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Assembly
of Ontario



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Tuesday
20 March 2018

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Mardi
20 mars 2018

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 20 March 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 20 mars 2018

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Consideration of the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I move, seconded by Mr. Chan, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health has moved, seconded by Mr. Chan, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Seniors Affairs and the Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to lead off debate on the throne speech for the third session of the 41st Parliament of Ontario. I want to thank the Premier for this opportunity.

In Ontario, we are fortunate to have access to the highest-quality health care. Every day we hear of the caring, compassionate and dedicated staff who are focused on helping patients get the best possible care. Our government has been increasing investments in health care at near-record levels, and Ontario's health care system is something to be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that Ontario's economy has been performing strongly. In fact, it has out-

performed nearly every other major economy, thanks to the hard work of the people of this province. But despite increased investments and a strong economy, many families are still facing challenges. Every day our government hears from people who share their stories, and they are a reflection of so many others who share similar experiences. These stories are particularly important because they have informed the steps our government must take moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, we need to make investments that will better enable people to care for their loved ones, and the throne speech reflected that. It's about making deliberate choices to invest in the care and the services that the people of this province rely on. It's about laying out a plan of care and opportunity for the people of Ontario.

This throne speech is about investing in areas that will make life easier for Ontarians. It's about doing more for people. It's about demonstrating that our government is not going to pull back at a time when many Ontarians are in need of support.

Our government has always worked hard to provide better care for Ontarians. As Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, I know that our government has worked to transform the health care system into one that puts patients first. We recognize that, as our population ages, home and community care is becoming even more important, and we value all of our hard-working health care professionals in Ontario. We know that personal support workers, or PSWs, are incredibly dedicated to their clients, and we value the services they provide for families. To strengthen this critical workforce and address the challenges of recruitment and retention, our government increased the hourly wage for all PSWs in the publicly funded home and community care sector. This important investment reflects just one of the ways that Ontario is helping to provide much-needed care to Ontarians.

At the start of the year, we saw the biggest expansion to medicare in a generation with the introduction of OHIP+, children and youth pharmacare. As of January 1 of this year, we began providing free prescription drugs for children and youth aged 24 and under. Four million children and youth now have access to over 4,400 drugs, including antibiotics to treat infections, inhalers for asthma, various insulins, oral diabetic medications and diabetes test strips. OHIP+ covers drugs to treat arthritis, epilepsy and other chronic conditions; medications also to treat mental health conditions, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder drugs. It includes drugs to treat some childhood cancers and other rare conditions. These

drugs are provided at no cost, with no fees and no copayment.

Over one million young people aged 24 and under have had their prescriptions filled at no cost under OHIP+, and the numbers continue to grow. OHIP+ is a critical way that Ontario is helping to provide children and youth to get a better start in life. We want everyone in Ontario to feel this kind of freedom so they can make better choices and increase the quality of life for themselves and their families. This is a significant first step toward our vision of universal pharmacare that will help bring free drug coverage to everyone and ultimately will result in a healthier, more productive province.

All of these investments speak to our government's commitment to transform our health care system into one that puts the needs of patients at its centre. We recognize how important it is for patients to have access to high-quality health care when and where they need it. We believe that a healthier Ontario, where no one is left behind, is a stronger Ontario.

Through the Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care, Ontario has been working to deliver care that is easy to access and more equitable for all Ontarians. Ontario's health care system is something we should be incredibly proud of. Across the board, from the leadership to the doctors and nurses and the support staff on the front lines, we have built a health care system that is doing an incredible job of taking care of the people we love. Yet for all that we have accomplished, we recognize that there is more work to do. We know how important high-quality health care is to Ontario families, and we will continue to make investing in high-quality care a priority.

As outlined in the throne speech, we are proposing to make significant investments in the operation of our hospitals as part of the 2018 budget. Our government is focused on investments that will provide families across the province with faster access to care, to meet the needs of growing and aging populations.

0910

We are committed to a strong, stable, publicly funded hospital system that delivers quality patient services efficiently, and we are working diligently to reduce the wait times for patients. In February, our government announced \$187 million in ongoing support to make more hospital beds available for patients. The investments we are proposing in the budget will support each hospital in Ontario to continue to deliver high-quality care that meets the unique needs and priorities of their communities.

Those investments will also help to expand essential services and procedures that patients and their families need. Yet our government also recognizes that hospitals are not always a patient's first choice for care, nor is it necessarily the most appropriate option. We understand that patients want to be able to get the care they need as close to home as possible. Our government is committed to expanding community support services to ensure that people receive care to meet that goal.

Through the Patients First Act, our government provided the foundation for a patient-centred home and community care sector that is fully integrated with other health care providers, and that is responsive to and respectful of patients' needs. As well, Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors, lays out a plan to meet the needs of seniors as they grow older.

We all have a collective responsibility to care for our seniors. For that reason, we will focus on major investments in home care to provide more services for people aging at home and provide financial relief for families caring for aging loved ones. The investments we are proposing will help to improve home and community care services today while investing for tomorrow. They will also provide patients and their caregivers with greater choice and control over their home care. Expanding home and community care will ensure the ongoing sustainability of our health care system and will address the needs of our growing seniors population.

Our government has been working hard to provide integrated care to all Ontarians, and that includes all health care, both physical and mental health. We know that one in five Ontarians will experience a mental health illness in their lifetime and we have been clear on this side of the House that there is no health without mental health.

We commend all of the brave individuals who have been speaking out across the province to reduce the stigma around mental health. We understand that for many people with mental health and addiction issues, seeking support through publicly funded services is a critical first step towards recovery.

Every Ontarian deserves access to mental health services to support them in living fulfilled and healthy lives. That is why we will continue to prioritize the growing need for mental health and addictions care in Ontario: to help people get the mental health and addictions services they need quickly and close to home.

We recognize that we need to support not only those who are experiencing mental health challenges but those who care for them as well. The investments we are proposing will help to streamline access to care so that Ontarians will know where and how to access mental health and addictions information anywhere in the province. Again, it's about providing Ontarians with the support they need to care for their families and loved ones.

I spoke earlier about the success of OHIP+ since it was first launched back in January. The introduction of OHIP+ was an important step forward in the history of medicare in Ontario and across the country. It represents the first step in achieving the goal of universal pharmacare for all, but it is only the first step.

Speaker, as outlined in the throne speech, our government is proposing to expand OHIP+. That means more people without a drug or dental benefits plan would have access to more affordable prescription drugs and dental care. It represents another step forward toward the goal of truly universal health care for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, our government is working to strengthen our health care system today and for the future. We want

to ensure that everyone in Ontario can access the publicly funded health care they require, when they need it the most. A high-quality health care system is about more than helping patients find the care they need. A healthy population is also critical to helping Ontario thrive and grow toward a brighter future. Helping more people to access the prescription drugs and mental health supports they need to be well also helps them to participate fully in their community.

For those caring for aging parents at home, having access to the professional support and financial relief they need helps them to go to work each day with more energy and confidence. It means they are able to put more money away for their own future.

All of these investments in health care represent just one part of our government's overall investment in Ontarians, and in a brighter future for our province.

It gives me great pleasure now to turn you over to my colleague the Minister of Seniors Affairs, who will share with you further details of our plan for care and opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing in debate, I recognize the Minister of Seniors Affairs.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm also pleased this morning to speak on the throne speech, and add my voice and my thoughts.

Yesterday's speech from the throne exemplified how our government looks at the promise and the people of Ontario together. Our vision honours how far we have come, yet remains squarely focused on where we are heading. From child care to education, health care to the economy, our government has shown true compassion and a deep understanding for the challenges Ontarians face in their homes, workplaces and wider community. Our government has shown that we will not take a narrow view in response to the change each sector is facing, nor will we look solely at the opportunities these changes present for benefits in the short term.

We have shown that Ontarians come from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Of course, the tools each of us needs to live life to our full potential will also be diverse. This is, of course, also true of seniors. Seniors are an example of a demographic where the needs vary extensively.

There is a common perception, often perpetuated by certain members of this Legislature, that Ontarians over the age of 65 can be addressed as one collective group. The opposition seems content to view seniors solely through the lens of health care, a view that, when you turn 65, your abilities diminish and your aspirations are a thing of the past. As Minister of Seniors Affairs, I can tell you that this unified view of seniors is far from true. The dynamism I see on a daily basis is strong and widespread, and it has informed our government's approach to caring for seniors. We view them holistically. We recognize that the supports you require at 65 will be different from the supports you require at 85.

Ontario is home to more than two million seniors, a number that is expected to double in the next 25 years.

As individuals, they have made extraordinary contributions to our province, a province I think we can all agree would be unrecognizable had it not been for their talent, ingenuity and commitment to bettering the world around them. As they age, seniors deserve to participate and achieve as they have always done: In different fields, in different ways, they want to continue to build our province.

The one thing that I have heard from seniors across this province is quite simple: They say, "We want to continue to lead lives of purpose. We want society to continue to give us the opportunities to fulfill our new dreams and new aspirations." This is the fundamental thing that seniors are telling us. My ministry conducted an opinion poll, a survey of seniors. An astonishing 80% of Ontario seniors told us they want to learn something new. That is at the base of our strategy for seniors: to recognize their dynamism, their continuing desire to continue to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: —to help build this province.
0920

This was brought home to me fairly vividly recently. Last fall, I was touring a Habitat for Humanity project in Toronto. I went there thinking I was going to help put drywall in place, but as it turned out they said that first I have to learn how to drive a nail through a two-by-four the right way. In the time that I had, that was all I could do: learn how to drive a nail through a two-by-four the right way. But I also learned something more powerful. I learned that 75% of Habitat for Humanity's crew leaders are seniors—75%. It's a powerful reminder of how seniors continue to build up Ontario. I often hear people say seniors have helped build Ontario, and I'm here to tell you that Ontario seniors are continuing to build up Ontario, and as the Minister of Seniors Affairs, I'm committed to giving them that opportunity.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, last November I was proud to join the Premier in Hamilton to introduce Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. Aging with Confidence lays out our government's plan to help seniors live their best life at every age. It captures the hope and optimism seniors across this province feel while also addressing any apprehension they may have, notably about receiving the right supports to help them age with dignity. It lays out our government's plan to support seniors living independently, those requiring enhanced supports at home and in their community, and those requiring intensive supports.

Our government recognizes there are a number of challenges that accompany aging, and whether seniors require a little bit of care or a lot of care, the services should be there for them. Aging with Confidence includes more than \$155 million in new investment for initiatives that keep seniors independent, healthy, active, safe and socially connected.

I recently was visiting a retirement community in Mississauga. In one-on-one conversations, I asked a

number of them, “What is the secret to living a long and happy life?” The answers were almost unanimous: Stay active, never stop learning and go out and meet people. I met an 86-year-old woman who still goes skating. She still goes ice-skating. In fact, she doesn’t just skate in Ontario; she tours the United States. That is the human potential: Never stop learning, never stop being active. In that light, our government has committed to funding initiatives that allow seniors to be active and engage with their peers.

We are expanding our Seniors Community Grant Program by committing \$11 million over three years to support more recreational, educational and social opportunities for seniors. We received tremendous interest this year, vindicating our decision to grow the program and have it benefit more seniors. This innovative program has supported activities that have benefitted more than 435,000 seniors since its inception. This includes projects such as the Peterborough New Horizons Bands—made up of seniors, many of whom had never previously played an instrument.

Interjection.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: It is true that Minister Leal and I had a chance to play some instruments with this band. Their commitment to lifelong learning and social engagement was a breath of fresh air when I took part in band practice on a visit last winter, along with the member for Peterborough.

Similarly, I was inspired by the intergenerational program being run by the Coniston Community Garden, where seniors have the opportunity to share their joy of gardening with local children.

We are investing \$8 million over three years to create 40 additional seniors active living centres across the province for seniors to remain active and engaged in their local area. This will expand the seniors active living centres network to over 300, allowing Ontarians to benefit from the programming these centres provide, including exercise classes, transportation services and communal dining experiences.

From Ancaster to Ottawa, Cobourg to London, I have toured many of the seniors active living centres our province has to offer. These facilities are led by outstanding teams of staff dedicated to providing seniors with a wide range of programming and engagement opportunities. These centres are an essential component of our government’s commitment to addressing social isolation.

We are supporting shared learning experiences between seniors and youth. There will be an investment of \$600,000 over two years to support the existing ChangeTheWorld program that links youth volunteers with seniors to help enable their use of technology.

There will also be an investment of over \$4 million over two years to establish a senior-youth mentorship program. This program will build relationships and encourage knowledge sharing between generations. We want to harness the opportunity for seniors to share with youth their wealth of lived experiences, on everything from career management to life skills.

We are also set to expand the successful age-friendly community grant program—a program whose success will be on display at next week’s Age-Friendly Communities Symposium. This symposium, the first of its kind in Canada, will highlight Ontario’s progress on developing age-friendly communities in small, urban and rural settings, including multicultural and indigenous communities. The goal is to showcase communities that have made tremendous progress building a physical and social environment that is accessible to people of all ages.

During the symposium, I will be presenting 40 municipalities with the brand new Ontario Age-Friendly Community Recognition Award. I would ask all members of provincial Parliament in this Legislature that if your municipality is getting an age-friendly recognition award—there are 40 municipalities that we are awarding—please be at hand to support your municipality and your constituencies by attending this awards ceremony. This award will honour communities that have led the way in making their communities more age-friendly and will inspire others to follow their example.

Keeping seniors safe is another fundamental pillar of Aging with Confidence. No senior should live fearing they will be taken advantage of by a family member or a salesperson at the door. Our government is taking a holistic approach by investing in efforts to prevent these incidents from occurring and then providing the right supports in the event this abuse does take place.

Over one third of seniors have not designated a trusted power of attorney. A public awareness campaign will raise awareness among seniors of how important and how easy it is to set up a power of attorney and to encourage them to choose who can make personal care and financial decisions on their behalf if necessary. Easy-to-use resources, including information on how to prevent POA misuse, will be readily available online.

Hearing stories of seniors being victimized by consumer scams is both disturbing and disheartening. Recognizing that seniors are increasingly being targeted, manipulated and, in some cases, even forced to hand over their financial information to individuals wishing to inflict harm, our government has taken action. We have committed to launching a consumer protection program aimed at protecting seniors’ hard-earned money through education and awareness, as well as through enhanced assistance for seniors who have fallen victim to these threats or scams.

Ontario’s Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee is the public guardian for over 13,000 mentally incapable adults, an office that touches the lives of more than 50,000 of Ontario’s most vulnerable citizens. We are committed to strengthening this office with an investment of \$10 million over two years. This will go towards the creation of a contact centre, improving information management and modernizing service delivery—all designed to support anticipated increases in volume and complexity.

0930

Seniors have made it exceptionally clear that they want to live in their own homes and in their community

for as long as possible. They have told us that few things are more important than maintaining their independence. But at the same time, they have said that independence should not come at the cost of social isolation.

These are the three threads that we have married in our seniors strategy, because Ontario seniors have told us three things: “We want to continue to lead lives of purpose. We want to live in our own homes for as long as possible and as independently as possible, but not become socially isolated.” We’ve taken these three threads and married them together, and that is the essence of Ontario’s Seniors Strategy.

As my colleague the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care outlined earlier, our government has taken a holistic approach to supporting seniors’ health care. Between a once-in-a-generation investment in long-term care, increases to both hospital capacity and care hours, essential enhancements to—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: If you listen, your questions will be answered—essential enhancements to home care and supportive housing, along with caregiver resources, our government has shown that we are dedicated to making this incredibly stressful and emotional time for Ontarians that much easier.

Another innovative component of this plan is a \$15-million investment to create “naturally occurring” retirement communities. This means, for example, that if an apartment building is already home to many seniors, health care services and social programs could be introduced to help them age in place. This may include developing communal spaces for meals or for social and wellness activities. This does exactly what seniors want: to age in place without having to move away, and with their social network intact.

Interjection.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: You should listen; that would help you more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo will come to order.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: With this investment, Ontario will lead the way as one of the first jurisdictions to take action on naturally occurring retirement communities in a major way.

I’d also like to highlight Ontario’s Dementia Strategy as it once again shows our government’s proactive approach to support a growing number of Ontario families whose lives are transformed by this illness. This strategy will provide more than \$100 million over three years for better services, including increasing access to adult day programs, enhancing caregiver respite services, expanding behavioural supports, and improving the coordination of care.

In addition, our government announced that the Alzheimer Society’s First Link program will receive \$8.15 million over three years to enhance dementia care coordination across the province. This program will

provide 14,000 people diagnosed with dementia, and their care partners, with the services of a First Link Care Navigator who will help them access local supports and programs such as health professionals, information about day-to-day living care, counselling, and other community programs and services.

Having said all of that, there is one area that I haven’t discussed—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I’m just going to ask that everyone take a deep breath. I don’t appreciate conversations going across the aisle, okay? I’ve already asked the House to come to order several times. I would expect, with the demeanour in the House the way it is right now, that we can always get better.

So I’m going to turn it back over to the Minister of Seniors Affairs to continue with debate. Minister?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker.

Having said all of that, there is one area that I have not discussed. It’s an issue that I know is on the minds of seniors daily. It’s a question my office gets repeatedly, and it’s one of the most visited sections on our new website: financial assistance for seniors. For generations, human life expectancy has been increasing, and this has allowed all of us to live longer and has allowed us to view 65 as the start of a new adventure rather than the end of a road well travelled. Part of a good retirement is, of course, financial security. That is why, as a province and as a country, we have the Guaranteed Annual Income System, an enhanced Canada Pension Plan, the seniors’ public transit tax credit, and the Senior Homeowners’ Property Tax Grant—all examples of provincial programs designed to support seniors financially.

But there is more we can do. As we move forward, our government will continue to prioritize making life more affordable for all Ontarians, including seniors, and making life more affordable will be complemented by a reduction in hospital wait times, an expansion of home care, investments in mental health and an assurance that more people without a drug and dental benefits plan will have access to more affordable prescription drugs and dental care.

When I speak with seniors, I have the unique pleasure of learning what life was once like in Ontario—how our neighbourhoods were designed, how we did business, the way we communicated—and it’s always a delight, Mr. Speaker, to learn.

I’m proud that our government has the long-term vision and will make the necessary investments that will allow all Ontarians to age with confidence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing debate, I now turn it over to the Minister of Education.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our world and the economy are constantly changing and evolving. We know there are families in Ontario that are under a lot of pressure and living with a lot of uncertainty. People need help making ends meet, people

need help finding jobs and people need help with supports for their families. For working families with young children, these stresses and strains can be particularly difficult and challenging. Families need a government that cares, a government that puts supports in place and will make life easier so they can succeed.

One of the most vital supports young families need right now to succeed is access to quality, affordable child care. Child care allows parents to head to work with peace of mind so they can participate in our economy and provide for their families. Child care allows mothers to head back to work when they choose so they can support their families knowing their children are being well looked after. And child care allows our kids to grow up in happy, healthy, safe learning environments so they can get the best possible start in life.

Mr. Speaker, when our government held consultations on the gender wage gap, the number one recommendation that was made was to increase access to affordable, high-quality licensed child care. Think about that: Access to quality, affordable child care was the number one and number two recommendation given to us to close the gender wage gap and create a fair and just society for all. So we decided to do just that: create a strong system of quality, affordable child care to support families so they can flourish and thrive and lay the foundation for a stronger Ontario for all of us.

In fact, research shows that child care sets our kids on an early path to long-term success. It promotes women's participation in the workforce, reduces the gender wage gap, strengthens our overall economy and gives our kids a strong start in life. Think about that: A strong child care system builds a stronger Ontario.

By transforming the way we deliver child care, we not only create a strong future for children and families, but we also create a strong future for Ontario workers. By creating 100,000 new licensed child care spaces over the next five years, we will also be creating thousands of valuable jobs for Ontarians. This is good for kids, good for families and good for the economy. That's why we delivered a speech from the throne that commits to building a quality, affordable child care system for Ontario families.

We will be making deliberate, strong choices to invest in the care and services the people of this province need and rely on, services that include public education, early years programming and child care. Speaker, Ontario is a leader in these areas and our publicly funded education system is recognized internationally as one of the best when it comes to excellence. Our early years and child care system is preparing our children for the future by giving them the best possible start in life. Our vision for education and the early years is a system that's inclusive, equitable and accessible, a system that puts our children on a seamless continuum of learning from birth, to kindergarten, to grade 12 and beyond.

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Speaker, the bottom line is that this makes for a stronger and more prosperous Ontario for everyone who

calls this great province home. It's about equity, it's about fairness and it's about creating a solid future for everyone. This success is a direct result of key priorities we've made over the last 15 years. This includes our publicly funded education system—that's 72 school boards, nearly 5,000 schools and two million students. It's about supporting those students so they can flourish, thrive and reach their full potential. That's why our government has made historic investments in education through the Grants for Student Needs, which is projected to be \$23.9 billion for the 2017-18 school year. That's a 66% increase since 2003 and more than \$4,900 more per student.

Just think about that. We have supported our children, invested in our education system and worked tirelessly to create an environment that supports and cares for our children. And, Mr. Speaker, because of these investments, student achievement is up, graduation rates are up and public confidence in our publicly funded schools is up. Parents know their children are getting the education they need to succeed, and students know they are getting the opportunity to fulfill their potential and become engaged, productive citizens.

The same thing can be said for our youngest learners. We are giving our children the best possible start in life, so we can put them on a path to lifelong success. That's why we are transforming our early years and child care system.

It began with an ambitious modernization plan, where we replaced the Day Nurseries Act with new legislation and developed *How Does Learning Happen*, a resource that strengthens the quality of early years services across Ontario. We continued with new regulations to transform our early years system and to protect our youngest and most vulnerable learners. We eliminated unfair child care wait-list fees. We committed to transform the way we deliver child care in this province by creating more quality, affordable, licensed spaces.

Since we took office, Mr. Speaker, our investments in child care have increased by 182%, to \$1.58 billion. Furthermore, our government has committed to \$1.6 billion over five years to help 100,000 more children aged zero to four access licensed child care over five years. And starting this past year, this commitment includes capital funding to support the creation of 45,000 licensed spaces in schools and communities.

This groundbreaking commitment is part of our Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework. This is our blueprint for the future. It's a plan to transform Ontario's early years and child care system to support families right across this province. This seven-point plan supports our government's vision for the early years, to ensure that Ontario's children and families are well supported by a system of responsive, high-quality, accessible and increasingly integrated early years programs and services, a system that contributes to healthy child development today and a stronger future tomorrow.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that our upcoming budget will continue to support child care

access in Ontario. We will directly address the cost of child care and make it more affordable for families in Ontario. Affordability is a big priority for our government and will bring welcome relief to those who rely on child care.

Strong support in the early years is just the first piece. When children in Ontario turn four, they now have access to full-day kindergarten. FDK provides early, high-quality education to four- and five-year-olds, and it's a huge savings for families. When we implemented FDK, it was recognized as the most significant transformation in our education system in a generation. It's unique because it includes a play-based learning approach and a nimble and flexible staffing team of a teacher and an early childhood educator. It's groundbreaking. It's forward-thinking.

Our innovative approach to education continues through the elementary level. Again, it's about that seamless continuum of learning for all.

We've focused on better ways of teaching students the basics of literacy and numeracy, and we've worked hard to develop their higher-order skills. We want creativity, citizenship and critical-thinking skills to be embedded in all aspects of our education system. This means that rather than just teaching students to remember information, we're teaching them how to use and synthesize that information practically and beyond the classroom.

The results speak for themselves. In 2016-17, overall results show that 71% of grade 3 and grade 6 students are achieving at or above the standard in reading, math and writing. At the secondary level, Ontario has been a trailblazer in offering students opportunities to gain real-life, hands-on experience in the workplace. Our co-op program allows students to combine classroom and workplace learning while earning credits toward their high school diploma. We've heard from employers that they are looking for students who have this experience, students who know how to think creatively and critically about problems.

