co-op teachers writes, "Small business community partners do a great job supporting our high school co-op students."

One co-op teacher, Frank Bianchi, writes, "With the (accelerated) minimum wage and the average co-op student working 200 hours, what support is this government willing to provide to get more small business community members on board?"

This teacher wants to know if the government has considered a tax break to help support the partnership between local small businesses and high school co-op students. He says, "Remember these high school co-op students are our sons/daughters that live in our commu-

ity and will one day be running this country, as they are our future. This is what the education system is supposed to be all about, preparing them for real life. What better way to do that than have them experience it first-hand?"

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more. That opportunity to have co-op placements, to actually get some experience, but also to help those businesses in a manner that is productive for them—customer service experience, the opportunity to be out in the community. This is absolutely something that, again, could be very much a negative impact to them and something that, if we go forward with this legislation, could have monumental negative impacts to our communities.

In a nutshell, there has to be a support plan to ensure that high school co-op placements continue to be available despite these changes.

These are all concerns that were echoed by the local chambers of commerce, including the Meaford Chamber of Commerce and the Owen Sound and District Chamber of Commerce, who held dozens of round-table discussions with local businesses.

Businesses in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, from food processors, distribution companies, seed and fertilizer producers to manufacturers, are very worried about how this act will play out. Bill Gamble, who owns and operates the UPS Store in Owen Sound; Colleen Newell, who employs 47 employees at Colpepper's Ltd; Glenn Wilson, who runs Joe Tomato's restaurant in Owen Sound; Dale Cousins of Hanover Canadian Tire; Diane Ellah of the Candle Factory in Meaford; Gordon Price of the Dam Pub; Daryl Prince of the Good Health Mart; Peter Knipfel in Chesley; Luke Simpson of Durham Furniture; Nella Monaco-Wells of the Bookstore in Durham—and municipalities that, just like all of us, are here to support better wages but aren't clear about who will foot the bill of the financial burden and what the impacts are going to be.

We're talking about a \$23-billion bill over the next two years alone. So there's that—the \$23 billion—and there are the associated losses, and the ripple negative effect of job losses and a down cycle of economic opportunity.

The Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis, CANCEA, concludes that 185,000 Ontario jobs will be at immediate risk over the next two years; 30,000 of those jobs at risk are youth under 25. Again, those students who talked to me are very much concerned, and here is a third-party organization that's saying, "Here's exactly what we see happening." Some 96,000 employees at risk are expected to be women and there is an expected 50% increase to inflation for this year and the foreseeable future, increasing everyday consumer goods and services by up to \$1,300 per household each and every year.

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The Ontario government alone would need to borrow \$440 million more to cover the increases in new costs from this legislation. The cupboard is bare. They just borrowed \$25 billion on the backs of our youth to cover the Fair Hydro Act—or unfair hydro act, as I believe it

will come to be known as—and now they're going to borrow \$440 million more for something that, again, is simply going to have a negative impact.

Finally, I also want to voice concerns from the Ontario tourism association. The association represents 180,000 businesses across Ontario and some 372,000 workers; 6,200 of those jobs are located in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Their ask is the same: Change the scheduled increases and roll them out over a longer period.

To answer the crucial questions around this bill—Will workers really get ahead? Will their debt loads really disappear or decrease?—consider their cost of living will go up for everything, from buying food to heating their home to putting gas in the car to paying for daycare. They will hardly achieve any of the promises.

That's why at committee, we introduced amendments to require a cost-benefit analysis before the bill comes into force and an economic impact assessment of the bill in 2018. The Liberals rejected these common-sense amendments.

While we support raising the minimum wage, we're left with no choice but to vote against it, because we need them to slow down. That's the feedback we're getting from people.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Someone's heckling about, "It's not very positive." Sadly, it isn't positive. It's yet another bill that's going to be detrimental to the people of Ontario. It is our job as the opposition, as that member typically always shares, to be critical. It is our job to hold the government to account. On this bill, we certainly have to. Groups have come out of the woodwork that really don't ever contact my office and said, "Bill, what are they doing this time?" This is yet another hit to our economy. It's a hit to our youth, it's a hit to the everyday and, most importantly, those less fortunate—who they try to spin in the media they're going to help out. Those are the very people that I think, at the end of the day, are going to be impacted the most negatively by this bill.

Mr. Speaker, it needs to slow down. We need to ensure the people of Ontario can afford this and that it will truly help them, if we do it the right way.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I listened intently to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. New Democrats get the fact that small businesses need support. There is no doubt that there needs to be a balance when bringing in measures such as this. But we also know that people have been living below the poverty line for—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Folks, I can't even hear this person speaking. If you could cut it back—or if you want to have a group discussion, please take it outside.

Continue.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker.

We also know that folks have been living below the poverty line while going to work each and every day, playing by the rules, and yet the system has failed them. That is due to the lack of increases in the minimum wage.

It wasn't that long ago that the government thought \$11.40 was okay for folks. Now that we're coming into an election, the Premier sees that her likability and her ratings are not doing well, so she's decided to implement the \$15 quickly, without balance to protect small business.

We know that it's going to be a challenge. We hope that we will be able to convince the government to ensure that there are provisions in place to support small business, but we know that people need to be able to make a decent living. The economy will only do better if people have money in their pockets to be able to spend at the grocery store, to be able to spend at the corner store, to be able to buy the necessities they need to survive in life. Without the \$15, it just makes it that much harder.

Our economy is made up of precarious work. We have people working two and three part-time jobs at very low wages. It doesn't allow for a family to be able to sometimes pay for that extra bus fare they need to get their kids to school.

I'm happy to see the \$15 minimum wage, but we need to ensure that the government finds the balance and supports small business at the same time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I think that there's a pretty clear choice here for Ontarians. I think that there's no question in my mind that the Progressive Conservative Party has lost touch with the people they represent here in Ontario. They've been standing up, it seems, for everyone except the people of Ontario.

Here's what we stand for and here's what the Progressive Conservatives stand for. You have to remember, people don't have to go too far back in time to understand that when that party was in power, the minimum wage in this province was \$6.85. That wasn't long ago; that was in 2003. Just to illustrate the type of party they are and the policies they have, even the most vulnerable people that were out there, people who were on social assistance—they cut their amount received per month by 33%. So we know exactly where they're coming from.

And the NDP—the last time we brought this up in 2014 and we put together a panel and we raised the minimum wage, where were the NDP? People were looking for the NDP to speak on the issue, and where were they? They were trying to reposition themselves into the middle. They were silent on this issue. They didn't say a word. So it's actually quite hilarious to stand here in the Legislature and listen to the NDP talk about the minimum wage. They always position themselves as the party of the people, but they were silent on the issue in the last election because they wanted to reposition their party to the middle. They should be ashamed of themselves.

And the PCs—you know what? Start standing up for the people of Ontario, because every single time you

stand up in the House you talk about the people of Ontario, but you don't fight for them. This is about decency. It's about earning a fair wage.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you to the minister for his heated response. However, I must respectfully disagree. The people that I have spoken to throughout my riding and the people who have spoken throughout this province do not support this initiative that the Liberal government is proposing right now. They do not support it. In fact, they are crying over it. And they continually say that no one is against a \$15 minimum wage; no one has a struggle with that. The struggle isn't the increase; it's the time in which it's being implemented. Businesses cannot possibly survive at that pace.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's purely political.

Mr. Ross Romano: It is entirely political, simply to garner votes before an election. Why is it that at the last election cycle, that government and their leader suggested that it was okay to have this minimum wage increase but it should happen incrementally; it should happen at the rate of inflation; it should happen at a rate that allows businesses the opportunity to not have to bleed jobs, to not have to find a way to come up with that money overnight.

This cannot be handled by these businesses. I've spoken to a number of people within my community, businesses owners and the like, who continually say the same thing over and over again: We will have to bleed jobs as a result of this. We'll have to cut jobs. They can't afford it. In my community alone, we're hearing about 1,400 jobs that will be lost as a result this—1,400 jobs in a community of 70,000 people.

The effects across the province—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Have a seat, please.

Folks, I know it's a touchy subject, but we're yelling to each other about our responses and people are talking at random, openly. It's very difficult to keep order. Please try to cut it back. I'm being very flexible this morning, not my normal self, so let's try to keep it a little nicer.

Start the clock. Continue.

Mr. Ross Romano: I would say in conclusion here: Please, listen to the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario. Listen to the people of Ontario. Listen to your own words. Listen to what your own leader said at the last election. We can get to a minimum wage increase, but it has to happen over time. What you're doing is going to cost Ontario jobs.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate this morning and comment on our colleague the member from—Huron-Grey-Bruce?

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. It's early.

I've travelled within my riding of Essex and talked to many people about Bill 148. They are cautiously optimistic that some of the reforms will help support those who we know need the help most: those who are in precarious working conditions, our youth, students who are entering the workforce for the first time. But, of course, there are some cautions, and New Democrats have explained them and elaborated on them quite clearly to the government over multiple years.

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We know that small businesses in Ontario are massive job creators. In fact, they're the largest job creators. That comes with inherent challenges and risks, and we have to be ready to support them. New Democrats, in the last election, put forward ideas around a job creation tax credit whereby if you create a job, you get a tax credit.

I think of Joe Colasanti in Ruthven at Colasanti's Tropical Gardens. They have a greenhouse there. Joe is one of the first employers that a young person would go to. He takes in a lot of young people. He provides training—health and safety and workplace training, all the tools you would need to enter into the workforce. Joe would certainly benefit and should benefit for the time that he invests into young workers by a tax credit. That's something that could offset some of the stress and strain of an escalating minimum wage. Also, we think that Joe, as a small business operator, should have a corresponding or correlating small business tax reduction. That's another idea that New Democrats have proposed.

One of the issues that I'm hearing in my riding is not in a common area of small business, but those families who are on self-directed funding for support for their family members who have special needs. They are going to suffer. This is going to hurt them hard, because if the minimum wage goes up, they won't have the corresponding revenue to add those hours. We have to ensure they have the appropriate resources to take care of their families.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton Mountain and Essex, and my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie, who brought up a good point that it's really votes for election, what this bill is about. It's not really about helping people.

The minister of children and youth started off by saying we had lost touch. Well, I want to remind him that the chamber of commerce has come out very directly and said this is a wrong move. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture have all come out and said this is going way too fast.

When I think about lost touch, the people of Ontario tell me about \$330 billion this government has put us in debt. These young people in front of you are wearing that every day—the highest debt in the country, the highest

hydro rates. They're going to close 600 schools across our province. The Auditor General came out yesterday with a special report, a scathing report about this government and the things that they're doing to actually play with numbers and not be accountable and transparent to the people of Ontario. And he has the audacity to say we've lost touch?

Our job is to listen to the people of Ontario, to bring comments and concerns to this government and say, "You're going in the wrong direction." I'm very concerned that he would stand up and do an electioneering speech here and preach to us that we have lost touch. We are doing exactly what we're supposed to do. We've listened to those small businesses. We've listened to seniors who are very concerned. We've listened to young kids, high-school-age kids who are telling me, "We're not going to have jobs if this goes through."

Interjection.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: We're hearing from the less fortunate in our communities saying this is going to have a detrimental impact. Even Kathleen Wynne's minister—when media questioned about a report from the Financial Accountability Officer that shows at least 50,000 jobs will be lost as a result of this legislation, the minister said, and I quote—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The member from Barrie, I just asked her, and not two seconds later she said another thing. Please, I don't want to take it up a notch.

Finish.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the minister was asked, and I quote what Mr. Flynn said: "Well, I think they could look at pricing, obviously that's one thing that obviously any business would do...." Yes, just throw more costs onto the people who already are struggling under this government's reign—reign of terror.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, that's quite an extraordinary way to end off a speech.

I stand in support of the bill, but it's critical support because I think there's a lot that's missing.

I want to address the minimum wage issue first off. As many of my colleagues have said, and certainly as my party has been pushing for since April of last year, we need a much higher minimum wage. There's no getting around it. This government was not particularly in favour of a higher minimum wage up until about April of this year. Reporters have talked about the Premier being asked, in February or March of this year, did she think we needed to go further? Did she think we needed to go to \$15 an hour? "No, not particularly." But elections and polls are amazing things. Elections move mountains. They open up purse strings. They bring forward legislation that actually has a shot at making life better for a lot of people.

Speaker, I was here in 2007 when my colleague Cheri DiNovo led the fight for a \$10-an-hour minimum wage. It was something like seven bucks an hour at that point. I was out in York South–Weston campaigning with our candidate, Paul Ferreira, who was running on a platform of a \$10-an-hour minimum wage. The member for Parkdale–High Park drove this issue in the media with really powerful speeches, really strong statements, notwithstanding all the pressure against her. We won York South–Weston because of the desire people have for a wage that was somewhat closer to being a living wage. They needed an increase. They needed to move to \$10 an hour in 2007-08.

And it was astounding, Speaker—just as I’ve watched the transformation on the government benches this year as the polling numbers have come in—to watch in 2007 as Greg Sorbara and then-Premier Dalton McGuinty read the tea leaves, read the ballot numbers and recognized they were in deep trouble. They moved then to support a \$10-an-hour minimum wage.

If it weren’t for elections, the Liberals would never move forward on the minimum wage, and so I say, all praise and honour to regular elections, because they’re the only things that advance the quality of our lives.

I also want to thank \$15 and Fairness and the trade union movement, the labour movement in this province for the work that they’ve done to make this issue visible, make it powerful and put it on the table here in this Legislature. If they hadn’t done this work, if they hadn’t moved people, if they hadn’t done the organizing, then we’d be getting something far less, so to them a lot of credit is due. Clearly, however, an awful lot more work needs to be done to improve this bill.

I’ll just tell you, Speaker, I was down at a rally of workers down at the Toronto Marriott hotel at the SkyDome—the Rogers Centre, or whatever they call it today. These were people who worked in the rooms. They were the cleaners. They had just recently been certified as a union. Their employer is trying to decertify them; their employer is stonewalling them at the bargaining table.

The people I was with, the organizers from Unite Here Local 75, just to give me a sense of the kind of work people were dealing with, asked people in that crowd—there were about 60 people—to put up their hands if they had been injured at work. About three quarters of them put their hands up. I was astounded. They do very heavy lifting. They have a lot of back injuries, and a lot of neck and shoulder injuries. He asked them, “How many people deal with pain every day on the job?” It was half the people there. These are people who go in to clean up rooms and supposedly are being paid on an hourly basis, but if in fact they’re not able to get through all the rooms they’re supposed to in their shift, they have to stay until all the rooms are done.

People may be familiar with the hotel; I’m certain you’re familiar with the SkyDome. There are hotel rooms that overlook the field, and there are people who rent those rooms to have parties and then after the parties, the

cleaners have to go in and quite literally scrape pizza off the windows. They have to scrape food off walls. They have to deal with beer and wine spills all over. And they are not told, “Ah, this room is in particularly bad shape. We’ll give you extra hours.” No, they have the same amount of time allowed to them. They have to get it done, and if they can’t get it done, they stay later to cover their work. They need union protection. They need a decent first contract.

Speaker, this legislation does some useful things. Again, it’s an election year, and I thank God for democracy. But I want to say, Speaker, that there are a number of flaws in this bill that should have been addressed by the government.

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There is card-check certification here for a limited number of areas, and, frankly, Speaker, there needs to be card-check certification for unions in every sphere. I’ve been involved in union organizing. I know what happens when you’re involved in an organizing campaign: The employer does everything they can to intimidate people, to frighten people, to cajole people, to do whatever is possible to get them to back off. That’s why card-check certification, without having to put people through the long process of a vote where an employer gets the opportunity to beat up on that workforce, is critical. If you’re going to have decent work in this province, if you’re going to have decent pay, people have to be able to organize. It’s their right. We need to make sure that they’re protected against unfair pressure from employers to get them to back off. They all need card-check certification.

We need—and this is something we’ve asked for—sectoral bargaining in every sector. I have constituents who are security guards. They make at around the minimum wage. What you need to know is that in this sector, because there’s constantly a process of putting out requests for proposals and bidding on getting security guard contracts, companies that give a pay increase, no matter how small, are often just wiped out in the next round of bidding, and the workers’ wages are either dropped down to a new level or those workers are all gone. There needs to be sectoral bargaining for security guards, just as there is in Quebec, where security guards are relatively well paid—not extremely well paid but, compared to what they’re paid in Ontario, much better—because they have sectoral bargaining and they have successor rights. They don’t have to worry about the company that they’re working for being wiped out in the next round of bidding for a contract. If that company has performed badly, was not managed well or incurred unnecessary costs, it isn’t the workers who pay for it. That is the value of sectoral bargaining. It evens out the playing field between employers and employees. We need to have that. It should have been in this bill.

There’s no explicit protection for employees from reprisals during the bargain-unit-organizing campaign period. Speaker, there needs to be. I just outlined the kinds of things that go on in workplaces when there isn’t

protection. It needs to be there. Societies that have high levels of union membership are ones that tend to be much more prosperous. Contrary to what is argued by the Conservatives, having high incomes overall in a society gives an economy a real boost. When people have real purchasing power, they go into stores and they buy goods; they don't just sock it away to make it an investment somewhere else further down the road. You create effective demand, and you create an economy that is far more stable and far more prosperous.

Another thing that's missing: There's no meaningful definition of "employer" or a mechanism to enforce that employees aren't misclassified as independent contractors. This trick to deprive people of their workplace rights is far too common, and it needs to be explicitly set aside, outlawed, so that no employer can dodge paying people decently and giving them the benefits and rights that they deserve.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Like you, Mr. Speaker, we attended some of those hearings across the province, and we heard from workers and business people on this proposed legislation. One of the things that came to mind here is that we sometimes forget that the majority of people who work part-time or temporary, or work below the minimum wage or at the minimum wage, are people who actually work for big business in the service industry and in all kinds of food, accommodation. They work for big business. Sure, there are small businesses that hire part-time or temporary workers, but the vast majority work for big business.

Therefore, in this bill, there's an attempt to try to ensure that there is an appreciation by employers that their workers, who work very hard, need supports and need some recognition that their temporary or part-time work should have some protections.

The other thing in this bill—I know the member from Toronto–Danforth talked about card-based certification. The previous Conservative government basically eliminated card-based certification completely. In the past, we've brought it in for construction workers, and that's worked very well because of the mobility of construction workers. Now, in this bill, we're expanding it to temporary help agencies—where people are always on the move—health care workers and people in the building maintenance trades. That is a big step forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this couple of minutes to respond to the member for Toronto–Danforth—I should say the honourable gentleman from Toronto–Danforth, because he always demonstrates civility in this House, and that is something that needs to be acknowledged, too.

I would have to agree with him that the minimum wage needs to be a living wage, but I disagree with some of his conclusions. I think that we have to look at the minimum wage in terms of doing an economic analysis,

which our party has called for consistently during the course of this debate. Also, we need to look at competing jurisdictions. If we raise the minimum wage without regard to how many jobs are going to be lost, how many hours are going to be reduced for some of our lower-income workers, we're doing a disservice to them and we might even be hurting some of the people who we're trying to help.

When we look at the minimum wage, I think we need to listen to our small business people as well—not just employers, but also employees. Last night, I had the opportunity to attend the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce Business Achievement Awards in the Georgetown area, and I was very, very excited to participate in this celebration of business achievement and excellence. It's also Small Business Week, Mr. Speaker, as we know, and I think that it's important to put their views on the record in the context of this debate.

I have spoken to many small businesses in our community of Wellington–Halton Hills that are expressing very serious concerns. Of course, as we know, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce did an economic analysis which demonstrated that up to 185,000 jobs might be at risk as a result of this massive increase in the minimum wage in such a short period of time. I think that has to be considered as well.

I've spoken to individual small businesses in my riding. I think of Jackie Fraser at Fraberts Fresh Foods in Fergus. She has been on the record expressing concern about how this is going to impact her business. There have been a number of articles in the media about Jackie. I would encourage the government members to do a quick Google search and see what Jackie has been saying on this, because there are many small businesses that are very, very concerned, and we don't want to be hurting the people that the government claims to be helping.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the member from Toronto–Danforth for bringing his comments this morning. It wasn't that long ago; I remember actually being a union representative, knocking on doors, engaging with the membership and talking about the issues that happen at work through health and safety, proper wages, the environment at work and just making sure that benefits were there for their family.

I also remember the intimidations that were happening while I was on those trails, while I was knocking on those doors. Having employers follow you around; having that day of the vote; having to walk right in front of your employer in order to get this done: Those are the realities of what was happening. Having that ultimate say with regard to, "I hold your paycheque, buddy, and you will"—it has a definite impact with regard to the environment in a work area.

I want to give him credit for all the comments that he's brought forward and that a lot of my colleagues brought forward as to the need for card-check certification.

He talked about those workers over at the SkyDome. A lot of those workers, yes, absolutely scrape off that paint, wash that beer off the wall, replace the chandeliers that are in there, repair—they just do extensive work.

But here's another classification of individuals who deserve unions, as well: the PSWs that do home care. Those individuals, when they go into a home, care for our most loved ones. They are stringently put under very tight timelines: "You are going into this house. You are going to get 0.5 to get into the house and do the sweeping. You are going to get 0.25 to get that individual, that grandmother or that grandfather, into the bath and out. You are going to get five minutes in order to go downstairs and get the laundry done. And you know what? If you're not done, you've got to leave."

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Well, these individuals have a conscience. They're in this field, they are there providing that home care, because they love, and they actually apply the skills they have. They, too, deserve a union.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I've been listening to this debate with much interest from all parties. A lot of conversations have been had here about minimum wage. I think some facts are important to know. I've heard this argument about how this is not the right time to raise the minimum wage far too many times.

Back in 2004, when we were raising the minimum wage after it was frozen by the previous Conservative government for four years, from \$6.85 to \$10.25 over a period of time, we heard the same arguments at the time: "This is too fast. This is too soon. It's going to hurt our economy. People are going to lose jobs." None of that transpired. In fact, people earned a slightly more decent wage than they were before.

It was the same thing when, back in 2011, I was the Minister of Labour. We were bringing legislation to increase it from \$10.25 to \$11 an hour. We felt that we needed to do a catch-up. We felt that it was important that we at least get to \$11 and index it to the cost of living, even though the economy was struggling. I remember exactly the same arguments being heard by the Conservatives at the same time.

Now, the NDP like to think somehow they were advocating for \$15 at that time. They were not. In fact, when we came up with our policy around minimum wage, there was silence on the part of the NDP. I know some of the NDP members may recognize it; I think the member from Danforth did recognize that fact. The most the NDP came up with at that time was, "Oh, we'll do \$12 an hour." There was no conversation about \$15 an hour by the NDP at that time.