The groundbreaking Specialist High Skills Major program—SHSM—allows students to choose from 19 different sectors, including agriculture, health and wellness, and transportation, to help them prepare for apprenticeship training, college, university or the workplace.

In September, more than 50,000 students were enrolled in almost 1,900 SHSM programs. That's an amazing number of students. These programs allow them to focus on a career path that matches their skills and their interests while meeting the requirements of the Ontario secondary school diploma.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, these innovative secondary programs are absolutely having a positive impact on our students, they are having a positive impact on our schools, and they are having a positive impact on our communities. We know this is having a positive impact on our students because today more students are graduating from high school than ever before, with 86.5% of students graduating in 2016. This is a jump from 68% in 2003-04. That increase in the grad rate means that

approximately 217,500 more Ontario students have graduated than would have if the graduation rate had remained at the 2004 level. Think about that. Our work is paying off. Our young people are moving forward.

Our government has also made significant investments to renew and build new schools across the province, to ensure that students have modern, safe and healthy environments in which to learn. Since 2003, we have provided more than \$18 billion in capital funding for school boards to build or rebuild one in six schools in Ontario.

We are proud of what we have accomplished to improve the education experience for Ontario students, but we also know that we need to go beyond the fundamentals if our students are to succeed in their future. It's not enough just to get good grades; the public education system also needs to support the emotional, social and physical development of our students. Promoting and supporting well-being and equity is of fundamental importance to Ontario students and in helping them to reach their full potential. This includes supports for student mental health.

There is no question that young people today are facing some of the most serious mental health challenges. In fact, not a day goes by without us hearing about a young person who is having trouble dealing with stress, suffering from depression or is perhaps contemplating suicide. It's troubling, it's heartbreaking, and it's unacceptable. We have to do everything we can to give our kids the help they need and the support they deserve.

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They don't need cuts, they need care—a government that cares, helps and supports them. Our kids can't learn, thrive or be successful if they aren't happy, healthy and well. And we can't build a solid foundation for our children and their future if we don't give our children peace of mind. There is a call for action, and all we have to do is listen and act. The time to act is now.

Mr. Speaker, we are strengthening well-being supports for all students, educators and staff in order to make schools across the province more inclusive, safe and welcoming environments. The plan was informed by feedback from thousands of Ontarians through province-wide engagements over the past year. And we are investing \$49 million over three years to support it. But we aren't stopping there.

Our upcoming budget will continue to support student mental health and well-being. In the 2018 budget, you will see major investments in mental health services Ontarians need. This will expand access to mental health care and ensure people can get the support they need in our schools and in our communities. Mr. Speaker, it's the right thing to do.

It's clear that our government has made our education and early years and child care systems a top priority. Along with our key partners, we are committed to delivering responsive, high-quality and accessible services and programs—a full continuum that is integrated and seamless from early learning and child care right

through to adult education. That's because education is one of the most valued public services in Ontario. It's one of the ways in which we can level the playing field for all our children in this province, for all students and families, and give everyone the opportunity to succeed.

That's why, in the upcoming 2018 budget and the years to come, we will continue to focus on equity, achievement and well-being in our publicly funded education system; and access and affordability in our early years and child care system. Mr. Speaker, the reason we are doing this is because we want to make life easier for Ontarians and address the uncertainty that many families are feeling.

I'm confident that if we remain committed to these priorities, we will begin to reach for even greater heights and build a better province for everyone in Ontario, young and old.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Before I begin, I would seek unanimous consent of the House to defer our lead on this throne speech debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is seeking unanimous consent to defer the lead. Agreed? Agreed.

To the member.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. And I thank the House for accommodating that. Our lead speaker will join the debate this afternoon.

You know, I have listened to the Liberals speak, the government. They decided that the throne speech wasn't worth an hour of debate on their part for the lead. This might be the only part of the day that we actually agree on, that it wasn't worth an hour of debate. In fact, it wasn't worth a pinch of whatever they say back in the country there. It wasn't worth that for sure, Speaker. What a vacuous, empty throne speech we witnessed and listened to yesterday—an absolute waste of the Legislature's time.

You know what it was, Speaker?

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And look, I'm just barely beginning. Maybe they wanted to talk for the hour because they certainly seem to want to talk now. But I sat here politely and listened to their 40 minutes of nothing; and I barely get started and the member from Ancaster woke up and he's on me. Well, my goodness gracious, certainly I'm glad that I could rise them from their slumber here in the chamber this morning.

When I listened to the Liberals, Speaker, it makes, I have to say—and I heard the Lieutenant Governor as she read the speech. Inside she must have been wondering, "Where have I heard this? Is this déjà vu—like Yogi Berra—all over again? I've heard this song before, time after time after time."

I know I'm exaggerating. It's sort of like the pastor at church. He told us how kids, children, can sometimes exaggerate. He was saying how his son says, "Oh, I've done this a hundred times," to which he replied to his

son, "Now, I've told you about this a thousand times." We all tend to exaggerate from time to time. It may have been an exaggeration that we've heard it hundreds of times, but we've certainly heard it before.

What we heard yesterday was just like rewinding the tape. I know we don't use tape anymore, but if we did, that's what they would have been doing: rewinding the tape. My wife would call that "veik ir pika": over and over again, over and over again.

It was a stark admission of the failure of this government for the past 15 years. I know the Lieutenant Governor reads the speech, but it's this Premier's speech. It's just the tradition. She talked about how people are struggling in Ontario. Yes, you're right. They are struggling in Ontario. Let me just check my records here. Oh, in October 2003 the Liberals were elected government and they've been running this province into the ground ever since.

So if the people are struggling in Ontario, who do you think is to blame? Is it the opposition, which passes no legislation? Is it the opposition, which makes no appointments to agencies, boards or commissions? Is it the opposition that appoints the deputy ministers and the assistant deputy ministers? No. So if it's not us, who is it? I suspect it must be those folks over there, Speaker, who have been running this province into the ground for 15 years.

And now they're talking about how people are struggling and, "On the eve of our exit, we have found a conscience. We have found a soul. We have loved you all this time but we've only begun to realize how deeply. And now we're going to fix everything. That's why we needed, in the greatest urgency in the history of mankind, to prorogue the Parliament and have a throne speech. Because we've got to tell the people of Ontario we're sorry and we're going to do better."

Mr. Steve Clark: "And we really mean it this time."

Mr. John Yakabuski: "We really mean it this time. Just give us one more chance. Yes, yes, we've been hosing you for 15 years. Yes, we've emptied your pockets to the point that the only thing left in them is lint. Yes, we've hollowed out the manufacturing sector in this province. Yes, we've put long-term-care homes into a crisis, and also home care into a crisis, and hallway medicine and hallway health care. Yes, we've done all those and we've got a list of scandals longer than Shaquille O'Neal's arm. But if you just put your trust in us one more time, we're going to do better. Just forget about that 15 years. Forget about all those scandals. Forget about 300% increases in hydro. Forget about it."

What was that movie that Andy Garcia was in? "Just forget about it. Forget about it. Yes, we've been messing it up for 15 years, but forget about it. Forget about it. We're going to do better. Just give us one more chance and we're going to do it right."

Well, Speaker, I don't think they can fool you, but they're going to try to fool the people of Ontario, because they're hoping that they haven't been paying attention. Do you know what the people of Ontario were paying

attention to last night? Premier Wynne calls a town hall, advertises it all across creation—

Mr. Todd Smith: On the taxpayer's dime.

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Mr. John Yakabuski: On the taxpayer's dime—and she could barely draw flies. Doug Ford, on only two days' notice, schedules a rally at the congress centre, and it was an overflowing crowd of over 2,000 people who have had enough of this government in Ontario.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The biggest crowd you've ever seen in Ontario. It was huge. Say the word "huge."

Mr. John Yakabuski: Were you there with us?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, I hear it; I hear it.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. Please address the Speaker.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: See the pictures.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Apparently, we don't only have the Liberals scared and nervous; they're a little nervous too. They're having this little game now between them about, "Okay, this is a new game in Ontario. Who can spend the most money in 20 minutes on the television?" It's a little fight between Kathleen Wynne and Andrea Horwath.

It's sort of like: You remember that television game show, Speaker? I'm not trying to date you or anything, but you remember the television game show Name That Tune? "I can name that tune in four notes; I can name that tune in three notes." It's a little reversed: "I can spend \$6 million; I can spend \$8 million; I can spend \$10 million." It's going up. It's not fewer notes; it's more money. And every time they open their mouths, it's like, "Who is going to work harder to buy the votes of the people of Ontario?" It's almost like a contest about who is going to buy the votes and spend more of the taxpayers' hard-earned money—which has to be paid back at some time. It's a free-for-all. It's not about responsible government; it's about offering the people anything they want with their own money—which they don't realize—for their votes. Yes.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, we didn't have that. It was never called that, Jeff. I say to Jeff: If you're going to be critical, you've got to get it right—so, barrels of money.

Let's talk a little bit about the promises in the throne speech. First of all, they're going to fix health care. Here we are, probably in the greatest crisis time in Ontario's health care history, with more people in hallways than ever before. Beds have been closed and people are in hallways, but now they are going to spend the money that's needed to fix it.

We've got 34,000 people on the waiting list for long-term care. Just a few scant years ago, the Liberals, in their new caring strategy, announced that they were going to build zero new long-term-care beds—zero. Deb Matthews was the Minister of Health at the time, and they were going to build no new beds because they had an aging strategy that did not require them to build new

long-term-care beds. We were wondering, "What in the name of Sam Hill are they thinking?" We've got an aging population and the numbers of people who are entering their senior years is growing every year, and the level of acuity in our long-term-care homes is getting higher and worse every year, and they're not going to build long-term-care beds. Their strategy then was, "By the time we build them, the baby boomers will have filtered their way through the system and we're actually going to need fewer beds." That's small consolation to the people who actually need the beds now. "Well, if we just wait until you die off, we're not going to need the beds." That was their thinking. I won't need a bed after I'm dead either. I won't need this seat. I won't even need a bed at home; I won't need one anywhere. But if you're just waiting for me to die, you could be waiting a while—I hope.

Then, all of a sudden, the Liberals realized, "Holy moly, we've got an election in 2018. We've got to come up with a new plan." So now, last year, "We're building new beds. Hallelujah. Let the bells ring out and let the banners fly. We're going to build new beds." Some 30,000 beds over 10 years, I think it is now. The promises just have no limit. First you're not building any beds, and now you're going to build 30,000 beds.

After 15 years, I suspect that the people of Ontario are on to you. They're not buying what you're selling. They have been fooled too many times by these Liberals. The promises that they continue to make are not resonating anymore, because for the people, it's just hollow talk; it's empty rhetoric. They don't view it as being credible anymore. They don't believe you. They do not believe this government, and that is something, Speaker.

When you've been in power for so long—we're all raised to believe that the government is there, regardless of its political stripe, regardless of which political party holds the levers of power in any jurisdiction in our western democracies—we are conditioned to believe that they are there for us, the people—we, the people. We are conditioned to believe that government is there for us. They don't believe that about this government anymore. They don't believe that about this party. They believe that this party now exists to serve itself, to serve themselves, to serve their agenda, and whatever it takes, whatever message they have to disseminate to the people in order to get elected is the one that they will spread.

You have to ask yourself if this is where the people have landed, that they no longer believe in the government that is running the show in Ontario. It really is a sad day for democracy. But how did we get there? We didn't get there with 15 years of good government. Things do go wrong from time to time, and it's not always the government's fault. But if the people would be able to sit back and say, "You know, a lot of things happened that were beyond the control of the people in power. We believe that they had our best interests at heart, but sometimes events are bigger than any government"—but that's not where we are in Ontario. We've actually reached a point where political cynicism is at the highest level ever, and it is governments that run for the purpose

of re-electing themselves that drive that cynicism to these new record levels. It's at new record levels, the cynicism that exists in politics today. You have to ask yourself—if only this government was actually acting in the best interests of the people as opposed to their own re-election plans.

All you have to do, Speaker, is look at the last couple of years. Every bill that has been brought forward by this government, every initiative that they have taken to the people of Ontario, every single thing—the acid test of whether it gets approved in the corner office on the second floor is one thing: “Does this improve our chances on being elected or reduce our chances on being elected? If it passes the test and it says it improves our chances on being elected, that's the bill we'll debate in the House.” That is the initiative that will be put forward.

But how is it possible—and I say this from the point of view of any political party—that the people's interest and the political party's interest are always aligned? It just doesn't work that way. It doesn't matter if you're Liberal, Conservative or NDP. That's the basis on which this government has worked from in the past couple of years: There's only one test that must be passed and that is, “Does it further our chance for re-election?” Not, “Will it have a detrimental long-term effect on the people of Ontario?” Not, “Will it put us in a financial position that hamstring future generations for decades to come?” That is not the concern that they have ever asked themselves. They do not care what happens in Ontario over the next generation; they only care what happens in Ontario on June 7. And that is regrettable.

As people who are elected to this assembly, we have to believe that acting in the best interest of the people we serve will ultimately be in our best interest as well, but the priority has to be the best interest of the people—the people first. If you put the people first I don't think you'll ever go wrong.

It's not just the big things. I have a list here that, oh, my God, it even pains me to read. The waste and the scandals of this government's 15 years in office is just—\$8 billion on eHealth and we still don't have it.

Interjection: Name the hospitals.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Name the hospitals, Lou—\$8 billion. What's going on in the hospitals?

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I see the member for Northumberland is going on about hospitals. What's going on in our hospitals when we have people in hallways waiting for health care for days and days and days—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I'm almost out of time.

You know what really irks people? When there is no concern whatsoever for the taxpayers' money, like this recent example: Has anybody seen that Ontario cannabis store logo? Some \$650,000 on a logo that could have been designed by a four-year-old; \$650,000 of the taxpayers' money. That is shameful.

It's this kind of waste that is going to spell the end of this tired, out-of-touch, corrupt government in the province of Ontario.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There will be opportunity this afternoon for questions and comments.

Since it is now 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park the president of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, Gyllian Phillips, and their executive director, Mark Rosenfeld. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, I had a meeting this morning with some members of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. I'd like to welcome John Ciriello, from the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association; Stephen Pitel, from Western; Jennifer Sutton, from Brescia Faculty Association; Neil Brooks, from Huron University College; and John Grant, from King's University College Faculty Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Today, I would like to welcome Caius Harbridge from my riding of Barrie. Caius is a grade 7 student at Portage View school and is serving as a page. Welcome to Queen's Park, Caius.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to welcome Denise and Mike Roy and their daughter Sierra Roy, who are the family of page captain Mikayla Roy, who is here today as well from our riding of Wellington–Halton Hills. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to welcome the board of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture here today and thank them for the great meeting they hosted.

L'hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: J'aimerais accueillir à Queen's Park des représentants d'OCUFA que j'ai rencontrés ce matin : Jeanette Hatherill de l'Université d'Ottawa, Root Gorelick de Carleton University Academic Staff Association, Gyllian Phillips et Ben Lewis.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce our page captain Annabelle Rayson today. Her mother, Stephanie Lobsinger, is in the members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to introduce our page captain today: Lauren Grierson, from Toronto Centre. She is joined here today by her mother, Catharine Matthews; her father, David Grierson; and her twin sister, Kaitlin Grierson. They will be joining us here in the public gallery this morning. Welcome.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to welcome representatives from the Ontario Personal Support Worker Association. We have Debbie Jensen, Sylvia Ryan, Rebecca Piironen, Cynthia Stephens, April Hill and Miranda Ferrier. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to introduce Tiffany Encina. She is a student from Ryerson. She is not only gracing me with her presence at my office but helping me out as well. Welcome.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I'd also like to give a very warm welcome to today's page captain, Lauren Grierson. Lauren is a grade 8 student from Deer Park Junior and Senior Public School and a resident of Toronto Centre. I met her and former page Kaitlin Grierson, who is with us today, as ambassadors for Forests Ontario for their Green Leaf Challenge last year. I also want to welcome their family: Cathy Matthews, and Lauren's father, David Grierson. Welcome to Queen's Park, and welcome back, Kaitlin.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I know she's watching at home or at the office, but I'd like to wish Vicki Welton from Lindsay a very happy birthday on behalf of her son, Cody Welton.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: On behalf of our Premier, I want to welcome Sylvia Dixon to the Legislature today. She is the proud grandmother of Luke Dixon, who is a page here in the Legislature, from the riding of Don Valley West.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Just on a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're doing introductions. Thank you.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Further introductions: the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, thank you so very much for allowing me to introduce page captain Aidan Fletcher; his mother, Michele Hirak Fletcher; his father, Andrew Fletcher; his sister, Avery Fletcher; his grandmother Elizabeth Fletcher; and his grandfather Peter Hirak. They will be in the members' gallery this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome Hannah Scott from UOIT, who is at Queen's Park today with the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. Welcome.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I would like to welcome the members of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, OCUFA, to the House, and also to invite everyone to a reception today here at Queen's Park from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. All members are invited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is the custom of the Speaker to introduce former members in the gallery, in the Speaker's gallery today we have Mr. David Warner, the Speaker for the 35th Parliament. Welcome, David. We're glad you're with us for the tribute.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled during the adjournment: a report entitled Ontario Health Sector: An

Updated Assessment of Ontario Health Spending, Winter 2018, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also 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 Mrs. Gretzky assumes ballot item number 7 and Ms. Forster assumes ballot item number 71.

WEARING OF HOCKEY JERSEY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will now entertain the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka on a point of order.

Mr. Norm Miller: I would ask for unanimous consent to wear the Boston Bruins jersey of Bobby Orr, number 4, as this is his 70th birthday. He's the greatest hockey player who ever played.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka would like to wear the jersey for the rest of the sitting, in honour of Bobby Orr's birthday. Do we agree? Agreed.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ajax–Pickering on a point of order.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Mr. Speaker, I believe that you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of MEAO, the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, and their guests, who will be introduced later on this afternoon at 3 o'clock.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Dickson is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons. Do we agree? Agreed.

NORM JAMISON

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

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

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

Therefore, please allow me to introduce and welcome, in the Speaker's gallery, the family of the late Norman Jamison, MPP for Norfolk during the 35th Parliament, who are seated in this gallery: his wife, Sharon Jamison; daughter Carrie and her husband, Tim Makins; daughter Andrea and her husband, Chad Husted; daughter Shannon and her husband, David Spoelstra; daughter Eileen

and her husband, Matt Sankar; and grandchildren Caitlin and Brooklyn Makins, Lucas and Zachary Husted, and Noah, Christian and Ava Spoelstra. Welcome to the Legislature.

I will turn to the members for their tributes.

1040

Mr. James J. Bradley: It's an honour for me to pay tribute today to Norm Jamison, an individual I had the advantage of knowing, having been a member back at the same time and recalling the avalanche of 1990, which led to the New Democratic Party. It was a surprise to many at the beginning of that campaign but not by the end of the campaign. Norm was one of the individuals who were fortunate enough to be elected on that occasion.

What was interesting was—and the member for Norfolk would know this—that the Haldimand-Norfolk area was not what you would call the heartland of the NDP, by any means. So when Norm started out the campaign—remembering that in the polls in those days, the Liberal government was well ahead at the beginning of that campaign, and by the end was not ahead; I can assure you of that. People who took on the position of candidate in those days in the New Democratic Party were, I think, rather courageous people. I know that there was a scramble sometimes near the end, as there is, to get candidates, and it was good of people to come forward. Many of the people who came forward were from the labour movement, and Norm was one of those.

He was born in Ireland, I think, as many people would have known, and had an interesting time back in Ireland itself, which had encountered some conflict over the years. He was pleased to come to Canada and to the city of Hamilton, where he would become a worker at Stelco's Hilton Works plant, and a proud worker at that.

In 1979, Norm moved to Stelco's Lake Erie Works in Nanticoke, where he served as the vice-president of United Steelworkers Local 8782. People in the labour movement would know this better than others, but if you think politics is tough in the political scene in which we're involved, you should be in labour politics; then you would know what tough politics are. My friends who served there would tell me that. But he took that on.

He became a provincial candidate, actually, in 1987, and a municipal councillor in 1988. He was elected to the House by winning Norfolk for the NDP in that fateful time of 1990.

Despite having his own doubts about his ability to win, Mr. Jamison went on to advocate for the best interests of his community and steelworkers across Ontario. While he was a member of the steelworkers union—and obviously there were a number of people who worked at the steel works, whether in Hamilton or Nanticoke—he also recognized that he represented a broader community at that time.

He was appointed parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology with responsibility for small business, to help local businesses reach new global markets. I found a quote that I thought was rather interesting, because it's interesting not only in the day

that he said it but even relevant today. I'll mention that a little later on.

He became parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade in 1993. He continued to be what the Hamilton Spectator referred to as a “no-nonsense, straight forward” guy, which meant he could be a pain in the neck to the Premier of the day. There are people like that, I'm told, in various caucuses. He certainly was not afraid to speak up when the NDP caucus got together. That is a particular attribute which I can say I admire in people. I try to actually follow in his footsteps.

He endlessly did what was right for his constituents, and he was a fierce defender of their interests, even if it meant standing up to his own government in its decision to close Selkirk Provincial Park. That's tough, again, to be openly critical of your own government for those reasons.

Following his departure from Queen's Park in 1995, he returned to Stelco, where he would continue to remain engaged in community relations.

In his personal life, Norm showed an endless commitment to his community as the United Way representative for Norfolk county and a member of the Lions Club.

Norm's efforts in advocating for his constituents and standing up for citizens across Ontario serve as an example of the role of member of provincial Parliament. As a result, it's my pleasure, as I say, to pay tribute.

I found a quote that he made that I thought was rather interesting. I may not be able to quote it exactly, but he talked about the fact that in competition, you don't go to the bottom. There was a lot of pressure in those days. Remember, they were in the midst of a very deep recession, and the pressure was to make concessions on the part of labour and for governments to make concessions to everybody else because they wanted to keep business.

He said, “We will not succeed in meeting our competitive challenge by developing a business environment which features low wages, little security for workers and little protection for the natural environment. I believe we cannot go back to the time of a dollar-an-hour wage. Our future prosperity will depend on sustained innovation, the ability to adapt to quickly changing circumstances in our community and our ability to deliver these high-value products and services that are not vulnerable to low-cost competitors.”

That is almost throughout time that that pressure is there. He resisted that particular pressure, and his constituents, particularly those who were involved in industry, were very thankful for that.

We thank the members of the family who are here today for sharing Norm with us for five years, and actually for sharing him with the community in the other capacities in which he served. I certainly pay tribute to him and to his colleagues in the New Democratic Party who happened to know him. Perhaps they didn't serve with him—one member did; the member for Timmins—James Bay would have served with him—but he was

certainly an individual who will be remembered within the caucus and within the constituency in which he was so active.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: It is an honour to pay tribute to my predecessor, former MPP Norm Jamison. First and foremost, having known Norm for 30 years, I can attest that Norm Jamison was a true gentleman. He was quiet, thoughtful, courteous. He was a listener and an engaging conversationalist. Norm had respect. And why wouldn't he have respect? He was a steelworker, loyal to his union, and a devoted family man.

Norm was handsome, northern Irish, with the kind of stature you don't mess with. I will quote Ian Nichols, an area NDP candidate: "One of the things that sticks in my mind is that he was from Ireland ... if you wanted to go toe to toe with someone, he wasn't the guy to do that with. Everyone who knew him, understood this."

Norm was born in Magherafelt, Northern Ireland. His family immigrated to Canada in 1952 to escape sectarian strife between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Norm returned to Ireland in 1970 and joined the Ulster defence unit. He tired of the violence and the occasional chance meetings with Irish republican toughs.

Upon his return, Norm renewed his acquaintance with Sharon. The pair had met at a dance in Hamilton in the weeks just before he left for Europe. They married and went on to have four daughters.