Now, here we are hearing the same argument from the Conservatives. "It's too fast, it's too soon. It's going to hurt the economy." You've said it before. You've said it, and look, our economy is growing and we're making sure that people are living on a decent wage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Toronto–Danforth: two minutes.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to thank the members from Eglinton–Lawrence, Wellington–Halton Hills and Algoma–Manitoulin and the Attorney General for commenting on my remarks.

You can't have a society work well unless the majority of that society lives decently. We can look at the polarization in the United States, where there's no doubt there's growing poverty in the midst of extraordinary wealth, but we also see here in Canada, as well, that the top 1% have made most of the gains that have come in this economy in the last 10 or 20 years. Right now, the top 20% of income earners earn half the income in Canada and the bottom 80% earn the other half. Some 70% of the wealth in this country is with the top 20%, and 30% of the wealth is with the bottom 80%.

There's a very sharp divide. So when you're talking about labour legislation, when you're talking about workplace legislation, you're talking about starting, even in a small way, to redress that imbalance. If you want a safe society, a comfortable society, a stable society, you need to end that imbalance.

A friend of mine was meeting recently with some people from Brazil. These people lived what by Canadian standards would be a middle-class lifestyle. For them, walking down the streets was incredibly dangerous, because there are large numbers of people who are completely desperate, so the level of crime there is extraordinarily high because so many people have nothing.

If we want safety, decency, a sense of dignity, then we have to have labour laws and legislation that allow people to live decent lives. I'm going to support this legislation, but I want it to be better.

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

Hon. Michael Chan: I think we want everyone to benefit fairly from Ontario's growing economy. While business is expanding and creating jobs, not everyone is feeling it. We need to address the concerns of those who worry about falling behind, even as they work so hard to get ahead. I truly believe that is our role to play.

Because we balanced the books, we have the ability to do more. That means free tuition, expanded child care, free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 and a basic income pilot, as well as fair hydro and fair housing plans.

Speaker, building on these initiatives, we are moving forward with our plan for fair workplaces and better jobs. With these changes, every worker in Ontario will be treated fairly, paid a living wage and have the opportunity to move ahead. Whether it's child care or health care, rent control or workplace fairness, the motivation behind each of them is the same: They will help build an Ontario where greater opportunity is available for everyone and greater security is achievable for everyone.

We know where the opposition stands on this issue. The PCs have said time and time again they do not support raising the minimum wage.

This is a plan we are proud of. Now the third party has decided to join the conversation. They agree we need to

support Ontarians with these changes; they would like to see us go even further.

When the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act was tabled, we knew we needed to take it to Ontarians for their input. This bill was sent to committee after first reading. The committee then made amendments to the bill that reflected what committee members heard from Ontarians during the hearings held in 10 cities over the summer. When the bill returned to the House, we allowed debate to continue when we reached 6.5 hours of debate on this bill so that more members would have an opportunity to present their will on the bill.

Speaker, as you know, this bill has seen more than nine and a half hours of debate, and we have had many of our members of this Legislature speak to the bill. There has been considerable debate on this bill: nine and a half hours. It's time that the bill is put to a vote for second reading and sent back to committee, where members can continue the work they started this summer. As a result, Speaker, I move that this question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm satisfied there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

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

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

This will be voted on after question period.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And now it's 10 after 10. I will recess this House until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1009 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Colleagues, today we will be doing a tribute to a former member, so I would like to introduce in the gallery today former members who have come to associate themselves with this tribute. In the gallery are: Mr. David Warner, MPP for Scarborough–Ellesmere during the 30th, 31st, 33rd and 35th Parliaments and Speaker during the 35th Parliament; Phil Gillies, MPP for Brantford during the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments; Steve Gilchrist, MPP for Scarborough East during the 36th and 37th Parliaments; and former Premier Mike Harris, who has not yet arrived.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier. Fault of the Speaker.

Also, former tied dean of the House, Norm Sterling from Carleton–Grenville in the 31st, 32nd and 33rd, Carleton in the 34th, 35th and 36th, Lanark–Carleton in the 37th and 38th and Carleton–Mississippi Mills in the 39th Parliament.

Welcome to our former members. We're glad you're with us.

Applause.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an honour to be able to stand today and welcome to the Legislature Councillor Dave Kadwell from Grimsby along with his spouse Terry Kadwell. Welcome to the Legislature today.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome Gord Reynolds, who is the COO of Spark Power Corp., and Carolyn Pittman, here to speak about Pelee Island's sustainable energy future.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to welcome page Hannah Chen's grandmother, Amy Lin, and brother Michael Chen, visiting the House today. Please join me in welcoming them.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Elliott Silverstein, manager of government relations for CAA, and Tracy Nickleford and Matthew Turack, here for CAA lobby day.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes, the CAA is here. They'll hold a reception in room 228 at noon. Everyone is invited. I'd like to welcome the director of government and community relations, Teresa Di Felice, as well as the chief operating officer, Carlos Coutinho, and board member Tony Salerno. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome Scott Courtice and Steve Goodine to the members' gallery today. They are with the London InterCommunity Health Centre. Steve is the chair of the board and Scott is the ED. They are amazing people doing fantastic work and really important members of our community.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm pleased to welcome Paul Jacuzzi, CAA board member; Michael Shore, manager, CAA north and east Ontario; and, of course, my constituent, Elliott Silverstein, manager of government relations. I hope to see everybody at the luncheon on the second floor.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my pleasure to introduce Dana Janzen from the TEDx organization. Welcome to Queen's Park, Dana.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: It's Canadian Automobile Association day, Speaker. There have been a few introductions already and I would like to add to them: Cindy Hillaby, vice-president; Danica Logan, government relations specialist; Ghazal Momen, government relations specialist; and, of course, our dear friend, Elliott Silverstein, is here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: We have a big delegation coming from the Association of Ontario Health Centres, starting with Debbie St John-de Wit. She is the executive director of Seaway Valley Community Health Centre in Cornwall. We have Mark Peacock, the chair of the board at Port Hope Northumberland Community Health Centre, and Christanne Lewis, the director of the specialized programs at Port Hope; Edesiri Udoh, the health promoter with Bramalea Community Health Centre in Brampton; Mike Bell, the CEO of Kingston Community Health Centres; and Juanita Lawson, CEO of NorWest Community Health Centres in Thunder Bay.

The two members from London were already introduced.

Judith Wiley, the executive director of Central Community Health Centre in St. Thomas, Malcolm Wood, a board member from Central CHC in St. Thomas and Paul Jenkins, a member of the board at Central CHC in St. Thomas; Lori-Ann Green-Walker, director of clinical services at Women's Health in Women's Hands here in Toronto; Emily Rashotte, director of primary care at Gateway CHC in Tweed; and Adrianna Tetley, executive director of the Association of Ontario Health Centres, Kate Mulligan, director of policy and communication at AOHC, and Jacquie Maund, policy and government relations lead at the Association of Ontario Health Centres. They are making their way here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to extend a warm welcome to Mike Bell, the new CEO from Kingston Community Health Centres.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: A warm introduction and welcome to Judith Wiley, CEO of Central Community Health Centre, and my former dentist, Malcolm Wood, as a board member of the Central Community Health Centre.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you Mr. Speaker. You just made my day.

I have representatives from CAA Niagara: Peter Van Hezewyk, president of CAA Niagara—

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, I got that—Michael Goodale, board member of CAA Niagara, and Bill Willard, vice-president of CAA Niagara. And a guy that I grew up with, a pleasant surprise that he's here: Mr. Dave Kadwell and his beautiful wife Terry.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: On behalf of my colleague, Arthur Potts, MPP for Beaches–East York, I want to acknowledge the page captain for today, Colin Angell from Beaches–East York, and welcome his father Richard Angell and grandparents, Sigrid and Ralph Angell, who will be joining us today in the member's gallery.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to introduce Chris Cowley, the president of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, who is joining us here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to welcome, from Port Hope Northumberland Community Health Centre, Mark Peacock, the chair of the board, and Christanne Lewis, director of specialized service. The best community health centre in the province, Speaker.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Speaker, I would like to welcome a delegation from the Association of Ontario Health Centres who are here marking community health and well-being week in Ontario. The delegation includes executive directors, board members and, as we have heard, staff from community health centres across the province, from Thunder Bay to Cornwall to St. Thomas and more. They all do an excellent job providing primary health care and promoting community health and well-being, so I am pleased to welcome them today to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I'm very happy to recognize in the gallery Shireen Salti, who is a graduate of the master's program in law and public policy at York. She is my first OLIP intern. I'm very happy to have her here.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I want to introduce three people who I met with this morning from CAA: Ethel Taylor, who is a board member and vice-chair; Matthew Turack, who is the division president for insurance at CAA; and Raymond Chan, who is a government relations specialist with CAA. Thank you very much and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to welcome my colleague Minnie Wang from my constituency office, and I want to thank her for the excellent work she does in helping and serving the people of Richmond Hill. Thank you.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

I have a further introduction. In the Speaker's gallery is a staff member from my constituency office in Brant, Jennifer Yin-Johnson, and Stevelle Steer from my Queen's Park office. Welcome, and thank you for being here.

GORD DOWNIE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I recognize the member from Kingston and the Islands on a point of order.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence before question period as a sign of this House's condolence for the sudden passing of Gord Downie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kingston and the Islands is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence in tribute to Gord Downie. Do we agree? Agreed.

I would ask everyone in the House to please rise for a moment of silence for a great Canadian, Gord Downie.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pray be seated.

W. DONALD COUSENS

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Good morning, Speaker. I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to recognize the former member of provincial Parliament for Markham, Mr. Donald Cousens, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

Before we do that, would members please join me in welcoming the family and friends of the late W. Donald Cousens, MPP for York Centre during the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments and MPP for Markham during the 34th and

35th Parliaments, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery: daughter Mary Cousens and her husband Kevin Steinberg; son Paul Cousens and his wife Lesley Cousens; grandchildren Charlotte and Drew Cousens; as well as Suse Steinberg. Welcome and thank you for being here.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Delivering a tribute about someone you've never met can be challenging. Often the historical record can be spotty or provide you with the kind of revelations about a person's character that make it uncomfortable or, quite frankly, really difficult to speak glowingly about them.

Then there are times when the research of the tribute is revealing and the account of the person's life and their contributions to our province make you wish that indeed you had had the opportunity to spend some time with them, that you had a chance to get to know them and learn from them. Today is one of those times, and Donald Cousens is one of those people.

Looking back at his life, it becomes clear that Donald was one of those incredible individuals destined for a life of public service. Military service? Check; he was an officer in the Canadian Forces. An ordained minister with the Presbyterian Church? Check, plus school board trustee and board chair, a 13-year career as a member of provincial Parliament and 12 years as the mayor of Markham.

When Don left us, a Markham MP described him as "a tremendous leader ... a model of grace and generosity." He was a force for helping make and shape Markham's growth and development, an impact that is felt to this day.

He was part of a team that paved the way for the Markham Stouffville Hospital, which has become a centre of excellence in the greater Toronto area. He advocated for the expansion of GO Transit service in York region. He played a role in the development of the Rouge Park and served on the first board of directors for the Rouge Park Alliance. He fought tirelessly against the proposed garbage dumps that were slated for highly sensitive areas of the Rouge River watershed.

Markham embraced Don, just as much as he loved his community. He was one of the few Tories who survived the 1987 election when the PC caucus was reduced to just 16 of 130 seats. People of all stripes remember him as Markham's champion, not only because of his electoral success and the opportunities it gave him to help the city grow but for the work he did on his own time.

In addition to his day jobs, Don found other ways to contribute to the business of community and capacity building. In fact, Don gave so much that it seemed he had 30 hours in a day while the rest of us had to make do with 24. During his tenure as an elected representative, he made time to be active with charitable initiatives that were close to his heart. Don believed that his work wasn't about legacy or infrastructure, but it was about people.

In addition to his service as a board member and, later, chair of World Vision, the boards of Yad Vashem, the Markham YMCA, the Japanese cultural centre, the York region mental health association and the Canadian Mental Health Initiative are among the many organizations that benefited from his contributions.

But perhaps the most telling thing about Don's career wasn't the offices he held or the elections that he won—and there were a lot of those—but his leadership style. As I said earlier, although I never had the privilege of meeting Don, and despite the titles he owned, it always seemed to be that his convictions spoke the loudest. One of his World Vision colleagues summed it up like this: "With Don, always that sense of quiet authority, dignity, incredible character that just attracts people to him."

Even in death, his final act was to contribute to his community, calling for donations to the Markham Stouffville Hospital.

Today we are joined by members of Don's family, in the Speaker's gallery. As elected officials and dedicated volunteers, we're acutely aware of the sacrifices that our loved ones make to allow us to heed our calling here in this place. We thank you for sharing him with us.

For the people of Markham and for the people of Ontario, thank you, Donald Cousens, for your brand of leadership. Markham and Ontario are better places because you served.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tributes?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm truly honoured to pay tribute to Don Cousens, member of provincial Parliament from 1981 until 1994, first for York Centre and then for Markham.

I, like so many others, was fortunate enough to know Don and to consider him a friend—someone with whom you could have a real conversation, who always took the time to listen, and someone on whose advice and support you could rely.

Born in Vankleek Hill in eastern Ontario, Don grew up in Brockville, the son of a Presbyterian minister, in whose footsteps he followed, getting his undergraduate degree from Queen's and his master's in divinity from Knox College at the University of Toronto. After a stint as a minister in Penetanguishene, he switched gears and worked in the high-tech industry, in sales and marketing.

After marrying his beloved wife, Aline, a physiotherapist, the family settled in Markham. Don followed his passion for public education and was elected to the York county board of education in 1972, where he remained as a trustee until becoming chair of the York Region District School Board in 1978.

In 1981, Don was elected to this House. After being re-elected in 1985, he served briefly in Premier Frank Miller's minority government as Minister of Correctional Services. Of course, even though his tenure was brief, Don threw himself into his job, visiting prisons all over the province, including in his hometown of Brockville.

Re-elected in 1987 and 1990, he had the unusual experience of serving during the majority governments of all three parties and the minorities of two. He was Deputy

Speaker and was most proud of the private member's bill he introduced to control smoking in Ontario.

I believe his respect for this Legislature was evidenced by his children, Mary and Paul, both becoming pages in this place.

When I asked the dean of the House, the member for St. Catharines, about his memory of Don in this place, he said immediately, "He was one of the good guys." As we all know, the member always speaks his mind, and so this is high praise indeed.

After deciding not to run again provincially, Don was elected mayor of Markham in 1994. Re-elected three more times, he established Markham as a high-tech business hub. The first race relations committee was formed, and Markham won the Prince of Wales Prize for exemplary commitment to the preservation of built heritage within its boundaries. Don likened this to winning the Stanley Cup.

Following up on his anti-smoking legislation, Don and I, in my capacity as medical officer of health, worked together on a no-smoking bylaw for York region. It took us six years to get the required triple majority. I got discouraged many times, but Don always told me we would win in the end, and we did, in October 2000, just before that year's municipal election.

Don served on innumerable community organizations, including as chair of World Vision Canada, but his commitment to public education was always paramount. He spearheaded the Character Matters initiative that was adopted by the York Region District School Board and that remains in place today. A new public elementary school in my riding was named after him, and he told his family it was the greatest honour he could have hoped to receive.

1050

Needing another kidney transplant in 2006, Don decided to retire. Throughout the health challenges he faced in his later years, Don impressed everyone with his fortitude. Aline ensured they maintained a healthy lifestyle. They travelled and continued to attend events supporting charities they favoured.

There was always something interesting to talk about with Don. After my first election as an MPP in 2007, Don phoned me at home to give me some advice. First, not surprisingly, was to always look after your constituents. Next was that legislative committees were enjoyable and useful and where the real work was done. And then finally, after a short pause, he said, "You're a rather impatient person, so you'll probably find the debates in the House tedious, but hang in there." Of course, he was right. This was so typical of Don: very candid in his assessment but wanting to provide guidance and support.

So to Mary, Kevin and Suse, and to Paul, Lesley, Charlotte and Drew, and to the extended family and friends, very sincere condolences on the loss of Don, but rest assured that his legacy lives on in all the work he did in this House and in Markham to benefit the people of Ontario.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: It is my honour and privilege to rise today to pay tribute to the late Donald Cousens, former MPP from Markham. A father, a grandfather, a local advocate from Markham, a mayor, a cabinet minister, a Presbyterian minister: to say that this man left an impact is an understatement.

I wanted to start by acknowledging that we are joined today in the Speaker's gallery by Don's daughter, Mary, her husband, Kevin, and their daughter, Suse; and by Don's son, Paul, his wife, Lesley, and their children, Charlotte and Drew.

I first met Don in 1990, when I was a member of my local PC riding association. At the time, Bob Rae was Premier and Don was the environment critic. Don recognized that our Durham–York riding association was full of novices, but novices who were keen and committed to the PC vision for a better Ontario. He and his staff gave us the advice and guidance we needed to organize our community and stand up against the proposed mega-dump in Georgina.

Some of you may know that the mega-dump was actually one of the main issues that drew me into local politics. I saw something that my community and I knew was not in our best interests and I was motivated to do something about it. I will always be grateful for Don's advice and guidance and look back with fondness at the care he took for our little team. I always remember how approachable Don was and how open he was to our questions in a pursuit for a better Georgina. Working in tandem with this local issue, I was also motivated to run by our new leader, Mike Harris. I was attracted to his ideas and his vision for a more prosperous Ontario.

It is always important to know the motivation of a politician in seeking office. It's in those moments that they are not politicians; they are everyday citizens motivated by someone or something. Donald Cousens was motivated by Markham, first as a school board trustee, then an MPP, a cabinet minister, and then as mayor of Markham. He was motivated by his deep desire to serve Markham and to help it prosper. When Don stepped up to the plate to serve Markham as their MPP, he saw gridlock and long commuter lines. I suppose some things never change.

Prior to elected office, Don was a Presbyterian minister in Penetanguishene, an officer in the Canadian Forces and an executive at Honeywell. In conversation with his son, Paul, he mentioned that when he was growing up in Markham, his father celebrated the fact that his school had students who together could speak 47 different languages. Markham, and more generally York region, was diverse then and continues a culture of diversity today.

I can only imagine how special it must have been for Don to serve as an MPP during each of his children's time as legislative pages here at Queen's Park. To be able to open your child's eyes to the world around them and to engage them in the process in such a meaningful way is a unique opportunity.

Even after he left the political arena, he continued to advocate for Markham and remained involved in the

local business community. Don truly was a man motivated by community. He served in opposition more than he did in government—I know the feeling—and as a result was often in a position to seek consensus rather than simply oppose. As mayor of Markham, he had an opportunity to take those skills to a different environment. His story is a testament to the Canadian dream, a dream where if you work hard, opportunity will follow.

Born into humble beginnings in eastern Ontario, Don went on to raise a loving family and serve his community in elected office. His son remarked that he greatly enjoyed playing the role of “elder statesman” and, of course, time with family. He loved his children and his grandchildren dearly. Family was everything.

Today, he is commemorated in Markham with both a road and a school named for him. More than that, Don is remembered as a “good guy,” one of the good guys—somebody who was in politics for all the right reasons and somebody who always tried to do the right thing. I think that I can speak for every member of this House when I say we all aspire to leave behind such a legacy.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to thank all the members for their very kind and heartfelt comments. I thank the former members for being here; it tells a story.

To the family: Our deepest sympathies, and also, on behalf of the Legislature and all the members, we will ensure that you receive a copy of the DVD and a Hansard of the tributes paid today to Don Cousens. Thank you for the gift of Don.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier, but first of all, I just want to say, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, our deepest condolences on the loss of Gord Downie to his family, his friends and his fans. He will be missed in Ontario and in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General’s report was a scathing indictment of Liberal political corruption and their contempt for the people of Ontario. She said the scheme—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I’m going to ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: She said the scheme was “needlessly complex,” that the government is “improperly” accounting for billions of dollars and that Ontario will be paying \$4 billion more than necessary. This is an egregious abuse of power and someone must be held accountable.

Mr. Speaker, who will this Premier hold responsible? Which minister is she going to hold responsible?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I’m happy to answer this question, but I also want to extend my deepest condolences to the family, the friends and all of the fans of Gord Downie across this country. Gord lived every single day of his life with grace and resilience. His music was a quintessential part of being Canadian. I know that there are millions—literally millions—of Canadians who are in mourning today. I want to say that he will be greatly missed by all of us.

1100

Mr. Speaker, families in this province, in Ontario, asked for real and immediate relief on their electricity bills—because there had been billions of dollars of investment in a degraded electricity system. In 2003, the electricity system had been neglected. It had to be built up. We made those investments and our fair hydro plan—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—too late of a catch—come to order.

Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The question was, who will the Premier hold responsible? The Auditor General’s report is very clear. We’re going to waste \$4 billion because of the method this government chose—\$4 billion that families are going to have to bear the cost of because of the calculations that this government made for their own re-election.

So my question, once again: Given that we’re going to see \$4 billion wasted and given the Auditor General saying the government is making up their own rules, which minister is the Premier going to hold responsible? Who is she going to fire?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I’ll just finish what I was saying, which is that the fair hydro plan is delivering that relief, an average 25% rate cut to residential ratepayers. I guarantee that electricity rates will not rise—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Electricity rates will not rise beyond the rate of inflation for four years. We’ve been clear from the start that our plan does a smoothing out of the costs over a period of time and that there is a cost associated with that. We’ve been very clear about that. But we’ve also been clear that the fair hydro plan—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The cost of borrowing in order to do that smoothing was within the rate base, not the tax base, because that is the logical thing to do. That is what our plan does. It allows people to get that relief immediately; it smooths out those costs and keeps the cost within the rate base.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: One newspaper read, “Hiding billions of dollars the Ontario government is borrowing to lower electricity bills for a few years will cost hydro users an extra \$4 billion....” This is what it’s about; it’s about an additional \$4 billion that families are going to have to pay. The newspaper article continued, “The government, citizens, auditors and giant institutions that lend the province money are pretty much operating in a post-truth universe, where what the Liberals say is going on with Ontario’s finances has begun to drift from any previously understood shared reality.”

It’s the Liberals’ world, and we’re just living in it—a world where they can spend \$4 billion for an unfair hydro plan that is nothing more than a self-interested election ploy.

Again to the Premier: Nowhere else in Canada would making up your own rules be acceptable. Nowhere else in Canada would blowing \$4 billion be acceptable. So—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. To the member: When I stand, you sit. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know that families in this province, as the Premier said, really asked for real and immediate relief on their electricity bills, and that’s what we delivered. We made a policy choice, a policy choice to ensure that we continue to have a clean, reliable and affordable electricity system for the ratepayers of today and the ratepayers of tomorrow. The fair hydro plan keeps the cost of borrowing within the rate base, not the tax base, because that’s the logical thing to do. Electricity financing should remain within the electricity system.

While the Auditor General is welcome to her opinion, our plan has been approved by her peers, some of Canada’s—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned. I set the trap; you took the bait.

Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Our plan has been approved by her peers at some of Canada’s top accounting firms, including Ernst and Young, KPMG and Deloitte. In the development of the fair hydro plan, we also consulted with numerous third-party advisers in the application of accounting standards. IESO’S management, IESO’S audit committee—

Interjections.

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

You have a wrap-up sentence, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Even the office of the provincial controller supports this accounting treatment.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: I can’t believe she can sit here and accept an attitude by the Minister of Energy that is so condescending to an officer of the Legislature. It’s shameful, Mr. Speaker. This is an independent officer of the Legislature, and frankly, the Auditor General knows a lot more about accounting rules than the Minister of Energy. Frankly, she knows a lot more about energy than the Minister of Energy.

The reality is this is all about politics. This is all about partisan self-interest. Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Government House leader, come to order.

Question.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, this is about politics over people: \$4 billion wasted, and they’re trying to spin their way out of this.

Again to the Premier: Given the fact you’ve got a minister who has been caught deliberately hiding the facts, the government is making up their own rules, you’ve wasted—

Interjections.

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

The member will withdraw.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Withdraw. What am I withdrawing?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Come to order. For the benefit of the members, he has a right to ask that question. Know your rules.

You said something unparliamentary, and I asked you to withdraw. Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question for the Premier: You’ve got an instance where the government, according to the Auditor General, is making up their own accounting rules and \$4 billion is being lost. Will the Premier do the right thing and fire her Minister of Energy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the Leader of the Opposition knows, we adhere to Canadian public service accounting standards. We work closely with experts from KPMG, from Deloitte, from Ernst and Young, and the reality—

Interjection.

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

Interjection.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Finance, come to order. The member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order—second time. The Minister of Government and Consumer Services, come to order.

We're now in warnings. By the way, I don't need to give warnings to name people. Race to the top, please.

Premier.

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As government, we have to solve problems in this province. We have to find practical solutions to problems.

The first problem that we had to solve was a degraded electricity system, a system that was not reliable and was not clean. The second problem that we had to solve was that the cost of investing in that system to make it clean and reliable was burdening residents and ratepayers across this province. That's the problem that we had to solve. People needed rate relief, and we have delivered them rate relief.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: This government created this mess. They're about solving problems? They created the problem. This is their legacy. They're the ones who put Ontario in this hydro mess. I know they're trying to spin that this is not as bad as it appears, that this \$4 billion is not as bad as it appears, but it is.

Mr. Speaker, just listen to what the Auditor General had to say. She said this scheme "would be unacceptable in the private sector, and we maintain that this is also unacceptable in the public sector." She continued, "If the consolidated financial statements are so unreliable that an adverse opinion is warranted, terms like 'balanced budget,' 'deficit,' 'asset' and 'net debt' will be meaningless" under this government.

The reality is that they fudged the numbers. The numbers are an absolute—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You have to withdraw.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The numbers do not add up. The numbers are an absolute scam.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Premier defend her Minister of Finance? She's here defending the Minister of Energy, but how can you stand in the House and defend the Minister of Finance when the numbers are not believed by anyone, including the Auditor General?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. The Minister of Education will come to order.

Premier?

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: Our government and our cabinet made a very simple decision. When we listened to the people of Ontario who asked to have their hydro bills

lowered, we decided that social programs should go on the tax base and that electricity should go on the rate base.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: Now the leader opposite is claiming that somehow we made up the accounting rules, but let me tell—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. Stop the clock. I even forgot my own rule. The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Rate-regulated accounting is the norm in the electricity sector. The OPG uses rate-regulated accounting. It has been approved by this and other auditors and continues to be. Hydro One uses rate-regulated accounting. It has—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is warned.

Answer, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Hydro One's rate-regulated accounting has been approved by this and all the other Auditors General. The old Ontario Power Authority—

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: Page 8 of the report reads: "The government's ongoing spending on private-sector external advisers had exceeded \$2 million when we completed this special report."

The President of the Treasury Board holds the purse strings, and yet she allowed the government to spend millions on lawyers and consultants to try to hide the true state of the books. Mr. Speaker, that's not right. It's unacceptable, it's shameful and it's disturbing.

Can the Premier tell us if the President of the Treasury Board still has her confidence when clearly—it's not the opposition saying you made up the rules; it's the Auditor General. How can the Premier still have confidence in her President of the Treasury Board? It's shameful, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Let's continue to talk about the rules. The Ontario Power Authority, when it existed, used—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton is warned and inches away from being named.

Carry on.

Hon. Liz Sandals: The Ontario Power Authority, when it existed, used rate-regulated accounting, which was approved by this and other Auditors General. When OPA was consolidated into IESO, IESO decided it should use rate-regulated accounting for that part of the business which came from OPA. It received a clean audit from their auditors.

Now, let me tell you about other organizations like the IESO in North America. The equivalent organizations in

Alberta, New York, Michigan, Texas, the Midwest, the eastern seaboard and New England have equivalents to the IESO, and they all use—

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey is warned, the President of the Treasury Board is warned—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will do my job, thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You were just stretching? Yes, I'm sorry.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I'm also going to take the opportunity, on behalf of New Democrats, to extend our condolences to the friends, family, bandmates and fans of the iconic Gord Downie. He and his band, the Tragically Hip, were inspirational artists of Canada, and they gave us a goodbye and a long tour that I think will always live in all of our hearts, and we regret his passing.

My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Auditor General told Ontarians exactly how bad the Premier's \$40-billion hydro borrowing scheme really is, so bad that the Premier is putting an extra \$4 billion on people's hydro bills just to cover it up. Once again, it's the Premier putting herself and her party first and the people of Ontario last.

Why did the Premier sign off on a scheme that will cost Ontario families an extra \$4 billion?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say again that what the fair hydro plan does is to put the people of Ontario first. The people of Ontario said to us that because of the costs that had been incurred, because we had to invest in an electricity system that was degraded over years, their electricity costs were going up too high and too fast. The leader of the third party was hearing those same voices, and she brought those voices to the Legislature just as I did.

And so we acted. We put in place a reduction, keeping that reduction on the rate base, understanding that people needed immediate relief. That's exactly what we have done.

We also were very clear that the smoothing-out of costs over time would have a cost associated with it. We were very, very clear about that. But the motivation for us, in the first instance, was to respond to people who needed to see rate relief and needed to see it immediately.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families and businesses know that they're paying far too much for hydro. They see it every month when they open their electricity

bills. The Premier's solution is to implement a plan that will actually end up costing Ontarians more in the long run, and then use public money to hide the damage that she is doing.

Why is the Premier putting her partisan ambitions ahead of the well-being of Ontario families yet again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It is important, again, to reiterate that families in this province and 500,000 small businesses and farms are seeing real relief and immediate relief thanks to the fair hydro plan, which was a policy decision that we made to ensure that we continue to have a clean, reliable and affordable system of electricity here in the province that is there for the ratepayers of today and the ratepayers of tomorrow.

The fair hydro plan keeps the cost of borrowing within the rate base, not the tax base, meaning electricity financing actually remains within the electricity system. It is important to see that we keep that cost within that rate base, because, for example, when Guelph Hydro goes out and builds a new transformer and they borrow money or when OPG builds a hydroelectric dam, all of that money stays in the rate base; it doesn't come on to the tax base, which is the way it has always been done.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Where was this government's concern for families, businesses and farms when they increased their hydro rates by 300% in a decade and then sold off their public electricity system? Where was their concern?

It's like this Premier has never even opened a hydro bill in the last decade. She and her Liberal government are completely out of touch with what Ontario families are going through. The Premier is making Ontarians spend an extra \$4 billion. No matter where they decide to put it in the books, it's an extra \$4 billion that they're costing Ontarians, while families are struggling, just to hide the damage that her hydro scheme is going to do.

How can the Premier defend this massive breach of trust with the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development and Growth is warned. The member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, a 25% reduction for families, small businesses and farms is immediate and real relief for the people of Ontario, something that we heard loud and clear and acted upon.

When it comes to what we've talked about today, it was a policy choice of this government to ensure that we continue to have a clean, reliable and affordable electricity system and that all of the borrowing done within the electricity system stays within that system. It does not make sense for Hydro One, for OPG or for any of our utilities that need to borrow money, that need to invest to

keep that clean and reliable system going, that that money would then come onto the tax base. It doesn't make sense. It has never worked that way.

What we've done is that we've kept with common practice, we've kept with accounting standards and we're making sure that we're keeping bills as low as possible with a clean system and a reliable system in this province.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Auditor General also revealed that the government knew that the cost to hide their borrowing scheme was going to reach the astonishing additional amount of \$4 billion.

When did the Premier know what the cost of this scheme was going to be, and when did she decide that \$4 billion was an acceptable price tag?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the President of the Treasury Board will want to comment, but, Mr. Speaker, we heard from Ontarians across this province. They said quite clearly that the costs that had been incurred because we had to rebuild the system—the system was degraded, it was unreliable and it was dirty. It's clean. It is reliable. We made investments so that it would be. That's a cost associated with making those improvements.

We made a decision that we would smooth out the cost of making those improvements over a longer period of time. We were very clear that there would be a cost associated with that but that this was an asset that would be in place not just for this generation but for the future. I've said quite clearly that we understand that. We understand that there was a cost associated with smoothing those costs. But in the immediate term, people needed to see relief and they are seeing that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Auditor General has been very clear about this: The government knew that this financial trick would cost the people of Ontario an extra \$4 billion, and they did it anyway. The AG has the emails that prove it.

Was the Premier or any member of her office one of the officials who the auditor was referring to when she told Ontarians that the government knew the cost of this scheme?

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: I do need to note that the number that keeps getting thrown around here is an estimate that came from the FAO. It's not a number that ever came to cabinet for decision-making. The fact that it's out there is something the FAO put out there.

I want to go back to the issue around the accounting dispute, because clearly, with all due respect to the auditor, we are having an accounting dispute with the auditor. The auditor did a very peculiar thing yesterday.

The auditor announced in advance how she would rule on the province's books a year from now, based on a transaction that has not yet occurred.

The auditor says that the transaction is debt that should be treated like credit card debt, or like the stranded debt—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: After the gas plants cover-up, which two Liberal staffers are on trial for right now, and the Sudbury bribery scandal, which another two Liberal operatives are in court for right now, the Premier promised that she would finally be open and transparent with the people of this province.

Here is the Premier's opportunity to be true to her word, finally. Will she release those emails that the Auditor General referenced immediately?

Hon. Liz Sandals: As I was saying, the auditor says that this is just like credit card debt, it's just like the stranded debt, that we can't turn that debt into an asset. On the other hand, we have three firms—EY, Deloitte, KPMG—and the provincial controller who all say no, we should be using regulated accounting. We clearly have a dispute.

But the interesting thing is the transaction hasn't occurred. The market will decide who is right because if the market buys the asset, it's a regulated asset. The market will be the referee when OPG completes that transaction.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Minister of Energy. It may be a new Minister of Energy, but it's the same old lack of transparency, accountability and openness from this minister.

Every single ministry and government agency was able to comply with the order to produce emails to the Auditor General in advance of her report, but your ministry was singled out for failure to comply.

How come every time this Liberal government makes a multi-billion-dollar energy decision—let's be honest, to save its own political hide—it ends up in another email scandal?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know the member opposite heard the answer from us yesterday in estimates, so I'll repeat that. When it comes to the release of emails, over 13,212 emails, to be exact, have been released by the Ministry of Energy to the Auditor General and we're continuing to provide the Auditor General with more.

When the scope of the ask came from the Auditor General, there were 80 custodians that were identified with 40 actual words or phrases that needed to be captured. That produced over two million emails. All of those emails then had to be worked through; 145,000 of those two million emails were then identified. We have the Ministry of Energy going through all of those emails.

We continue to keep the Auditor General updated on the progress of this, but we've ensured that we've

complied with that and have provided over 13,000 emails to date.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: With all due respect to the current minister, we've seen this movie before here in the Legislature, where Ministers of Energy said, "No, no, no, we've complied. We've turned over all the documents." Then another couple of weeks would pass: "No, no, no, you now have all the documents." Then a few more weeks would pass: "No, now you have all the documents." It ended up in a billion-dollar gas plant scandal, and we're seeing the same kind of ethical deficit coming from the Ministry of Energy again.

We've learned that the government retained a major Bay Street law firm with a retainer of \$500,000—half a million dollars—to help them to decide which emails they were going to turn over. Does the minister not understand that the act that governs the Auditor General says that she's supposed to get any and all documents that she asks for? We're seeing a court case downtown right now on this issue.

Why is the government spending thousands of dollars on lawyers to tell them which documents to turn over?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I'll have to explain the process of what we're going through to the member opposite.

We've already complied. As the Auditor General said yesterday, we continue to work with her office to provide her with all of the emails. Over 13,000 emails have already been brought forward to the Auditor General's office. We're going to continue to work and provide her with all of the emails that she asked for. When you start with 80 custodians—80 people who actually would be involved with this—and 40 catchphrases or words, that created two million emails. We wanted to make sure she got access to this, so we brought that down and recognized that there were 145,000 of those emails. We have the Ministry of Energy working through this. Over 13,000 have been provided right now.

We'll continue to work with the Auditor General and provide those emails.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. The people of Ontario deserve to know who authorized an accounting trick designed to hide the cost of the Premier's hydro borrowing scheme. The Auditor General has been clear, based on emails she accessed as part of her investigation, that the Liberal government knew the astronomical cost and did it anyway. The Premier won't admit that she knew, and when, and neither will the minister.

Will the Premier stop telling Ontarians that she is open and transparent and actually be open and transparent and release those emails right now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, when it comes to the emails that we are providing to the Auditor General, when it comes to the fair hydro plan, we are in compliance. We're continuing to work with her office. We've identified 80 custodians of the request, with 40 catchphrases or words. That produced two million emails. We then had the firm narrow that down to the specific file. That produced 145,000 emails with these phrases. We then have the entire Ministry of Energy working on identifying all of the emails that will comply with the ask from the Auditor General. So we are complying, we are acting right now. We have over 13,000 emails—13,212 to be exact. We've made sure that we're going to continue to provide those emails to the Auditor General, and we'll continue to work with her office.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: The people of this province have had enough of this Liberal government's partisan manoeuvring. They've had too many vague statements, too much political doublespeak and way too many "I don't recall" from the Premier.

The government set aside \$500,000 for a lawyer to assemble these emails for the Auditor General. It should be easy for the Premier to release those emails to the public. Will the Premier release those emails now?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: As I said before and as I'll say again, Mr. Speaker, there were 80 custodians identified who were involved in the fair hydro plan. Of those 80 custodians, 40 catchphrases or words were then identified that needed to be turned over. That produced two million emails. Those two million emails were reviewed by the firm to which we've paid approximately \$40,000—we will not be going over \$60,000 on this. That firm then identified those 145,000 emails, which the Ministry of Energy is now identifying and releasing. We've released 13,212 emails to the Auditor General.

We're going to continue to work with the Auditor General's office. We're going to continue to provide the emails as we identify those 145,000 that pertain to this case. We'll continue to work with the Auditor General on this file.

POVERTY

Mr. Ted McMeekin: My question is for the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for poverty reduction. Minister, we know that the Local Poverty Reduction Fund is an important component of our government's renewed poverty reduction strategy. These funds help community organizations provide innovative and local solutions to poverty in their area.

Yesterday, sir, I was pleased to join with you, announcing that Food4Kids in Hamilton will receive \$250,000 as part of the Local Poverty Reduction Fund for their Weekends Without Hunger program. This

program helps single-parent families by delivering food directly to their homes on weekends when school nutrition programs are not running. I was pleased today to hear this round of funding has a special focus on food security issues. That's good.

Speaker, can the good minister tell us more about the Local Poverty Reduction Fund and what kinds of initiatives were supported through the third round of funding?

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for the question and for his career-long commitment to poverty reduction.

Through the Local Poverty Reduction Fund, Ontario is helping to break the cycle of poverty for children and youth, increase employment and income security, increase food security and end homelessness in Ontario. The Local Poverty Reduction Fund announced in April 2015 it is investing \$50 million to support sustainable, community-driven initiatives that measurably improve the lives of those most affected by poverty. Through the third round of the OPRF, Ontario is providing more than \$16 million to 48 projects across Ontario, including \$4.5 million specifically for food security.

We know there's much more to do, and we continue to make strategic investments such as these to help break the cycle of poverty in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Again to the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for poverty reduction: I'm pleased to hear that the third round of funding for the local poverty reduction program has been distributed to such helpful programs.

I urge all members of this House to be aware of the Local Poverty Reduction Fund and highlight the successful work we're doing together to reduce poverty across Ontario. What makes the Local Poverty Reduction Fund unique is that we are in fact collecting data, and we can measure whether it's successful and whether it should be replicated or not.

Can the minister tell this House how the Local Poverty Reduction Fund is helping to gather evidence to measurably improve the lives of those most impacted by poverty?

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: Our Poverty Reduction Strategy sets bold targets to ensure that our efforts are having the greatest impact and ensures that we tackle poverty in a comprehensive and coordinated way. Through our government's Local Poverty Reduction Fund, we're evaluating what works, so that we can replicate those successes elsewhere throughout the province and lift more people out of poverty. These projects focus on local community partnerships, including a third-party evaluation component, which is important because better data will help communities develop better solutions to increase food security, better employment, reduce homelessness and help people find jobs and keep their homes.

Mr. Speaker, we're continuing to make sure that people have the resources they need and they're able to take

part in the economic growth that we know they can participate in.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier of Ontario. Like her government, Enron also hid large debts off of its balance sheet. It became one of the worst corporate scandals of all time.

Here, the "unfair" hydro plan is on track to becoming Ontario's worst political scandal, and that's a feat. Why? Let's put it in perspective. This costs more than the \$1 billion wasted at eHealth, \$1.2 billion in cancelled gas plants and the \$2-billion smart meter rip-off, and it all happened under the Treasury Board president's watch. The unfair hydro scheme is \$4 billion in unnecessary interest payments that Ontarians will be paying for decades to come.

The question for the Premier: Does she condone the gross incompetence of her Treasury Board president?

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: Oh, dear, where to start? Let's go back to where this really did start, Speaker. This started with the people of Ontario, who said to us, "We appreciate the fact that you've cleaned up the air and shut down the coal plants, but this is really costing too much on our hydro bills." We said, "Yes, you're right."

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Cabinet made two important decisions: The first of those decisions was to separate what were social programs out of the hydro bill and put them on the tax base. In fact, that amounts to—just to remind people because this number was also provided yesterday—\$7.7 billion over five years that has been shifted because it's social programs to the tax base—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I guess I got my answer, Speaker: The Premier does condone gross incompetence. If they want to start from what they said—"Where to start?"—if they don't know where to start, how about we start with the truth?

This isn't the first time the Treasury Board president has proven to be incompetent when it comes to the public accounts of Ontario. She has had an ongoing "accounting dispute" with the auditor over the pension assets, which has left a \$5-billion hole in their budget. Now the minister is claiming an "accounting dispute" with the auditor, who found an additional \$4 billion in unnecessary interest.

The auditor is using standard and accepted accounting practices; the Financial Accountability Officer agrees. The Liberals are just making it up again. They are making Bernie Madoff look ethical. Does the Premier condone this type of political corruption?

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn. Sorry; I put the wrong word in there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Let's look at one part of the decision, which was to put social programs on the tax base. The other part of the decision was to put things that have to do with the electricity system onto the rate base. That's where we get into an interesting conundrum because what the public sector accounting standard says is, "No rule of general application can be phrased to suit all circumstances or combinations of circumstances that may arise. As a result, matters may arise that are not specifically addressed in the primary sources of GAAP"—generally accepted accounting principles. "It is necessary to refer to other sources when the primary sources do not deal with the accounting and reporting in financial statements...."

What we have done is exactly what the public sector accounting standard asks for, which is to refer to other standards—

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

New question.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. I want to welcome the leaders of community health centres from across the province, and I want to applaud their work and their advocacy. Community health centres know that in Ontario today up to three million people cannot get the dental care that they need. Why, Speaker? Because they cannot afford to pay for it, and there is no government support to help them.

The Premier has promised to expand dental care for low-income adults, but she's making them wait until 2025. No offence, Speaker, but there's a good chance she won't be Premier by then, which basically means that she's not going to help them. She's not going to do it.

My question is simple: Why does the Premier think that she can leave the most vulnerable adult working Ontarians without access to the dental care they need, for another eight years?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I am also honoured that we're joined by so many front-line health care workers who represent the community care that's being provided through community health centres and other important facilities.

It is true that we have, in fact, expanded our Healthy Smiles program. Several years ago, we integrated six different programs and added 70,000 more kids who are eligible. So any kid in Ontario who is 17 or younger and meets the eligibility criteria, through a myriad of options, is able to have that all-important dental care, which gives them that important start in life, because a healthy mouth means a healthy heart and a healthy body. It's so import-

ant for self-esteem and for everything from employment and other.

With regard to adults, the Premier and this government have made the commitment that by 2025—because as everyone can appreciate, it is a costly exercise but it's one that we're committed to and we're working with our partners on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: New Democrats, front-line workers, community health centres: We all know that adult working Ontarians need access to dental care. Yet this Liberal government refuses to make it happen. People today with a toothache or mouth pain are forced to go to the emergency room. Every nine minutes, someone visits an emergency room, and all they'll get will be painkillers. Those emergency room visits are not free. They cost Ontario \$30 million a year but don't address the problem.

Family physicians are also worried. They try to care for over 200,000 patients every year who need dental care but can't afford to see a dentist.

Why are this Premier and her minister refusing to provide dental care to every vulnerable Ontarian who needs it now?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We are absolutely committed to this objective. I know the member opposite understands that there is a process under way, that we're working with our partners, that nearly half a million Ontarian children 17 and younger are now receiving access to dental work, including emergency but also preventive dental care, through our public health units, through private dentists' offices. It's really a remarkable program that is working exceptionally well.