I recall Eileen, the youngest, speaking at the funeral, describing herself as "my dad's favourite," saying her dad would drive his daughters anywhere, just to be with them, shopping for things they didn't need. Then Shannon came forward saying—and I took notes—"I'm pretty sure I was his favourite," describing her dad as so physically and emotionally strong. Then from Andrea and Carrie—also their dad's favourites, by the way—we heard that Norm taught his daughters how to throw a punch. With four daughters, Norm must have got up at about 4 in the morning to have a shower. I don't know how he accommodated that.

Four sons-in-law, of course: Matt Sankar, Dave Spoelstra, Chad Husted and Tim Makins. And the grandchildren: Christian, Ava, Noah, Lucas, Zachary, Caitlin and Brooklyn.

As Norm's health faltered, he received a call from Bob Rae. Sharon put the call on speakerphone, and Norm's eyes opened and a smile crossed his face once he heard his leader's voice.

1050

To quote the former Premier, Bob Rae: "He was an outstandingly hard-working, decent, engaging man, and was the source of good advice, counsel and support to me as Premier. I thought the world of him then and now. He thoroughly enjoyed his elected service and was an outstanding MPP. He was one of those politicians who generated respect and affection from people in all parties."

Prior to my being elected in 1995, I was fortunate to build up a working relationship with Norm. I was doing

joint union-management work with industry, including steelworkers and Stelco management. Every year I would sit in Norm's office to get his commitment to do the opening keynote address for our annual symposium. I know Sharon got dragged to that on at least one occasion.

We also worked together during the 1995 election to ensure that the all-candidates' nights were fair, respectful and well organized. I was the rookie and Norm would mentor me, offering me good advice throughout the election. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is just one measure of the kind of man that was Norm Jamison. I've said this many, many times: Norm Jamison was a true gentleman, a true representative of his family and our local area.

Sharon, just the other day, told us that the day Norm was elected was a dream come true, and throughout his service, his priority was to do a good job for his constituents and to contribute to the area. And that he did—I can attest to that—all the while looking after and making time for his family.

"Norm was honoured to serve," Sharon said. "He was very proud of it and he'd be thrilled with the tribute today."

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Unfortunately, I never knew Norm or had the opportunity to serve with him. It is surprising because we share a lot in common: We both were Stelco workers, big, big union guys, and NDP MPPs from the south central Ontario area. We both are history buffs, strong defenders of our ridings' interests—and I have three daughters; Norm beat me by one. I think we might have been long-lost twins; it's quite possible.

I have to admit, reading about some of his work, I was quite impressed. There was one quote of his that especially struck me as a good idea. During a point of order on December 6, 1994, he said that all MPPs needed to shorten their statements and questions to let more people talk; I can relate to that. I'm sure we would all agree the statement makes him a true visionary. In honour of Norm Jamison, I think some of us should start cutting our speeches in half.

From everything I've learned, researching Norm, I got the sense that it would have been an incredible privilege to know him personally. I also recognize that he had a wonderful impact on the people he knew.

I'm proud also to introduce a large group of Norm's family today. That includes his wife of 45 years, Sharon; children Carrie, Andrea, Shannon and Eileen; their spouses Tim, Chad, David and Matt; as well as Norm's grandchildren Caitlin, Brooklyn, Lucas, Zachary, Noah, Christian and Ava. It's certainly no small group, Speaker.

Norm had many people who loved him and looked up to him. So, to all of you who are here today, thank you so much for sharing Norm. From all of us, thank you for sharing Norm with us, as we are all aware that there's a great deal of dedication required for both an MPP and their family. Long days spent on the campaign trail, unexpected difficulties that arise regularly—everything is amplified a million times. I'm sure we would all like to

say this to our loved ones. Thank you for all the love and support you gave to Norm.

After reading a bit about Norm, it made me want to learn more. With that in mind, I thought it would be most appropriate to reach out to some of the many Norm was close with, to get a better understanding of who Norm was. Today, I'm going to read out just a few of the many statements from his colleagues in the Legislature.

To give you a sense of Norm's dedication to his riding, I will start with a quote from someone who worked with Norm, current senator and former minister Frances Lankin:

"Norm Jamison was a large man with a large personality and a large heart. Norm invited me down to his riding a number of times, and I could see the relationship he had with his constituents. He was always there for them and you could see the high regard in which they held Norm as their MPP.

"I first worked more closely with Norm when I was Minister of Health. We were taking strong policy steps with respect to the negative health effect of smoking. Norm represented Norfolk"—big tobacco country—and the farmers. "He was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Industry and he took a very active role advocating for the farmers in his home community.

"Sometime not too long after, there was a cabinet shuffle and I was moved to the new Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Norm was the PA and the first day in my new portfolio, Norm showed up in my office, sat down"—calmly—"and said, 'Okay, so you are no longer Minister of Health. You are responsible for economic development.' A pause—'Now, let's talk about tobacco farming.'

"He was tough, tenacious, a lot of fun to work with and always put his community first. He left us much, much too early."

Former MPP and minister Rosario Marchese was also eager to pay his respects to Norm. He had wanted to be here at the event but, unfortunately, is travelling at the moment. However, he was somehow able to send a message, using some pretty shaky WiFi, all the way from Chile. Here's part of that message:

"Norm always struck me as a sincere, humble man committed to his district. A union guy through and through. I was so sorry to hear of his passing and my heart goes out to his family."

The final quote I want to leave with you is one from Norm's wife. She wrote to me about Norm's incredible dedication to his family:

"Norm was always interested in politics and had a very strong social conscience. His political activity started when he campaigned for the NDP candidate Ian Deans in Hamilton"—my area. "When he moved out to Norfolk in 1981, he joined the NDP riding association and became the provincial candidate in that area. In 1990 he was elected as a New Democrat. His dedication to his constituents and the communities he represented was evident everywhere in his riding and appreciated by all who knew him. He was well liked and made a very positive and significant difference in the Norfolk riding.

"Family was everything to him, and no matter how busy he was, we"—the family—"always came first. He instilled a strong belief that family is the most important thing," and it was everything to him. "We would describe him as someone who wore his heart on his sleeve and gave of himself unconditionally. He loved people, loved hearing their stories, learning from them and helping them. He was genuine in all that he did and taught his girls to treat everyone with love and respect and to fight for what you believe in. Norm was a fighter until the very end, when he lost his courageous battle with liver cancer."

"A few of Norm's favourite pieces of advice were as follows: 'Life is about choices,' and 'Every day you are miserable is a day wasted.' I think I may have wasted a few."

Laughter.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Norm, for the guidance.

"He is dearly missed by his family and all those that knew him. We are so proud to have been able to call him our husband, father and friend."

Here's to a parliamentarian who was a strong representative of his area, a loving man and a true visionary, a man who lived every day to the fullest.

If you can hear us, Norm, thanks for all you gave us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to thank all members for their very kind and heartfelt statements.

In particular, thank you to the family for being here. As you can see, these are cherished moments that we have in this House to show the affection we have for former members and each other. Thank you for the gift of Norm.

The Legislature would like you to have a copy of the Hansard and a DVD of the tributes that were paid toward Mr. Jamison. Thank you so much for the gift of Norm.

1100

PEJCINOVSKI FAMILY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will now recognize the member from Ajax-Pickering on a point of order.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you for the point of order, Mr. Speaker. 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 condolences for the family that tragically lost their lives in Ajax this past week, the three members of the Pejcinovski family: mother Krissy, son Roy and daughter Venallia. Thank God, the fourth member of the family, their daughter Victoria, is alive. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ajax-Pickering seeks unanimous consent for a moment's silence. Do we agree? Agreed.

I would ask all members of the House to please rise for a moment of silence in tribute to the family in Ajax.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): God rest their souls.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Acting Premier.

One problem with the Liberal government is that they will say anything and promise anything to stay in power. We saw it yesterday with the throne speech. The Liberals talked a lot about care. But for 15 years, they ignored health care. They ignored mental health care. They ignored dental care. They ignored long-term care. In fact, the only thing they actually care about is clinging to power.

Mr. Speaker, why do the Liberals pretend to care about families 79 days before the next election?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, let's be clear: Ontarians do not want to go back. They do not want to go back to the kinds of cuts to public services that were made by Mike Harris. They do not want to go back to the kind of meanness towards people that was exhibited by Stephen Harper.

What people really want is, they want a caring and a fair society that allows them the opportunity to grow. What they want is a Premier and this government to help them build Ontario by investing in them, by investing in their care, by making sure that the kinds of pressures the families are facing today—that the government is providing them relief. It's about the pressure families are feeling about finding good child care for their little ones, saving up tuition for their teens heading to university, or how to deal with an aging parent by finding proper home care. That's what Ontarians want and that's the kind of care we're investing in.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Okay. I've heard from both sides. Your indicators are that you've forgotten what I started before the break, and we're going to ramp it up.

I'll make another observation: While the question was being put, members from the same side were making comments, and when the answer was being put, members from the same side were making comments. You're not helping each other. I'll help you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier: The Premier has made commitments of billions of dollars in new spending for expensive re-election ploys. This is a desperate attempt to spend their way to votes instead of trying to fix the problems that they actually created. In fact, Speaker, one media headline said it all: Premier's "Throne Speech Is Liberal Snake Oil."

"It's the oldest snake oil in the Liberals' bag of tricks and if it was true, Ontario's streets would already be paved with gold."

Certainly our streets aren't paved with gold, and in the case of the Ring of Fire, which was not mentioned in the throne speech, the roads are not even existing at all.

Mr. Speaker, is this not a desperate attempt to win votes with the taxpayers' own money?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, Speaker, while Doug Ford and the Ontario Conservatives may be focused on cutting vital public services that the people of Ontario need and deserve, our government will remain focused on building its care agenda. Our government will remain focused on focusing on home care and elder care, on investing in our mental health care system, expanding child care and eliminating the price of tuition. Speaker, these are the pressures that families are facing. These are the kinds of investments that they want from their government, building on our historic investments in building our health care system and our education system.

We need to take the next step in building that care agenda. So while Doug Ford and the Ontario Conservatives are focused on cutting public services, we're going to build a caring and fair society for the people of Ontario.

Hon. Michael Coteau: The Trump virus is spreading.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Children and Youth Services, come to order.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier: Over the last 15 years, the Liberals have doubled government spending. They've more than doubled the provincial debt. Ontario is the world's most indebted province or state anywhere. So what do the Liberals decide to do? They attempt to cling to power by trying to fool the people of Ontario right before an election. But they aren't fooling anyone. If the Liberals get re-elected, it will be just more of the same.

So, Mr. Speaker, do the Liberals think they can win votes by spending more taxpayers' money, and who do they think they're fooling?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, the member opposite claims to be a numbers guy, so maybe he can help me with this. What we want to know, what Ontarians want to know, is how many jobs are going to be cut under a Conservative government. According to one independent economist, it could be 40,000 jobs. Another says it's going to be 75,000 jobs. During the last election, we know the same party, these same members, ran on—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, come to order. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, during the last election, we know that the Conservative members, all the members who were elected to the House, ran on cutting 100,000 public sector jobs: teachers, nurses, personal support workers, child care workers, people who make our communities and our economy tick, people who provide essential services to our families and to Ontarians across the province. Clearly, they're still clinging onto the same agenda of cuts. That is not acceptable to Ontarians. That is not acceptable to our Premier and this government.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Acting Premier.

"For many of our friends and neighbours, life is getting harder.... The cost of living is rising, and at the same time, stable, long-term jobs—jobs that pay a decent wage—are proving harder to find.... And as these pressures mount, they bear down on families where it matters most. People are struggling to take care of themselves, and their loved ones."

This is not from the opposition. This is straight out of yesterday's throne speech. This is the Ontario the Liberals have created. Mr. Speaker, how can they be proud of the fact that "people are struggling to take care of themselves, and their loved ones"?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, we do live in an unprecedented time. Our economy in this province is growing. It's one of the fastest-growing economies in Canada—in fact, in all of the G7 countries. More jobs have been created since early 2000. Our GDP is growing.

But, Speaker, what we are also seeing is that the pressures on families are growing as well. There is a tremendous amount of anxiety that families—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right. You've asked. We're in warnings.

Finish.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Even though our economy is growing and we're creating more jobs, there is a tremendous amount of pressure that our families are facing. They are feeling pressures around home care and child care and long-term care. That is why, Speaker, we are making a deliberate choice to invest in these essential, important public services. Unlike Doug Ford and the Ontario Conservatives, we're not going to cut those services. We're going to invest in those important services.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier: I'm sure the 51,000 people who lost their jobs in Ontario in January don't believe a word that you just said.

Speaker, on April 2, 2012, someone on the government side of the House said these words in the Legislature: "I think everyone here knows that eliminating the deficit is the most important thing we can do to move to economic growth."

Can the Acting Premier tell us who said that?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I was fascinated by the first question of this round that came from the Leader of the Opposition, Speaker. It was interesting that he quoted from the throne speech.

It would have been more heartening for the people of Ontario if you had actually listened to the entirety of the throne speech and heard about how we are ambitiously investing in the people of this province.

As the Acting Premier said just a second ago, since the depths of the global recession, this province has created

more than 800,000 jobs. We lead not only this country but the entirety of the G7 when it comes to GDP growth. We are creating jobs because we are literally, every single day of this week, investing in our people, investing in infrastructure, investing in public transit and investing in all of those things that are truly the ingredients of what will provide for a brighter future for the people of this province.

Just once, Speaker, I would deeply appreciate it if that party would find a way to get it right and support the initiatives that we're embarking on to build a—

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

Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier: Let me tell you that it was the Premier who spoke of no deficits.

Yesterday, we saw once again that this government will say anything to cling to power. They highlight how life is harder in Ontario, but ignore the fact that it's because of 15 years of Liberal rule that life is harder in Ontario. All the spending and debt, and where are we? A 32,000-long-term-care-bed wait-list, hallway medicine, and autism and mental health wait-lists, all with no results. The Liberal insiders got rich, while the rest of us got stiffed.

Mr. Speaker, will the Liberals admit that this latest spending spree is an attempt to cling to power and not to make life easier in Ontario?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, not for the first time in my time in this Legislature, what we're seeing from the Conservatives is yet again a significant deficit in creativity and a significant deficit in believing in the people of this province.

As I mentioned a second ago, 800,000 new jobs have been created since the depths of the global recession a decade ago—

Mr. Paul Miller: Look who's talking. You stole all of our ideas. Thank God we're here, or you'd have no ideas.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can't quite pinpoint—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're throwing your own member under the bus? All right. I'm trying to be serious here. Jeez.

Finish, please, Minister.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I was saying, as the Acting Premier mentioned a little bit earlier today, we are investing in every corner of this province. We are building the province up.

I would say to the members of the Conservative caucus that it's okay if you have misguided beliefs about cutting, slashing and burning, but the people of Ontario deserve to know the truth about exactly who you're going to hurt, who you're going to throw under the bus and who you're going to push to the side. Let's show the people of Ontario—

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

Interjections.

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

Another reminder: If you address the Chair, you'll know that I was standing.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Acting Premier.

Kathy Lee is a 66-year-old Torontonion. She retired from a career as a daycare worker. She has no health care benefits anymore, and no dental coverage at all. Kathy hasn't been to the dentist in nearly two years.

Why have the Premier and her Liberal government done nothing in the past 15 years to help Kathy get the health care that she needs?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for the question.

Speaker, it's people like Kathy, and many people like Kathy across the province, who we are focused on. We want to make sure that Kathy and all of the people around the province have the kind of services that they need when it comes to quality health care in their communities. That's why we've been making unprecedented investments since we have come into office in making sure that we're building health care up.

After the devastating cuts that were made to the health care system by the previous NDP government and by the previous Conservative government, our focus has been to make sure that we build new hospitals, that we invest in our community health centres and make sure that there are important services available to all Ontarians.

We recognize that more needs to be done, and that is why, as we heard in the speech from the throne, we will be investing in important care that people like Kathy and other Ontarians need in our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: Fifteen years is a long time to focus.

Kathy's mom also has no dental coverage. She says that when she or her mom needs to go to the dentist, her sister has to cover the cost. It's embarrassing for Kathy, so she and her mom just don't go unless it's an emergency.

Why has this Liberal government spent 15 years in office and yet taken absolutely no action to help Kathy and her mom?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Our government continues to take action to help thousands of families with health care costs, providing families with over one million free prescriptions thus far through OHIP+.

Our government made the biggest expansion to medicare in Ontario in a generation by providing drug coverage to over four million children and youth—four million children and youth who now have access to over 4,400 drugs, including antibiotics to treat infections, asthma inhalers, insulin, seizure medications, oral contraceptives, antidepressants, drugs to treat arthritis and epilepsy, and some drugs to treat cancer and rare diseases. That is happening at no cost, no fees and no co-payments to our families.

This is a significant first step towards our vision of universal pharmacare that will help bring free drug coverage to everyone, ensuring a healthy start in life for our children and youth that will result in a healthier, more productive province.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Kathy says that the fear of having something go badly wrong with her teeth and being forced to rack up credit card debt to get the problem taken care of is something she worries about all the time. Kathy isn't alone, either: Two thirds of Ontario seniors have been left without dental care by decades of Liberal and Conservative governments. We have an aging population, so that statistic will only get worse if we don't take action now.

Why did this Liberal government ignore the huge gap in health care for Ontario seniors for 15 years?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, as you know, we have a Healthy Smiles program, which is focused on children and youth in our province. We want to expand and build on that program.

That program provides free preventive routine and emergency dental services for children and youth from low-income households across the province. This program is helping more than 450,000 kids access important dental services, and this number continues to grow.

We will work towards building out a larger program for low-income adults that will provide peace of mind for these families and individuals, allowing them to be more productive.

We welcome some of the ideas that have been brought forward by the NDP to help seniors and to support our health care system, as these are steps that our government has already been taking.

We will continue to invest in the care of Ontarians.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Acting Premier: Kallee Lin is a young woman who works in the arts and culture sector in Toronto. She does have a few hundred dollars per year in medical benefits at her current job, but it's not nearly enough to meet her basic health care needs. She is forced to choose between going to the dentist and dealing with the other physical and mental health issues that she faces.

Why is this Liberal government okay with Kallee being forced to choose between going to the dentist and addressing her other medical needs, after 15 years?

1120

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I said earlier, our government very much recognizes that Ontarians are feeling pressures, even though our economy is growing, even though more jobs are being created, through our increases in minimum wage to \$14 an hour to soon-to-be a living wage of \$15 an hour on January 1, 2019. People are still struggling when it comes to some very important services they need for their own care.

That's why we want to invest in that care. We want to make sure that pressures that families are feeling about finding good child care or saving up money for tuition to go to college or university or for an aging parent to have long-term care—we are investing in that. Our speech from the throne was very clear that our care agenda will make exceptional investments in those important services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Kallee says that she has put off getting needed gum grafting for more than a year because, if she does go ahead, she won't have any money put away in case of an emergency.

Why does this Premier not seem to care that young workers like Kallee are facing this impossible choice?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think one thing the Premier has exhibited in her role as Premier and as a member of provincial Parliament is that she cares deeply about Ontarians. She is always focused on investing in programs and services that are important to Ontarians. That is why she has recognized and continues to work toward ensuring that we have fairness and opportunity for the people of Ontario.

That is why, Speaker, the Premier is focused on building a caring society, investing in things like child care, investing in things like health care and mental health care. Not to mention, we need to make sure that we look at how we can expand our OHIP+ plan, as was stated in the speech from the throne, and not to mention looking at dental care programs for those who may be on low incomes.

We thank the NDP for the ideas they have put forward. We will continue to ensure that we are investing in the care of the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: There are about 4.5 million people in Ontario just like Kathy and Kallee, people who have always worked hard, done the right thing and played by the rules. But they have been let down by decades of Conservative and Liberal governments who care more about hanging on to power than helping people like them.

Will the Liberal government apologize to Ontarians without dental care for taking no action over the past 15 years to help them?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, our government has been focused on building a strong, publicly funded health care system. We have invested heavily in our hospitals; all the hospitals across the province have grown significantly, providing more services to Ontarians. We have been investing in our community health services to make sure that, at a community level, we have good health care services available. We have made unprecedented investments in building a primary health care system so that no Ontarian is left behind in terms of access to primary health care, be it through a family doctor or a nurse practitioner or through their local community health centre.

We are going to continue to build on that foundation. We are going to continue to build on that investment. That is why we launched the OHIP+ program. We want to expand that program and ensure, when it comes to dental care, we're looking after low-income Ontarians as well.

HOME CARE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Acting Premier.

Today, we're joined by Patients Canada, the Ontario Personal Support Workers Association, the Ontario Community Support Association and Home Care Ontario. They are here today in protest of this government's new and controversial PSW agency.

The government has moved forward with its new home care bureaucracy with zero consultation. Instead of spending precious dollars on home care and patients, they've moved \$3 million from front-line workers to the expanding bureaucracy. Given this government's poor track record, this clearly is not going to be benefiting patients.

Can the Acting Premier explain why they failed to consult with PSWs, patients and home care organizations?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for the question.

We know that Ontarians want more control and choice over their home care services. That's why our government launched two new innovative, self-directed care models that patients could opt into that would (a) provide home care clients with funding to purchase services in their care plan or to employ people to provide these services, or (b) provide home care clients with the opportunity to select and schedule their personal support workers from an organization that will protect clients from the administrative burden and legal risk of directly employing staff.

Speaker, we know that a small group of patients with chronic long-term needs wants strong relationships with their care provider, which will leave the care provider more satisfied and the client with better care. The reality is that clients with complex conditions may need or want assistance to design their own programs, and may have little knowledge in dealing with employer taxes, employee benefits and how to conduct background screenings of PSWs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Acting Premier: This government has planned the creation of this US-modelled PSW bureaucracy for months, behind closed doors. They've handed this new bureaucracy over to the SEIU in exchange for them running attack ads through Working Ontario Women. They've taken dollars directly from patients' front-line care for their own political gain. They continue to put insiders and their political self-interest first, while making life harder and more unaffordable for Ontario families. This government should be ashamed of themselves.

My question for the minister: How many more dollars does this government plan to strip from patient care in order to buy votes?

Interjections.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Withdraw.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Personal Support Services Ontario is an option that helps that navigation process—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara West–Glanbrook is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This service is an option that would help the navigation process. It allows both the personal support worker and the client to focus on what is important, which is the care. After careful consideration and feedback from the sector, we adjusted the parameters to ensure that there will be no local disruption to the market.

This model will serve a very small client population, in parallel to our existing home care system. It will be implemented in three LHINs to be evaluated for cost effectiveness, patient need and patient outcomes.

We know how critical home care is to the quality of life of Ontarians, which is why our government will be making major investments in home care, as we heard in the speech from the throne yesterday, to provide more services for people aging at home and to provide financial relief for families caring for aging loved ones.

We will continue to put Ontarians first. What the Conservatives need to come clear on is how many PSWs they are going to fire—

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

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier.

One in three workers in Ontario today do not have workplace health benefits like dental coverage, and the problem is getting worse; it's not getting better. More and more people are working in unstable work, with no health benefits for themselves or for their families.

Whether it's the 2017 report on income security, the 2016 Changing Workplaces Review or the 2012 Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario, this government has been told for years that all workers should have access to dental coverage. Why has this government not listened to your own advisers, your own reports, your own recommendations, and failed to give the people the health benefits that they deserve in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I said earlier, we thank the NDP for the ideas that they are bringing forward to further support Ontarians and further strengthen health

care delivery in Ontario. We are exactly on that track, to ensure that more and more Ontarians get the care that they need in order to support themselves and their families.

OHIP+, which is a pharmacare program for children and youth until the age of 25, is a great example of that. What's remarkable about that is that families, with a simple OHIP card, don't have to pay anything when it comes to accessing up to 4,400 prescription medications that will be funded through OHIP+. That is an incredible program. It's the first of its kind in Canada. In fact, it's the first of its kind in North America.

That is our track record, and we're going to build on that in providing care to Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This government has known for years that one in three workers in Ontario today has no dental coverage at work. That is over 2.5 million workers who work without benefits.

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Mr. Speaker, we shouldn't settle for this. We shouldn't be in this place in the province of Ontario. It is not okay that millions of workers and their families go without the health benefits that they need. We should fix it and make sure that every worker has the benefits they need and deserve.