We will and we need to expand that to other age groups, including the working poor and adults of low socio-economic income. That is a commitment that we've made. It is a commitment that, I think, needs to be captured in the essence of the other important investments that we are making in health care, including OHIP+ for all those 25 and under who will get absolutely free access to 4,400 prescribed medications starting January 1.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Monsieur le Président, ma question est aussi pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Our government is certainly committed to ensuring that Ontarians have access to health care close to home. Last year, I understand we passed the Patients First Act, which requires that the LHINs pay attention to health equity. So we are concerned, obviously, about reducing all health disparities between regions but also between different populations.

Now, given that this week is Community Health and Wellbeing Week, can the minister explain how these community health centres bring us closer to reducing health disparities?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I want first to add my own condolences and that of my spouse, Samantha Nutt, to the family and friends of our friend Gord Downie. To Laura and their four children; to Rob and Gord and Paul and Bobby, we mourn with you.

Mr. Speaker, it's safe to say that War Child Canada, the charity that Sam and I founded, would never have existed without Gord Downie and the Tragically Hip. At the charity's benefit concert launch in 2000 in Winnipeg, outdoors at the Forks, in front of 80,000 people, Sam was on stage imploring the crowd to donate cash into buckets being carried through the crowd. Only \$10,000 had been raised. Then Gord walked on stage, took Sam and the microphone by the hand and calmly said six words: "Put the money in the cup." Half an hour later, we had raised over \$300,000. Such was the influence that Gord had.

Gord was an incomparable artist, musician, poet, humanitarian, champion of indigenous rights, immeasurably talented and incredibly generous—and he put Bobcaygeon on the map. He will be missed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I turn to the member from Ottawa–Vanier for a supplementary.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Yes. I want to congratulate the minister for expressing all our feelings today about the great loss that Ontario and Canada have suffered.

Maybe, at this point, he can explain a little bit more how we are getting to reducing health disparities in Ontario. Thank you.

1150

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Last week, I had the opportunity to make an announcement in my riding of St. Paul's, in the Oakwood-Vaughan area, which is a challenged area, if I can describe it that way. We announced an investment of \$1.6 million for a new clinic that will provide preventive care and social support for people living in poverty. It's an extension, a satellite, of a community health centre run by Unison. It will help isolated seniors, vulnerable youth, non-insured patients and people with complex mental health issues. It will help nearly 1,000 residents in that underserved community with high needs and allow them to access regular health services from a doctor, a nurse practitioner, a registered nurse, a social worker and a health promoter.

We're also making improvements across the province. We've invested \$146 million between now and 2019-20 towards recruiting and retaining health care professionals for primary care teams, \$100 million over three years to support the expansion of intra-professional primary care teams and many investments that reflect the vital importance of our front-line community health workers.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is to the Premier. As reported on Newstalk 1010, senior Liberal officials worked in secret to cancel the Slots at Race-

tracks Program in 2012, knowing full well the devastating impact it would have on the horse racing industry. Court documents and emails show that the Liberals ignored all evidence and abruptly cut off the program with no transitional support to racetracks and horse people.

The result was catastrophic. Former Liberal MPP John Wilkinson predicted, "23,000 job losses and 27,000 dead horses. The lawsuits coming our way will add up to \$500 million and you will be lucky to settle for \$250 million."

My question is, why did the government ignore all evidence and scrap the Slots at Racetracks Program at the expense of rural Ontario, thousands of beautiful horses and good-paying jobs?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. The member opposite references a decision to ensure that more of the money that's being raised throughout the industry goes to the horsemen and the horses. Frankly, we looked at the way it was being done, which was not as transparent and not to the benefit of the horsemen. That is why we are committed to the long-term sustainability of the horse racing industry.

This Premier took it upon herself specifically to make sure more money goes to them: \$100 million more annually is going to the horse racing partnership, right to the horsemen. We are doing everything to make it a sustainable industry on an ongoing basis, recognizing the importance of where the money should be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The government is being sued by a group of standardbred horse breeders over their political decision to kill Slots at Racetracks. The government is trying to block witnesses from testifying, including former Premier Dalton McGuinty, former finance minister Dwight Duncan and the current Premier of Ontario.

Now we know what the Liberals have been trying to hide. A long trail of documents shows that senior Liberals conspired to scrap Slots at Racetracks. A top adviser to Premier McGuinty wrote in an email: "Meeting with Premier just ended. He was inclined to go to zero dollars for horse racing." They rushed to cancel the program without doing any real economic analysis or consulting with the horse racing industry.

Again to the Premier: Why was your government willing to devastate the horse racing industry with 23,000 job losses and 27,000 dead horses? Was it because the brunt of damage would fall on rural Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we are committed to supporting the horse racing industry. It is why we are

obtaining the resources necessary to provide for the revenues. We are supplementing much of the horse racing tracks right now, both operations and their purses. We are providing a funding program. We have Ontario Racing, which was formed to provide even greater transparency and oversight, with horsemen and the horses at the top of the chain of command.

We support greater transparency within the industry. We support a greater use of funds. We are providing more money than they had before through slots. More money is going to where it needs to be, and that's to the horses, to protect them—and planning for their years to come. We recognize that cycle does take time.

We want to partner with the horses; we are doing so, Mr. Speaker.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. This week we learned that, since at least 2009, engineers at the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change have been raising serious concerns about the safety at Ontario's petroleum refineries. We also learned that this government has been muzzling these engineers, and they buried a 2014 report showing the health impacts of air pollution on families living in south Sarnia and the Aamjiwnaang First Nation.

The engineers claim the ministry meets regularly with industry officials while shutting out its own engineers. Why is your minister more interested in listening to industry lobbyists than your own engineers and your own Ministry of the Environment?

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

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you for a very important question. As I said yesterday, Ontario takes the quality of air very seriously. Everyone across this province has the right to breathe clean air. My ministry is carefully reviewing the report that was provided to them by the union representing engineers and we take very seriously the concerns that it brought to our attention.

We take advice from a wide variety of people. Inside our ministry, we have a very transparent methodology to collect information and move it through the pipeline. We post that publicly. We talk to a variety of stakeholders, from right across the spectrum, in order to get it right.

I will reiterate that I'm taking this very seriously. My ministry is reviewing it and I'll have tough questions for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again, back to the Premier. It would be good if you listened to your own engineers and your own ministry. Here are some of the concerns that have been raised by the minister's own engineers: poorly regulated flaring of acid gas is emitting unsafe levels of sulphur dioxide in Chemical Valley; and after a hydrogen sulphide incident in 2010, children at the Aamjiwnaang day care began vomiting and needing medical care.

Even US regulators have flagged Ontario's lax air pollution standards and enforcement, but instead of taking action, this government told its own engineers to remain silent, which is actually against their own code of ethics as engineers. When will the minister stop muzzling his own engineers and take the necessary action to keep Ontario families safe in this province?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Again, thank you for the follow-up question, because I think it's very important to talk about what we're doing in our ministry. I visited two First Nations communities in Sarnia recently and had these conversations with their leadership and with members of the community about the air quality that they have, and about the quality of water and the quality of land within their communities. They have concerns, and I share those concerns and have committed to moving forward.

We will continue to improve air quality for the folks who live in First Nations, in Sarnia and, quite honestly, right across Ontario. I can tell you that in Sarnia specifically, we have reduced sulphur dioxide by 64%, nitrogen dioxide by 23%, and we've greatly reduced benzene levels since the 1990s.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is for the Minister of Seniors Affairs. Minister, I read that last week you were at the fire station in Toronto to announce a new funding program to enhance fire safety in retirement homes. Changes to the Ontario Fire Code will take effect in January 2019, mandating that all licensed retirement homes have automatic fire sprinklers in individual suites. Many retirement homes are already sprinklered or partially sprinklered. However, others like some in my riding in Port Hope, Brighton and Trent Hills are struggling to meet this deadline due to financial constraints.

Minister, can you tell this House what help there is for these homes, which could not fully cover the costs, to be able to ensure installation is completed in time? Will the Minister of Seniors Affairs inform the House about this new funding?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to begin by thanking the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for this very important question about our new sprinkler retrofit program. I'm proud to say that Ontario became the first province to make the retrofit of fire sprinklers mandatory in licensed retirement homes.

1200

But we're not stopping there. As the MPP for Northumberland–Quinte West pointed out, some retirement homes did come to us and say that it's going to be a little bit challenging for them to be able to retrofit with sprinklers. Because as a government we are so committed to the safety of our seniors, we have announced funding of up to \$20 million to address the financial challenges that retirement homes across Ontario have raised, through a balanced cost-sharing—

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I want to thank the minister for her answer—

Interjections.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a good answer.

I'm pleased to hear that we are making investments that will enhance fire safety in retirement homes for Ontario's seniors. I am appreciative of this government's actions in ensuring that vulnerable Ontarians are given the safety and protection they need.

While the number of seniors in Ontario is growing to record numbers, and with more seniors moving to retirement homes, it is important that they feel confident in their safety so that they can live healthy, active lives.

Could the Minister of Seniors Affairs describe to this House the expected impact of this program on Ontario retirement homes?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I again want to thank the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for this very important question.

As I was saying, last week, along with the MPP for Trinity–Spadina, I announced up to \$20 million in funding to address financial challenges that retirement homes across Ontario have, so that they can go ahead and retrofit their homes.

The model that we have is cost-sharing. With our new program, over 150 small or rural licensed retirement homes, representing over 6,000 suites—once again, I want to emphasize that 6,000 suites are now eligible for funding to provide them with the assistance they need to become fully equipped with fire sprinklers by the January 1, 2019, deadline.

The funding follows a cost-sharing model, as I said, with the government providing between 50% and 75%—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. The worst thing we learned yesterday from the Auditor General is that this government knew, Speaker. They knew that the cost was billions of dollars more, yet they plotted to do this anyway. They co-opted crown agencies to be complicit in their cynical, multi-billion-dollar election ploy. The auditor's report clearly states, "Cabinet was regularly briefed" and provided details.

The Premier, the finance minister, the energy minister—in fact, all of cabinet—knew that families would be on the hook for \$4 billion more, and not one of those people had the integrity to stand up and say, "Whoa, this isn't right." Instead, it wasn't that minister or that minister or that minister or that minister. None of them stood up, Speaker.

To the Premier, I say, why on God's green earth should families ever trust a word you say again?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It's because this government stays true to its word and brought forward a 25% reduction for all of its families, right across the province.

Mr. Speaker, when families in this province asked for real and immediate relief, it was this government that delivered. We made a policy choice to ensure that we continue to have a clean, reliable and affordable system that ratepayers can enjoy today and, of course, it will be there for the ratepayers of tomorrow.

The fair hydro plan keeps the cost of borrowing within the rate base, not the tax base. Electricity financing should remain within the electricity system. Of course, we've worked with KPMG; we've worked with EY; we've worked with Deloitte; we've worked with the provincial controller. All of them agree that the accounting standards are accurate.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on a point of order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I believe that when I was referring to OHIP+, the Children and Youth Pharmacare Program, earlier, I said it was available to all those 25 years of age and under. In fact, it will be available to those up to their 25th birthday; that is, 24 and under.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member has the right to correct his record, which is in order.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c)—

Interjections.

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

I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Ms. Forster assumes ballot item number 7 and Ms. Horwath assumes ballot item number 51.

DEFERRED VOTES

FAIR WORKPLACES, BETTER JOBS ACT, 2017

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

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put 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): We have a deferred vote on the motion for closure of the motion for second reading of 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.

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

The division bells rang from 1206 to 1211.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On September 12, 2017, Mr. Milczyn moved second reading of 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. Mr. Chan has moved that the question be now put.

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

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Oosterhoff, Sam
Bailey, Robert	Horwath, Andrea	Pettapiece, Randy
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Sylvia	Romano, Ross
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Sattler, Peggy
Coe, Lorne	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Martow, Gila	Taylor, Monique
Forster, Cindy	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
French, Jennifer K.	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Hardeman, Ernie	Natyshak, Taras	
Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 51; the nays are 40.

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

Mr. Milczyn has moved second reading of 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.

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

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1215 to 1216.

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	French, Jennifer K.	McMeekin, Ted
Baker, Yvan	Gates, Wayne	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Ballard, Chris	Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gretzky, Lisa	Moridi, Reza
Bradley, James J.	Hatfield, Percy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Chan, Michael	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Chiarelli, Bob	Horwath, Andrea	Natyshak, Taras
Colle, Mike	Hoskins, Eric	Potts, Arthur
Coteau, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Crack, Grant	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Damerla, Dipika	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Del Duca, Steven	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sattler, Peggy
Delaney, Bob	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	MacLaren, Jack	Tabuns, Peter
Dhillon, Vic	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Mangat, Amrit	Taylor, Monique
	Mantha, Michael	Thibeault, Glenn
	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Romano, Ross
Bailey, Robert	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Clark, Steve	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Coe, Lorne	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Fedeli, Victor	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff
Harris, Michael	Oosterhoff, Sam	
Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 66; the nays are 25.

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

Second reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before we dismiss, I'd like to introduce, in the Speaker's gallery, a dear friend of mine who has been my mentor in my

riding, and his son, who I was mentor to in teaching: Mr. Fred Englefield and Brian Englefield. Thank you for being here.

Also in the members' gallery is Mr. Chris Cowley, who was a table officer of OTF, is a resident of Brantford and president, presently. Welcome, Chris, to Queen's Park.

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

The House recessed from 1220 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Today I'm really pleased to introduce to the House—I don't know where she went; she was just sitting to my right—Danielle Prapavessis. Danielle is an intern with the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme, and I'm thrilled to be working with her this session.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

"BE AN EXPLORER"

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to congratulate the county of Bruce and their brand project team as well as Tenzing Communications on receiving an award of excellence at the International Association of Business Communicators. The award is in recognition of the county's "Be an Explorer" brand campaign, designed to inspire all who live, work and visit Bruce county to explore the world around them and travel the roads less taken.

In an article in the Mildmay Town Crier, Bruce county CAO Kelley Coulter said that the compass icon and messaging "really capture Bruce county's essence while at the same time representing a pathway as we journey into our future."

While the award was never the intention of the project, it is a wonderful recognition of the time and effort that was put into the project.

Bruce county has so many amazing venues to explore: the grotto to the north, the sandy beaches around Kin-cardine, and all the amazing natural features that we have from top to bottom in the county, as well as the amazing towns and villages that are destinations that can't be missed if one truly wants to appreciate what the rural countryside and small-town Ontario have to offer.

I would like to share with you, as well, that Warden Mitch Twolan said the purpose of developing the brand has really evolved and it has "encompassed Bruce county's soul and spirit.... Having our project recognized ... is a testament to the successful work and commitment by our ... team."

Bruce county is truly an explorer's paradise, and I would like to invite and encourage all to get out there and be an explorer.

WINDSOR POETS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: In appreciation of Random Acts of Poetry Day held every October, a group of seven poets in Windsor have a new book out recognizing our colourful history.

Our poet laureate, Marty Gervais, wrote this one about a much-publicized visit to Windsor many years ago by Sir John A. Macdonald. It's called That Day in Sandwich with the Prime Minister.

His voice a singsong normally
 Whole sentences drifting out
 And rising and falling
 But forever lost in a monotone
 As he paced back and forth
 Before the crowd
 Scowling at his opponent.
 Today in Sandwich
 Sir John A. is silent
 And seated, smug and
 Staring at the stage floor
 In this open-air debate
 A drunken stupor clouding
 Mackenzie's reasoned jargon
 Ripping into him
 Scandal and hearsay
 With political wrangle
 Sir John A. slumps in a chair
 Lingering for that moment
 To lift his frumpy but narrow frame
 To tower before the crowd
 And warily waves a crooked finger
 All the while struggling
 To retrieve the right word
 In this scandal and hearsay
 And political wrangle
 Then suddenly
 Vomits over the stage

An abrupt hush
 And Sir John A.'s left hand
 Almost in slow motion
 Reaches for a handkerchief
 Tucked deep within
 The pockets of his waistcoat
 Then swabs his mouth

And eyes agape
 He begins his apology
 And turns to his opponent
 And with a polite and civil nod of his head
 He says "Mr. Chairman,
 I don't know how it is
 But every time I hear
 The honourable gentleman speak

It turns my stomach!”

Speaker, it's a great book. It's called *Because We Have All Lived Here: Poems Along the South Shore*, and it was edited by your poet laureate from Brantford, John B. Lee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hence the extra time. I know that story too.

DIWALI

Mr. Bob Delaney: Today, the world celebrates Diwali, the Hindu festival of light. It is among Hinduism's principal festivals, and Diwali is now a Canadian festival too.

Diwali signifies the victory of good over evil, light over darkness, hope over despair and knowledge over ignorance. Hundreds of members of our Ontario Hindu, Sikh, Jain and other communities celebrate Diwali annually as well.

In 1619, Sikhism's Sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind Sahib-Ji, was freed from the famous fort of Gwalior by Emperor Jahangir. Guru Sahib negotiated his release, and that of 52 kings and princes, to coincide with Diwali.

In Mississauga, our celebrations include dinners hosted by the Hindu Heritage Centre and the Ram Mandir. Despite last weekend's wet weather, Diwali RazzMatazz brought its music and artistic light to Celebration Square in Mississauga.

In Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville, our own annual Diwali reception at Vic Johnston Community Centre filled the main hall with our Hindu, Sikh and, this year, our Chinese seniors as well. Hundreds of members of our own Peel region South Asian community gathered in Brampton last week to celebrate Diwali.

By whatever name we call it, the values of Diwali are what we believe in and try to live by every day. Happy Diwali: Shubh Diwali. Dhanyawad, Shukriya, Rab Rakha.

CANADIAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Vaughan.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thornhill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thornhill. Sorry.

Mrs. Gila Martow: The largest club in Canada is CAA South Central Ontario, and it's headquartered in Thornhill, so I'm very pleased to rise today and say a few words about the Canadian Automobile Association, which was founded in 1903 as an advocacy organization. Today, they focus more on transportation and infrastructure, mobility, traffic safety and consumer protection.

CAA is known for responding to members when they're broken down and in need of roadside assistance. It's regarded by members of this Legislature as a trusted stakeholder when it comes to traffic safety and transportation issues. What's interesting is that one in four

Ontario motorists is a CAA member, and included in that is my own family.

My daughter, who is 19, got her driver's licence last June. We didn't really think to sign her up for CAA as a member, but she is driving a bit of an older car, and it broke down slowly on the side of the road; it needed a new alternator. This August, it was quite hot. She was driving between Guelph and Kitchener, and CAA came and took her to a dealer. She left the car and the keys there. It was a great, positive experience.

I want to thank the CAA tow truck driver. I don't know who it was, but I want to give a big shout-out to him. I hear that one of their top-performing areas is in the Guelph-Kitchener area.

Thank you to CAA. Thank you for all you do. Thank you for visiting us here at Queen's Park today, and hoping that we don't need you too often.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do apologize to the member from Thornhill. I should know her riding by now.

SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today, during Local Government Week, to recognize the dedicated, locally elected school board trustees who are responsible for governing public education in our province.

School board trustees are the oldest form of elected representation in Ontario. They are champions of public education whose singular focus is the promotion of student achievement and well-being, and ensuring that all students are able to reach their fullest potential.

School boards bring together elected trustees, appointed indigenous trustees and elected student trustees. This year, I want to congratulate the Thames Valley District School Board for its leadership in creating a seat at the board table for Canada's first-ever indigenous student trustee. Tsista Kennedy, a grade 11 student at Saunders Secondary School in London, will bring the voices of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students to school board decision-making—a historic first, not just for Ontario but for our nation.

Speaker, this is what truth and reconciliation looks like and what public education is all about. It is about celebrating and respecting the contributions of first peoples and ensuring their voices are heard in curriculum and in governance. It is about embracing diversity in our schools and our communities, and closing achievement gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous students, between black and non-black students, and others. It is about providing students with special needs the resources and supports they require to learn.

School board trustees are critical to our future as a province and as a society, and I salute them for their advocacy and commitment.

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AZERBAIJANI COMMUNITY

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I am really honoured to rise in this Legislature today to extend my warmest greetings to the Canadian Azerbaijani community.

On October 18, 1991, the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan adopted a declaration of independence and declared its independence from the USSR. Independence granted Azerbaijan the right to maintain its cultural heritage—a rich heritage that we get to enjoy here in Ontario. The community of Azerbaijanis in Ontario adds to our immense multicultural fabric, and we are delighted to celebrate it today.

I would really like to recognize the value of partnership and friendship that exists between Azerbaijan and Ontario. Both sides benefit from this close bond. Indeed, the relationship was made even stronger when my colleague Reza Moridi, the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science, led a very successful innovation mission to Azerbaijan.

To all the Azerbaijani community, please accept my sincere best wishes for a meaningful and memorable independence day. Félicitations.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to recognize a significant personal commitment from Shakir Rehmatullah of Flato Developments to health care in our community.

The Markham-based developer has pledged half a million dollars over 10 years towards the new Markdale hospital. His company is also currently in the first stage of developing 800 family homes in nearby Dundalk.

Mr. Rehmatullah realizes that residents need and want access to health care, so he wants his company to be a vital part of helping to build the local hospital. I quote him:

“It’s just a way of saying we’re supporting the community, and that should make them proud and that should make them feel they bought their home from a builder who cares, who is involved in the community. We’re not just out there to just build the homes and we’re gone. We’re going to be here, we’re going to stay around and we want to work with the community,”

I’m also pleased to share with the House that Grey Bruce Health Services has just submitted the design plan for the new hospital, which will have four beds, a palliative care room, 24/7 emergency with seven treatment areas, a procedures room, laboratory, diagnostic imaging, physio and a space for ambulatory care clinics. Construction is expected to begin in 2019 and be complete by 2021.

In my six years as MPP, this has been a priority file for me, and I have been very vocal about it. This is why my constituents and I are very excited to see this project finally coming together. It has been 15 years since a fundraising program was launched to help Grey Bruce

Health Services build the new hospital. A total of \$12 million was raised in just a couple of years by the generous people of Markdale and area. It has also been 12 years since Grey county donated the land for the facility.

I know the members in the Legislature will join me in acknowledging this great contribution from Mr. Rehmatullah and Flato Developments and for their ongoing investments that will help make several key equipment purchases over the coming years.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING WEEK

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today to recognize Community Health and Wellbeing Week, from October 16 to 20. The theme for this week is “Health Equity at the Centre.”

During this week, we have an opportunity to reach out to the people who face barriers to achieving their best possible health and well-being. We recognize that not all Ontarians have equitable access to health services. Indigenous people, Franco-Ontarians, newcomers and people with mental health and addictions challenges often struggle to get the health care they need.