Why has this government done nothing to fix the problem, leaving over 2.5 million Ontarians working and living without the basic health benefits that they need?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Our government is focused on continuing to make investments to make our health care system a stronger and more supportive one for all Ontarians.

As a result of those investments, we have the shortest wait times from GP to specialist. Ontario has the shortest wait times from specialist to treatment. We have the shortest wait times for CT scans. We have the shortest wait times for MRIs. We have the shortest wait times for ultrasounds. We have the shortest wait times for radiation oncology. We have the shortest wait times for general surgery. We have the shortest wait times for gynecology procedures. We have the second-shortest wait times for medical oncology. Speaker, the list goes on and on.

That has happened because of the investments that we have made in our health care system. But we recognize that we need to do more. That is why, through the programs like OHIP+ and our commitment to enhance those programs, to ensure that Ontarians get the care they need, that remains the focus of our Premier and the government. We will continue to make those investments.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the minister responsible for early years and child care.

I'm very proud of our government's commitment to ensuring families have access to high-quality and affordable child care and early years programs. In my

riding, I have a lot of young families who call Beaches–East York home, yet we do face a shortage of child care spaces. So I have been working very closely with providers such as Centre 55 and the Kingston Road Montessori school to increase the number of spaces available.

I know that this message is resounding across Ontario—that more spaces need to be created. So I've heard from families that there are challenges with child care access, and I want to ensure that all of these families can be accommodated.

Speaker, you'll note that the word “daycare” doesn't even appear in the platform of the new leader of the official opposition, but I have heard from families that there are challenges with child care access. We need to support them.

Can the minister responsible for early years and child care tell us what this government is doing to ensure that families' needs are being properly met?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you to the hard-working member from Beaches–East York for this very important question.

We know that Ontario families are facing challenges when it comes to finding quality, affordable child care. That's why our government decided to transform the way we deliver child care in this province. We have been working tirelessly for months to build new, affordable child care spots. In fact, in December we announced that more than 8,400 Ontario children will now be able to benefit from the opening of 493 new child care rooms in close to 200 schools across the province. In January, we announced another 2,700 new licensed child care spaces for children aged zero to four, through new and renovated schools.

Speaker, this funding is changing thousands of lives. It is one of the many steps we are taking to improve our child care system and build supports, and we're working hard to make sure we get it right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to thank the minister for that answer and for the leadership that she is showing on this very important file.

It's encouraging to know that the government is working to address the needs of Ontario families. I recognize that there's a lot of work yet to be done, but families are keen to see how our system is being transformed.

About two years ago, I heard from constituents who were concerned that some daycares were charging non-refundable, non-transparent wait-list fees. In response, I brought forward a private member's bill to address this issue.

Many parents are looking for child care options now, but we know that the province has announced 100,000 new spaces.

Speaker, what can the minister tell us about the next steps that she is taking in order to help transform Ontario's child care system to provide the kind of equitable, affordable, accessible daycare that is so important?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Our government has been taking bold steps to ensure that child care is more

accessible and affordable. By eliminating wait-list fees for child care, we have been able to improve access to child care and make life easier for families. By subsidizing 60% of new child care spaces, we are working hard to provide more affordable spaces for families.

When children in Ontario turn four, they will be able to access full-day kindergarten, which provides early, high-quality education to four- and five-year-olds. This results in huge savings for families and gives our children a great start in life. All of this has laid a solid foundation for care and opportunity for children and families.

I know there's more work to do, but I want you to know that more is under way, and we will be addressing some of these issues in the upcoming weeks.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is to the Acting Premier.

For those who don't know, Internet and cable providers pay a fee to hydro companies to attach their wires to hydro poles. Last week, CBC News reported that a 133% increase is being proposed by the Ontario Energy Board for those fees. Many of those companies, many of those providers, have formed the Ontario Broadband Coalition to fight the rate hikes.

They're being honest here: They've said that this expense would be one that they'd be forced to pass on to their customers. I can't say that it's shocking that life is about to get more expensive for residents of Ontario, and the Liberals are doing nothing about it. They're sitting on their hands.

My question this morning is, will the Liberals stop this unfair rate hike in Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased to rise, because I know how important it is for Ontario families and businesses to have access to fast and reliable broadband Internet. That's why it's this government that has invested roughly \$490 million since 2007 to upgrade broadband infrastructure across the province, bringing it closer to homes and businesses everywhere.

We're committed to building on this investment, and we continue to work closely with small, rural, northern and remote communities to understand their broadband needs and will be releasing a draft broadband strategy later this year.

When it comes to the issue that the opposite member brought forward, the Ontario Energy Board, our independent regulator, has recently undertaken a policy review of the wireline pole attachments and has issued a draft report for comment. We understand that the OEB has received a number of comments on this report and is now considering these comments. It is our expectation that the OEB continue to work with the telecom companies, utilities and other stakeholders to arrive at a wireline pole charge policy that is fair and balanced for both hydro and broadband companies.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: This new pole tax that's about to occur in Ontario is going to make the expansion of broadband Internet more expensive. It's going to make it less likely that it's going to occur in our rural areas.

The Liberals and the Minister of Energy say that they have no control over the proposed hydro pole fee hikes. They're passing the buck to the OEB, as we just heard from the minister, but this government interferes with the OEB time and time again. They will issue directives to help their friends, but not regular folks when they need the help.

Everyone knows that the Liberals can stop this rate hike. This 133% hike will make the fees the highest in North America for broadband Internet service. It will create an even higher barrier for rural Ontarians trying to get this service.

Will the Liberals put a stop to this unfair rate hike, or will they do the same thing they did with hydro rates in Ontario and drive them up to the highest—

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise and talk about hydro rates, because it is this government that looked after the rates and made sure that they have dropped by 50% for all rural and northern people right across the province.

Do you want to talk about a government that is investing in people? We're building this province up by investing in infrastructure, roads and broadband; \$490 million is what we've invested since 2007, and we're going to invest more. We will not start cutting \$10 billion.

Let me quote: "With his erratic and out-of-control behavior, I worry that if Doug was to lead our party, he would lead us to certain defeat." Who said that, Mr. Speaker? That member. They are actually not only going to lead them to defeat, but they're going to lead our province to ruin.

We will continue to invest and make sure that we look after and care for the people of our province.

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Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. I will now remind you that we are in warnings. Anyone care to make a comment? I didn't think so. Thank you.

New question.

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Acting Premier.

Lisa is a low-income senior who lives in my riding. Over the last year, she has lost 30 pounds because she cannot be treated for TMJ, a locking of the jaw, a severe arthritis. Her jaw locks; it gets stuck, and she has such overwhelming pain that she has been unable to eat. Worse, when she went to her doctor last fall, she was told

that the oral services that she needed to fix her jaw are not covered by OHIP.

Speaker, people like Lisa shouldn't be forced to choose between getting the dental care they need or paying the hydro bill, the rent or buying food.

Why does the Liberal government continue to fail low-income seniors in our communities by not ensuring that they have the dental care that they need?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member for the question. I think it's an important question because we have to do everything possible to help our seniors, to make sure that they have the kind of care that they need and that they're so deserving of.

That is why, Speaker, I am really excited to share with the House what the Premier announced earlier today: that the Ontario government will expand OHIP+ to include all of our seniors, people who are aged 65 and over.

That means that our seniors will no longer have to pay for any prescription drugs in our province. Through an expansion of OHIP+, more than 4,400 prescription drugs will be available free of charge to everyone 65 and over in the province of Ontario.

By expanding OHIP+, similar to what we have done for children and youth, our seniors will now be able to save an average of \$240 per year. Prescription drugs such as medications for cholesterol, hypertension, thyroid conditions, diabetes and asthma will be covered through this expansion of OHIP+.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Speaker, Lisa doesn't want to take pain pills, and Lisa isn't alone. The Liberal fix for those out-of-pocket expenses isn't going to help Lisa.

Today, two out of three seniors are living without dental coverage. Our seniors built this province, Speaker, and when they need dental care, they should be able to get it. Lisa has ongoing chronic pain, which has made her stress worse. She has overwhelming anxiety and she has depression on a daily basis.

No senior should have to live in pain because they can't afford dental care, nor should they live with worries about cracking a tooth and knowing that they can't afford to fix it.

After 15 long years in office, why has this Liberal government left the vast majority of seniors without any dental coverage at all?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I said earlier, we welcome the ideas that the NDP are bringing forward to strengthen our health care system.

We will continue to build on the successes that we have had in building a strong, publicly funded health care system in the province of Ontario. That is why the introduction of OHIP+, focused on children and youth until age 25, was such an incredible move to make—the first province in North America, the first jurisdiction in North America to offer that service.

Now, to expand OHIP+ to include all our seniors aged 65 and above is an incredible, incredible opportunity to ensure that we truly do have universal pharmacare in our province. That is going to really help our seniors in

getting the critical medications that they need every single day to stay healthy, and we will continue to invest in their care.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question this morning is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

In yesterday's speech from the throne, entitled "A Time for Care and Opportunity," the government laid out its priorities. Unsurprisingly, the work the government is doing in student financial assistance was proudly mentioned.

Speaker, this government has transformed the way that students access post-secondary education right here in Ontario by providing them with the financial support they need to complete their degrees and diplomas in an ever-changing economy.

Can the minister inform the House on what the government is doing to help post-secondary students afford the cost of higher education?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member from Davenport for this question and for her passion for education.

Our government believes that attending college or university in this province should be based on a student's ability to learn and not on their ability to pay. That is why we have completed the most ambitious transformation of student financial assistance in North America. Today, more than 225,000 students are getting their education without worrying about the cost of tuition, including almost 13,000 single moms.

Speaker, with the new OSAP, eligible students, including mature students and adult learners, will receive enough in OSAP grants to cover average tuition costs.

OSAP is unique to a student's circumstances. About four out of five students from families who earn under \$90,000 will be eligible for free tuition. Helping Ontario students with their costs is part of Ontario's plan to keep—

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

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: —post-secondary education—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When I say, "Thank you," Minister, you sit. Supplementary.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm glad this government is investing in Ontario's brightest by providing them with the financial assistance they need. Actually, last night, while knocking at doors in my riding of Davenport, I met a young fellow who had recently moved to Ontario from Alberta, since this is where his girlfriend was able to find employment. Unlike what the party opposite suggests, we are open for business and we are creating jobs here in Ontario. He was very grateful to be back in school to upgrade his education, thanks to OSAP.

We know the number of indigenous students receiving OSAP has increased by 34%.

While this government is working towards making sure that everyone in this province is able to access

education and training so that they can find good jobs and support their families, some students still worry about their debt.

Can the minister address the concerns of those students and tell them what the government is doing to alleviate their debt?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you again to the member from Davenport for her question.

The member is absolutely right. As was said in our throne speech yesterday, at the core of the prosperity of this province is the skills and the talents of our people. Like the member has said, I speak to students like Manesa, a first-year journalism student from Sheridan College who took two years off because she was saving up for school. With the new OSAP, students no longer have to worry about the cost of tuition preventing them from pursuing their dreams.

Ontario students graduate with the third-lowest average student debt because of Ontario's robust and progressive student assistance program. In 2014, we provided students with almost \$1.3 billion in grants and loans, and 70% of it was money that students will not have to repay.

It is also important to note that OSAP loans are interest-free while students are at school, and that students have six months following graduation before repayment begins. We're still making improvements to this great OSAP transformation—

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

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Acting Premier. Can the Acting Premier tell this House which logo the government spent \$650,000 for? Is it A or is it B?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member knows that that will be considered a prop and he is not to use it again.

Acting Premier.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is doing gimmicks. His new leader wants to promote cannabis in grocery stores and corner locations, putting young people in harm's way. The member opposite is trying to make a mockery of the tremendous amount of work that's being done—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Why not buy both for \$1.3 million?

Hon. Charles Sousa: —to safeguard young people, to provide proper enforcement—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You've made a mockery of the taxpayer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are committed to ensuring we provide that safety, to ensuring that we provide health promotion, to ensuring our society is protected from the illegal market and the illicit market that now exists.

The branding is not about a logo, Mr. Speaker. It's a holistic approach to looking at the ways to control the distribution of marijuana and cannabis, recreational and medicinal, in our communities. We're going to safeguard the people of Ontario, at their request, Mr. Speaker—not enough of their mockery.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, back to the Acting Premier: One of those logos cost this government \$650,000. The other logo was created in about a minute by one of our staff using Microsoft Word. When this government has the audacity to claim that there's no waste in this government, I'm going to remind them about this logo.

We have seniors who can't find a long-term-care bed. We have patients who are in hallways because of this government's hallway medicine. We've got children who are waiting for mental health services. And they've got \$650,000 on a logo? Speaker, how can this government justify \$650,000 on a logo? Come on.

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: You guys have gone logo loco.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Very smart, not to look at me.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The branding of an organization like the Ontario retail corporation—the cannabis stores—is more than just a logo. It's more than just a banner on the wall.

Mr. Todd Smith: You guys have gone logo loco.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not that time—no, it was him. If there is a test to be made, I'll take it to the next level if you'd really like to, and we'll get into naming.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The costs involved will include branding and will include supports for the distribution, supports for the actual content within those store locations.

The member opposite is just being reckless. They're being reckless with something—

Interjections.

Hon. Charles Sousa: They're laughing, Mr. Speaker, but this is a serious matter. We're talking about the distribution of cannabis in our communities. We're talking about stopping the illicit market. They're laughing at that.

We're going to protect the people of Ontario.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier.

Today in Ontario, one out of three workers is working without health benefits like basic dental care—and that number is growing. More and more people in Toronto are finding new ways to work. They've found new opportunities as independent workers on contract or freelance. But they're living with stress, worry and even pain because they don't have the model of health benefits that works for the new ways that they work.

Why does the Acting Premier think that freelancers and people earning a living in the gig economy should be expected to work without health benefits like basic dental care?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to start by thanking the Minister of Labour, my colleague from Oakville, for the tremendous amount of work he has done in making sure that we do bring fairness in our workplaces. The entire work that he did with the expert panel that consulted Ontarians over two years across the province with the development of Bill 148 was exactly designed to ensure that we modernize our labour laws and our employment standard laws to deal with the increased precarity of work in our province, so that more people who are maybe independent consultants or are self-employed have the kind of safety and security through our employment laws that is possible.

Speaker, we need to, of course, build on that—but there is a recognition on the government's part. That is why we thank the NDP for the ideas they're bringing forward. We will continue to invest in strengthening our public health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Acting Premier, and maybe this time for an answer: New Democrats believe that every worker should have health benefits. Full-time and part-time employees need benefits; so do temp workers, freelancers, people on short-term contracts, and the self-employed. Every worker in Ontario should have health benefits, no matter what you do, no matter how you work. Why doesn't this Acting Premier agree?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I think we are agreeing that this is very important and that they're good ideas that we need to look at. We will, as was said through the speech from the throne yesterday, work towards strengthening our public health care system, making sure that these important programs are there.

The proof point that exists is around the work that we have done on OHIP+. OHIP+, everybody said, could not be done. We, for the very first time in the history of Canada—in fact, the first jurisdiction in North America—have now provided for free prescription medications for our children and youth until the age of 25. One million prescriptions have been issued as a result of that.

But we are not stopping at that, Speaker. As the Premier announced earlier, we are going to expand OHIP+ to our seniors as well, to people who are aged 65 and over, so that they can also be able to get prescription medications—4,400 prescription medications—free of charge.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of the Status of Women.

It is a remarkable time for women in this province. There is so much momentum for change, and I know that we are working hard to create fairness and equality for all women in Ontario.

However, we know that indigenous women in this province face unique challenges, and that is not acceptable. Indigenous women are disproportionately affected by violence, and face even greater barriers when it comes to employment. In fact, indigenous women earn 25% less than indigenous men and 43% less than non-indigenous men.

Like all women in our province, they deserve to feel safe and empowered wherever they live. We must take action to confront and eliminate the root causes of violence and ensure that indigenous women have every possible opportunity to create their own futures.

Speaker, can the minister please tell us what the government is doing to help improve the lives of indigenous women and girls in Ontario?

Hon. Harinder Malhi: I want to thank my colleague for that important question.

As the Minister of the Status of Women, I'm ready to work to confront and eliminate the root causes of violence. I'm committed to working hand in hand with indigenous partners, and the work is under way.

We've consulted with over 200 agencies, indigenous partners and survivors to inform It's Never Okay, Ontario's strategy to end gender-based violence, with an investment of up to \$242 million.

This strategy will expand the child witness program to offer individual counselling and supports to indigenous-led preventive services at emergency shelters. It will help agencies respond to greater demand with culturally appropriate services and counselling for indigenous shelters and healing lodges.

This month, we have also launched Then Now Next: Ontario's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment. It will expand our Building Aboriginal Women's Leadership Program so that indigenous women across the province have access to leadership workshops and supports for better opportunities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for her answer.

The legacies of colonialism, systemic discrimination and institutional racism perpetuate behaviours and norms that lead to violence against indigenous women and girls. First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban indigenous organizations are unanimous in identifying violence against indigenous women as a priority issue in their communities. It's essential that we work together to develop and deliver policies and programs that put an end to violence against indigenous women and girls.

Just this past week, Ontario released its second progress report on Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women.

Minister, can you tell us more about how our government is working with indigenous partners on this very important issue?

Hon. Harinder Malhi: Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Hon. David Zimmer: In 2016, Ontario was the first province to launch a dedicated strategy to end violence

against indigenous women. The strategy was Walking Together. Our 2016 budget committed a further \$108 million to initiatives under that document. This strategy was designed in collaboration with indigenous partners through Ontario's Joint Working Group on Violence Against Indigenous Women. This week, I was honoured to co-chair the very first ministerial committee which brought together non-government indigenous partners to help guide the implementation of that strategy.

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We value the input and advice of indigenous partners. Reconciliation is more than words; it's about action. It's a shame that both parties opposite opposed our \$108-million commitment to ending violence against indigenous women. But our government will continue our efforts to take action with our First Nations—

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

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Acting Premier. In yesterday's speech from the throne, your government talked about protecting automotive, steel and agriculture workers from unfair US trade policies, but conspicuously absent from the list were our forestry workers—this in a speech only days after the US Department of Commerce announced duties up to 22% on uncoated groundwood paper—newsprint and paper for book publishing. This is on top of the up-to-6.5% countervailing duty imposed in January.

Speaker, this duty is based on an investigation into Catalyst Paper of British Columbia. Because Catalyst was allegedly found to be dumping, any Ontario pulp and paper companies that were not audited are assumed to be dumping at the same rate.

Why did this government fail to mention forestry jobs in the speech from the throne? Is this yet another indication that northern Ontario is not important to this government?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Thank you very much for the question.

It's a pleasure to rise to describe the role that we are playing in supporting forestry in Ontario. Indeed, we are worried about what's going on and the protectionist attitude in the US; and as you know, our government has done a lot to spread the good word and protect forestry against this protectionist attitude.

I had the pleasure of meeting the Rayonier paper company recently to talk about the struggle that they have in responding to this protectionist agenda from the US. We are continuing to help them and listen to them.

We have a strategy to continue to negotiate, with the help of the federal government, the way in which we can resolve this long-standing dispute where we have been successful in the past. We are hoping that we will be able to continue to do the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: Back to the Acting Premier: One of the companies hardest hit by the duties will be Rayonier, formerly Tembec. The government says that people are important. So what about the 815 people in Kapuskasing, Cochrane and Hearst who work for Rayonier, and people like the 57,000 people who work in the forestry sector? In order for these people to keep working, the forestry companies will need help to survive the four- to five-year legal process that comes with the US trade dispute.

Speaker, why isn't this government standing up for these people and their jobs in the forestry sector? What will the government do to save these jobs that are so important to northern Ontario?

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: I'm very pleased again to rise about the work that we've been doing in the forestry sector for the last several years. It has been a pleasure to meet with the forestry sector and talk about the myriad of programs that are there to help them. There are programs to help them build roads, to support them in that context. We have also helped them recruit appropriate employees, which is one of the issues that was raised—the shortage of skilled workers that they have.

Indeed, the forestry sector seems to be progressing and wanting to have more access to more lumber. We are co-operating with them and ensuring that they are maintaining their forestry. We are very proud of the fact that many of them have sustainable forestry in Ontario. It makes us a leader in the world in terms of sustainable forest management. This continues to be a priority for our government: to support their workers and northern Ontario. I've had the privilege of meeting—

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

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Michael Mantha: People in northern Ontario deserve access to health care in our own communities. Communities in the north, including—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who to, please?

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Acting Premier.

We shouldn't have to drive for hours on end to see a dentist; workers shouldn't have to live without the health benefits that their families need; and seniors and aboriginal communities and indigenous communities in the north living on fixed incomes and facing soaring costs of hydro shouldn't have to go without the dental care they need because they can't afford it. Just the other day, a senior in Elliot Lake was told it would cost her \$5,000 to repair her teeth and gums, but there is no help available.

Everywhere, everyone in northern Ontario deserves better. We need more public dental clinics in our community health centres and aboriginal health access centres, and more mobile dental buses visiting our communities. The NDP has a plan to do it—

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I again thank the NDP for coming up with some good ideas as to how we can strengthen our health care system, and their suggestions on dental care. I hope, Speaker, as I've been saying earlier, that we are doing exactly that by creating programs like OHIP+. Now, it would be nice, when we do introduce programs like OHIP+, if the NDP actually supports those programs by voting for them, which unfortunately is not the case.

Speaker, as I said earlier, we're going to be further expanding OHIP+ by including seniors aged 65 and over. That is going to result in a \$240-a-year saving for our seniors, not to mention access to 4,400 prescription medications that our seniors rely on so much to keep themselves healthy.

That is the kind of investment that we're making in care for Ontario, and I ask the member opposite to stay tuned for the budget to see the kind of things we will do to further enhance care. And I hope the NDP will support our budget.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today, in the Speaker's gallery, we have some special guests of mine and friends—Father Mark Curtis, Pastor Dan Rogge and Pastor Natalie Rogg—and a friend of mine, a constituent of mine and an uncle to one of the members in this House, hockey's favourite hockey dad, Walter Gretzky.

The Minister of Research, Innovation and Science on a point of order.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, within about 10 minutes, spring is coming to Ontario and it is Nowruz, the Persian New Year. About half a million Ontarians, and Canadians, in fact, are celebrating Nowruz.

Happy Nowruz to my colleagues in this chamber and to all Canadians who celebrate Nowruz.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Ajax-Pickering on a point of order.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As most of us will not be back until 3 o'clock this afternoon, I just wanted to remind everybody right up front that there is a reception being hosted by MEAO in committee room 228 at 4:30 this afternoon. Thank you for your flexibility, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Of course. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1208 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LYNCH SYNDROME

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I rise today to acknowledge world hereditary cancer awareness day taking place on March 22. It's otherwise known as Lynch syndrome. Lynch syndrome is known as hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer, which is an autosomal dominant genetic condi-

tion that has a high risk of colon cancer, endometrial cancer and various other types of aggressive cancers. It usually occurs at quite a young age.

It is among the most common of the hereditary cancer syndromes, and it is estimated that as many as one in 300 people may be carriers of an alteration in the gene associated with Lynch syndrome. Individuals with Lynch syndrome have an 80% lifetime risk for colon cancer.

Lynch Syndrome International has been monumental in raising awareness of the syndrome, providing support for those afflicted with Lynch syndrome, educating members of the general public and health care professionals, and providing support for Lynch syndrome research endeavours.

Early detection is crucial, resulting in favourable outcomes, enhanced survival rates, greater longevity and overall quality of life, which really speaks to the point of having tests, if you carry the gene, done earlier in order to detect early signs of cancer.

I really would like to thank Lynch Syndrome International for all of their awareness, support and advocacy efforts.

I encourage all survivors, patients, caregivers, family members and everybody who has been affected by Lynch syndrome to speak out, discuss their story and get it well known. Awareness is key in developing a proper strategy and helping those with Lynch syndrome.

POET LAUREATE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Okay, listen up. It's poetry time, Mr. Speaker.

My prose may have been stronger, but
Being prorogued has made me weaker.

Our private members' bills are dead—just collateral damage.

That's disappointing—but what can we do, we'll just have to manage.

Perhaps there's nothing to prevent
A bill's adoption by unanimous consent.

You can tell I am putting on a brave face,
As I know in my specific case,

On behalf of the proletariat,

I had my hopes set on a provincial poet laureate.

Gord Downie was a poet and singer with the Tragically Hip,

His poetry followed no traditional script.

But his poetry and lyrics were seamless,

He was considered a humble and literary genius.

In his memory the poet laureate bill was dedicated.

It won unanimous consent here when it was debated.

It had the Premier's support, her House leader's too.

But politics got in the way and out of the blue,

Prorogation—a political stain on good public legislation.

I say to my Liberal friends, if you want the credit, then make the bill your own,

Gord Downie and I won't care—let that be known.

He called his daily writing lifting the 400-pound feather,

So instead of fighting, let's do this together.

Let's create this non-partisan position,

To me, it's a simple transition.

Make it a government bill instead of a PMB.

An Ontario poet laureate named in memory of the one and only, the Hip's Gord Downie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Very good timing.

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's my honour to once again welcome the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, MEAO, represented by Denise Magi, president—just give us a little wave as we do that—Adrianna Tetley, Keith Deviney, Irene Turrin, John Doherty and Jason Rehel. Have we got everybody, just about? Okay. Thank you very much.

What an honour year after year to be able to work with these wonderful people, Speaker. I have so many presentations to do today. All I can tell you is that all members are invited to a reception being held today and hosted by MEAO in committee room 228 at 4:30 p.m.

It's an honour for me to sponsor this group. It is something we all know is a registered Ontario charity that supports people who live with chronic, complex, environmentally linked medical conditions known as myalgic encephalomyelitis—which is also known as chronic fatigue syndrome—and fibromyalgia and environmental sensitivities, also known as multiple chemical sensitivity. These conditions affect nearly 600,000 people living in our province.

I think you're going to cut me off. Anyway, Speaker, I've sponsored them many times. I look forward to this afternoon. I want all members to gather all of the other members and join us after 4:30. Thank you, Speaker.

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

HOSPITAL REDEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to once again talk about the critical importance of the redevelopment of two hospitals in my riding. Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston and Collingwood General and Marine Hospital have both spent considerable amounts of their own money planning for future redevelopments.

First, I want to thank the government for its decision to forward \$500,000 to each hospital to help with redevelopment and planning. The government made this announcement in February, and it was a positive, although symbolic, first step for both hospitals.

We all know that half a million dollars to each hospital is nowhere near enough to cover the costs of planning and design. It doesn't even cover what both hospitals have spent to this point. To date, Stevenson Memorial Hospital has spent \$1.3 million on stage one of a five-

stage process for planning for the redevelopment, and Collingwood General and Marine Hospital has spent \$1.2 million. Hospital officials tell me they expect that the total cost to plan and design the projects will exceed \$14 million per hospital.

Mr. Speaker, these redevelopments are critically important for both communities. These hospitals were built in the 1950s and 1960s. The infrastructure is old and it's out of date. Both hospitals need more space to deliver the services that patients depend on. This isn't about partisan politics. I know all the candidates in the upcoming election will agree that the hospitals deserve the money to fully do their planning and design. It's about planning for the future health care needs of citizens. This is not an issue that's going to go away.

The time has come for both hospitals to receive their full planning grants. The hospitals and their supporters are ready to move forward with both projects; it's time for the government to get on board.

ALBERT GAUTHIER

Mr. John Vanthof: Yesterday, Albert Gauthier was inducted into l'Ordre de la Pléiade for his work supporting francophone culture in Ontario. He told me he was a bit overwhelmed because he was just a farmer. Well, let me tell you what "just a farmer" like Albert could do.

He could walk up to a mike at a national dairy conference, say his name and have the room go quiet. He did it time after time. At a time when francophones faced open discrimination, he gained admiration.

Albert was a dairy farmer before supply management was created in this country. He had private dairy contracts with two dairies. Back then, milk was shipped in cans, the ones you see now in antique stores. Often, his milk would come back rejected. It had a big, red X on it.

It was two hours to the dairy. He followed the milk one day to the dairy, and the milk was not even inspected. It was just rejected because it came from far away and it was just Albert Gauthier. They had a little fight on the grading station, and Albert went to the owner. The owner basically told him to leave it alone. What Albert did was that he organized, he mobilized, and Timiskaming was the pilot project for supply management in this country because of men like Albert Gauthier.

CAMPUS ENERGY RETROFITS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: On March 9, I was at the University of Guelph to talk about the new Greenhouse Gas Campus Retrofits Program. We're investing up to \$514 million in grants and interest-free loans for college and university retrofits.

At U of G, I am proud to share that we have allocated \$25.9 million in funding as part of the program. And the great thing is that all of the funds come from Ontario's cap-and-trade program.

U of G has a district energy system which uses central boilers to heat steam and then distribute heat through an

underground tunnel system. The original builders of the tunnel system in 1906 never anticipated that the tunnel system would eventually expand to several kilometres underground, which is what we have today.

1510

U of G will use the funding to upgrade and expand the campus heat recovery system, install real-time energy monitoring meters, and replace the boilers.

So, Speaker, while critics of our Climate Change Action Plan are promising to cancel our fight against pollution, we're focused on fighting climate change by investing in students and newer, greener campuses.

FIRST RESPONDERS UNITED

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise to celebrate First Responders United, an amazing initiative launched by Rev. Edward Murray and the congregation at Cardinal's St. John's United Church. This remarkable program recognizes that even our heroic first responders sometimes need help too. We're blessed to have these brave men and women, who put their lives on the line by rushing toward danger as others run away.

But in keeping us safe, first responders risk more than physical injury. Far too many have post-traumatic stress disorder, and that's where First Responders United comes in.

Rev. Murray, who is a retired OPP officer trained as a clinical psychologist, saw a need for affordable, accessible PTSD treatment in eastern Ontario. With the support of his congregation, including Donna Gladstone and retired area fire chief James Grant, they renovated the church to make it happen. Recently, they welcomed their first participants for a five-day stay.

I was honoured to meet those involved and was so impressed by their selfless commitment to help heal the terrible pain of PTSD. It was clear their groundbreaking program made a difference in the lives of those first responders who took part.

Speaker, I'm so proud that St. John's United has given first responders, particularly volunteer firefighters from small departments, somewhere else to turn in their time of need.

First Responders United is yet another example of how the people of Leeds-Grenville continue to look after each other and why there's no better place to live.

PHARMACARE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to read the letter I just got from a constituent this week. It reads as such:

"Dear Lou,

"I usually never write to local politicians, not because I don't care about politics, but because I am fortunate to live in a small community where, as a constituent I have easy access to my MPP, mayor etc. So if I have a concern or comment it can be easily heard.

"However, a recent situation involving my extended family compelled me to write to you and praise some

changes by our government that have helped their everyday lives.

“My daughter and her common-law husband have been going through some ‘rough times.’ He has been laid off for many months, not able to find suitable employment to support his family, getting discouraged, having to live on social assistance, losing their housing situation. They have a three-year-old daughter full-time and an eight-year-old daughter who lives with them part-time.

“The three-year-old recently became very ill and my daughter took her to the emergency department at the hospital only to find out that she had contracted pneumonia. It was a very scary situation. The hospital was great, nurses, doctor et al. She was prescribed three different medications and thankfully all were covered under the OHIP+ pharmacare program. My daughter did not have the added stress of trying to pay out of pocket for her daughter’s medicine, which would have meant no money for groceries....

“My daughter is not quite ready to resume regular work yet, but once her three-year-old starts full-day kindergarten, she knows that she will be able to earn a minimum wage that is more in line with the actual cost of living and be able to help lift the family a little further up out of poverty.”

PROROGATION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It’s a pleasure to rise today, on behalf of the constituents of Huron–Bruce, at the beginning of this legislative session.

I need to speak about the throne speech, Speaker. Yesterday seemed more like a Hail Mary by a desperate team than democracy. Instead of cynical election ploys, we should be debating policy. Constituents in Huron–Bruce, like all Ontarians, have real and pressing concerns that need to be dealt with.

Before the House was prorogued, my colleagues from all three parties had useful, substantive legislation tabled—legislation that addressed concerns shared by constituents not only in Huron–Bruce but across Ontario.

My colleague from Leeds–Grenville had an important bill addressing concerns held by car dealers across the province and dealing with the Highway Traffic Act.

In proroguing, this government that likes to trumpet its environmental credentials scrapped three important bills relating to the environment or conservation that deserve debating. These bills were from my colleagues from Oxford, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Since the new year, this government has been re-arranging the deck chairs on policy and personnel in the hopes that Ontarians won’t notice the sinking ship. Well, Speaker, if what I’m hearing from stakeholders and constituents is true, guess what? They have noticed, and the party with the taxpayers’ money is over.

We need a government that is ready to stand up and listen to constituents and deal with the pressing issues of today, not the party politics and tricks.

JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

L’hon. Marie-France Lalonde: On a point of order, monsieur le Président, aujourd’hui nous célébrons une journée très importante : le 20 mars, nous célébrons la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. J’aimerais souhaiter à tous les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes une belle journée de la Francophonie.

Le Président (L’hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. It’s not quite a point of order, but tout de même.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CUTTING RED TAPE FOR MOTOR VEHICLE DEALERS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 ALLÉGEANT LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES POUR LES COMMERÇANTS DE VÉHICULES AUTOMOBILES

Mr. Clark moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act /
Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant le Code de la route.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

M. Steve Clark: Le projet de loi modifie le Code de la route pour permettre à certains commerçants de véhicules automobiles de demander des certificats d’immatriculation, des plaques d’immatriculation et d’autres choses par des moyens électroniques ou par le biais d’un support électronique.

PAY TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE SALARIALE

Mr. Flynn moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 3, An Act respecting transparency of pay in
employment / Projet de loi 3, Loi portant sur la
transparence salariale.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The Pay Transparency Act, 2018, would help address biases in hiring and pay setting, and promote fairer compensation practices in the private and the public sectors. The bill would help ensure that all Ontarians, including women and other groups who have been disadvantaged in the workplace, can enjoy equal opportunity to get hired, negotiate fair wages and progress in their career based on merit. It is part of

the Women's Economic Empowerment Strategy and will help address the gender wage gap, Speaker.

MAGNA CARTA DAY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LE JOUR
DE LA GRANDE CHARTE

Mrs. Munro moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 4, An Act to proclaim Magna Carta Day / Projet de loi 4, Loi proclamant le Jour de la Grande Charte.

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.

Mrs. Julia Munro: This bill proclaims June 15 in each year as Magna Carta Day.

HOME CARE AND COMMUNITY
SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT
(DAN'S LAW), 2018

LOI DE 2018 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES SERVICES DE SOINS
À DOMICILE ET LES SERVICES
COMMUNAUTAIRES (LOI DAN)

Mrs. Gretzky moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 5, An Act to amend the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994 in respect of funded services for new residents / Projet de loi 5, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur les services de soins à domicile et les services communautaires en ce qui concerne les services financés pour les nouveaux résidents.

1520

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.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. The bill amends the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994. The bill is about people who have public health insurance in another province or territory and then move to Ontario. They will not be subject to a waiting period for publicly funded home care and community services under the act—and it is named after Dan Duma.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
TRANSFORMATION ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LA TRANSFORMATION
DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

Mrs. Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to enact the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services Act, 2018 and the Correctional Services and Reintegration Act, 2018, to

make related amendments to other Acts, to repeal an Act and to revoke a regulation / Projet de loi 6, Loi édictant la Loi de 2018 sur le ministère de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels et la Loi de 2018 sur les services correctionnels et la réinsertion sociale, apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois et abrogeant une loi et un règlement.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: The Correctional Services Transformation Act, if passed, supports care for those in our custody and improves outcomes for those under our supervision. The bill, if passed, will modernize Ontario's correctional system by setting definitive rules around segregation, improving conditions of confinement, increasing transparency and accountability, reform health care services and aid in greater rehabilitation and integration.

END THE PUBLIC FUNDING
OF PARTISAN GOVERNMENT
ADVERTISING ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 VISANT À METTRE FIN
AU FINANCEMENT PUBLIC
DE LA PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE
PARTISANE

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend the Government Advertising Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la publicité gouvernementale.

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.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: In 2014, in the budget bill, there was a removal of the Auditor General to have oversight on government advertising—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Explanatory note, please.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: —and this private member's bill would return that oversight back to the Auditor General.

ACCESS TO CONSUMER CREDIT
REPORTS AND ELEVATOR
AVAILABILITY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR L'ACCÈS AU RAPPORT
DE SOLVABILITÉ DU CONSOMMATEUR
ET LA DISPONIBILITÉ DES ASCENSEURS

Ms. MacCharles moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur et la Loi de 2000 sur les normes techniques et la sécurité.

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 minister for a short statement.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. If passed, this bill would enhance consumers' access to their credit information and provide consumers with a new ability to implement a credit freeze, which will act as an important deterrent in the fight against identity theft.

It will make elevator availability data more readily available so people can make an informed decision about where they choose to live, and if passed, will allow for the creation of standards of availability of elevators, including standards and time requirements for the repair, as well as introducing greater penalties and enforcement powers by the TSSA.

MANDATORY SEXUAL ASSAULT LAW
TRAINING FOR JUDICIAL OFFICERS
ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LA FORMATION
OBLIGATOIRE DES FONCTIONNAIRES
JUDICIAIRES EN DROIT RELATIF
AUX AGRESSIONS SEXUELLES

Ms. Scott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act and the Justices of the Peace Act / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires et la Loi sur les juges de paix.

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.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Currently, under section 43 of the Courts of Justice Act, the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee makes recommendations to the Attorney General for the appointment of provincial judges. New subsection 43(10.1) provides that the committee cannot consider a candidate unless he or she has completed comprehensive sexual assault law education.

Section 51.10 of the act is amended to require the plan for the continuing education of judges to require judges to complete education in respect of matters related to sexual assault law.

Similar amendments are made to the Justices of the Peace Act with respect to justices of the peace.

FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LE MOIS
DU PATRIMOINE PHILIPPIN

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to proclaim the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month / Projet de loi 10, Loi proclamant le mois de juin Mois du patrimoine philippin.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Proclaiming June as Filipino Heritage Month in Ontario provides an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate all Ontarians, including this generation and future generations, about Filipino Canadians and their continuing role in helping to foster growth, prosperity and innovation throughout Ontario.

PHONES DOWN, HEADS UP ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 INTERDISANT
L'UTILISATION DU TÉLÉPHONE
PORTABLE PAR LES PIÉTONS

Mr. Baker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit pedestrians from holding and using certain mobile devices while crossing a roadway / Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'interdire aux piétons de tenir et d'utiliser certains appareils mobiles lorsqu'ils traversent la chaussée.

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. Yvan Baker: The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit pedestrians from holding and using certain mobile devices while crossing a roadway, subject to certain exceptions. The bill also requires that the Ministry of Transportation conduct an annual campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of distracted driving, with an emphasis on texting and driving.

504260 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2018

Mr. Rinaldi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr82, An Act to revive 504260 Ontario Ltd.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

Introduction of bills? Introduction of bills? Last call for introduction of bills. The filibuster is over; we'll now move on to motions.

1530

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Minister.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(c), a change be made to the order of precedence for private members' public business, such that Mr. Takhar assumes ballot item number 2 and Ms. Hoggarth assumes ballot item number 41; and that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notices for ballot item numbers 2, 7, 9, 10 and 11 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Flynn moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(c), a change be made to the order of precedence for private members' public business, such that Mr. Takhar assumes ballot item number 2 and Ms. Hoggarth assumes ballot item number 41; and that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notices for ballot item numbers 2, 7, 9, 10 and 11 be waived. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to present this petition. As you can see, it's a very large petition. It was sent to me by Jill Beemer of 20 Moulton Court in Ingersoll. It is addressed to the province of Ontario.

"Whereas municipal governments in Ontario do not have the right to approve landfill projects in their communities, but have authority for making decisions on all other types of development including nuclear power and nuclear waste facilities as well as casinos; and

"Whereas this outdated policy allows private landfill operators to consult with local residents and municipal councils, but essentially to ignore them; and

"Whereas the government has proposed through legislation (Bill 139) to grant municipalities additional authority and autonomy to make decisions for their communities; and

"Whereas the recent report from Ontario's Environmental Commissioner has found that Ontario has a garbage problem, particularly from industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) waste generated within the city of Toronto, where diversion rates are as low as 15%; and unless significant efforts are made in Toronto and area to

increase recycling and diversion rates, a new home for Toronto's garbage will need to be found, as their landfill space is filling up quickly; and

"Whereas rural municipalities across Ontario are quietly being identified and targeted as potential landfill sites for future Toronto garbage by private landfill operators; and

"Whereas other communities should not be forced to take Toronto waste, as landfills can contaminate local watersheds, diminish air quality, dramatically increase heavy truck traffic on community roads, and reduce the quality of life for local residents;

"Therefore, we call upon the government of Ontario, and all political parties, to formally grant municipalities the authority to approve landfill projects in or adjacent to their communities, prior to June 2018."

I affix my signature as I agree with this petition.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

"Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

"Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

"Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages, and protection from discrimination;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

"Eliminate the practice of 'deeming' or 'determining,' which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

"Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

"Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on 'pre-existing conditions' that never affected the worker's ability to function prior to the work injury."

Speaker, I fully agree with the petition. I will sign it, and I'll either bring it up to the desk or have one of the pages do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They're on their way.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas habitual absenteeism often results in students leaving school early and subsequently having significant gaps in both the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve future success;

“Whereas habitual absenteeism may be an early indicator that a child is experiencing difficulty in the home, including substance abuse and addiction, neglect, and/or abuse;

“Whereas there is a need to improve communication between education and child protection workers;

“Whereas it would be beneficial for child protection agencies to be empowered to investigate such habitual absenteeism when it cannot be resolved by the school system;

“Whereas when a child is subject of or receiving services through the child welfare, justice and/or education systems, intervention at the earliest opportunity puts the child at the centre and could identify dysfunction, provide help to the child and family, and promote better outcomes for children;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make chronic absenteeism and lateness from school, when it cannot be resolved by the school system, a child protection issue.”

It’s an excellent petition. I support it and will leave it with page Annabelle.

DIABETES GLUCOSE MONITORING

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

“Whereas technological and research advancements alter the findings of the 2011 Medical Advisory Secretariat document ‘Continuous Glucose Monitoring for Patients with Diabetes: An Evidence-Based Analysis’; and

“Whereas the Endocrine Society’s continuous glucose monitoring clinical practice guidelines recommend continuous glucose monitor use by people living with type 1 diabetes, and has deemed that the benefits justify the costs; and

“Whereas the Canadian Diabetes Association’s Diabetes Charter for Canada states that Canadians living with diabetes have the right to affordable and timely access to prescribed devices and insurance coverage; and that governments have the responsibility to guarantee fair access to devices and supplies to all Canadians, no matter what their income or where they live; and

“Whereas government coverage of continuous glucose monitors is increasing internationally but is not available in Canada;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide financial coverage of continuous glucose monitors through the Ontario Assistive Devices Program or another appropriate provincial government program.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature and I’ll send the petition to the table with page Luke.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It’s a “Petition to Resolve the Crisis in Ontario Corrections,” which reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has faced serious criticism by OPSEU, offender advocacy groups, media, the general public, the Ombudsman, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the MCSCS independent auditor (Mr. Howard Sapers) and the Auditor General as a result of significant deficiencies in the correctional system; and

“Whereas the rates of assaults on correctional workers continue to increase exponentially; and

“Whereas Ontario probation and parole officers have the highest workloads in the nation; and

“Whereas Ontario has one of the highest recidivism rates in Canada; and

“Whereas the current working conditions of correctional staff, coupled with the comparatively low rates of investment across Canada, has resulted in difficulties with staff retention and recruitment;

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

“That the Ontario government significantly increase expenditures to resolve the crisis in corrections by hiring full-time correctional workers, increasing funding for adequate offender services and increasing investments to recruit and retain skilled professionals and reduce recidivism.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name and send it to the Clerks’ table via page Caius.

RESPIRE CARE

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition from the Flexible Options Network. The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas we are concerned about the elimination of respite care from the core suite of services in the EarlyON Child and Family Centres, and the undue hardship this will cause for families who rely on this service;

“Whereas too many Ontarians who have children do not have access to part-time/flexible/short-term or respite care in their communities; and

“Whereas the Ontario government is rolling out the Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework so that ‘families can have access to programs better suited to their needs’;

“Whereas families in Ontario said that ‘they wanted more; more responsive hours of care that meet the demands of modern life’;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to sustain and fund respite/flexible child care under the banner of EarlyON Child and Family Centres as a viable option for families and their children.”

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

1540

TREE SEED SERVICES

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Charles Bruce-Thompson, president of Toronto Field Naturalists, for sending me this petition. It's entitled, "Wynne: Save Ontario's Tree Seed Facility and Seed Bank."

"To Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is closing the Ontario Tree Seed Facility in September 2018;

"Whereas both public and private sector forest restoration experts have disagreed with the internal government decision and have expressed their concern;

"Whereas Ontario's forest restoration practitioners had expected that the MNRF seed services would not only continue, but be enhanced, in service to Ontario's forests, which face the triple threats of overdevelopment, invasive alien species and climate change;

"Whereas this decision is in opposition to other Canadian and global jurisdictions who support seed processing and banking as an essential social service to help forests adapt to climate change;

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

"That the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry take immediate action to put on hold any actions on the closure of the Ontario Tree Seed Facility and begin a comprehensive public review to explore innovative ways to revitalize government support for native tree seed services, as per the Ontario Tree Seed Coalition's letter to Minister Kathryn McGarry dated October 13, 2017."

This issue is still relevant in my riding. I will sign the petition.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas municipal governments in Ontario do not have the right to approve landfill projects in their communities, but have authority for making decisions on all other types of development including nuclear power and nuclear waste facilities as well as casinos; and

"Whereas this outdated policy allows private landfill operators to consult with local residents and municipal councils, but essentially to ignore them; and

"Whereas the government has proposed through legislation (Bill 139) to grant municipalities additional authority and autonomy to make decisions for their communities; and

"Whereas the recent report from Ontario's Environmental Commissioner has found that Ontario has a garbage problem, particularly from industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) waste generated within the city of Toronto, where diversion rates are as low as 15%; and unless significant efforts are made in Toronto and area to

increase recycling and diversion rates, a new home for Toronto's garbage will need to be found, as their landfill space is filling up quickly; and

"Whereas rural municipalities across Ontario are quietly being identified and targeted as potential landfill sites for future Toronto garbage by private landfill operators; and

"Whereas other communities should not be forced to take Toronto waste, as landfills can contaminate local watersheds, diminish air quality, dramatically increase heavy truck traffic on community roads, and reduce the quality of life for local residents;

"Therefore, we call upon the government of Ontario, and all political parties, to formally grant municipalities the authority to approve landfill projects in or adjacent to their communities, prior to June 2018."

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition on my constituents' behalf. I will affix my signature as I agree with this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Cindy Forster: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas quality of 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 recommends 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 support this petition, affix my signature and send it with page Aidan.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

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

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

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

"Whereas substandard facilities exist in the emergency department; there is no space in the dialysis department to expand, and there is a lack of storage and crowding in many areas of the building; and, structurally, additional

floors can't be added to the existing building to accommodate growth;

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. I will certainly sign this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. Good afternoon to you.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Health Care You Can Count On.

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

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

"Whereas hospital beds are being closed across Ontario; and

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

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

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

I'll sign the petition. I agree with it and I'll give it to Colin to bring to the desk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for petitions has now expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 20, 2018, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Good afternoon. I just want you to get comfortable and settle in there for an hour, because that's how long you're going to be. No, put your shoes back on. Don't get that comfortable.