Through the Patients First Act, the government demonstrated their commitment to improving health access and equality, as well as reducing health disparity. The passing of this legislation empowered the LHINs to be responsible for building a more sustainable, efficient and accessible health care system.

I want to recognize Scarborough–Agincourt’s Hong Fook nurse practitioner-led clinic for putting health equity at the centre by addressing barriers to well-being, such as racism, sexism and homophobia. The clinic staff offer a variety of primary health care, mental health services, outreach programs for people facing homelessness, and impactful education and mentorship programs for at-risk youth in Toronto and York region.

During this week, Ontario’s 107 community-governed primary health care organizations will host events to showcase their work in serving the people most at risk for poor health. I encourage all of my colleagues and Ontarians to visit these organizations throughout this week, and I look forward to visiting the Hong Fook nurse practitioner-led clinic later this week.

SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: School bus drivers are Ontario’s unsung heroes. They ensure the safety of our children as they get in and out of buses.

They have a difficult and stressful job as it is, but the government is making life harder for them. Why? Well, funding for school bus drivers is already tight, and the sudden rise in the minimum wage which the government plans to introduce is already posing a serious problem. Busing contracts determine payment years ahead. Other service providers can manage the new minimum wage by raising prices. School bus operators are bound by long-term contracts which never contemplated a 32% wage in-

crease. Government demands for school bus service providers have increased costs much faster than funding has risen. Now this latest cost increase has pushed the system to the brink of failure, putting jobs in danger. But there's more.

Everyone knows that it is illegal to pass a school bus when it is stopped, with lights flashing and stop arm extended. Almost a year ago, my private member's bill, Bill 94, addressed the blow-by crisis. I recommended that cameras be installed on school buses in order to capture the blow-by as it occurs. The government has stalled for several months, but recently invited me to a consultation about installing cameras on school buses. So it seems the MTO is finally interested in doing it.

Let me say this, Speaker: We cannot let school bus safety fall off the radar. Today I would like to specifically show my appreciation for school bus drivers by promising now to never give up the fight to crack down on blow-bys.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO FORESTRY REVITALIZATION ACT (14 STOREY WOOD FRAME BUILDINGS), 2017 LOI DE 2017 SUR LA REVITALISATION DE LA FORESTERIE EN ONTARIO (BÂTIMENTS À OSSATURE DE BOIS DE 14 ÉTAGES)

Mr. Fedeli moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 with respect to the height of wood frame buildings /
Projet de loi 169, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment en ce qui a trait à la hauteur des bâtiments à ossature de bois.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The bill amends the Building Code Act, 1992, to provide that the building code shall not prohibit a building that is 14 storeys or less in building height from being of wood frame construction. This does not prevent the code from imposing requirements on or prohibiting specified classes of wood frame buildings.

Speaker, I was pleased in 2015 when the government adopted the change from four to six storeys sought in my previous private member's bill, and I hope they will do likewise with this bill—I'm almost done; I swear.

By increasing the use of harvested wood in northern Ontario, we help construction by providing jobs, and we help southern Ontario meet—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Explanatory notes are to be used in the description of the bill only—no other editorial, because you have a time to debate that. So I would appreciate the member staying with his explanatory notes.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PERSONS DAY

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Speaker, I'm pleased rise today to speak about an important day in the history of Ontario. Today, October 18, is Persons Day, and we celebrate it during Women's History Month. In October, we honour the remarkable women in Ontario's history. October is also a time to look at the women in our communities who are shaping our present. And it is a time for us to look ahead to the future, at what's still left to be done.

Speaker, this is the 25th year of celebrating Women's History Month, and this year's theme is "Claim Your Place." It's an opportunity for us to tell the stories of women who have claimed a place, however big or small, in building our province's rich history.

The trouble is, these stories are often untold in our history books. But we know that this great province was absolutely built with the grit and determination of both women and men. By retelling the stories of how these women claimed their place, we are acknowledging their struggles, celebrating their victories and inspiring the next generation to carry on important, hard work that still needs to be done.

1520

So today, and this month, I encourage all of my colleagues in the House to join this important conversation with the hashtag #ClaimYourPlace. We all know women who are making Ontario a better, fairer place to live. Let's celebrate these remarkable women together.

Speaker, each year on Persons Day, we celebrate the day in 1929 when the Famous Five fought and won the cause to have women in this country declared persons, making women eligible to sit in the Canadian Senate. Think about that: In 1929, women were actually called "persons." The first woman senator was appointed the very next year.

While this declaration was a victory for some, it was for many women an act of exclusion. It was not a cause for celebration for racialized and indigenous women. In fact, it wasn't until 1960 that these women were even granted the right to vote.

We must remember this day, because the reality is that women are still struggling today for basic rights: the right to safety, because we know one in three women in Canada experience sexual assault in their lifetime; the right to equal pay, because for every dollar earned by a male worker, a female worker earns only 71 cents; and the

right to be free from bias and discrimination, for newcomer women, women with disabilities, indigenous women, single mothers, and gender-diverse and racialized women.

It has taken the tireless effort and commitment of many, many women to earn the rights we enjoy today, women who have had to stand up and use their voices to make a difference, to be recognized for their full potential, to be respected for their abilities.

But when we talk about claiming your place, a big part of that conversation must include the young women and girls in our communities. That's why, later this month, I'm so pleased to announce that we will be opening nominations to the 2017 Leading Women/Leading Girls, Building Communities Recognition Program.

This program is now in its 12th year, and during that time, we have recognized the leadership of nearly 1,000 women and girls across the province. I think that's something to be proud of.

Last year, we received a record 264 nominations from MPPs. I think that's amazing, and I look forward to an even greater number this year, so I encourage everyone here to please participate. I ask every member in this House, as I said, to nominate women and girls in their communities who are volunteering their time, working tirelessly to make a difference in their ridings.

Today I also have the honour of hosting a special reception. We will remember the women of the past, but we are also recognizing the diverse group of Ontario women who are claiming a place and changing the future of Ontario today.

I'd like to acknowledge just a few of the amazing guests we have invited to Queen's Park: for example, Sabina Ali, one of the founding members of the vibrant Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee; d'bi.young anitafrika, an extraordinary artist and performer working in the field of human development; environmentalist Tovah Barocas, of Earth Rangers; and the amazing indigenous poet Gwen Benaway. These are just some of the women creating a better future for Ontario. There are many more, and we look forward to welcoming them all to Queen's Park later today. I invite you all to drop by.

I spent this past summer meeting with people all over this province about some of the most urgent issues facing Ontario women today: gender-based violence, as well as barriers to economic empowerment for women and girls, to name a few. I listened to the voices of survivors, front-line workers, experts and leaders. I listened to the voices of mothers, daughters, sisters and neighbours. I listened to the voices of women, young and old, in our province who are working tirelessly to claim their place. What we heard was passionate, compelling and a call to action, and I want you to know that we listened.

Speaker, I want you to know that I am proud to live in our province because, under the leadership of our Premier, Premier Kathleen Wynne, we continue to work hard to claim a place for women. Our government has a plan that includes and creates diversity, equality and opportunity for everyone across the province. We have a

plan that gives women a strong voice in Ontario. Our cabinet is now 40% women, for the first time, under the leadership of our first female Premier. We can see that influence over this past year alone in the fast-changing narrative for women in our province.

In 1929, women were declared persons. But in 2017, Ontario created the Ministry of the Status of Women. In 2017, Ontario passed the Anti-Human Trafficking Act. In 2017, we are developing a strategy to support the economic empowerment of women and girls. In 2017, for the first time ever, campuses across Ontario were required to create campus-wide sexual violence and harassment policies. In 2017, our government increased access to Mifegymiso so women can obtain a safe, effective and free medical alternative to a surgical abortion. In 2017, we introduced the Safe Access to Abortion Services Act, which, if passed, will protect the safety, security, health and privacy of women seeking abortion. And in 2017, we introduced a transformative, renewed early years and child care policy to better the lives of women and their families.

Today is Persons Day, but let's honour the faces and voices of women claiming their place every day in our province. Let's encourage and support women and girls in the workforce, their homes and their communities. Let's recognize the trail-blazing women who are tirelessly building our province up. Many of them are in this room right now. When women succeed, we all succeed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's time for responses.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I find it an absolute honour to stand in front of everyone this afternoon on behalf of Patrick Brown, the leader of the PC Party, and Laurie Scott, the PC critic for the status of women, and present our response today. I would also like to note that I have been helped today by an OLIP intern, Danielle Prapavessis, who is here this afternoon and has joined my team for the fall session. I thank her for her efforts in this matter.

I'd also like to start out by recognizing that it's an honour to stand here on behalf of Laurie Scott. She herself is making history as she works tirelessly to stop the human trafficking that we're all experiencing in every corner of this province. While she's out there working on that, it's my pleasure to be here in the House responding to a statement that absolutely emphasizes the importance of recognizing women in the month of October, which is Women's History Month.

I want to share with everyone viewing today that you need to come to Queen's Park and join us on the first floor in the east wing and walk through A Remarkable Assembly: Women at Queen's Park, which was created by our Speaker, Dave Levac, the member for Brant. I really appreciate work you've done as well. It's important, in order to pursue a path that invites women to become more involved, that we celebrate our history. So thank you for A Remarkable Assembly of women. In that first—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, it really is appreciated.

On that first floor, amongst the Remarkable Assembly of women that we have had the honour of learning from and working with in Ontario, I can't help but feel inspired, because women who have walked the halls before me blazed a path for women's involvement and voices in Ontario politics. I admire the integrity and the determination of these leaders and wish to continue their legacy through my own public service. I'm sure everyone in the House today agrees with that. It is unequivocal that women are an integral part and play such an important role in the health, spirit and success of families, communities, our province and our country.

We have come a long way in recognizing this, thanks to the efforts of strong women advocating this message. This year, we are celebrating 100 years of women getting the right to vote in Ontario. Women like Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy and Louise McKinney worked tirelessly and diligently to ensure that female voices could be heard.

1530

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that this 100-year anniversary of the right to vote is only for a certain segment of women. It took decades of more advocacy and hard work for indigenous women to finally have their voices heard in our political system, in 1954. But today, we all stand together to celebrate.

While we celebrate, we know there is so much more work to be done. Women like Agnes Macphail, the first woman elected to the Ontario Legislature, and Rae Luckock campaigned hard, not only for their seats but for the success of future generations of women in politics.

As a point of interest, Agnes Macphail was a teacher in Kinloss, which is in my riding of Huron-Bruce, and it was here that she started on her path of inspiring young women around her to value intelligence, hard work, and to feel empowered to make a difference. These values shape all the work that I do and, I'm sure, all of our colleagues here in this House.

I currently serve, personally, as the vice-chair of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians—known as CWP—Canadian region steering committee. The CWP was founded by women delegates at the 1989 plenary conference. They united over the shared opinion that there must be increased female representation in Parliament. One of my personal focuses in this role is to encourage women to make a difference in rural Ontario and throughout the province, from both inside and outside the political sphere.

This March, in Ottawa, I was fortunate to join 338 young women, one from each riding across Canada. They took the time to come to Parliament Hill for the Daughters of the Vote conference hosted by Equal Voice. The Daughters of the Vote delegates were all between the ages of 18 and 23, and they absolutely blazed a trail. They were ambitious, intelligent and innovative. As part of the conference, 67 young ladies participated in an indigenous forum to discuss specific issues of importance

to indigenous women across Canada and what future involvement could look like.

We also held a similar event right here at Queen's Park this past April. I was delighted to participate in the Remarkable Assembly event, where one young woman was selected from each of the 107 ridings in Ontario to meet parliamentary figures and gain a behind-the-scenes perspective of Ontario's Parliament. Not only was this inspirational for the attendees, but the depth of conversation and how these young leaders envisioned a role in shaping a better province and country were truly inspirational. I believe that empowering young women is essential, and we need to mentor and celebrate all in tandem.

To close off my comments on Women's History Month, I would like to share a quote from Louise McKinney, which is found on the back page of the recent Canadian Parliamentary Review issue that celebrates 100 years of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians: "The purpose of a woman's life is just the same as the purpose of a man's life: that she may make the best possible contribution to the generation in which she is living." Louise was the first woman elected to a Legislature in Canada and in the entire British Empire.

Today, those of us elected to the Ontario Legislative Assembly salute the women who have paved the road on which we journey.

I would like to encourage women of all ages to #ClaimYourPlace. By becoming engaged, you can surely make a difference and inspire more women to get involved.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think the Speaker's tolerance was tested, but because you mentioned me, I gave you a couple of extra inches.

I would make it clear that I'm not going to interfere with anyone's particular statement today unless it becomes, shall I say, political.

The member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm proud to rise today on behalf of my leader, Andrea Horwath, and the Ontario NDP caucus—the first parliamentary caucus in Canada to be made up of a majority of women—to respond to the minister's statement on Persons Day and Women's History Month.

Eighty-eight years ago, on October 18, 1929, women in Canada were declared persons following an appeal of an earlier Supreme Court decision that found, to their surprise, that they were not. The appeal was led by Emily Murphy and four other women crusaders from Alberta who made up the Famous Five. Thanks to their determined efforts, the Supreme Court decision was reversed.

Women's History Month celebrates women like the Famous Five: women who have advanced women's equality; women who have blazed trails in arts and literature, in science and technology, in business and manufacturing, in health care and education; women who have contributed immeasurably to our society and improved our quality of life.

These pioneers were not just white, middle-class women like Emily Murphy. They include inspiring black

women, indigenous women and women of colour, whose stories have for too long been excluded from our history books and are just beginning to be told—women like Viola Desmond, who challenged racial segregation in Nova Scotia, and Mary Two-Axe Earley, who fought legal discrimination against First Nations women.

Despite their victory in 1929, neither Emily Murphy nor any of the Famous Five ever made it to the Senate. As a male senator said at the time, “We could never have had Mrs. Murphy in the Senate. She would have caused too much trouble.”

While it may be troublesome for Canada’s political establishment to deal with women as equals, Women’s History Month shows us that women’s leadership is undeniably good for society. The positive impact of women’s involvement in decision-making is not just because of the unique experiences and perspectives they bring but because of the open, collaborative and less hierarchical leadership styles they often exemplify. Economists have shown that women’s leadership is also good for business, with higher corporate profits generated by firms that have more women on their boards.

Yet Ontario women continue to be denied the opportunities they deserve for full and meaningful participation in economic and political life and for equitable access to the services they deserve. Women in Ontario struggle to find affordable child care and to find secure, stable employment that reflects their education and experience and provides more than poverty-line wages. They struggle to find affordable housing and to pay off the huge debts they may be carrying for their post-secondary education. They struggle to buy food for their families and to pay the bills.

Yesterday, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released its fifth report on the best and worst places for women to live in Canada. Of the 25 cities that were measured, nine were from Ontario. Six of those nine were ranked in the bottom half, including the three worst cities in Canada for women to live.

One of the key findings of the report was that cities have stalled. They have stalled on closing the gender wage gap, stalled on the employment gap, stalled on access to child care and stalled on levels of sexual assaults, with rates that continue to climb. It’s hard to understand, then, why this Liberal government refused to strengthen the equal pay provisions of the Employment Standards Act, which have proven so ineffective for years in preventing gender wage discrimination.

This week we saw the hashtag #MeToo reveal the reality of every woman’s experience of sexual violence in the hundreds of thousands of women who have written “me too” into their social media profiles. Yet this government’s Sexual Violence Action Plan is barely making a dent, with students raising concerns about the effectiveness of stand-alone campus sexual violence policies; the government’s refusal to implement mandatory sexual violence training for liquor servers and bartenders, as proposed in my private member’s bill; and its failure to guarantee paid leave for employees experiencing domes-

tic violence and sexual violence, as called for in three NDP private members’ bills, which would enable women to leave abusive relationships and rebuild their lives without risking their jobs.

In addition to celebrating the amazing women in history who have opened the doors for the rest of us, we need to ensure that all Ontario women have equal access to the opportunities available to men. This will open new doors for women leaders, break down cultural and structural barriers and show everyone what women in Ontario can achieve.

PETITIONS

CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICIES

Mr. Todd Smith: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to keep criminals out of our communities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1540

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Catherine Fife: “Ontario Needs to Fund Family-Created Housing.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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 Payton.

ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition.

“To Address Reoccurring Delays and Unspecified Time Frames for Elevator Repair and Service.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Colin.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. James J. Bradley: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas we, Liberty Village residents in conjunction with MPP Han Dong, ask for increased community consultation with SmartTrack, Metrolinx and the city of Toronto regarding their plan to build a rapid transit station in the neighbourhood;

“Whereas the current transit options out of Liberty Village are insufficient and crowded for a rapidly growing community;

“Whereas the proposed location for a rapid transit option in Liberty Village does not effectively serve the community;

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

“Direct SmartTrack, Metrolinx, the city of Toronto and the TTC to consider the SmartTrack station from the proposed Dovercourt and Sudbury location to the more accessible Sudbury and King (north of the tracks) and behind the Liberty Metro (south of the tracks). The Douro Street location will better serve Liberty Village residents and businesses as well as the King–Strachan corridor’s residents.”

I’m going to sign this petition and have it submitted.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I have a petition to save local long-term-care beds.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas seniors and their families need long-term-care beds and high-quality care in their community; and

“Whereas across Ontario, the number of people waiting for long-term care is expected to spike to nearly 48,000 in the next six years; and

“Whereas Hillside Manor, a local long-term-care home, is set to close, resulting in a devastating loss of 90 beds; and

“Whereas the government is using the upcoming closure as reason to consider moving at least 38 of Hillside Manor’s 90 beds out of our area; and

“Whereas Perth–Wellington has already lost long-term local care beds with no commitment from the government to replace them; and

“Whereas many long-term care bed licences are set to expire in the coming years, and will require significant investment to be allowed to stay open;

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

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care be asked to reject any proposal to reduce the number of long-term-care beds in Perth–Wellington, and to increase investment in local long-term-care facilities to accommodate our growing number of seniors and their needs.”

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I will send [*inaudible*].

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It is entitled, “Create a Minimum Long-Term-Care Standard.

“Whereas quality care for the 78,000 residents of (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents’ increasing

acuity and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

“Whereas several Ontario coroner’s inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the most reputable studies on this topic recommend 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

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

“Amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

I strongly support this petition, affix my name and will give it to page Rochelle to take to the table.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

“Sexual violence and harassment survivors” are “too often ... revictimized by the systems set in place to support them. The voices of survivors, in all their diversity, need to be amplified...;

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

“Support the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment’s final report, highlighting the need for inclusive and open dialogue to address misogyny and rape culture; educate about sexual violence and harassment to promote social change; fund sexual assault support services....”

I agree with this, will put my name to it and hand this petition to page Matthew.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Todd Smith: I have a petition here from the Ontario Long Term Care Association.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s 627 long-term-care homes play a critical role in the support and care for more than 100,000 elderly Ontarians each and every year;

“Whereas nine out of 10 residents in long-term care today have some form of cognitive impairment, along with other complex medical needs, and require specialized, in-home supports to manage their complex needs;

“Whereas each and every year, 20,000 Ontarians remain on the waiting list for long-term care services and

yet, despite this, no new beds are being added to the system;

“Whereas over 40% of Ontario’s long-term-care beds require significant renovations or to be rebuilt and the current program put forward to renew them has had limited success;

“Whereas long-term-care homes require stable and predictable funding each year to support the needs of residents entrusted in their care;

“We, the undersigned, citizens of Ontario, call on the government to support the Ontario Long Term Care Association’s Building Better Long-Term Care pre-budget submission and ensure better seniors’ care through a commitment to improve long-term care.”

I agree with this, will sign it and send it to the table with page Max.

PHARMACARE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition that reads as follows: “Universal Pharmacare for All Ontarians.” What a concept.

“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;

1550

“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 Airika to bring it to the Clerk.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Han Dong: “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 support this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Alexander.

ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: “Petition in Support of Bill 153: The Organic Products Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Canada is now the fifth-largest organic market in the world and expanding by over 10% annually;

“Whereas the federal government adopted the Canada organic standards in 2009 for products labelled organic that are sold outside their province of origin;

“Whereas the Canada Organic Trade Association rated Ontario lowest amongst all provinces for regulation, support and development of organic products;

“Whereas anyone in Ontario is free to use the term ‘organic’ on any product, even if they are not certified, as long as they do not use the logo or sell across provincial borders;

“Whereas Quebec, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Manitoba have already enacted organic legislation to address this gap; and

“Whereas inconsistent use of the word ‘organic’ reduces consumer confidence and hurts the business of hard-working organic farmers and producers;

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

“That the government adopt Bill 153, the Organic Products Act, and consult with farmers and producers about how to ensure consumer confidence in organic products in Ontario.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Jacob to take to the table.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to stop taxpayer-funded partisan ads.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas the Wynne government has since run ads such as those for the Ontario pension plan that were extremely partisan in nature, which cost almost \$800,000; and

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

“Whereas history shows that the Wynne Liberal government has increased government ad spending in the year prior to a general election;

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

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

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Andy to take to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled, “Stop the Eviction of Long-Term Care Residents.

“Whereas every resident of a long-term-care home has the right to be treated with respect and dignity; and

“Whereas section 1 of the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, identifies as its ‘fundamental principle’ that ‘a long-term-care home is primarily the home of its residents’; and

“Whereas regulation 79 under the act conflicts with this fundamental principle because it states that long-term-care residents can lose their home after 30 days in hospital and must then reapply and join wait-lists for available long-term-care spaces; and

“Whereas the risk of losing their home can create emotional distress and trauma for long-term-care residents who are temporarily hospitalized;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care change regulation 79 to ensure that residents of long-term care do not lose their home after a 30-day or longer stay in hospital.”

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

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members’ public business such that Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, assumes ballot item number 14 and Mr. McDonnell assumes ballot item number 71.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PATIENTS ACT, 2017

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 17, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 160, the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act, 2017, for second reading.

I have to say that when I was going through this legislation, and after consulting with our health critic, the member from Nickel Belt—who I'm pretty sure is ready to be the Minister of Health, her knowledge of this field is so profound—I have to say that I was genuinely surprised to see some of the schedules in this bill. I will be focusing primarily on three of them.

One of them has to do with schedule 4, which introduces the Health Sector Payment Transparency Act. One of them is schedule 5, the Long-Term Care Homes Act. Schedule 9, which overhauls the licensing framework for independent health facilities, for us is very problematic around the continued privatization of our health care system in the province of Ontario, which was started in earnest by the PC Party under former Premier Mike Harris and has actually been accelerated under this Liberal government, under two Premiers. And then, finally, schedule 10 amends the Retirement Homes Act to permit the confinement of residents in retirement homes despite the lack of proper public oversight of our retirement homes as they currently stand in Ontario.