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak. Yesterday we sat in this Legislature and the Liberals outlined their future priorities in a throne speech. By proroguing the Legislature last week, the Premier and the Liberals want the people of Ontario to think that they have basically hit the reset button on their government.

Interjection: Good luck with that.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes. Well, Speaker, we've seen this movie before. The people of Ontario know this Liberal government way better than that. There is no reset on 15 years of Liberal waste, mismanagement and scandals. Every election year, since 2003, to be exact, Premiers have made their commitments on billions of dollars in new spending. However, these pre-election—or in their case, re-election—ploys are a desperate attempt to try to save their government. I'm going to give some examples a bit later on, Speaker, but I have to tell you, when I did question period this morning, I talked about who do they think they're fooling, because the people of Ontario are smarter than that. They're not fooling anyone.

I'm going to outline some of the things over the past years and talk a little bit about the future as well. These Liberal ploys, these re-election ploys—let's call them what they are. This is not a speech from the throne with ideas of the future. This is purely a re-election ploy. I must say, in this particular case, it was a desperate attempt to try to save this failing and flailing government.

In the speech from the throne, this Liberal government spoke, if you listened carefully, to their insider friends through a laundry list of promises. Again, when I talk about how we've seen this movie before, we always know that what they really do is to take care of the Liberal insiders.

1550

We saw that through their so-called Green Energy Act, when they jeopardized the energy rates in Ontario and set us off on a path of reaching the highest energy rates in all of North America. Meanwhile, their insider friends got unbelievably rich over this, when you think of how many millions of dollars each and every wind turbine is in Ontario and you recall that \$1.3 million was fundraised by the Liberal Party from that small segment of Liberal insiders. When I say that yesterday we heard a laundry list for the Liberal insiders, they were the ones who were really listening carefully: "What's in it for me?" That's what we heard loudly and clearly yesterday.

The other aspect of it, Speaker, is that the Liberals are trying—and it's a desperate attempt—to spend their way to votes instead of trying to fix our province for all the people of Ontario. I've said this one sentence in this Legislature many times: The economy is not going to take off by the government taking our money. That just doesn't work. We've seen that too many times, and we know.

The Liberals are trying to spend their way to votes instead of fixing our province. What we've seen is that this is a government, over and over now, who will say and who will promise anything to cling to power. Let's remember that as we go through the next bit of the speech, where I'll give the examples of specifically what I'm referring to. It's not about saving money; it's about the Premier saving her own political career and the fortunes of the Liberal Party. Sadly, again, it's never, ever about the people of Ontario; it's always about the Liberal Party and what's good for the Liberal Party.

When we use the word "Liberal" here, it might as well be a euphemism for broken promises. That's what it has come to, Speaker. I say that because all we see is broken promise after broken promise. That is what has happened. For 15 years, Ontario families—

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It would be good if you could hear me, Speaker. I know you're interested in being able to hear.

For 15 years, Ontario families have struggled—

Mr. Jim Wilson: You're hitting nerves over there.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Absolutely, we're hitting a nerve, because this is a failing and flailing government that is in their last dying days. We can see it here. We can see them continually scraping here, Speaker. That's, again, a very sad and true story. All we see is broken promise after broken promise.

For 15 years, families have struggled and watched as Liberal insiders and elites have grown rich. Relief for Ontario families is in sight. The Ontario PCs are ready to fight for hard-working Ontario families and put money back in the taxpayer's pocket.

Speaker, we're just getting started here, so I have to ask you: On the clock, I have an hour, and—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You just don't put the time up? Okay. Thank you. And what time will it be ended at?

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you. I apologize, Speaker. I needed to clarify that, because the clock is not set on my speech today.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a Liberal clock.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Percy, you're right: It's a Liberal clock. The numbers don't add up.

It's important to look at a few things that the Liberals had to say in the speech yesterday. They said, "For many of our friends and neighbours, life is getting harder." I'm quoting the speech now, Speaker.

"The cost of living is rising, and at the same time, stable, long-term jobs—jobs that pay a decent wage—are proving harder to find." This was in the Liberals' own speech yesterday. This isn't a PC advertisement you're listening to.

It goes on: "Part-time and precarious work is becoming more common..."

"And as these pressures mount, they bear down on families where it matters most.

"People are struggling to take care of themselves, and their loved ones."

This is the Liberal throne speech. Finally, the Liberal government has acknowledged the Ontario that they have created over the past 15 years.

"People are struggling to take care of themselves, and their loved ones." How many years have we stood here and said exactly those same sentences? We said, "The cost of living is rising," and the Liberal government said, "No, no. Everything is great."

"And at the same time, stable, long-term jobs ... are proving harder to find." No, they say. But yesterday, they finally told the complete story of what's happening in Ontario, and Speaker, it's not good to hear.

They talked about an Ontario where families have to decide whether to heat or eat. We first heard that expression back at one of the pre-budget consultations in Ottawa. It was a young woman on ODSP who gave a deputation. She talked about how she has to put multiple sweaters on to be able to stay warm. She couldn't afford the heat because she needed to buy food. That is the Ontario that this Liberal government has created.

This is an Ontario where children are denied access to quality mental health care. This is an Ontario where people cannot depend on their government to care for them and their families.

Let me give you another example from my riding, Speaker. I've told this story a couple of times in the Legislature, but it bears repeating because it is such a poignant story and it encapsulates the Ontario that this Liberal government has created. There was a gentleman who came into our office in the riding of Nipissing. He was looking for help because his power had been cut off, and as a result of that, his pipes froze and burst and put water everywhere—pretty much ruined the house, by the way. He told us that every single night, he shovelled snow into his bathtub so that he could have water in the morning in which to bathe. That is the Ontario that this government created. Can you imagine that this is what has happened to people as a result of these Liberal policies?

This house is nine doors from the house I grew up in in North Bay, basically in the centre of the city. It's on a very busy street. This is a real story of a real constituent who came in with real issues—a very tragic and very sad story.

This is an Ontario where our seniors are neglected and left in hallways in hospitals without proper care. First I want to congratulate our front-line health care workers. They're doing amazing with the resources that this government has left them. They have left them next to nothing, but they're surviving.

A couple of weeks ago, I was door-knocking. I had one of the television networks with me to follow me. We met for coffee, and I said, "You pick the area we're going to go. You pick the house you want me to knock on." They picked a subdivision. We drove there together, and they picked the houses that I was to go and knock on. The cameras came up, and the first door I knocked on

was a nurse. We told her, “Do you mind that the network is going to follow us in? Do you want to talk to them?” “Yes, I’m fine with that.” She has got her nurse’s scrubs on. She said, “I’m going to tell you a story about what happened last night.” She was determined, let me say, Speaker. She said, “We knew we had to bring a patient into a room, but our hospital”—which is not that old. I remember, as mayor of the city of North Bay, the ribbon cutting, and I was mayor up until 2010, so this is not an old hospital.

1600

In fact, they closed 60 beds in this hospital. There are 60 beds closed. If you go into one of the twin rooms, the double rooms, the bed is actually gone. Everything is removed. They’re down in storage. So when they say that they closed 60 beds, it’s not sort of a nudge and wink; this is an empty facility now—nothing there. The phone—everything is gone; the television—everything is out of the room.

They desperately needed a place for this one particular patient. I know that there are patients in the hallway. My mother was one of those patients who spent 12 hours in the hallway. She was 83 at the time that it happened. This is the Ontario that they’ve created.

So the nurse told us that they cleaned out a closet. You’ve heard of a story from the third party, a story in Sudbury where they cleaned out a bathroom and had a patient live in that bathroom. Well, they cleaned out a closet at this hospital. This was the nurse telling us—myself and the CBC—the story. They cleaned out the closet, and that became the patient’s room.

This is the Ontario that this Liberal government has created. This is an Ontario where these problems are not one-offs. These problems are not rare and unique. These are every day—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Systemic.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke called it “systemic,” and he’s right. This is baked in. This is built into Ontario. This is not the Ontario that we grew up in, and this is not the Ontario that the Ontario PCs will stand for. I tell the people of Ontario that relief is on the way.

So let’s talk a little bit more about health care. Yesterday the Liberals talked a lot about care. Everything was care. Well, for 15 years, they ignored health care, they ignored mental health care, they ignored dental care and they ignored long-term care. In fact, the only caring they did was caring to get themselves re-elected.

In the past 10 years, we’ve seen a 67% increase in hospitalizations for children with mental health disorders. Once people are treated in an Ontario emergency room after a suicide—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I know that the member from Barrie likes to laugh when I talk about this, and she can continue to laugh. But I’ll tell you, when they’re treated in an emergency room after a suicide attempt, the majority are not seen by a psychiatrist—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order. Stop the clock. Okay—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): When I stand, I would appreciate if nobody else comments. I’m going to ask that they maintain an element of civility here in the Legislature. I hear these—what I call—drive-by comments. They look down, but I know exactly where they are coming from—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from eastern Ontario—just so that he knows—I’ll be listening rather intently—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): —and perhaps even from members from northern Ontario, as well.

Again, I’m going to turn it back to the member from—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

I would ask the member to continue. Thank you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Again, there’s certainly a lot of chatter when I’m talking about the people who are treated in an Ontario emergency room after a suicide attempt, because the majority are not seen by a psychiatrist for upwards of six months. This is what they don’t want you to be able to hear. That’s why they want to talk over me when I talk about society’s most vulnerable. That’s what we get from the Liberals. That’s the contempt that the Liberals have for our society’s most vulnerable.

The one thing that we heard in the pre-budget hearings—it’s one thing to hear these very shameful stats, but it’s another thing entirely to look someone in the eye who is suffering and hear their personal story. That’s what happened in this year’s pre-budget consultations, in two different—actually, three. I’ll tell you about the third one in a moment.

The poor handling of mental health issues by this government was a common theme at almost every pre-budget hearing in January. We heard that this government is not doing enough for those who are suffering issues of mental health.

The words of a 17-year-old student in Sudbury who decided to share his story left a lasting impression on everyone in attendance. He said: “I attempted suicide. I’m extremely fortunate to be here today. I felt utterly alone.” He went on to explain that “most youth are unsure of what to do and where to go” when they need help; that, too often, they don’t know the resources, if any, that are available to them, and sometimes they simply cannot access those resources.

Another presenter told us how his battle with depression led him to also attempt suicide. He described our mental health system as “a broken system that has ... and will continue to take more lives if we don’t start acting now.”

Speaker, we cannot and we must not let these words ring hollow.

However, the most tragic story was about an individual who could not be there to share their own story. A London health care worker explained how a lack of resources meant turning away people at the doors of their hospital's urgent care department: "One of those poor souls committed suicide in the parking lot" of the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, when you hear stories such as the three I refer to, it simply breaks your heart. We absolutely must do more than this government is doing.

Canadians are proud of our health care system, as they should be. As I said earlier, we have some of the most highly trained and compassionate health care providers in the country. But a system can always be improved, and in hearing those three stories especially, it's clear more than a little improvement is needed when it comes to mental health.

One of the expressions we heard so often was: If you break a leg, you go and you get treated; you present yourself at the hospital with mental health issues, and you have a tendency to be on a list that could be six months, could be more. We heard of an example of 18 months. We need to be treating mental health the same way that we treat other physical health, but it does not seem that this Liberal government believes that.

Let me explain what I mean by that, Speaker. I'll give you some examples of the health care cuts: There's over a billion dollars in cuts, including \$815 million cut from physician services in 2015 alone—stunning; 50 medical residency positions eliminated; \$20 million slashed from the Assistive Devices Program; and \$50 million cut from physiotherapy services for seniors.

I recall that one of the seniors told me—this is anecdotal—that they used to be able to go in after a hip or a knee surgery and have therapy, and it would be up to so many sessions. I think they said that it was 50 or 100 sessions. Now it's cut to four, whether they're healed or not. That is the \$50 million that was cut from physiotherapy services for seniors; again, 1,600 nurses cut since the beginning of 2015; and nine consecutive years of hospital funding cuts, including four years of frozen hospital budgets. Speaker, that's the reality.

1610

Let me talk a little bit about why that happened. If I had to put a title on this one, I would call it "15 Years of Liberal Waste, Mismanagement and Scandals," because all three of those contributed to the problem that the Liberal government has created, not only for themselves, but for the people of Ontario, who bear the real burden in all of this.

For 15 years now, the Premier and the Liberals have made life harder for Ontario families. Think about this, Speaker: When you and I were younger, Ontario was once the economic engine of Canada. We were the economic engine of Canada, but after years of what I'll be outlining in a moment—the waste, mismanagement and scandals—we're now a have-not province, and have

been for some time. So while life is good for the insider friends of the Liberals, it's not so good for middle class families throughout Ontario.

I said to you earlier, Speaker, "Don't believe a word they're saying; we've seen this movie before." Well, to keep that movie theme going, we'll have a look at the Liberal highlight reel, because that is a true example of the breadth and depth of their waste, their mismanagement and their scandals.

At the top of the pile is the eHealth boondoggle. Remember years ago, when it was announced at first? It was a billion-dollar boondoggle. Well, in the Auditor General's report—not this last one, the one before—she said that eHealth has now hit \$8 billion, with no end in sight and nothing to show for it. This is the sort of granddaddy of their waste, their mismanagement and their scandals, all combined into one: \$8 billion that is not spent on health care or the other issues that we're talking about.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: And here we go. We have a new member who has shown up, and we're going to have more noise from that side again, Speaker.

So \$8 billion on eHealth and \$1 billion on cancelling the gas plants. Now, Speaker, I've probably got a half hour left, and I could spend that entire half-hour detailing the \$1.1 billion on cancelling the gas plants, but I think we all understand the level of waste, mismanagement and, in this case, scandals.

Of course, in April the highest of Liberal insiders—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —who is now convicted will now be sentenced, so we understand why they want to start to yell and scream over the fact that there is a gas plant. It's one of the highest possible Liberal operatives who is now going to be sentenced, who is a convicted criminal. This is the status of where we're at, Speaker. That's the \$1.1 billion of—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Okay. All right, enough is enough. I will very quickly move to warnings. I hope I've made myself very clear. I would ask that all members of this House take a deep breath. That's it. You feel better now.

Now, I'm going to ask that the leader of the official opposition continue, but I expect civility in here. The next person I hear stepping out of line will be warned.

Please continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. We were talking about the—

Mr. Han Dong: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order, the member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: I believe the member brought up someone who is neither a Liberal caucus member—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. That's enough. I will overrule you on that. No names were mentioned—nothing at all. What he said was perfectly fine, in my opinion.

Back to the leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Again, we were referring to the \$1.1-billion cancelling of the gas plants. This is an example of why all of the health care cuts are made, when I continue down the long litany—as I called it, my “highlight reel” of Liberal waste, mismanagement and, in this case, scandals.

The next one on the list is the \$2 billion that were wasted on smart meters. The Auditor General in 2014 gave us her report that talked about that. We learned so much about how much was wasted, mismanaged and, again, turned into yet another, in this case, multi-billion-dollar scandal. This is a long litany of issues.

While we’re still on the hydro side, I could talk about the four-and-half-million-dollar salary for the CEO of Hydro One. Where everybody in Ontario was in the several-hundred-thousand-dollar salaries, all of a sudden—boom—we have to have a salary of \$4.5 million for the CEO of Hydro One—unprecedented and, quite frankly, unimaginable. But in this land of Liberal waste, mismanagement and scandals, this is just on the list. Oh, well, it’s just yet another item on the list.

I could talk about the \$400 million in overruns on the Presto card. That came from the auditor in 2012. When you have \$400 million wasted in a cost overrun, it’s no wonder why you end up freezing the hospital envelope for all those years. It has to come from somewhere, and it’s all used up on these scandals of this government.

The \$304 million over budget of the Pan Am Games: The Auditor General told us that in 2016.

Ms. Deborah Matthews: That’s not true. That is not true.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I understand she doesn’t think the Auditor General is true. We’ve heard of that member’s comments about not believing the Auditor General in many, many, many instances, where they don’t believe our own independent Auditor General, but that is out of her report in 2016.

I know it’s a sensitive topic, but it’s so sensitive because that’s where the money that should have gone to front-line health care ended up. Other money ended up with the \$36 million on bureaucracy at the LHINs. That came from the Auditor General in 2015.

I could keep going down a list. I could talk about the Canada Goose jackets that were reported—\$53,948 not spent on front-line health care but spent on Canada Goose jackets.

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Now, Speaker, I know this gets them going. This one is a particularly exciting chapter when you go through the movie reel of Liberal waste, mismanagement and scandal. There’s no scandal that’s too big or too small. There’s no waste that’s great enough. There’s no breadth or depth of their mismanagement; they’re all in when it comes to mismanagement.

Speaker, because I live in northern Ontario, I want to give you the classic example of—this encapsulates all waste, mismanagement and scandal.

You have to appreciate, Speaker, that Ontario Northland has been in the north for more than 100 years. They

have a division called Ontera. I know the government ended up selling and shut off our rail division. I’ll talk about the passenger rail later.

I can tell you, we’ve had a telecommunications division there since telephones were invented. They are the telecom company—were; I have to use the past tense now because the Liberals sold them off. They were the telecommunications company for northern Ontario.

1620

Speaker, the company was valued at over \$67 million. Just before the Liberals had a fire sale of Ontera—that’s the name of the company. Just before the Liberals’ fire sale, they put in a fibre ring at a cost of well over \$20 million; they purchased a telecom company in Sault Ste. Marie; they did all kinds of things that spent a lot of money. The company was worth \$67 million. But the Auditor General in 2015 told us they sold Ontera for \$6 million. It was a \$67-million company. They sold it for \$6 million. They sold it at a \$61-million loss.

In further investigation, the Auditor General turned up the facts that they paid—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Durham is warned.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the auditor told us some time later, after reporting that they lost \$61 million selling Ontera for \$6 million, that they ended up paying \$6.5 million to consultants and lawyers. So they sold it for \$6 million and lost \$61 million plus the money that they spent on consultants.

This is Liberal math, Speaker. This is exactly why they don’t have the money for our front-line health care. They spent it on their waste, their mismanagement and their scandals. That’s what this government is all about. If there was ever one story that encapsulates, “Vic, tell me about how the Liberal government of Ontario works,” I would use that as a classic example. It’s not the biggest, it’s not the smallest, but it’s a classic example of their waste, their mismanagement and their scandals.

Last week, we read a report called Ontario’s Lost Decade: 2007-2016. That’s our lost decade. The report finds that Ontario suffered through a decade of poor economic performance in comparison to the rest of the country. Speaker, you have to appreciate that in the recession of 2008, everybody suffered. There’s no question about that. But the other provinces, in how they reacted, all bounced back quickly. This government doubled down on waste, mismanagement and scandal. We saw them plunge our hydro rates into amongst the highest back in 2009. When others were looking at what we could do to kick-start our economy—I recall at the pre-budget consultation two years ago, Mr. Frank Dottori told us that other provinces use energy as an economic development incentive; here in Ontario, energy is what’s killing businesses. That’s what Frank told us at the all-party pre-budget consultations. So whereas other provinces bounced back because they were attentive to the needs of families and businesses, Ontario went the other way. Ontario ended up dead last among provinces in median

household income between the years 2005 and 2015. That is because we lost so many hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs. That is why our median household income tumbled. We were dead last. We were at the bottom.

I understand that this government enjoys these record-setting numbers. One of them happens to be dead last among provinces.

Speaker, I hear them say all the time, “We’re the number one foreign direct investment destination in North America.”

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “Hear, hear,” he’s cheering. What he doesn’t know is that we’re not number one; we’ve tumbled to number four. That is the reality, Speaker. At one time we were. We also were the number one jurisdiction for mining worldwide. Today, we’ve fallen to 18th position. Speaker, this is the reality. When you wonder why we had a lost decade, this government was in charge of this lost decade. This is what happened. It’s under their watch that we became dead last.

The only indicator in the entire report that put Ontario near the head of the pack is in the growth of government debt. That’s why we talk about the fact that we are the most indebted subnational—as we call it; that’s a province or a state—on the planet. That is where we are. When this government took office, Ontario’s debt, which took about 137 years to get there, was \$139 billion. Today, it is \$312 billion and, according to both the Financial Accountability Officer and the Auditor General, on its way to around \$372 billion. That’s where we are. Can you imagine, the only indicator that we’re number one in is the growth in government debt? Not only the growth in debt, but in debt—we’re number one in debt worldwide. No other state or province has the debt that we have. That’s this government’s legacy. Never mind more than doubling; it’s on its way to tripling. That’s where we’re headed.

What do the Liberals have to say about this? Well, we heard what they had to say: They announced an \$8-billion deficit. That’s what they’re forecasting for next year. That’s their answer to being the number one most indebted province or state in the world. Their answer is, “More debt. Let’s go. Pour it on.”

Just a few months ago, they were promising a balanced budget. Let’s hear some of the finance minister’s greatest hits. This is his reel. These are quotes from our finance minister. This is last year: “We’re looking at a balanced budget in this coming budget ... next year as well, and the year after that.” Wrong.

“I will confirm that we are on track to deliver balanced budgets for the next two years as well.” Wrong—never made it. They didn’t quite get there.

“We have outperformed and as a result we’re coming to balance next year and the year after that.” Oops. Failed; misfired; missed it.

Here’s another quote: “The government is continuing to project a balanced budget in 2017-18 and ongoing balance in 2018-19 and 2019-20....” This is from the gov-

ernment’s own fall economic statement. They forecasted balance, balance and balance. Oops, oops and oops; they missed it.

In the actual budget document of last year, the printed document that we received in the Legislature—this is reading from the document: “Not only are we presenting a balanced budget this year”—I’m going to talk about that, because it was not balanced; it was artificially balanced, but we’ll get to that—“we are on track for balanced budgets in 2018-19 and 2019-20.” Oops. The Liberals can’t be trusted, period.

The Liberals in the throne speech have made plenty of promises. They simply cannot be trusted, period.

Remember, in 2013, the Liberals promised a 15% auto insurance reduction. That was to appease the NDP and avoid an election in 2013. So they promised a 15% reduction. Well, they had absolutely no plan to get there, and they aren’t anywhere near that target, Speaker. So here we are, with a promise made—“We’re going to balance the budget”—and a promise broken. Here we are, with a promise made—“15% off your auto insurance”—and a promise broken.

1630

In the throne speech and in the upcoming budget, I have to ask, what promises are the Liberals going to break this year? Anything they have to say, you cannot trust. It is just not something you can trust. I ask again: What promises are they going to break this year?

Speaker, it’s actually not just about the promises they’ve broken; it’s about the things they didn’t tell you they were going to do, that they did, that cost you billions of dollars. Again, it’s not just about their broken promises. You can ask any voter in Ontario—any one of them—and none of them will tell you that this government told them they were going to sell Hydro One. There’s no way, nohow; there are absolutely none of them who will be able to tell you that. Again, this is something they didn’t tell you, and what happened is that it has ended up raising our hydro rates. Although they continue to deny that, this is absolutely something that ends up raising your hydro rates.

They tried to hide this one-time cash grab in a reckless and fake balanced budget. They continue to say that the budget balanced last year, but it only balanced because they had the sale of one-time assets. The Auditor General explained this to everybody and the Financial Accountability Officer explained this to everybody. But apparently that didn’t go over too well with the Liberals, because they didn’t quite understand that when you run out of things to sell, you’re going to end up with a deficit. That’s the core issue here.

I stood here, year after year after year—every member that you see here on the side of the official opposition has stood up and said, “You did not truly balance the budget. You’re only balancing the budget by selling assets.” Of course, you’ve heard us all—everyone has said this—saying that you’re burning the furniture to heat the house. When you run out of furniture, you’re not going to have anything left to heat the house.

We tried every way to explain to these members that this is not going to play out well for the people of Ontario very shortly. We told them, over and over. You announced a balanced budget, but you did it because you sold assets in downtown Toronto and you sold the prime asset, Hydro One. You used that money in the operating budget of the province of Ontario, so now this year there's no asset to sell.

Big surprise—the Liberals, I think, are the only ones surprised in Ontario that they're announcing an \$8-billion deficit. It's there because all of the expenses they've baked into the budget—they're built in. They have a systemic deficiency in their budget. It is a built-in deficiency that they have. It's a built-in deficit. It's baked in now. It's a permanent deficit that they have baked in there, and they were artificially taking care of it by selling assets.

The Auditor General, the Financial Accountability Officer and everybody who understands a balance sheet told this government that, year after year, and lo and behold: "Oh, my gosh, we have nothing to sell this year. We have an \$8-billion deficit." Big surprise—and they, again, are the only people who are surprised, because for 15 years they've put insiders and political self-interest first while making life harder for Ontario families. Hydro bills have skyrocketed, taxes and fees have ballooned, and our debt is more than double—almost triple—its size when the Liberals came into power.

Speaker, when you think about your own family, you work harder, you play by the rules and you think that everything will be okay and you're going to get ahead—well, we now know the real problem. We now know why life is more expensive under this Liberal government. If you've ever felt that you just can't seem to get ahead, we're now told by the Financial Accountability Officer why that happened. We now know what the deal is.

This Liberal government has nicked and dimed the people of Ontario every chance they get. That's what they do, Speaker. The Financial Accountability Officer just recently highlighted a great example. The province forecasts that it will collect \$2.9 billion in service fees in 2017-18. That is 45% more revenue from fees since 2011. So that's why. When you wonder, "Why does it feel like I cannot get ahead?"—that is why.

Fees and revenues, 45%: There's not a fee on the books that this government won't raise to make life more expensive. In fact, this year, the Liberals introduced five brand new fees in addition to the 90 existing fees that they raised—five new ones on top of the other ones.

When I think about drivers and licences and vehicle registration, I remember standing in this Legislature two years ago announcing that it's gone up—just gone up, not how much they've collected—the increase in four years was \$503 million from drivers' licences and vehicle registration. Everything from hunting and fishing licences to driver and registration fees has gone up in the province of Ontario, period. On the whole, the rate increases were significantly above the rate of inflation—again, 45% more revenue since 2011. That's unbeliev-

able. Simply put, life continues to get more expensive under this Liberal government.

This government continues to rob Peter to pay Paul, but Paul is usually a Liberal insider. That's what has happened in the province of Ontario. The Liberals will continue this spending addiction. They're going to continue to feed this spending addiction on the backs of Ontario families.

Again, they've already broken a key election promise and are planning to run an \$8-billion deficit. That in itself is more proof that this government cannot be trusted to keep their word. Anything that's promised in this budget will be nothing more than another expensive re-election promise that the Liberals have no intention of keeping—absolutely no intention. They will do and say anything to cling to power.

Now, this is interesting, Speaker. While we were in question period this morning, the Premier had a release. The first line of her release said, "[T]his period of economic change and uncertainty." Oh, well, hang on a second. I thought they told us that everything was great. But now, in her release at 11 o'clock this morning, there's economic uncertainty. We're scratching our heads here, going, "Uh-oh." They're obviously trying now to change the narrative to match their \$8-billion deficit. In one breath, they tell these tales about leading in the G7, which is not accurate either, and today it's economic change and uncertainty. That's one of the few things that we've heard that's accurate from this Premier.

I'd certainly like to know, which one are we getting tomorrow? Is it going to be that things are great or that there's economic uncertainty? You can't have it both ways. Only one of those is accurate. You cannot have it both ways. So you have to wonder, are they now fear-mongering because the facts, the \$8-billion deficit, doesn't fit in with their election narrative or re-election narrative or their pre-election narrative, for that matter? Something went off the rails here for the Premier to completely do a 180 and now talk about economic change and uncertainty. Something doesn't add up here, Speaker. So if they're not using taxpayer money for votes, then they are now trying to scare everyone into voting for them somehow. Either way, Speaker, either of those are both appalling and pathetic.

1640

We talk about the fact that we lost 51,000 jobs in January, we talk about the fact that there are 300,000 fewer manufacturing jobs, and this government continues to say, "Well, we've created so many jobs since the recession." But in their own words—I'm reading from one of their own reports—they say here that "there are fewer jobs today relative to the population than before the recession." In other words, employment growth has not kept up with the growth of the working-age population. That, Speaker, explains everything. Yes, jobs are created. That happens. Businesses create jobs. But the economic climate that this government has created means that it didn't keep up with the growth in the population, never mind the 51,000 people that lost their jobs in January alone.

Think of Sergio Marchionne from Fiat Chrysler sitting down with the Premier—I think it's two years ago now—and saying to her, “You've created one of the most expensive jurisdictions in North America in which to do business.” And what was their answer to that? Well, hike fees, make Ontario even more expensive for families, put in a cap-and-trade tax so everything—it's a tax on everything—is now more expensive in the province of Ontario. Have hydro rates that continue to skyrocket. All of these issues are deterrents to business. They have chased businesses away from the province of Ontario.

Speaker, I've used this example as well. Not only have they chased businesses away; it's businesses that aren't coming to Ontario. Google and Amazon both opened their first-ever Canadian data centres: heavy, heavy users of energy, electricity. They opened their first-ever data centres, both of these world-leading companies. Where did they go? The province of Quebec. Read why, and they both state it: because of the high cost of energy in the province of Ontario. That's why they did not come here. We're chasing companies away. Other companies are not coming. It's no surprise, Speaker.

In closing, I would conclude by saying, it used to be that if you worked hard, played by the rules, spent wisely and saved diligently, you could get ahead. But that is no longer the truth in Ontario. It's no longer true under this government. The Premier has betrayed the trust of Ontario families. After 15 years, life is now harder under the Liberals.

A PC government will lower hydro rates, end hallway health care, ensure students are ready for the current workforce, bring back good-paying jobs to Ontario and bring back accountability to Queen's Park.

Speaker, it's time for change that works for the people, not the Liberal insiders, and only the Ontario PC Party and our leader, Doug Ford, will represent the change for the better.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order. There have been a few additions into the Legislature since I last spoke and said we are now in warnings. I just wanted to make that rather obvious at this point in time.

Therefore, I now turn it over for further debate, and I recognize the member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Speaker, I'm seeking unanimous consent to stand down our lead for this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Windsor West is seeking unanimous consent to stand down their lead. Agreed? Agreed.

Back to the member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity today to be able to comment on the throne speech that was delivered yesterday.

I have to say that I was quite shocked by what I heard in yesterday's throne speech. We heard this government admit that, “For many of our friends and neighbours, life is getting harder.” The Lieutenant Governor said to us, “The cost of living is rising, and at the same time, stable long-term jobs—jobs that pay a decent wage—are

proving harder to find ... People are struggling to take care of themselves, and their loved ones.”

Now, my NDP caucus colleagues and I were shocked to hear the government actually admit to this. We all know the Liberal government has been in power in this province for 15 years. At the end of these 15 years, what is the legacy that this Liberal government has left? In their own words, “life is getting harder,” good jobs are “harder to find,” and “people are struggling.”

It is absolutely shocking to me that this Liberal government, after 15 years, has the gall to stand up and pretend as though all of this is not their doing. And now, they're asking Ontarians to put their trust in them again: to clean up the mess that they have created. That is absolutely absurd, and Ontarians see right through it.

They know that the reason they can't afford their medication is because of this Liberal government. They know that they can't find a stable job because of this Liberal government. They know that their hydro bills are sky-high because of this Liberal government. They know that their family members and loved ones had to wait for health care and mental health supports because of this Liberal government. They know their parents and grandparents have suffered in long-term-care homes because of this Liberal government. It's shameful that this Liberal government thinks that Ontarians will forgive them for that.

I think the clearest example of this can be found in the examples that we heard in the throne speech of Ontarians who are struggling. We heard about a man in Peterborough, a minimum wage earner who spoke about the shame of using a food bank just to get by. No matter how much this government pats themselves on the back for raising the minimum wage in Ontario—which, really, they should be thanking the labour movement for, not themselves—the reality is that after 15 years in power, they are fully responsible for allowing wages to stagnate for so long, not to mention that under their watch, food bank use has gone up exponentially.

In Windsor, our downtown mission reported last year that it now serves 700 people per day, every day. Just a few years ago, they were averaging 100 people per day. In Toronto, the Daily Bread Food Bank has reported their highest annual client visit numbers since 2010, when the effects of the 2008 recession hit Torontonians with full force. The reality is that the reason that our brother in Peterborough is barely getting by is because of this Liberal government. When your hydro bill rises 300%, when your housing and food costs more and more each year, but your wages don't rise, when you can't afford to take your medications as prescribed or get a checkup and restorative treatment like fillings at the dentist, your quality of life suffers, and we have this Liberal government to thank for that.

As much as the Liberals have continued to make life harder for everyday Ontarians, I think it's very important to consider how a Conservative government might tackle this situation. I think, by all accounts, it simply wouldn't. The Conservatives have boasted about their promise to

cut \$6.1 billion in social spending. They will lose this province billions more when they cancel cap-and-trade, another approximately \$2 billion a year. Their new leader has promised to “leave no stone unturned” when it comes to privatizing the public services that we depend on. The Conservatives haven’t told us whether it is our overcrowded hospitals, our crumbling schools or our backlogged transit that’s getting cut back even further. It was the Conservatives who said, “Let the auto industry die.” They were happy to sit idly by and see over 100,000 people on the unemployment line. Auto workers contributed \$6.1 billion to the Ontario economy in 2014. It’s ironic that it’s \$6.1 billion, the same number that auto workers put into our economy, that the Conservatives now want to take out of it—they’ve promised to cut.

1650

If you think it’s too early to predict the future, then let’s look to the past. Conservative Premier Mike Harris closed 28 hospitals. He fired 6,000 nurses. He slashed social assistance rates by 21%. The last Conservative government told low-income families they could just buy dented cans of tuna and eat baloney sandwiches to save money. In eight years, they not once raised the minimum wage from \$6.85 an hour. The Conservatives, under Harris, set us back decades and did long-lasting damage to this province that is still felt to this day. The last thing our brother from Peterborough needs is a Conservative government.

Next, we heard about a mother who lives in Thunder Bay, a teacher whose daughter lives with a developmental disability. Speaker, this is one of my favourite topics to discuss. Since taking over as the Ontario NDP’s critic for community and social services, I have developed strong relationships with parents and families in the developmental services community, and many of these parents and caregivers have similar stories to the mother in Thunder Bay. Many of them are caring for adult children, who lost the vast majority of their government support when their children aged out at 18. For those who are not aware, there is a huge gap in supports between when a child with a developmental disability is 17 and when they turn 18.

Right now, we have 11,000 people on the wait-list for Passport funding, which is supposed to be available as soon as an individual turns 18. This is such an enormous source of stress and anxiety for my friends in the developmental services community, who are increasingly worried about how their children will be cared for as they age.

Again, we have 15 years of Liberal government to thank for this situation. Under this government, the wait-list for those with developmental disabilities to get supportive housing has risen to 15,000 people. Again, for those in the House who may not be aware, this is not a stagnant list. Individuals on the list can be bumped up and down depending on need or whether an individual is deemed to be in crisis. In practice, this means many people with developmental disabilities are waiting upwards of 20 years for supportive housing.

I want to take a moment to thank my friend Mary Beth and the parents and caregivers who make up Parents of Adult Children with Disabilities Windsor/Essex Group for their incredible advocacy and their Nowhere to Turn campaign.

As a result of the unacceptable wait-list for funding and housing, those with developmental difficulties in their families are sometimes forced to turn to other means. Last parliamentary session, I asked the Liberal government why it has failed to address the influx in illegal group homes. We have heard story after story about unregulated and unlicensed group homes with inhumane and unsafe conditions, where landlords exploit seniors, low-income earners and those with developmental disabilities. Individuals are forced to live in these homes because of sky-high housing costs, a lack of affordable, safe housing, and a years-long wait-list for supportive housing. People have died in these homes, Speaker—either died in the home or trying to escape them because of the horrendous conditions. When I asked this Liberal government who was responsible, they kept passing the buck from ministry to ministry. It turns out that no one in this Liberal government actually has a handle on this problem.

My colleague from Welland had a private member’s bill that would tackle this very issue, but it died on the order paper after this government’s campaign stunt to prorogue the Legislature.

For almost a decade, this Liberal government has also refused to increase the base funding for agencies that work with those with developmental disabilities, like Community Living and OASIS. Without fulsome funding, these organizations are struggling to provide complete care, pay their skyrocketing hydro bills, as well as meet their pay equity obligations.

Since I know Ontarians are completely fed up with this Liberal government and are looking for an alternative, I think we should talk about how the Conservatives might respond to this pressing issue. I think it’s safe to say that I speak on behalf of thousands of families and individuals in the developmental disabilities community when I say that the new Conservative leader, Doug Ford, has made some absolutely despicable and heartless comments about individuals with disabilities. How could we possibly entrust the Conservative Party to tackle supportive housing wait-lists when their leader claimed a group home for teenage boys with autism was ruining the community and suggested that they were criminals? After the father of one of the boys issued a formal complaint, Doug Ford, the new Conservative leader, told the man to go to hell.

New Democrats, parents and caregivers find this attitude disgusting. In fact, I think the vast majority of Ontarians would find it disgusting, and it’s not the kind of leadership that we need to solve these problems once and for all.

We need a government that is compassionate, supportive and willing to make the investments needed to ensure good quality of life for all Ontarians; not a Liberal

government that has left families with nowhere to turn, or a Conservative government that sees people with developmental disabilities as a blight on their communities.

The third individual who was mentioned in the throne speech was a man in Toronto whose family is relying on a sole income while he cares for his mother, who has late-stage Alzheimer's. The Liberal government's neglect of our long-term-care system is contemptible, which is why I find it highly ironic that this was such a large part of yesterday's throne speech, made extremely evident by the fact that the speech was titled "A Time for Care"—clearly, a play on words relating to my colleague the member from Nickel Belt's bill, the Time to Care Act. I think the Liberals wanted to take this name and try to make it their own because the Time to Care Act had such incredible widespread support from Ontarians—families and workers alike.

Tens of thousands of people have experienced firsthand the crisis in our long-term-care facilities. Under this Liberal government, the quality of hands-on care has diminished, thanks to a lack of funding and support. There have been increasing instances of violence towards long-term-care residents and workers. Support workers are run off their feet, only able to provide a mere six minutes of care to help residents get ready in the morning, a problem that was brought to light thanks to incredible advocacy from CUPE Ontario and Unifor.

The entire system is in crisis, and now the Liberals want to make it seem as though they are part of the solution, and that now is the time for care.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know why the Liberals did not think that the time for care was last year, or the year before that, or the year before that, because the reality is that the Liberals have had 15 years to make life better for people in Ontario, and that's a long time for them to prove that they actually care.

Ontario used to have a legislated standard guaranteeing a minimum level of hands-on care per day for every resident in long-term care. The Wynne Liberals abolished it and haven't replaced it. There is no law at all right now that guarantees that our parents and grandparents in long-term care get the care that they need.

With the recent prorogation stunt, the Liberals killed the Time to Care Act, which was a great opportunity for positive change. The Time to Care Act mandated that each resident in long-term care would be guaranteed a minimum of four hours of care every day, a much-needed change that residents and support workers alike would benefit from.

We in the NDP will not give up on that vision. We will continue to fight for drastic improvements to the long-term-care system. We will fight for a proper, system-wide, find-and-fix public inquiry into long-term care. We will continue to fight for mandated minimum hours of care. I sincerely doubt that the Conservatives can promise the same.

Conservatives know how to do two things: They cut, and they privatize. Ontarians saw what happened to our health care system when the Conservative Harris govern-

ment closed 28 hospitals and fired 6,000 nurses. They know that when Harris privatized the 407 and started the privatization of Hydro One—and Kathleen Wynne continued it—it has been disastrous for our hydro bills.

Speaker, I'm going to also draw attention to the fact that in Walkerton—many people will be familiar with Walkerton. Walkerton happened under the last Conservative government. Two individuals who were involved in the inquiry have stated that it was because of the Conservative government privatizing the system that half of that community fell ill because of E. coli contamination in their water, and seven people died.

The Conservatives' platform promised \$6.1 billion in cuts, and their new leader sees no limit to what can be privatized and cut. This means long-term care will suffer, without a doubt, as will our hospital wait times and the disrepair in our schools. Speaker, I could go on and on.

1700

Saying that Conservatives will fix long-term care is a pipe dream, or, in Liberal words, a "stretch goal."

I want to spend some time talking about the implications of this government's prorogation stunt last week. It was an incredibly selfish and politically motivated decision, a way for the government to gain some airtime and talk about all of their shiny new promises, things they could have actually done during a campaign. But they also killed a lot of important opposition legislation with that prorogation. I've already talked about the Time to Care Act, Bill 33, and my colleague from Welland's bill on illegal group homes.

They also killed Dan's Law. This was my private member's bill that I introduced back in 2016. It had all-party support. With the invaluable support and hard work of Dr. Darren Cargill from Windsor, I put forward this bill in an effort to remove the three-month wait-list for access to OHIP-funded palliative care and home care for Canadian residents who move to or return to Ontario.

The bill was named after Dan Duma, a Windsor resident who, when the GM plant in Windsor closed, moved to Alberta for work, where he was diagnosed with cancer. When Dan moved back to Ontario to be with his family during the end of his life, he was not able to access home care, which was vital to his final wish to die at home, surrounded by family.

Since Dan's Law was introduced in 2016, there have been countless other Dums who have suffered because the government refused to make the simple fix. The Liberals had 16 months to call that bill to committee and then move it back into this House for final debate to become law. Instead of doing that, they prorogued to start their re-election bid.

I'm not giving up on Dan's Law, and neither is Dr. Cargill or many other partners that have long supported this legislation.

New Democrats are not giving up or giving in on establishing better labour laws for workers. We are committed to guaranteeing fair and equitable sick days and emergency leave time, even for the autoworkers, who the Liberals don't think should have it. We are the only party

standing up for our brothers and sisters in the auto sector, whose leave days are getting cut back because this Liberal government puts profit over people.

We're not giving up on our plan for universal pharmacare and universal dental care. We're committed to ending the decades of cuts and privatization in health care and ending hallway medicine—all started under the Conservatives and continued under the Liberals.

We're not giving up on our plan to put Hydro One back into public hands, where it rightfully belongs.

We're not giving up on improving conditions in First Nations communities, on establishing a dedicated ministry of mental health and addictions, and on making child care more affordable.

We're not giving up on making housing more affordable and protecting our climate and green space.

We are not giving up on improving access to healthy and affordable food and actually fixing social assistance, rather than cutting it and making it worse.

We're not giving up on repairing our classrooms and turning all post-secondary loans into non-repayable grants.

We're not giving up on supporting children and adults with developmental disabilities, and we're committed to ending all forms of violence and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, age, ability or sexuality.

You see, seniors, low-income people, health care and education workers, businesses, families and caregivers of those with developmental disabilities, first responders and correction workers, community service agencies and workers in all areas and industries, including auto-workers, have been surviving and growing in Ontario in spite of this Liberal government, not because of this Liberal government.

We can do so much better than these past 15 years. We don't have to settle between bad and worse. We can get good things done, and we can have real change for the better.

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

Ms. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to have a couple of minutes to respond to the member from Windsor West. I have to say that there was much in her speech that I agreed with. Certainly, I agreed with her evaluation of what the opposition party is cooking up these days. I know they have a new leader. That new leader has been very clear that he is a private market guy. He believes in free market forces—let them go—which is why the PC Party, even way before Doug Ford was elected leader, didn't want to intervene when the auto sector was very close to shutting down.

This new, invigorated free market force that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about includes things like selling cannabis in the corner store. That's an idea that we think is a very bad one. It's not safe for our kids. The other thing he's already pontificated about is eliminating rent controls, sending rents skyrocketing across this province. So we're watching with interest about what more they might cut, but Speaker, I can tell you that we

on this side of the House will be standing up for the people of this province.

The member from Windsor West talked about “after 15 years,” and I thought I would just highlight some of the things that have changed over the past 15 years. Very importantly, the high school graduation rate has gone from 68% to 86%; OHIP+ means over a million prescriptions have been filled for people under age 25; and now we're expanding it so that almost half of the population of Ontario will have no copay, no deductible and free prescription drugs. We're bringing our seniors into that. We've had no more smog days—

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to comment on the member from Windsor West's comments about the speech from the throne. For those just tuning in at home, the Liberal government decided to prorogue Parliament, which means they ceased the current session we were in, lost all the bills that were on the docket—I introduced one today—and introduced a speech from the throne.

There are many headlines: “Wynne's Throne Speech Will Be a Fairy Tale.” Well, Mr. Speaker, I think they wanted to change the channel, which is why they had a speech from the throne. But I don't think they're fooling the press, nor the people of Ontario.

Interjection: They won't be fooled again.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes. I mean, 15 years of Liberal rule—I've been standing up, saying, “You're making it harder for anyone to survive in the province of Ontario.” The at least 300% increase in hydro rates has been a tipping point for poverty in my riding. I go on to tell the statistics of what they've done to the people of the province of Ontario. It truly is a fairy tale when you listen to the throne speech, because it's like we're at Disney World: Everything is great. People are better; education is better; health care is better. Well, I don't know. I listen to the parents in my riding and they're pretty darn concerned about education—the math skills, the literacy skills that their children are not getting.

Interjections.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I listen to the parents; it's a pretty reliable source.

And then they're going to balance the books, and then all of a sudden it's an \$8-billion deficit. So guess what? They reneged on that promise.

For 15 years the Liberal government has rolled out—how can I say this, Mr. Speaker, in the appropriate language?—falsehoods. Dalton McGuinty—what was it, 240 broken promises in the first month he was elected in 2003? And this Wynne government has carried right on. Why would anyone believe them? Why would anyone trust them?

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to stand on behalf of the residents of Windsor–Tecumseh and speak on the comments made by my good friend from Windsor West today.

I had the opportunity to go through the speech from the throne, and I noticed that they used the word “care”—I lost track—it might be 72 or 73 times, “caring” eight times, “caregivers” once, and “pharmacare” a couple of times. You have to take a care, you have to give a care. But had they, in the past 15 years, taken care of the voters, the residents of Ontario, we wouldn't have hydro rates go up 300% and then down 25%, and then say to the people, “Don't worry, we're looking after you.”

We wouldn't have had hallway medicine to the degree that we have it now, with hospital overcrowding. You go to the hospital and you might end up in a water closet or in a broom closet. You might be on a stretcher in the hallway for a week—15 years of no care on that file from this government.

1710

We wouldn't have the wait times to get into long-term care had this Liberal government, in the past 15 years, paid attention to what was going on in long-term care.

We talk about mental health, Speaker, and the issues we have in the mental health file. For 15 years, this government has been asleep at the switch. Maryvale in Windsor has not had one penny increase in base funding in 15 years from this Liberal government. Maryvale is an institution, a facility that works with children with mental health issues and young people with mental health issues. If you can't fix the problems when they're small and when they're young, those problems just manifest and get a lot deeper.

That's 15 years of uncaring from this Liberal government.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, during my first term here—I guess it was my second term, actually—in the fall of 2008, after three consecutive surpluses in the fiscal years ending 2006, 2007 and 2008, like the rest of the world, Ontario focused on the big recession. It meant nine years—nine long years—climbing out of that recessionary deficit.

During that time, the province set and achieved a path back to a balanced budget and achieved it right on schedule, never once missing a deficit reduction target. Along the way, in order to do that, the province borrowed a lot of money, and the province realized we couldn't do everything that we wanted to do.

Now this year, the fiscal year ending in 2018, Ontario is going to table a budget surplus. It's a logical time to say it's now time to turn the page. If we're going to consider this the end of the recession and the start of the period post-recession, then it's time to have a proper speech from the throne, no matter how late we are in the Parliament, and a budget that says, “This is where we're going, moving forward in time.” Our budgets, as a government, have always looked forward.