I do want to say that when our health critic got up, she referenced the importance of getting health care right. She also made reference to the fact that everything in health care is connected. I'll just give a direct quote from her one-hour lead from yesterday. She said that we should be talking “frankly about what we can do better to reach people who face barriers to achieving their best possible health and well-being. We know that treating illness is important, but to truly focus on getting equitable results and health outcomes for everyone in the province, we have to find ways to reach people struggling to get basic necessities like prescription medication, affordable food and housing, oral health care”—there was a question today on the barriers that exist to dental care—“and mental health and addiction services.”

Schedule 9 under Bill 160, for those of you who don't know, overhauls the licensing framework for independent health facilities and out-of-hospital private clinics to bring them under one common framework. It prepares the way for further privatization of hospital services. The technical briefing document from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care begins with the phrase, “As the number and range of services and procedures being performed outside of public hospitals continues to grow....” The reason that has happened is that the Liberal government has opened the door to the profit agenda in our health care system. We would be much better prepared for an aging demographic, the complex mental health needs that we face and the complex long-term health care needs of the people of this province if the profit agenda in the health care file was not driving the agenda. Imagine how much money there would be for front-line health care workers—nurses, nurse practitioners, our midwives, who continue to fight for pay equity, ironically, to this day.

1600

Schedule 9 has been designed so that the private, for-profit clinics continue to grow at the expense of the public Ontario hospitals. Now, this is not the solution to the crisis that exists in our hospitals right now; it just is not. Day after day, we bring stories to the Minister of Health and to the Premier of this province, stories from our own ridings, real people experiencing real crisis in health care, and what we get back is just a level of stubbornness to not accept the reality of what's happening in our hospitals. Until the reality of what hospitals are facing in our emergency rooms across every community in this province, until there's an acceptance that there is a problem in health care, there will be no solution.

We have now very good sound bites from the Minister of Health: “There is no health without mental health.” That's true, but there are also 20,000 people on a wait-list waiting for mental health services. Until we move past that point and just acknowledge that there are people in closets, in hallways and in storage closets receiving health care in the province of Ontario—there must be some acknowledgement that this is happening. When hospitals are actually operating at an overcapacity, then the risk to those patients becomes acute. That is not the best way to build up a health care system.

Even in our own Waterloo region—I had the misfortune to end up in the emergency room at St. Mary's with my husband. There we met a former student of his, because he's a teacher, and we were in the hallway. We were in the hallway with 14 other people on gurneys. We started to talk to her, and we found out that she is the hallway nurse. It used to be a 12-hour shift in the hallway at St. Mary's hospital in the emergency room. This hallway nurse position is funded by the region of Waterloo because the ambulance and the paramedics are not allowed to leave a patient until someone can sign off for them. In order to actually keep the paramedics and the ambulances in the community helping other people and addressing emergencies, the region had to fund this pos-

ition, this hallway nurse. She was actually saying that it was reduced from 12 hours to a 10-hour shift. At 12 hours she was super busy, so you can imagine how busy she was at 10 hours.

My point in this is that these stories are real. This is the truth. This is the reality of the pressure and the stress that our hospitals are under. I can tell you for a fact that further privatization of clinics, and for-profit clinics at that, compromises and undermines the overall goal of the health of the citizens of this province. What you have, though, is a fairly now blatant neo-liberal agenda that says, "We've given up. We are going to alleviate ourselves of the responsibility of delivering health care directly with some accountability and with some responsibility, and we are going to formalize this relationship with these for-profit corporate health care clinics."

It was profound for me to listen to our health critic say that when she first came here, over 10 years ago, there were about 50 to 60 private clinics. According to the latest stats that she has acquired, there are over 900. A business opportunity presented itself to these clinics, and now this government has formally embraced that model.

I want to tell you, it adds insult to injury because part of schedule 9, which brings them all under one common framework, says that these facilities will now be renamed community health facilities. You put a new name on a for-profit clinic; it doesn't make it about community. In community health facilities, true community health care is so different than the for-profit model, where you are 15 minutes in, one complaint and no holistic view of the health care. You know what I hear, mostly from seniors who genuinely need to have a holistic view of their overall health including their prescription medications that they are on—and what do they have? They have a 15-minute appointment, because it is about moving people in and moving people out. I have some experience with this in my own riding.

So I think it is genuinely misleading to call these for-profit clinics "community health facilities," because they are not. For me, I was genuinely surprised that this government has doubled down and just embraced it. They're not even keeping up the façade that they are fully supportive of a public health care system, because in so many examples, they are not.

The other area of serious concern for us is the new provisions which include allowing restraints and confinement in retirement homes, updating these provisions in the Long-Term Care Homes Act. We feel very strongly that no landlord—which is what a retirement home is; people pay to rent space in a retirement home, rent a facility—should confine or restrain a resident. This gives an inordinate amount of power to a potential landlord. It goes on to say that if a person needs that level of care, they should be receiving proper hospital care or long-term care with proper public oversight.

The other issue around restraints and confinement in long-term-care homes: It should not be expanded without the proper staffing and resources for long-term-care homes, which the government refuses to provide. I would

say that the state of our long-term-care facilities in my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo has now surpassed the area of concern and crisis that we used to have for child care. Those concerns are still there. I equate very vulnerable young children, who don't have the ability to advocate for themselves and who are left in the care of others—especially in the for-profit, corporate child care model, which, again, this government has fully embraced—with seniors who are in long-term-care facilities.

Our leader, Andrea Horwath, came to the riding about a week and a half ago, and we met with a constituent whose husband and mother are in two different long-term-care facilities. This woman is spending to the tune of \$55,000 a year, and she's actually topping up to \$18,000 so that her mother has some dignity—I mean, that's really what we're talking about here.

And so what do you have? You have a government which is now, in this instance, looking in the retirement home situation to broaden the power and control that a retirement home owner would have over one of their residents, which is a huge power imbalance. That's what we talk about with seniors who are in long-term care, as well as young children who are in child care.

We have so many stories to talk about the state of long-term care in this province. The 30,000 people who are on the wait-list—you can't deny that those people are waiting, and some have been waiting for a long time.

We have this one story, which I have permission to share, from a woman in my riding. Her name is Lana Jones. It's genuinely a shocking story. Lana Jones, whose daughter has complex medical needs and requires constant care—this has been ongoing in my office, and we've been advocating for her since May 2014. In December 2014, her daughter turned 18 and she lost all of her SSHA funding, and her mother lost respite services. So the system dropped her when she became 18 years old. She was faced with the current pitfall in services that exists when children with autism age out of the system. Her daughter was told by the system, by the ministry, that she was too expensive and not a meaningful contributor to society, by a government worker. We have this well documented.

Our office assisted in getting her Passport funding through the DSO, but it hasn't been enough. This September, she reached out to our office again about an 88-hour gap in services due to scheduling challenges, where she has to be awake in case of emergency. We were able to get her nursing support during the gap, but respite services are still few and far between for her daughter.

This is another crisis: When we talk about long-term care, sometimes we're talking about folks who have early-onset dementia. Sometimes they have complex medical needs that are across the entire spectrum. Sometimes they're the victims of accidents, be it at a hockey game or in a car accident. There is no other option, so long-term-care facilities have become the default place for vulnerable Ontarians to end up. Quite honestly, the directors of some of the long-term-care facilities that I've

toured say that these people shouldn't be here; they're here with seniors. This continues to be a concern for us.

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Back to schedule 9, because I still can't believe that this government has fully laid it all out, fully gone the whole distance for privatization of health care. When we look at the state of home care, for instance, in this province, and the way that the LHINs subcontract out the personal support worker options in homes—I want to say at the outset that there are good people who work in the LHINs, and now that they've absorbed the CCACs—and now we have somewhere along the line some sub-LHINs because we have one of the most complicated health care systems in any First World nation, I'm fairly certain about that. When I met with the LHIN and I'm trying to advocate for people who are accessing home care, these private companies that the LHIN has hired and contracted out truly do not have that level of accountability—direct accountability—to ensure that the quality of those services is met.

Quite honestly, they've said that there is such a shortage of personal support workers that they've gone into other fields, because being a personal support worker in the province of Ontario—and we met with some of them yesterday—is genuinely a very difficult job, especially when you are paid so little and especially when you've entered into a caring field and said, “I want to be helpful to people in home care,” and then you have 20 minutes to spend with that senior or with that individual who requires assistance. When that happens, they become stressed, they become depressed, and then they leave the field. So the key to retaining personal support workers in home care is actually treating personal support workers with respect, paying them with respect, and treating them like the very people who are essentially holding the home care system together.

When you look at how privatization has really watered down the quality of care that we have in Ontario, it is astounding. Think of that 30%—as the Auditor General had identified—of the administration and the bureaucracy and the profit that's right at the top. Think of what you could do if you remove that profit agenda and you streamlined the system.

Why wouldn't the local health integrated networks across this province have direct accountability to the kind of home care that they can deliver? They can't. It is completely and utterly unacceptable that these companies come in, charge and make huge profits, and do not honour their contracts. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that these companies—and not all of them are like this, but the ones that I am dealing with right now in Waterloo region—have made record profits. That is money, quite honestly, that should be going to the front-line workers because that is where the quality matters.

So schedule 9 doubles down on privatization; it really does. I have to say that it will actually further compromise the quality of health care that you are seeing in this province. I would much rather be in the position, as an MPP, to work towards and find some consensus to build

a better system for all Ontarians instead of seeing what's in Bill 160, where you have essentially renamed these “community health facilities” just to try to rebrand. This is not a public relations exercise; this is one of our core principles as Ontarians, as Canadians, to deliver and honour the commitment to universal health care. It's what makes us different from the United States on so many levels, and yet here you have a government embracing a very regressive policy. Schedule 9 and schedule 10—they are showstoppers for us, for sure.

Then schedule 5—going back to long-term care—makes it an offence for a licensee to fail to protect residents. Well, right now what you have is basically the business of taking care of seniors. The resident who met with Andrea Horwath and myself described it as “warehousing of seniors.” It was incredibly emotional for her to have the courage to speak up and share her story, but she has a husband she loves and who she cannot guarantee is getting the kind of care he deserves. She has a mother who's also suffering from dementia, and she does not want to see her mother restrained. She does not want to see her mother's quality of life further compromised. Who would want that?

When I go door to door in Kitchener–Waterloo with our petition asking for a full review, a full inquiry into long-term care, so that we can fix it—if you're going to spend the money, if you're going to spend the time, let's get it right. Let's do our due diligence to make sure that this system which has really evolved to not meet the needs of Ontarians—let's get it right. Let's fix it. I really do wish that the government would honour that commitment.

For so many reasons, we have so many concerns about Bill 160. Indeed, it is not the solution to a health care crisis that exists in Ontario.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member opposite. I would like to say that there were a couple of things we agreed on, or that I agree with her on or we have some common ground on. She did raise two things: There are great people doing work out there. But I want to say that in long-term care there are some challenges there. I know in my own city of Ottawa some of the challenges we've had—and actually facilities that were not-for-profit, as well as for-profit facilities. I'm glad that she also mentioned that, “Well, there are good companies out there that I work with.”

I was at the Ontario Community Support Association this morning, speaking to companies like Carefor, like VON, like Saint Elizabeth—all not-for-profits. So there are really good actors in the field. One of the things when we're talking about long-term care—and I share the member's concerns—is that we don't negate the great work that's being done there. The vast majority of care—and I know this in my city of Ottawa—is excellent. There are people out there working very hard to provide that care. I think that to characterize the changes in this act as not being useful or not enough—you know, we have to

establish the fact clearly in legislation that the failure to protect a resident from neglect and abuse is a serious thing—and failure to comply with an order. That's why those penalties are in there, to increase the penalties for individuals and for corporations and boards. They're challenges that if they're not going to follow the law, there's going to be some penalty. I think this piece of legislation is very important.

With regard to PSWs, I had a chance again to speak this morning—I actually have a private member's bill that deals with PSWs and DSWs and mandatory coverage for PSWs working in retirement homes and group homes, so that people working in similar situations should have the same coverage. You have it in long-term care but not in retirement homes. I hope the member will support that bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to respond briefly to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo on her presentation this afternoon on Bill 160, the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act, 2017.

I know that the member for Kitchener–Waterloo is very passionate about expressing her views as a member, as well as the views of her community. While I think we agree that health care is probably the most important service that the provincial government delivers for the people of Ontario, we're in different parties and we might draw different conclusions about how we might pursue improvements to the system.

We know that health care is emerging again as a huge political issue in this province. We know that waiting lists in the province are growing longer again for many procedures. Emergency rooms are again experiencing considerable overcrowding. And long-term care is an emerging crisis. I don't believe the current government has done enough to sufficiently plan for the coming numbers of people who are going to be needing long-term care. That's going to be a huge problem in the coming years because of, in my opinion, the last 14 years of inaction.

This Bill 160, of course, is an omnibus bill that opens a whole long, long list of acts and creates 10 new pieces of legislation: the Ambulance Act, the Excellent Care for All Act, the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Health Sector Payment Transparency Act, the Long-Term Care Homes Act, the Medical Radiation and Imaging Technology Act, the Ontario Drug Benefit Act, the Ontario Mental Health Foundation Act, the Oversight of Health Facilities and Devices Act and the Retirement Homes Act. Certainly, our caucus believes that because so many details of such a substantial piece of legislation have been left to be determined by regulation, this raises the question of how much thought and actual meaningful consultation went into the preparation of this omnibus bill.

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We believe that the government needs to work closely with stakeholders to ensure the development of effective

amendments. Of course, if and when this bill goes to committee, we'll be engaged in that process. We need to listen to the stakeholders and try to improve this bill.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: It really is a pleasure to be present today and listen to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and her depiction of what New Democrats feel about this bill. She raised many concerns.

The first thing, though, that I want to raise is the size of this bill and the 10 different schedules that go into it. As per usual with this Liberal government, it comes under a great title: the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act. We have seen many, many times over again great titles that come before us, yet inside we don't find the best interests of the people of Ontario.

When we're talking about privatization, when we're talking about putting more responsibility and allowance for private providers—that is not in the best interests of the public. We know that our health care dollars are very few and far between—it's probably one of the biggest parts of the provincial budget—and yet we're allowing those dollars to go into private profits. That is not the purpose of our health care system, nor should it ever be. We're seeing this throughout different schedules in this bill.

There are serious concerns when it comes to retirement facilities and the ability that they will now have with patients that they didn't have before. A simple phone call could allow Mom, Dad, Grandma or Grandpa to be locked up. That really shouldn't be something that is happening in our health care system, by a private provider who is putting quite a huge amount of dollars into their own pocket.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to join the conversation this afternoon on the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act. I want to use this opportunity to detail some of the important aspects of this bill, and I do that for the people who might be watching us at home this afternoon, if they are wondering what is included in this bill.

I want to start with the oversight piece and talk about who's taking payments, gifts, from pharmaceutical companies. This legislation, if it's passed, is going to require the medical industry to annually report payments submitted to health care professionals and organizations. It includes who's taking meals, travel, research grants and fees for services. The legislation is going to allow for the payment information to be posted publicly on a database so Ontarians can check in to see which doctor is taking this kind of payment. We don't know the extent to which this is happening within the health care profession, but if it's passed, this legislation is going to reveal all of that information to us.

The bill is also going to guarantee that all long-term-care home operators are providing safe, quality care for

their residents, and they're going to do this through a stronger inspection program with more robust enforcement tools, including the ability to put out financial penalties.

It's going to give ambulances the ability to transport patients to the most appropriate care settings—perhaps a patient should not be going to the emergency room; they ought to be going to a mental health care facility, for instance. That's going to reduce overcrowding in emergency departments, and it's going to provide the best care for patients when needed, when they do call 911.

Speaker, in my remaining time, I'd like to say that the bill is also going to be looking at retirement homes and improving that.

It's a very comprehensive bill with many important aspects. It's going to help improve our health care system. I will be voting for this bill.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the members who had comments on the 20 minutes that I was able to speak to Bill 160.

I will say, though, on the exposure of payments that pharmaceutical companies are issuing to doctors, that if it's an issue, then stop it. Other jurisdictions have moved stronger, but this bill does not aim to do that. It does not address that in a significant manner.

And then, under schedule 5 of the Long-Term Care Homes Act: We know that confinement in long-term-care and retirement homes, expanding the authority to restrain and confine residents, should only be permitted if the government provides additional staffing and resources, which it refuses to do. There have been instances where restraints are necessary, but it's a dangerous practice, and it needs to be monitored. The only way to keep people safe in those instances is to have the staffing and the resources there to ensure that everyone maintains safety.

In our long-term-care facilities right now in Waterloo region, in the Waterloo Wellington LHIN, there are currently 2,625 people on a wait-list to get into a long-term-care facility, and there are only 4,000 beds in 36 homes. There are over 1,000 people in long-term care currently waiting for a transfer to a different facility, and there are 1,622 people who are currently waiting to get into a long-term-care facility.

These numbers are huge. This bill will not address the crisis in our long-term care, it will not address the crisis in our home care, and it certainly will not help the Ontario hospitals who have begged this government for some relief. It is an omnibus bill with some key issues that we could support, but fundamentally, it makes it very difficult for us to move forward and build a universal health care system that is meant for everyone in the province of Ontario.

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

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'll begin by saying, Speaker, that I'll be sharing my time with the members for Ajax–

Pickering and Trinity–Spadina and the Minister of Research and Innovation.

I'm pleased to have a few minutes this afternoon to make a few comments on the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act. As mentioned by other speakers, this particular legislation touches on several different pieces in one bill. One that I think is worth repeating, which has already been mentioned, is a piece in reference to the Ambulance Act. Knowing how this will be impactful in my home community of Thunder Bay, in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan—this is about the work that is done by our paramedics.

Some will know that there are almost 9,000 paramedics working in the province of Ontario and 1,730 ambulances that support this work on a daily basis. About one million patients were transferred last year by our paramedics.

What we do know is that many of the calls that paramedics in their ambulances arrive at are not life-threatening, but as currently constructed, when a paramedic in an ambulance arrives at a scene as a result of a 911 call, it is mandated that they take that individual who is the cause for the situation, the patient in the situation, to the hospital. We know that oftentimes the patient does not need a hospital, but the individual needs a different level of service, the individual needs other care. The change here is going to allow for the paramedics to make that determination at source. So should this legislation pass, we're going to see our paramedics enabled to make a determination of what care needs the patient requires, divert that patient to the appropriate care setting and keep them out of hospitals if that's not where they need to be. We all know that ambulances can be in a queue; it can take time to off-load, to get out of the hospital and go back to doing the work that they do. So this is a very fundamental and important change, and I want to commend the Minister of Health for bringing that forward.

Speaker, an old colleague of mine told me a long time ago, "Billy, health care is a political loser." I remember when he told me that, and he's right. I don't think it matters what you do as a government; it will be easy to be criticized, no matter what amount of resources or what decisions you make. If you are an individual living in your home community and you spend a little longer time than you think you should in an emergency room with a loved one, if you have a family member who has to leave your community for care, these situations and many others can be incredibly emotional and incredibly trying. So no matter what you do as a government, no matter how many resources you bring, it is not likely that you will ever find yourself in a position where people will ever be satisfied with our health care system. We can rhyme off numbers of the investments and the changes that we've made, so many of them being transformative and substantive; nevertheless, people will find cause to find concern with our health care system.

1630

We've hired around 6,500 more doctors than were working in the province of Ontario when we formed gov-

ernment—over 6,500 more. Some 28,000, in that range or that order of magnitude, more nurses are working in the province of Ontario than was the case when we formed government. The list goes on and on.

I can think of examples in my own community and my own riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan where we now provide angioplasty services to 700 people a year, where we now provide vascular surgery to about 400 people a year. We didn't have those services before. We have now committed to providing full cardiac surgery in Thunder Bay by the spring of 2020. This is amazing work. It will represent about 1,700 people who currently live in the riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Thunder Bay–Superior North and the district of Thunder Bay being able to get those incredible services in their home community so their loved ones can be there, so they don't have to travel, so they'll get better health care. We will save some lives, we will create jobs and we will have better health outcomes at the end of the day.

This is only one small example of the investments and the changes that we've made to health care that directly benefit the riding and the constituents I've had the pleasure of representing for quite some time. But no matter what we do, Speaker—I understand that health care is easy for the opposition to pick at. I could go on for 20 minutes easily today, but I'm sharing my time with other members, and my five minutes, unfortunately, have quickly wound down.

There will be more announcements that I will be making in the very near future. My five minutes is up, so I yield the floor to the member from Ajax–Pickering. I thank you for your time, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I thank the honourable minister and now call upon the MPP for Ajax.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Mr. Minister, for your comments.

I'm pleased to speak to Bill 160 today in reference to Open Pharma. The people of Ontario really deserve health care they can rely on and health care they can trust. Transparency allows the public to have access to information in order to be engaged and make informed choices about their health and the health of their families. Ensuring there is transparency with Ontario's publicly funded health system increases the public trust, as everyone deserves access to information that can support them in being confident that they are receiving the highest-quality care.

That is why our government is committed to strengthening transparency in health care in Ontario. We are introducing new legislation that, if passed, would make information on payments from the medical industry to health care professionals and organizations available to the public. It would require the medical industry to annually report payments submitted to health care professionals and organizations. This would include paid meals, travel, research grants, and fees for a number of things, such as consultation or sponsored speaking engagements.

If passed, the new legislation would allow for the payment of information to be publicly posted on a database, which would give Ontarians insights into the extent of the private sector's funding of the health care system. We do not yet know the extent of industry transfers of value to health care but, if passed, these changes would allow for us to have a better understanding of these transfers of value.

The minister is quite correct: Five minutes goes very fast.

This would arm patients with the knowledge that they deserve to make informed decisions about their own health care. This province deserves openness and accountability, and we are working to make that the norm. France, the United States, Belgium, Denmark, Portugal and Slovakia have all addressed this issue through legislation. We are aligning ourselves with a growing movement and are leaders nationwide, as we are the very first jurisdiction in Canada. And we are not stopping there. This bill, if passed, will not only increase transparency but will strengthen the health system and accountability and enhance the quality of care for patients.

The previous speaker, the minister, spoke briefly about the Ambulance Act, and I would be remiss if I didn't mention something that's happening to me. Previously there was a change where we lost a mental ward with 20 beds to Toronto. Under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and our minister Dr. Eric Hoskins, that is coming back to Ajax-Pickering hospital. The 20 beds of vintage age cannot be used, so new beds with new technology are now on order. When they arrive, they will arrive at Ajax-Pickering, and what a difference that will make for the Ambulance Act, because now we have to sometimes use ambulances to transport our patients back and forth to Toronto. That just doesn't work when the populations in Durham, particularly Ajax-Pickering, Whitby and Oshawa, are just booming and everything else is running to catch up. This is something very, very special.

I would also mention, when you get to health and long-term care, I go back as far as 40 or 50 years ago when service organizations spent so much time—in Whitby, we had what was called Whitby Psych; it's now Ontario Shores, and it's just a fantastic facility. It's a major improvement than we had in our day overlooking it with a number of cottages, of all things, and it was great—it served the purpose at the time—but better service has grown and better service is there today. We did many things, whether it was a Christmas day where 50 or 60 of us went over and treated 100 patients, a BBQ day where we went over and treated 100 patients, and on and on. We did that several times a year. So there are improvements everywhere.

I'm going to cut mine, so I get it on the mark and I don't get chastised for running over again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and we'll go on to the next speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I thank the honourable member from Ajax–Pickering and now invite the MPP for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: It's my pleasure to share some of my thoughts on this very important bill. I had an opportunity to respond to the member from Nickel Belt yesterday on her debate, so I am pleased to have more time to talk about this bill.

This is a big bill, actually. I see that there are a lot of good things in there, and I really urge all members of this House to spend some time and study this bill. The part I'm going to be talking about today has to do with the Long-Term Care Homes Act. I'm pleased that the safety and the quality of life of Ontario's 78,000 long-term-care residents remains as one of the top priorities of our government.

I can relate my recent trip to Mon Sheong senior homes in my riding: They do a great job in there looking after seniors, and I think the average age is 90-plus and the turnover rate, they kept under, I think, 7% or 8%, if I am not mistaken. But every year I have the opportunity to visit there, spend quality time with seniors, and I can tell they are well served and they are happy while living there.

While the vast majority of long-term-care homes are in compliance with the provincial rules and regulations, there are still some we want to make sure to bring in line so we offer better protection for all residents. This legislation, if passed, will have new enforcement tools that will ensure long-term-care-home operators with reoccurring care and safety concerns are urgently addressed. This is very, very important.

By introducing maximum fines for all offences, a provision under the Long-Term Care Homes Act will be effectively protecting the residents. For example, for individuals the fine will go up to \$100,000 for the first-time offence and \$200,000 for subsequent offences. For corporations, it's \$200,000 for the first time and a half a million dollars for a subsequent offence. To me, this is showing our commitment to protect seniors at long-term-care facilities.

1640

Another part of the bill I found rather interesting speaks to the Health Protection and Promotion Act. It is an initiative intended to protect the health of children and consumers in Ontario. If passed, these changes will protect children's health by regulating recreational water facilities like splash pads and wading pools. I'm a little surprised that there are very limited regulations around that. Both of my kids enjoy splash pads, like many others in Ontario. In my neighbourhood, Grange Park just got renovated this year, and I urge all members, if you have a chance, to walk down Beverley Street close to Queen's Park and check out the state of our park, Grange Park. They turned the wading pool into a splash pad. Now a lot of people are enjoying it through the days and nights. They will spend lots of time. So making sure splash pads are safe for our kids to use—for anyone to use, actually—is very, very important.

It has also proposed changes that would improve food safety by revising the definition of "food premise" to include the part of the home that is used to operate a food

business. This is actually a big issue in a lot of ethnic communities. For example, in the Chinese community, I often see ads on social media talking about home kitchens. I often think about why there isn't any regulation to look after them, because this is a potential public health hazard. So I'm very pleased to see some movement on this, and I hope that this will pass. This will go a long way to help many Ontarians when it comes to food safety.

I think my time is up. Thank you very much for this opportunity to debate this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I now invite the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to rise in this House and speak to Bill 160. As we all know, our health care system is really a jewel in the crown of this province. There are many jurisdictions on this planet, globally, that wish that they had a similar system in their own jurisdiction, in their own country. Though our system is an excellent system, indeed it requires continuous improvements, and that's what this bill is really meant for.

My colleague the member from Trinity–Spadina mentioned the Mon Sheong institution. One of the sites is located in the town of Richmond Hill. I've been there several times, actually, and it's just a perfect example of how our not-for-profit sector provides health care services to our elderly in this province of Ontario.

One part of this bill, if passed, is going to provide a guarantee that all long-term-care home operators are providing safe and quality care for residents through a stronger inspection program with more robust enforcement tools, including financial penalties and new provincial offences. We know that places such as Mon Sheong are perfect places, but still, an inspection provides better enforcement of rules and regulations and, indeed, helps service providers as well as the patients and the residents who reside in these long-term-care facilities.

Also, this would give ambulance services the ability to transport patients to more appropriate care settings. Ambulance services sometimes feel certain restrictions—that they have to take patients to certain hospitals, but this bill will give them more flexibility, particularly when it comes to mental health facilities. Also, it would reduce overcrowding in emergency departments and provide the best care for patients in the most appropriate settings when they call 911.

The bill, if passed, would protect Ontarians in their day-to-day lives by regulating recreational facilities; for example, splash pads and wading pools and personal service settings such as barbershops and nail salons.

These are some of the things that this bill, if passed, is going to provide protection for Ontarians, not only for our elderly, our seniors and people who reside in long-term facilities, but also people who use recreational facilities as well.

The other aspect of this bill is going to provide more transparency. Transparency is very important for patients, in particular, because we all want to know what's

happening, in terms of information, with regard to our health care system. So it's very important that this bill provides that very tool which the public needs in order to raise their confidence, so that they know what they are getting.

Again, if this bill passes, the legislation is going to require the medical industry to annually report payments submitted to health care professionals and organizations. Of course, this would include paid meals, travel, research grants to certain individuals in the health care sector and certain institutions in the health care sector, and the fees for services such as consultations or sponsored speaking engagements.

Again, if passed, this new legislation will allow for the payment information to be publicly posted on their databases so the public will have continuous access to information. This would, of course, give Ontarians insight into the extent of private sector funding in the health care system.

Countries such as France, the United States, Belgium, Denmark, Portugal and Slovakia have all advanced this issue through their legislation, and we are going to do the same in Ontario. Actually, if this bill passes, Ontario is going to be the first jurisdiction in our country—Canada—to pass this legislation, which will bring more accountability to our health care sector.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Sometimes during debate, it's what's not said that is as interesting as what is communicated. For the last 20 minutes, we've had four different Liberal speakers, and not one mentioned schedule 9 and the oversight and the inspection bodies. Probably, frankly, because so much of that information is being left to regulation.

I think that it is valuable, it is important, it is key to transparency to have a little more meat on the bone, so to speak, on what the inspection bodies are going to look like. It's pretty clear that there is a great deal of control and a great deal of power that they will have. I think that we need to know, as legislators and as the public, what the Liberals have in mind for how those inspection bodies are going to actually operate within the health system across Ontario. I would personally like to see that we spend a little more time talking about—or they sharing their vision for—what those inspection bodies will ultimately end up doing.

The second thing—and a number of speakers did touch on this—was the change in the paramedic responsibilities and duties. In my own community, the Community Paramedic Program has been a pilot project that has been very well received, and I would encourage all Ontario communities to act with that program because it has been such a success. But there are other parts of Bill 160 that are not nearly as clear.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to do a quick shout-out to Boris and Sheila Natyshak, who are watching their

granddaughter, Airika—actually, they're streaming it. They don't have the bandwidth or something, so they have to stream this stimulating debate here on health care today.

I will say, though, this is a non-starter when the confinement and restraints in long-term-care facilities will now be expanded without the corresponding increased staffing and resources. This is a dangerous direction to go in long-term care.

It's worth noting that this House, this Legislature, did vote to expand the scope of the public inquiry to look into long-term care, so that we will look at some of the systemic problems that we have, like the understaffing, like the underfunding. Although the will of the House is such, the government has failed, to date, to communicate this expanded mandate to the judge. I do want to thank, though, the two Liberal members who did support that expansion for that review.

1650

New Democrats have also talked about bringing a minimum standard of hands-on care. When the Long-Term Care Homes Act was first changed 10 years ago, in 2007—we used to have a minimum standard of care right there in the bill. If it's right there in the bill, you have to fund it. We do not, today, have that minimum standard of hands-on care for long-term-care homes anymore, and the regulations that were promised at the last review never happened.

We've been asking for that minimum standard of care of at least four hours hands-on. If you're serious that you're going to increase the use of restraints and increase the use of confinement in our long-term-care homes, which is proposed in Bill 160, you must increase the staff and the resources. Otherwise, it is just too dangerous. This must be changed.

I think our health critic is going to be very busy trying to amend this flawed piece of legislation.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to respond to the member opposite's last comments. I think we read the same bill different ways. In actual fact, right now, confinement is something that's used as a last resort and as a safety mechanism when it is necessary to prevent harm that person would be doing to themselves or to other people. What's being proposed here is a framework to protect residents who need that restriction. The legislation, if passed, would establish a consent-based framework for residents who need to be confined in a LTC home for safety reasons.

The consent-based framework for confining a resident would set out criteria for preventing residents from leaving a long-term-care home and would provide protections for an incapable resident whose substitute decision-maker consents to the resident's being secured.

The protections would also include the opportunity to meet with a rights adviser, who would explain the resident's rights, including the right to seek a review of the substitute decision-maker's consent. Licensees of long-

term-care homes will be required to contact a rights adviser if a resident asks to meet with a rights adviser or expresses disagreement with confinement. In addition, residents would be given contact information for the rights adviser.

Some residents may need to be confined to ensure their safety or the safety of others. For example, a resident with a severe cognitive impairment who may become lost if they are permitted to leave the home may need to be confined. We do have situations where people can do harm to themselves or other people. What this bill does is it provides some right of appeal, and the ability to understand and know what your rights are in this regard, so that this kind of restriction is used in an appropriate and needed case, and not where it's not needed. That's the way I read it.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: With respect to this bill, I thought I would just make a few comments. Some of the observations I've made out of the comments I've heard from across the floor cause me some concern, and one in particular. There are certainly a lot of complaints about the health care system in this province. I struggle when I hear that there are all these strides being made and that it's still going to be an area that we're always going to hear complaints about, even though we're doing so well. I look at the community that I represent, the community of Sault Ste. Marie. If you talk to the people in my community, they would certainly oppose those comments. They will tell you things that don't look like they're going very well at all in Sault Ste. Marie.

I just had a conversation a number of weeks ago with one constituent within our community. Luckily, this constituent had the financial ability to take measures into his own hands when his wife was very ill. He travelled; he went to the hospital with his wife, and for several weeks she was going through testing. They thought she was suffering from one ailment and started testing specifically with respect to that one ailment. After several weeks of continuing to struggle with health concerns, this constituent said to his wife, "I don't trust what we're getting from our hospital," so they packed up their bags, they travelled to Rochester and went to St. Margaret's. This is something that people within my community—the ones with the financial ability to do so—are doing on a regular and ongoing basis.

They spent 13 days at Saint Margaret's, and once an MRI was done, which was done within the first few days of being there, they were able to immediately determine that she was suffering from cancer. They were able to immediately put her on a course of treatment, and hopefully she'll be okay. But if they had waited the six months or so, she would have not been here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I guess it would be the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science—or someone has two minutes.

The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: I'm pleased to respond to the comments and questions.

First I want to thank the member from Dufferin–Caledon, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, the member from Ottawa South—who is also the PA to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and has a proven record and has done an excellent job in his PA-ship—and also the member from Sault Ste. Marie. I want to thank them for their comments.

I just want to quickly point out that I'm sure the predecessor of the member for Sault Ste. Marie would be very happy with all of these changes that we are bringing forward, as he is a long-time advocate for better health care in this province.

I just want to quickly address the concern brought forward by the member from Dufferin–Caledon with regard to schedule 9. As modern health care evolves and new technologies are being developed, Ontario is strengthening the safety, quality and oversight of and transparency around services delivered in community health facilities.

Our government is proposing legislation that will, if passed, introduce new quality assurance measures and standards, including criteria such as keeping staffing records up to date, regular equipment maintenance to ensure patient safety and the delivery of quality care, strengthened accountability in the system for providing high-quality care, ensuring that patients and their caregivers have access to critical information about the quality of care provided through public reporting, and modernizing and expanding the regulation of medical radiation devices to ensure safe and appropriate use of best health results. This initiative will also allow other health facilities, like private hospitals, to be designated as community health facilities at a later date.

I think these are all good measures going forward.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's my pleasure to rise and speak about Bill 160.

I'm going to focus specifically on a couple of issues in my riding and talk about schedule 5, on the Long-Term Care Homes Act of 2007. We talk about how the minister can suspend a licence and issue orders. I want to speak to you about that very fact of what the minister can and, in many cases in Ontario, could and should be doing.

Then I'm going to talk about what happens in the interim, because this summer, in July, Lady Isabelle Nursing Home in Trout Creek, in my riding, was indeed closed, ordered to be shut down. I personally have read the inspection reports, the revocation-of-licence order and the interim manager order, and I must say that over the course of the last five years there has been a history of widespread, ongoing non-compliance, so I have absolutely no issue with the Ministry of Health ordering this facility to be shut down. I have been in the facility, I understand completely why, and I have no hesitation with what the minister has done for the betterment of the residents of that 66-bed facility.

That brings us to the fact that this facility, at that time in July, had already had orders to suspend parts of their licence and whatnot. It was down to about 40 residents, and at that time, the long-term-care facility was ordered to be closed, so the residents are being put into other long-term-care facilities in my riding as beds become available. That's what is happening. We understand that. We concur.

I have written to the minister. I'm going to just read a little bit of my note, and then a little bit of his reply. Basically, I'm saying to the minister, "Look, this is 80 employees in Trout Creek, a 66-bed facility—shutting it down, I understand why; putting the residents elsewhere, we understand why. But in the best-case scenario, it's going to take a couple of years to rebuild the new facility." What we wanted and what the residents of Trout Creek wanted was a guarantee, a 100% commitment, that the 66 beds will be relocated, rebuilt in Trout Creek, and the opportunity for 80 people to get back to work there. The residents want to know their loved ones are going to be looked after, and I know that is being well handled, but we want the beds back in Trout Creek.

1700

The minister wrote back a very thoughtful letter. He and I have had many discussions about this. One sentence was, "I am committed to working with you on any proposal that involves a plan to keep the beds in Trout Creek."

So we're all on the same page about suspending the licence in Trout Creek, moving the residents to other facilities, hopefully rebuilding a 66-bed facility in Trout Creek, and putting people back to work, but that is going to take some time. In the interim, it is causing some problems.

I met with the president and CEO of North Bay Regional Health Centre over the weekend. We talked about the bed pressures at North Bay Regional Health Centre. We all realize that alternate-level-of-care patient numbers are rising. In general, that's right across Ontario. But he says the recent closure of Lady Isabelle in Trout Creek—the one I was speaking about—has increased their concerns for their patients, physicians and staff, and is even more heightened with their percentage of alternate-level-of-care acute days increasing from 7.5% in June to 25% in late August. So the hospital has been talking with the LHIN about the fact that they need to balance this. What's happening, of course, is that the alternate-level-of-care patients in the hospital can't leave and get into an alternate-level-of-care facility because the Trout Creek residents are filling those spaces up as they come. So nobody's able to leave the hospital, and those hospital beds are being extended as long-term-care beds. They talk about how the frequency with which patients are placed in long-term care from a hospital is decreasing. There's nowhere to go because those spaces are being filled up.

So that's the problem. Here's their solution. As I've said in this Legislature many times, when I was mayor of the city of North Bay we participated in funding the

hospital. At the time, we funded about 10% of it out of the municipality—and 60 beds have since been closed. I've been in this Legislature just over six years, and as I was leaving the mayor's chair, the hospital was open, but now 60 beds are closed. So the hospital is saying, "Hey, we've got these beds that are closed in the hospital. We've got long-term-care patients who can't go anywhere because the long-term-care facility is being filled up with the Lady Isabelle long-term-care residents who are being moved out because that facility is correctly being shut down. Why don't we take 15 beds, in a turn-key proposal to leverage those vacant beds, and make a community partnership to ensure that these patients are in a transitional care location versus acute care?" So take them out of the hospital bed—they can't go into a long-term-care facility because there's no room today, because of this problem caused by the shutdown—and move them to these 15 of the 60 empty beds.

I've got to say, this doesn't sound too bad. The province is saving money, in a sense, by having 66 beds that are no longer being occupied. It will be that way for a couple of years, while a new proposal and a new developer or whatever come forward to build a brand new multi-million-dollar facility for 66 beds. So why not use some of those funds that aren't being spent and fund these 15 beds? They already exist; they are down the hall in the hospital. It's not a bad idea.

Speaker, I did want to use part of my time to address the fact that, indeed, in schedule 5 of the Long-Term Care Homes Act they talk about how the minister can suspend licences and revoke licences. It says here the directors can revoke the licences. You know, it's one thing to shut these facilities down. I understand that in Trout Creek it's the second time in history—I could be wrong, but this is what I've been led to believe—that a facility has shut down.

Again, I have absolutely no hesitation in concurring with the minister's decision and the ministry's decision. I've been in the facility and understand why it's shut down. But if you are going to do this, you should also acknowledge that for every action there's an equal and opposite reaction, so there's a problem that is created. These guys have come up with a pretty creative solution to use some of the ministry's money that's not being spent on these beds.

I wanted to bring that situation forward. I wanted to be on the record describing the Lady Isabelle situation, which created a situation at the hospital, which has developed an interesting solution. I wanted to use about half of my time on that.

The other half, really, talks about something else, again, with the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007. This is something else that is not in there, and that's the second half of what I wanted to spend some time talking about.

This time the facility that I'm going to speak about is in North Bay, Ontario, and it's called Cassellholme. Cassellholme is a long-standing district home in North Bay. When I was young and growing up, it was, as long

as I can remember—not having been involved in that industry as a young boy—the only place we had in town. It was our district home. My grandmother ended up in Cassellholme, at the long-term-care facility, when our family could no longer take care of her. She was requiring medical assistance at that time. She lived with us for as long as I can remember growing up. I think I've talked many times in this Legislature about the great stories I had with my grandmother—both my grandmothers lived with us as long as I could ever remember, from the day I was born until I was well into my twenties; actually, it might even be after that, that my grandmothers Fava and Fedeli lived with us. One of them did move into Cassellholme for the great medical care that they offered there. That's a little bit of history of what I'm talking about.

Cassellholme has been working towards a redevelopment for years; it might be a decade. Again, back in the day, when I was mayor of the city of North Bay, I recall at the time Cassellholme talking to us. It's partly funded by the municipality. It's the way the north works, and perhaps rural Ontario. It's provincially owned, partially municipally funded, with a board. The board has provincial appointees and municipal appointees. Although I didn't sit on the Cassellholme board, I reviewed their budget annually and was able to contribute my thoughts to their budget process. It was one of the ones that is not an A class and needs to be redeveloped by 2025, as so many of the older facilities in Ontario need to be.

I remember back at the time—this would be probably about 2009 or 2010—it was about a \$24-million redevelopment. That's what it would have cost back then. I remember our former MPP coming to North Bay, on the weekend, as I do now, and making an announcement that the province will be funding—actually, it was \$40 million and the province would be funding \$24 million of it. That was an announcement back in about 2009, I guess.

Here we are in 2017 and it still hasn't happened. Today, to build it now, it's a \$60-million bill. That's what it will cost—not what it would cost; what it will cost—Cassellholme in the city of North Bay to build.

Again, they bring an interesting conundrum, and I'm hoping that this is a situation that we can look at. On behalf of the residents of North Bay and my constituents, I intend to bring their amendment.

1710

I know that when this comes to committee, they're going to come to committee and speak to this, but I'd like to have the opportunity now to put on the record basically what it is they want to talk about and the request that they want to make.

They tell me they have a very specific request that has been made to the province, but it has not made it into Bill 160. What they're basically saying is that Cassellholme and other district homes have the ability to borrow on their own for this reconstruction. Right now, they have to have the city of North Bay as a borrowing partner. The city has to be the one to borrow the money. Cassellholme is asking for an amendment that they and other district homes have the ability to borrow on their own without

their municipality—or, in this case, municipalities; I have 11 mayors that I answer to in the riding—having to borrow for them.

I'll speak predominantly about North Bay because it is the largest of the 11. It has 54,000 citizens; our smallest, Mattawan, has 120 people. They have a mayor, a town council, a municipal building, and they have 120 people. We go from as small as 120 to as large as 54,000.

They're asking also—and this is a bit technical now—“that the province provide the present value of the provincial share of the redevelopment up front.” If you remember back when I mentioned it in 2009, the MPP made the announcement: “We're giving \$24 million to Cassellholme for this \$40-million build.” Well, now what they're asking is \$30 million, which is the number that is, I understand, already agreed by all the parties: “That the province provide the present value”—\$30 million—“of the provincial share ... up front.” That means that they don't have to borrow it, and those borrowing costs would not be borne by the individual provincially owned/municipally owned facility.

They've said: “We had been asking that the required legislative changes be made” in this Long-Term Care Homes Act, which was going to be tabled as an omnibus bill, but those changes, unfortunately, did not make it into the bill.

They are definitely asking me to bring this forward, and they will be, as I say, coming to the hearings, making a proposal, having everybody in the room—all of the MPPs and the staff who are there—come to an understanding that here's the reality: You have all of these district homes all across Ontario that are required to be redeveloped by 2025, but there's no real money there. There's money coming from the province on a year-by-year basis, but they need this money to be up front to reduce the overall cost.

Again, they are a licensed long-term-care-home facility. As I said, I have 11 mayors. In this particular case, there are nine of these municipalities that are in the region that are funding Cassellholme. I can get technical, Speaker, in the few minutes I have: “District homes are governed by part VIII (specifically sections 122-128) of the Long-Term Care Homes Act. Cassellholme, supported by all the other district homes, has been working for over a year with the Premier's office, the minister's office and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the minister's office and Ministry of Municipal Affairs to remove the provisions in the Long-Term Care Homes Act that prohibit district homes from borrowing on their own faith and credit, except to bridge operating revenues to the maximum of 25% of total annual revenues”—and they go on, so on and so forth, with the subsections.

Basically, what they're saying is: “We need (a) your money, province, up front; and (b), we want to be able to borrow our share without having the municipality have to borrow it for us.” This is what they're saying; this is what they're going to bring.