What it has meant for Ontario, what it has meant for my community—manufacturing is booming in northwest Mississauga. That was done by a Liberal government. It has meant investment in our hospitals, investment in our

transit. That was all done by a Liberal government during a recession. It has meant, for us, double the GO service, all achieved during a recession and by a Liberal government. That's the difference that this has made.

It has been responsible, prudent fiscal management that got us back to a balanced budget on time, and what it means, moving forward, is that the first people to be paid are not the bankers; they're the people who had to be patient and wait, and now it's their turn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Windsor West for final comment.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The member from Mississauga—Streetsville might want to correct his record. On the government side, the Liberals actually said they're going to table an \$8-billion deficit budget. I don't know how the Liberals can manage to say, “It's an \$8-billion deficit, but it's a surplus.” But anyway, Speaker—

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Yes, that is what he said. Check the record.

But anyway, Speaker, we've seen an increase. It started under the Conservatives with their cuts and privatization. As I mentioned, we can talk about Walkerton. We can talk about the 407. We can talk about the down-loading onto municipalities, but not actually supporting them financially. We can talk about all that. We can talk about how last time they campaigned on cutting 100,000 public sector jobs. That's in addition to over 100,000 auto sector jobs that they were willing to let die. I think the record speaks for itself.

Clearly, their leader speaks about his feelings around people with developmental disabilities and how he thinks they're a blight on our communities. We know the Conservative record on cutting social assistance that would actually help those people with developmental disabilities.

We can look at the Liberal record. For 15 years, they've done the same thing. They've taken our public services down the drain. We have hallway medicine. We have a crisis in our long-term-care sector, our education system—our schools are falling apart; there's a \$15-billion repair backlog.

Speaker, I just want to remind everybody that the title of the throne speech was A Time for Care and Opportunity. What I'm going to say to the Liberals is this: You've had 15 years to show your care, and your opportunity is over. It isn't just time for change, Speaker, because if you just vote for change, you're going to get the slash, cut and privatize Conservatives. It is actually time for change for the better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I will be sharing my time this afternoon with the member from Guelph and the Minister of Energy.

Speaker, I have, I think, about 10 minutes this afternoon. I thought one of the first things I would chat a little bit about is this continued effort on the part of the Progressive Conservatives to create a narrative in the public

perception that, when it comes to fiscal responsibility and fiscal prudence, they are the party that is best able to achieve that on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario. I guess, given the recent goings-on with the leadership, that we can remove, perhaps, the “progressive” from the name and just simply refer to them as the Conservatives.

There is a little bit of information that I think bears repeating when it comes to their record. In their most recent time in government, from 1995 to 2003—people will remember, and I’ve said this before in this Legislature, that from 1995 to 2003, an eight- or nine-year period of power for the PCs, on the North American continent, economic times were very, very good, unlike the times that we found ourselves in between 2005 and 2008, when the greatest recession since the Great Depression hit and we lost 30 million to 40 million jobs worldwide—they had a lovely time to be in government. You would think and expect that during that period of time, they would be able to show and leave the books in good order for the next government that succeeded them in the election in 2003. Unfortunately, Speaker, nothing like that occurred. Remember: very strong economic times in the entire North American continent—very strong times.

When we came to government in 2003, we were told that there was a balanced budget. We were absolutely told; it was committed to, a number of times, by their party. When we got to government, Speaker, we found very clearly—a headline in the *Toronto Star* said they lied—a \$5.5-billion deficit left by a party 15 years ago, when there were very strong economic times. I don’t know how you explain that away when the economy of the province was very robust.

But Speaker, that’s not the whole story. It’s \$5.5 billion, but it’s not the whole story. There were two other significant pieces that, in my mind, would say that the deficit that was left to us, as an incoming government, structurally was much more significant than \$5.5 billion. In fact, I would put it at the order of magnitude of \$10 billion to \$12 billion, because two other significant things occurred in the years before we formed government.

Number one was selling and privatizing Highway 407, something valued at \$11 billion or \$12 billion, to a Spanish consortium, privatized through a lease for 100 years at a value of \$3 billion. Without the \$3 billion, the \$5.5 billion is now \$8.5 billion. Remember, the \$5.5 billion was confirmed by the auditor and the *Toronto Star*—\$3 billion in one-time money, and now we have an \$8.5-billion number.

The other significant thing that occurred, which affected every single residential, property and business taxpayer in the province of Ontario, was, as we like to refer to it on this side of the House, the “who got done in” committee. They called it the Who Does What committee. That was the exercise that led to a very significant downloading of provincial services into and onto the backs of residential and business taxpayers in every municipality across the province of Ontario.

Now, I’m not sure what the total number or the quantum of that downloading exercise was. Some put it at around \$3 billion a year. I’m not sure. Let’s call it \$2 billion. Without a doubt, they left us a structural deficit of over \$10 billion a year. It took us two or three years to balance that. As the member from Mississauga–Streetsville just said, then we ran three consecutive balanced budgets, until we found ourselves in the midst of the greatest recession since the Great Depression, as I mentioned just a moment ago.

Speaker, the narrative that is attempted to be carved out by the Progressive Conservative Party—that they can manage dollars well for you—is just simply not the case. The experience, I would say, both provincially and under the last federal Conservative government—the information, the history, the narrative just does not bear out the story and the narrative that they try to create.

One of our members spoke a little bit earlier about the idea—as they move forward with the idea that the free market can do everything better.

I remember very well that during the 2008 recession I was here, and I remember the remarks that came from the federal Conservative Prime Minister, and I remember very well the position that was taken by the PC Party here in Ontario: “Leave it alone; it will take care of itself.” When people’s pension plans were nosediving and disappearing in the market, the Prime Minister said, “Don’t worry; it’s a good buying opportunity,” or the Minister of Finance said, “It’s a good buying opportunity.” They were going to abandon the auto sector.

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Speaker, I can tell you that during that time we brought to a northern Ontario industry, the forestry industry, over \$1 billion, or in the neighbourhood of \$1 billion, in supports for that industry. Given the position that seems to be resurfacing within that party about the approach they will take should they have the honour of forming government, I would suggest to you that should we find ourselves in that situation again, industries like forestry, auto and others would be abandoned, because it was their position that should the government bring some sort of support to those industries and others, we would be picking winners and losers. That was the language verbatim. They didn’t think we should be picking winners and losers, when we saw it as supporting tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of workers across the province of Ontario.

When we go back to the narrative of debt and deficit, of course, the federal Conservative government, maybe as right-wing a Conservative government as we’ve ever had in the history of Canada at the federal level, found themselves with significant deficit and debt as well. Finally they came along, kicking and screaming, after their first attempt at trying to manage this recession: “Don’t worry about it. The market will take care of it. Don’t worry about it. Your pension plan is disappearing. Don’t worry about it. It’s good buying opportunities.” They finally came around, albeit kicking and screaming, and found it necessary for them to invest as well. That’s

what they did, and that's why they ended up with significant debt on their books as well, as we did.

Speaker, governing is not easy. You make choices, and when you make choices, there will always be somebody who's angry and upset about it. On balance, when they speak about the fiscal position of the province, I would point people back to their record of not that long ago and remind people of the positions that they took from 1995 to 2003. How it was possible to leave with us a \$10-billion deficit, I have no idea, when you had strong economic times. That's point one.

My time is running out quickly. The member for the PCs who spoke earlier also talked and filtered in and sprinkled in through his speech a narrative on energy prices. Of course, through all the time he's talked about it, not just today but ever, he forgot to mention the significant relief that we have brought to the sector. What they never talk about is what they would have done to suppress the increase that has come in energy prices. What would they have done?

I remind people that in 2003, all three political parties and all three political leaders committed to closing coal in the province of Ontario. Everybody said they were going to do it. We won government. We fulfilled our promise. We met it. Coal represented about 6,000 megawatts of energy in the province of Ontario. Some 20% or 25% of the generated capacity in the province of Ontario came from coal. We promised to close it. We kept that promise. But keeping that promise cost money. We kept our promise but it cost money.

I ask my friends on the other side, when you complain about energy prices, tell me how you would have met your promise on closing coal. If, in fact, you would have kept your promise, how would you have avoided the cost that was associated with replacing 20% of the province's generated capacity? What would you have done? And by the way, would you have kept the false cap on energy prices that you had in place when we came to government. When the price per kilowatt hour on a bill showed about four and a half cents a click but it was really five and a half cents, about 20% higher? They didn't want to deal with it. They knew that energy pricing was radioactive. They didn't want to do it.

Speaker, there are other significant pieces about why energy prices rose, but the folks on the other side never talk about it because they know, to a large degree, much of what has affected the price of energy could not have been avoided no matter who in fact had the reins and the honour of being government in the province of Ontario. It could not have been avoided.

Speaker, my time is almost up. I had lots to say on health care. The member tried to filter and sprinkle some of that—I was going to say—well, I won't use the word I was going to use. But I can tell you only this, Speaker: In my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, I can point to example after example of significant improvements in health care in my riding, and I would expect that every member on our side of the House can do exactly the same thing.

There are still challenges in my riding when it comes to health care, especially when it comes to long-term care. But anybody who tries the position that we have not done enough and moves the yardsticks forward—I would argue vehemently with them, Speaker. I would remind people, and the numbers are never challenged: 28,000 nurses hired, 7,000 more doctors working in the province of Ontario, nurse practitioner clinics for the first time, and the list goes on and on, in my riding as well as in the ridings across the province.

Speaker, my time is up. I yield the floor to my colleagues on this side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing along the line of debate, I recognize the member from Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to carry on from my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

One of the things that was really interesting about—I'm not sure what I call him this week—the Leader of the Opposition? The interim leader? The used-to-be interim Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: The rot-rooter.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: The rot-rooter? Okay. He's the guy who's going to root out the rot—the rot-rooter of the official opposition. When he—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member will withdraw.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Withdraw.

When he was speaking, doing the leadoff for the official opposition, he spoke for an hour. What was fascinating to me was, in that whole hour, he never once mentioned the policy positions in the speech from the throne. I am quite suspicious that the reason he never mentioned anything about policy from the speech from the throne is because the party opposite, at the moment, doesn't really seem to have any policy going forward into the next election, other than that they've cancelled their previous platform.

Depending on who you listen to, they have to cut \$6 billion, they have to cut \$10 billion, they have to cut \$25 billion over the next three years—but they are going to have to make huge cuts to the programs and services that Ontarians expect. I think what we should be talking about is, what are the programs and services that Ontarians expect?

One of the things that I know my constituents in Guelph particularly appreciate is the OHIP+ program that we introduced in January. As I think most people know now, that is extending pharmacare—free prescription drugs—to every child, youth and young adult under the age of 25. In fact, in less than three months, the Ontario government has paid for free prescriptions for over one million people. What that means is that there are a million families or parents or young adults out there who needed a prescription drug and who were able to get it filled.

What we heard before was that if you were a parent and you didn't have a job that paid you benefits—that parents were often having to choose between getting

drugs for their children when they were ill and paying the rent. We said, “That’s not right.” We think that any child—it doesn’t matter whether you’re from a poor family, a middle-class family or a wealthy family. If that child is ill and they need drugs, the government should pay for the drugs, and that’s what we’ve done.

And it’s not just a few select drugs; it’s all 4,400 drugs that are on the provincial formulary for drugs that are available in Ontario. If your doctor writes a prescription and says your child needs it, you can walk into any pharmacy in Ontario, and you can get that drug for free.

The other thing that we discovered is that a lot of young adults these days, when they get their first job, don’t get their first job with benefits. So we included the under-25s in that, the kids who are in post-secondary, the young people who have gone on to their first job, because they rarely include benefits. That means that if you’re a young person in post-secondary, or if you’re getting your first job, again, if you need a prescription, you can walk into the pharmacy, and you can get all 4,400 drugs on the provincial formulary for free.

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What I did hear in my constituency office was from a lot of seniors, and the seniors said, “You know, we actually do get access to the same 4,400 drugs, but we have to pay a copay and we have to pay a deductible.” That can be a real struggle for a senior who is on a fixed income.

What we have done with the speech from the throne and what we will provide funding for when we table the budget next week is, we’ve said we are going to have the same deal for seniors. Remember, seniors are our biggest-growing group of citizens in Ontario. We are going to extend that program and we are going to make sure that seniors can get drugs with no copay, with no deductible, absolutely free.

I think those are the issues that we should be talking about, Speaker—and not talking about how you’re going to cut, cut, cut, cut, cut.

I am now going to turn it over to my colleague the Minister of Energy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I turn it over to the Minister of Energy for further debate on the same side. Go.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m very pleased to be able to rise and add my voice to this great debate and this great conversation that we’re having here in the House relating to the speech from the throne. I want to thank my colleagues the MPP from Guelph and the Minister of Municipal Affairs for sharing their time with me, because there are many, many important points that I would like to be able to put on the record as part of this debate.

One of them that I think is key: If we’re looking at the title of the speech from the throne, it talks about care and opportunity. We, as MPPs, have the important role of being stewards to look after our citizens, to be part of that common good, to make sure that we can all work together to find ways to make a difference in the lives of

individuals. I know that sometimes we will have banter back and forth on what we think is a better policy idea, or even policy in general.

But the one thing that I would like to start off with, which will lead into some others in my small amount of time, Mr. Speaker, is climate change. I think we all can agree that climate change exists. I think we can all agree on that.

For those who don’t, I say, “Just look at the weather.” You can even come up to northern Ontario, go past Sudbury and look at some of our First Nation communities that are up there. They used to have ice roads, where they could get their goods brought up to their communities—many of them are fly-in in the summer and spring. They used to have 77 days of ice roads. We’re now seeing, in most instances, that every year they’re getting less and less, and they’re down to about 23. That is serious for many of our First Nation communities in the north, because the cost of having to fly in many of their supplies is actually detrimental to these communities.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, if you think about having to fly that in, bringing in diesel fuel, all of those types of other fuels that we want to get off of to actually help us address climate change—again, it is an important issue that we need to be able to discuss and talk about, and put a price on carbon.

What’s concerning for me is—now that there is no more People’s Guarantee or a platform coming from our friends in the opposition—that they are no longer talking about climate change. They are no longer talking about putting a price on carbon, which is concerning, Mr. Speaker, because we need to ensure that we continue to find ways to address climate change. We need to continue to find ways to reduce our GHGs.

I know that my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs talked about shutting down coal and that, in 2003, all parties agreed that we need to eliminate coal from our electricity supply, and we did that. This government did this. We now have an electricity grid that is 96% GHG-free. That’s 96%. We no longer have—for example, Matthew, a 10-year-old boy who has asthma, would not be able to go to school and was in the hospital weekly because of his asthma, because of the smog that we had in the air. He no longer has to do that because we’ve shut down coal and we haven’t had a smog day advisory in this province since 2014. That’s something we should all be proud of.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? Now, if he still has to go get that puffer, he can actually go to the pharmacy and get that puffer for free because of OHIP+. It’s because of our government’s care in recognizing the opportunities that we have had and that we’re making for the people of Ontario.

Now, when we’ve all been going door to door over the last little bit, I know we’ve been hearing some concerns from seniors as well, and we’ve addressed that. That’s why I’m so proud to be able to say, as I conclude, that we’re going to be bringing forward OHIP+ for individuals over the age of 65, and I look forward to having that further discussion in the future.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: In the few moments I have, I need to put on the public record some of the descriptions that other members have used to comment on what has happened in the past and what contrasts there are between the two major parties.

One of the things that always intrigues me about the criticism of the period of time when we were in government is the question of hospital closings. I always want to know—who is able to tell me?—what are the names of the 28 hospitals they claim were closed? I know when I had an invitation to a friend of mine's house in Sudbury, they had three hospitals at that time, and, of course, the conversation was about how to make them more efficient and up-to-date, with the best equipment. Well, obviously, putting them in the same building, rather than trying to stretch resources and have duplication through the three of them. Once they were up, everybody thought, "Well, that was a good idea." It's only politicians who still talk about closing hospitals, because everybody else has gotten used to the kind of transformation that many of them had.

The other problem that people seem to have is understanding the Ontario Works program and other programs that were put forward at the time. One of them, of course, is the question of having a reduction of payment for people. While a welfare payment was cut, it was more than anywhere else in the country—

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: —and able-bodied men were not included.

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

Further questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker.

You know, folks, the Liberals have had 15 years to build the Ontario that they wanted. They slashed budgets; they froze hospital budgets; they cut hospital budgets. We now have hallway nursing care unlike anything I've ever seen in the years that I actually nursed—occupancy rates as high as 140% to 145% when the recommended occupancy rate should be 85%.

We have thousands of people on wait-lists waiting for home care, and minimum care being provided to the many who are receiving it. The Liberals have not built any new long-term-care beds in the 15 years that they've been around, and we have thousands of people on the wait-lists for long-term care.

They closed hubs in our communities by closing schools in communities. We have four- and five-year-old kids on buses in the north for four to five hours a day, trying to get to school, because there isn't a school open in their community.

They continue to privatize health care services in long-term care by giving beds that were in the non-profit sector to the for-profit sector, using our dollars to pay for profit instead of paying for the care of our seniors.

The Liberals used the legislative process this week to actually kick off their campaign. As MPPs, we can't even send out a householder with our party name on it, but the Liberals can use the whole legislative process to kick off their campaign here in the Legislature.

I say that on June 7, we don't have to choose bad or worse; we can actually have a change for the better.

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

Mr. Brad Duguid: When I sat here the other day listening to the Lieutenant Governor give the throne speech, I couldn't help but think of the contrasts between our approach and the approach of the opposition and their new leader. I couldn't help but think of how hard we've worked over the years to build a strong economy here in this province and the investments that we've made in our people, from JK to post-secondary to free tuition, to full-day kindergarten—all things that that party and their new leader oppose and oppose today.

I couldn't help but think of the investments we've made in partnerships with businesses, something their new leader calls corporate welfare; something that has created hundreds of thousands of jobs in this province for the people of Ontario. I couldn't help, Mr. Speaker, but think of the important investments that we've made in innovation. I look across the street at MaRS. It's something that they and their new leader wouldn't have thought that we should have invested in, and something that's now chock full of innovation and job creation.

The result of the investments we've made, Mr. Speaker? We've placed Ontario at the cutting edge of the innovation agenda globally. We're up over 800,000 net new jobs since the global recession. Our unemployment rate is at the lowest level in 17 years. That's a good economic record.

What the throne speech also speaks to is the fact that we on this side of the House recognize that there are some folks that are still feeling left behind. That's why we're making more investments in health care. That's why we're making more investments to ensure free prescription drugs for more. That's why we're going to continue to invest in education. That's why we're going to fight hard to make sure that those guys on the other side can't cut the heck out of all of these programs we've worked so hard to build up. We can't wait to get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further—
Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. Thank you. That's much better.

Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I think it's time for a reality check. Let's take some headlines from today: "Wynne Demonizes Old, White Voters in Grasp for Votes." "Running Deficits in the Liberals' Playbooks." My goodness. "Wynne's Throne Speech Will Be a Fairy Tale." Speaker, they just go on and on. "A Budgetary Divide." "Throne Speech Frames Ontario Election Choice." I can

tell you that, based on this particular headline—"Ford Fires Up Tories at Rally"—people are seeing through all this pixie dust that the Liberals are scattering all across Ontario. People are seeing through it once and for all.

The throne speech was supposed to be "A time for Care." Well, Speaker, as I said, people are seeing through this Liberal pixie dust because the Liberals' definition of caring is actually sharing more debt. Sharing is not caring in that regard, because they think it's okay. One minute they're saying, "We're going to have balanced books this year," and then next minute, "Oops."

Our member from Nipissing actually said the Premier herself admitted that, "You know what? There is time for change, and we'd better go into a deficit, to the tune of \$8 billion." But in reality, it's probably going to be more than \$12 billion or \$14 billion.

What's really rich is their claim that selling Hydro One wasn't an attempt to balance the books and get everything back on track.

The only thing that their actions have proven over the last 15 years that is they can't be trusted. This government is old, it's tired, it's out of gas, and on June 7, they're going to get a really strong message.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Guelph for final comments.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to respond. What we've heard from the opposition parties, particularly the official opposition today, is a lot of doom and gloom. But when I look around my riding, I don't see a lot of doom and gloom. What I see is a lot of people who are working really hard, who are finding jobs and who are actually taking part in an economy that's booming.

I live in a town that's partly university, but our biggest sector is actually manufacturing. People don't realize that Guelph is, in fact, a manufacturing town and also a food-processing town. What I see is the auto sector; I see other manufacturers; I see the food-processing sector; I see the beverage sector all flourishing in terms of creating new jobs and new opportunities.

In fact, I just had the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in Guelph not too long ago, and we were announcing some funding to help Sleeman repatriate a processing line. They're actually bringing back jobs from the US and putting them in Guelph because they see the opportunity for beverage processing in Ontario. They're putting in more automated equipment so that we can do processing right in Guelph instead of in the US.

I think when the opposition talks about doom and gloom—the member kept talking about how we're losing jobs—that is not what I see in my community. What I see in my community is a thriving community.

Do you know what? We need to make sure everybody moves forward together. That's what we're doing with this throne speech: making sure every citizen of Ontario can participate in that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I guess I'll be the last Speaker of the day. We've got about 15 minutes left in the legisla-

tive day. I'm pleased to be able to provide a few comments regarding the speech from the throne.

Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals—here's what they want you to think: Their talking points are that this throne speech was a reset. You can't reset 15 years of scandal, waste and mismanagement. You can't do that.

Yesterday, we were here, and the entire order paper was cleared off. When you look at the votes and proceedings, we started yesterday at 12 noon, and right here, in black and white, in the votes and proceedings: The House adjourned at 12:30—half an hour. For half an hour we sat yesterday to have the speech from the throne and one bill introduced. That's it; that's all. All they wanted was this opportunity to set the reset button.

Do you know what we did last night, Speaker? It was a tremendous night. Ontario Progressive Conservatives and our new leader, Doug Ford—we had a rally. We had a rally in Etobicoke like no other rally I've ever been to. It was unbelievable. It was amazing.

I know the Liberals don't like it, but Doug Ford is right: They're scared. They're scared of what the people of Ontario are going to do on June 7, when they get to hit the reset button. I'll tell you, in the next 79 days, you're going to see a lot of things talked about.

We had so much enthusiasm in the room last night, Speaker. It was amazing. The energy was great. From a caucus and a candidate perspective, change is in the air. Speaker, I'm telling you, change is in the air.

If you look at what I had to do yesterday, Speaker—I wasn't going to let this government's throne speech stop the work that I do in Leeds–Grenville. Even though my private member's bill was taken off the order paper, my private member's motions were taken off the order paper, and my order paper questions were taken off the order paper, I made sure, on behalf of the people of the people of Leeds–Grenville, that they're all back on. I made sure that the second we walked in here for the throne speech, I went to the table to see the Clerks and handed them all of those back, because the people of my riding and the people of Ontario deserve an answer.

1750

I'm just going to run through some of the things I put back on the order paper. This afternoon, as you know, Speaker, I got to re-table my bill, Bill 3. I think it's probably going to be Bill 2 now on the order paper. It allows the government the opportunity to have a designated number of automotive dealers be able to provide licensing services, so if I want to go in and buy a new car in a dealership, I don't have to wait another day or couple of days to get it plated and get the registration changed over, or have somebody stand in line at a ServiceOntario. It would allow the government to make that happen, and allow something in terms of customer service. People expect that when they're going to make this major purchase of a new vehicle, they're going to be able to get it when they need it, so I've re-tabled that bill today, Speaker. It'll appear on the order paper tomorrow.

My order paper motion would recognize the sacrifice made by Ontario veterans and have the Lieutenant Gov-

ernor consider establishing a military service pin. Members of Canada's Armed Forces could wear the pin on their civilian clothes and designate them as a veteran. It's done in other provinces, and I think it's high time that our province consider the same.

The other issue that has been discussed on a couple of occasions—I see