They are also saying that all of this, of course, “has been prompted by the ministry’s requirement that district homes redevelop by 2025 on one hand”—I’ve said that. But on the other hand, municipalities really genuinely aren’t interested in having to pick up the bill for this. They will pick up the tab of the interest, because they all pay a share of the operating costs over time. Each municipality can be several million dollars a year. These municipalities of district homes are mandated to have one in each city, I think it is, that type of thing. That is how it is throughout the north. They are mandated to do this. They are mandated to have a board. They get to put some seats on the board, and the province does.

But this is big now. Now we’re talking \$20 or \$30 million that’s the other share. And quite frankly, especially in the north, the municipalities just don’t have the capacity to go out and borrow that kind of money. Some are going to refuse to and some just don’t have the ability. They are unable to carry a mortgage for the redevelopment.

If the province pays their half or their share up front and the facility is allowed to borrow their share themselves, certainly any mortgage lender would be able to provide an adequate and fair mortgage for that facility using the facility as collateral. So we want those restrictions to be removed. It’s going to be very difficult, Speaker, to proceed with any redevelopment, although they are necessary, mandated and must happen by 2025, if they don’t respond to these local requests. They are, as I say, coming to the committee and asking us to put forward the necessary amendments to the bill at the standing committee, and therefore in this Legislature.

Speaker, that is really how I wanted to address it. There are many, many issues in Bill 160, the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act, but my choice was to talk to you, in the 20 minutes that I had, about Lady Isabelle in Trout Creek and the issues that have been created with their closure, and about Cassellholme and the issues that have been created by their requirement to redevelop by 2025.

I say thank you very much, again, to you, Speaker, and to this Legislature for the opportunity to share the stories from my riding of Nipissing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the member for Nipissing for his presentation.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I thank the member from Nipissing for his comments, particularly around the long-term-care sector. I as well experienced a loss of long-term-care beds in my riding, and it took 10 years from the date of the announcement to actually rebuild those beds. They weren’t new beds; they were just beds that had been removed from a larger nursing home that ended up being demolished and replaced by a retirement facility. It took 10 long years, and we have a wait-list in my area of about 1,400 seniors waiting for those beds.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo talked about our concerns around schedule 10, which amends the Retirement Homes Act to permit the confinement of resi-

dents in retirement homes. These residents in retirement homes—this is like a landlord. These people pay in some instances \$4,000 or \$5,000 to live in a retirement home, and it seems that we are going to be giving the landlord the right to actually confine residents. There is a concern that we may be implementing the use of physical restraints. I can tell you that there aren’t enough staff in the retirement homes to actually monitor any residents, let alone three or four residents who could potentially be confined in those retirement homes.

Hospitals moved away from using physical restraints, as did long-term-care facilities. Now they use bed rails down, mattresses on the floor for those patients who may find themselves in and out of bed on a regular basis when they are in some state of confusion. So schedule 10 is very concerning for us.

1720

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

Hon. David Zimmer: I just want to speak to the long-term-care aspect of this bill. There are 78,000 long-term-care residents here in Ontario. A top priority is seeing that they have the quality of care and the protections they rightly expect and should have.

How are we going to go about doing that? We want to make sure that Ontario families and seniors have confidence in their care, confidence in their environment and that they receive the highest quality of care. To do that, the bill contemplates some new enforcement tools. These enforcement tools will include financial penalties for homes with repeated non-compliance. What we want to do is ensure that all home licensees are immediately addressing concerns for the benefit of their residents.

These enforcement tools will include a set of maximum fines for various offences under the long-term-care legislation. That means some of those fines for an individual could go as high as \$100,000 for a first offence and \$200,000 for a second offence, and for a corporation, \$200,000 for a first offence and up to \$500,000 for subsequent offences. There is going to be a whole regime to guard against failure to protect residents from abuse and neglect, and also failing to comply with orders made under the act.

As a part of the enforcement tool, there’s a new inspection strategy that’s going to be enhanced. It’s called the resident quality inspection strategy. In the exercise of those inspections, they’ll monitor the safety and the well-being of the homes. If they’re not in compliance, then those fines will kick in. This will provide a safer environment for residents.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I’m pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the speech by the member from Nipissing on Bill 160. He focused on schedule 5, the long-term-care part of the bill, and he gave some excellent examples of issues within his riding, starting off with the situation of Lady Isabelle Nursing Home, which is in the process or has closed. That affects the northern

part of Parry Sound–Muskoka, as well. I think he made a very good case for a temporary situation that would help, with North Bay providing 15 beds.

I do have a need for more beds within the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka as well. I know in Huntsville, we have Fairvern Nursing Home, which is, I believe, a C-class. It needs redevelopment. The district has put together a plan to redevelop it. They have the land. The municipality of Muskoka has put \$10 million towards the project. But to make a long-term-care facility work, the way they're funded on a per person basis, it needs to be at least 96 beds, or it just doesn't work financially. So I would say to the member from Nipissing on his proposal for Trout Creek that they need to bump the number up a little bit to make it work. Also for Fairvern, they need 96 beds, or it just doesn't pay for itself on an ongoing basis.

I would also simply say that the minister has talked about 5,000 new beds. They certainly aren't in Parry Sound–Muskoka. I have yet to see any new beds anywhere in the province, although the minister mentions that number a lot.

There is a great need for more long-term-care beds. Wait-lists are increasing, and there's this situation where we have these facilities that desperately need redevelopment. That is the case in Huntsville, where Fairvern is located. The district is behind it and looking to make something happen.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: It's definitely been an interesting afternoon to sit in the House to listen to Bill 160, the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act. For those tuning in at home, they would say, "Wow. Strengthening quality and accountability for patients: That sounds like it's a good thing for the people of Ontario." But what they don't realize is that it's a very large bill with many different schedules that reach broadly throughout our health care system.

What the bill doesn't do is really ensure that we are strengthening the quality. It does nothing to increase the number of beds in the long-term-care sector, to ensure that the thousands of seniors that we are going to be seeing in the generation to come will be able to have one of those beds. We have thousands currently waiting throughout our cities, throughout our municipalities and our regions, waiting for beds.

There's nothing in this bill to say that there are going to be more beds to alleviate the pressure that we're going to be seeing coming in the future. It does nothing to stop the hallway medicine that is currently happening, where people are in the hallways and they're at their sickest points—if they're in the hospital, they're very sick—and they have noise and lights, and no dignity and no bathrooms that are available to them. Nurses are treating them at their most vulnerable time in front of everyone to see. There is nothing in this bill that does anything to take care of that.

And it doesn't talk about pharmacare, and the need for an actual, real, universal pharmacare that covers all patients in Ontario, and not just a very small few.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to thank the members commenting—the member from Welland, the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member from Hamilton Mountain—for their comments on Bill 160.

Speaker, I would like to take this moment, then, to continue to speak about Lady Isabelle and Cassellholme. At this time, I want to be able to say thank you to the wonderful staff. We've toured Lady Isabelle about every second year since I've been an MPP, including this past summer, and the staff are simply the best you're going to find. They are absolutely wonderful, hard-working men and women, and the residents there absolutely adore each and every one of the caregivers and the administration who are in that building.

Over at Cassellholme, the same applies. As I said earlier, my grandmother lived there for a while. Patty and I would visit Cassellholme on numerous occasions for events and birthdays: 100th birthdays and 75th wedding anniversaries, if you could imagine 75 years together. We do a lot of events at Cassellholme, and the staff there are absolutely and spectacularly remarkable people, remarkable caregivers. You can tell the compassion that they have for the residents, the love and care that they show for them. The administration are excellent and a superb group of managers. The final group would be the volunteers. There are so many volunteers who help the people at Cassellholme.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Minister?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: We'd like it to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, debate will continue. Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise today to participate in this debate on Bill 160, the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act. In particular, I wanted to focus my comments on a couple of the key schedules of the bill, specifically schedule 1, the amendments to the Ambulance Act.

Speaker, some of my colleagues in this Legislature may recall that on numerous occasions throughout the spring, I raised a concern about lack of government approval for a pilot project which my community of London had been working on for a number of months—well over a year, in fact. That pilot project was a partnership between the emergency services and it was a partnership with the London Health Sciences Centre and also with CMHA. CMHA in my community operates a

24/7 crisis centre. When people go to that 24/7 crisis centre, they can usually access counselling within about 20 minutes.

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By contrast, when people experiencing mental health crises call 911 and get picked up by an ambulance, they are taken to the hospital emergency room. That is, as has been pointed out, because of the legislative requirements of the Ambulance Act. Unfortunately, when they are taken to the hospital emergency room, they often have to wait hours and hours and hours before they are even triaged and an assessment is made about their condition. All the while, the ambulance and the paramedics have to wait at the hospital until they know what is going to be happening to this patient.

This is quite costly. In my community, it was determined that if the ambulances could go straight to the crisis centre instead of to the hospital for patients who are experiencing non-acute mental health issues, then there could be savings of about \$2.5 million a year, which is significant. This is a significant savings that could then be reinvested into our health care services in the community.

Last March 20, I shared the story of a constituent of mine, Angela Jolly, who had been waiting almost a week on a stretcher at London Health Sciences Centre for access to a mental health bed. At that time, on March 20, 2017, the emergency room was operating at 130% capacity. As we have been hearing over this last little while, that's actually pretty good. We are hearing of the emergency room operating at 140% or 150% capacity. On that particular week, it was at 130% capacity with 22 patients waiting for beds. Some of those patients had been there for more than a week, in fact, when I first learned the story of my constituent's experience.

I raised this issue in the Legislature and I called on the Minister of Health to take action to address the mental health crisis in London, which was not a new issue that suddenly materialized in March 2017. This was an issue that we had been facing in London for years.

On March 23, three days later, the hospital ER was, on that day, operating at 152% capacity. There were 26 mental health patients waiting for beds. At that point, I called on the Minister of Health to approve London's pilot project, to approve this single partnership between the London Health Sciences Centre, CMHA Middlesex and Middlesex-London EMS and allow that to proceed in my community of London. At the time, the Minister of Health was unequivocal: No, it could not happen.

On March 27, I once again called on the government to sign off on this pilot project and allow it to proceed in my community.

Then, on March 30, more crises were erupting all over the place in London. I called on the government once again to stop dragging its feet and do something to look at how to facilitate this pilot project going ahead in London and make sure that this kind of helpful intervention could be put in place.

On April 3, I again asked the government to work with my community, work with those community partners and find a way to allow the pilot project to proceed.

On April 24, which was almost a month since the first time I had raised the issue, I once again asked the minister in question period about the pilot project. At that time, the capacity of the ER was 146% and there were 18 patients waiting for beds. Still the government refused to offer any kind of solution to my community in order to move the project ahead.

The following month, on May 31, I raised the issue for the seventh time in this Legislature and shared the story of another constituent, David Warren, whose wife had been waiting more than three days in the hospital ER. She had been taken to the hospital ER under a Form 1. She was involuntarily taken to the ER and she had to wait—actually, she had to be transferred to St. Thomas because, after more than three days of waiting at London Health Sciences Centre, they told her that there was still no bed and she would have to go out of our community to get the treatment she needed.

So, Speaker, after these seven attempts to get the government to work with my community and get this pilot project in place, I was cautiously optimistic, on June 5, when I read the news release from the government indicating that there would be amendments to the Ambulance Act to allow paramedics to transport patients to non-hospital facilities. Certainly there were concerns about what exactly this would mean, but it appeared that this might provide the vehicle for the pilot project to move ahead.

At the time, however, along with my cautious optimism, there was also great concern because the government's press release announcing these amendments also indicated that the full rollout of any changes to the Ambulance Act would take approximately 24 months to complete. So two years after the passage of this legislation there would be the possibility that London's pilot project could finally be in place. That would represent a period of about four years since my community first came together to work out a business case and put plans in place for this pilot to move forward.

You can imagine, Speaker, my concern when I finally saw Bill 160, the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act, which includes, as one of 10 schedules, amendments to the Ambulance Act to enable the diversion of patients by paramedics to non-hospital sites. I am concerned because instead of moving forward with enabling legislation to allow the pilot project to go ahead—although I have to say that I really do question whether the government couldn't have found a way to just allow the pilot project in London to move forward. However, instead of moving cleanly with some simple legislation, the government packaged these amendments to the Ambulance Act within omnibus legislation that includes many, many other very contentious changes to health care legislation.

Not only that, but the amendments that they have proposed to the Ambulance Act are much broader than what

my community was looking for. They are, in fact, so broad that there are numerous and quite justified concerns about what this legislation will mean for the province. There is nothing in the legislation that talks about what these non-hospital sites will be. In my community, we were looking strictly at the CMHA crisis centre. It's a community service. It's operated through a non-profit board. However, in this schedule 1, the amendments to the Ambulance Act that are outlined in this legislation are wide open in terms of where paramedics could divert patients instead of taking them straight to the hospital. As I said, this has aroused all kinds of very legitimate questions. For example, will patients be able to decide where they are going to be taken? Will paramedics be protected from additional liability that may arise from this new ability to divert patients away from emergency rooms? Will paramedics be pressured to treat and refer patients inappropriately because of lack of provincial funding for ambulance services? How will the acuity of the patients be determined? How will safeguards be put in place to ensure that patients who are diverted are the patients who should be diverted?

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Speaker, if the government had moved ahead with a pilot project in London—which is what my community has been working on for years, as it happens—we could have done the research from that pilot project. We could have determined what kinds of mechanisms needed to be put in place to ensure patient safety when they are being transferred. However, the government has decided to move ahead with this full provincial rollout of amendments that are so broad that there are a lot of legitimate questions, and that may create all kinds of barriers to the pilot project proceeding in my community.

That's just one schedule of the act that I wanted to focus on today.

I also want to spend some time talking about schedule 5 and the amendments to the Long-Term Care Homes Act.

I can't help but be struck by the fact that this debate is taking place on the very day that the public inquiry into the safety and security of residents in the long-term-care system is holding its very first public meeting on the Wettlaufer murders and the circumstances that led to the Wettlaufer murders in Woodstock and London. The inquiry is meeting today in Woodstock and tomorrow in London. As you can appreciate, Speaker, there are many, many people in my community who want to be part of that public inquiry, who want to talk about their personal experiences with loved ones in the long-term-care system, and who are very concerned that the focus on the circumstances of the Wettlaufer murders will restrict the kind of input that they can bring to that public inquiry.

Schedule 5 makes amendments to the Long-Term Care Homes Act. There are some positive changes—making it an offence for a licensee to fail to protect residents from abuse or neglect—but very, very problematically, it also makes amendments to allow for the use of restraints and the confinement of residents. Unless we

provide long-term-care homes with the resources that are required to safely use restraints and confinement in dealing with residents, unless we ensure that those staffing ratios and that funding are in place, we could be jeopardizing the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our province. The proposed amendments are not accompanied by any indication that there will be enhanced funding.

As my colleagues and I in the NDP have reinforced in this Legislature and outside of this Legislature, we need to look at all of the systemic issues within our long-term-care system. In particular, we need to look at staffing ratios; we need to look at quality of care. We have been advocating for a minimum standard of four hours of care per resident per day, adjusted for acuity and case mix. We need to look at those things.

We need to look at regulation, enforcement and inspections. We need to look at capacity—the availability of long-term-care beds. We need to look at the impact of for-profit privatization on the long-term-care system. We also need to look at the accountability of this government for responding to numerous recommendations that have been brought forward by the Auditor General and the coroner about what needs to happen in our long-term-care system.

It is irresponsible of us to move forward and approve an amendment like this, allowing for the use of restraints and confinement of long-term-care residents, without ensuring that all of those other protections are in place: the staffing, the funding, the processes, the procedures, the checks and balances, everything that needs to be addressed from a systemic perspective. Those things have to be dealt with before we should be looking at that.

I hear regularly from constituents in London West about their personal experiences and their concerns about what has happened to their loved ones in the long-term-care system. I don't know how many constituents I have spoken to, women my age, who have either reduced their employment from full-time to part-time or who have left the labour market altogether because they have a loved one in a long-term-care home. They have gone in there too many times and seen that there is no staff to feed their loved one. There is no staff to move their loved one from the bed to the wheelchair so that they can be taken to watch TV in the common room. They have felt obligated to be there to provide the services for their loved one that staff at our long-term-care facilities are simply not able to provide because there are too few of them. There are not enough people, not enough health care professionals, PSWs or RPNs to provide the kind of care that vulnerable seniors need.

I can't believe that my time is up and I've only been able to address two of these 10 schedules, but it does give you a sense of how problematic it is when you bundle all of these kinds of changes—very significant changes—to our health care system that really need to be dealt with individually so that they can have the kind of comprehensive review and analysis that is necessary to make sure that we actually are strengthening the quality of our

health care system and we actually are ensuring accountability for patients in Ontario.

Speaker, I can tell you, as my colleague the very eloquent member for Nickel Belt, the health critic for the NDP, stated in her lead on this legislation, that this is not a bill that the NDP can support. There are simply too many red flags. There are simply too many concerns for us to be able to support this bill.

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

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act this afternoon. I thank the member from London West for her comments.

This bill, if passed, will guarantee that long-term-care home operators are providing safe and quality care for residents. I often hear from residents in my riding that the quality of care sometimes is not up to par, and the accountability and the inspection should be more vigorous. What this bill does is to provide some of that safeguard and some of that strengthening of our ability to make sure that our homes are safe and that our most vulnerable sector gets the protection they deserve.

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This bill would also give ambulances the ability to transport patients to more appropriate care settings, such as mental health facilities, that best address individual needs. If a patient doesn't need to be in a hospital in a waiting area, they are providing a setting that hopefully is safe, secure and comfortable until a permanent setting is available for these residents to be in, Mr. Speaker.

This bill also would reduce overcrowding in emergency departments in providing best care for patients, as I alluded to, in the most appropriate setting when they call 911 for assistance, Speaker. It would also protect Ontarians in their daily life by regulating recreational water facilities, like splash pads and wading pools, and personal service settings, like barbershops and nail salons. The proposed changes under the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act would roll out important initiatives that would help Ontarians' health care system to continue serving all Ontarians today and well into the future. That's what we all want for our seniors.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 160, the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act. They can probably short-term it, because it's an omnibus bill, and call it the "soup-to-nuts bill," because there's an additional 10 schedules in here. In my two minutes, I just don't have enough time to address those 10 schedules.

But I will say, though, that in the Chatham-Kent-Essex riding that I am so honoured to serve, I have over 20 combined long-term-care and retirement homes. I know that so well because I visit them—all of them—at least twice a year. I have a little fun with them, and probably humour them with my "sing along with Rick" series. But I also have an opportunity to interact with staff and

to talk to them about some of the issues and challenges that they are faced with. They are doing the best they can with what they have, and sometimes what they have is hardly enough. It's hardly enough.

I have some real concerns, because this government is noted for establishing red tape. We all know what red tape is. The more red tape to ensure quality and safety in these long-term-care and retirement homes—it puts a greater emphasis on that, a greater burden on them as well.

In the Chatham-Kent-Essex area—I'm sure it's happening throughout Ontario—we are finding more and more that people in these long-term-care homes are cutting back. And what does that mean? That means they are cutting back on quality, they are cutting back on the service that they can provide, and job losses are occurring throughout Ontario in that sector.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is always interesting to listen to my good colleague from London West and her comments on Bill 160, the Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act.

A big part of this is schedule 4, the introduction of the Health Sector Payment Transparency Act. Let me tell you about another part of our health care system that needs quality and accountability for patients: Ontario needs to ban the practice of commercial arrangements between manufacturers and wholesalers in pharmacies to avoid exclusive deals.

What does that mean? Well, for somebody in Sudbury, it means that—say you have cancer. You deal with the pharmacy at the cancer treatment centre. You need a specific drug to take to deal with your cancer, and then your drug plan tells you can have that drug but you have to deal with their pharmacy of choice. Of course, I live in northern Ontario. The pharmacy of choice is not in northern Ontario; it is someplace in southern Ontario or God knows where.

Then this package arrives on your front door, and sometimes it is a cold-chain medication that you need, so we are talking about a package this big right on your front door to have your little package of oncology pills. Then you take them back to the cancer treatment centre so that somebody can explain to you what you do with that. Why, Speaker? How can we ever link this to good-quality care? It is impossible to do. This bill gives us an opportunity to change this. Quebec just passed Bill 92, and Bill 92 was passed to do just that. It bans those deals with the preferred providers of pharmacy services, to give everybody a chance to deal with their local pharmacy, if they so wish. This will be something we will bring forward.

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

Mr. Han Dong: I want to thank the member from London West for her thoughtful debate. She mentioned quite a few things. I want to talk about the Ambulance Act, which she referred to. She made some good

suggestions, especially around the pilot option. I think legislative and regulatory changes need to be in place to provide that framework for these projects to go on. I'm sure there will be lots of opportunities in the implementation of these initiatives, if this bill passes, to figure out the details of those operations. If this bill passes, I look forward to amendments and clause-by-clause during the third reading process.

I also want to clarify what the proposal is. The proposed changes would allow our EMS workers to treat and release low-acuity patients who do not need additional medical care or to treat and refer patients to a health setting more appropriate than an emergency room. These changes will help to reduce off-load delays at our hospitals, meaning ambulances can spend more time attending to more emergency calls. Right now, when someone makes a 911 call, these individuals will be brought to emergency rooms. We know that many 911 calls are not of a life-threatening nature. In the process, we are reviewing our emergency services to ensure that we continue to respond quickly to emergencies and provide the right level of service to non-urgent care.

I look forward to further debate on these changes with regard to the Ambulance Act.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the members for Durham, Chatham–Kent–Essex, Nickel Belt and Trinity–Spadina for their comments on my speech.

In answer to the member for Trinity–Spadina, I want to state very clearly that my community was ready last year to move forward with this pilot project. We were ready to put it in place and to include a robust evaluation mechanism so that we could learn from the pilot and feed those learnings back to the government before any of this would be rolled out provincially. Unfortunately, instead of allowing my community to proceed, the government has chosen to bury amendments to the Ambulance Act within a very complex and also quite contentious piece of omnibus legislation that is not helpful to the urgent need for something to be done to address the mental health care crisis in London.

Speaker, I want to be clear. We recognize there is a need to strengthen the quality of our health care system because, goodness knows, the quality has been deteriorating rapidly in this province. In my community of London, we have longer wait-lists for joint replacement surgery than anywhere else in the province. The only way that people can get a hip or knee replaced within two years is to come to Toronto. They can't get access to that surgery in London, and that is shameful. It is a disservice to the people in my community, who have a right to access the health care they need in a timely way in their community.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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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
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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

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
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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

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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

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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

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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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
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Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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Lorne Coe, Bob Delaney
Vic Dhillon, Joe Dickson
Harinder Malhi, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley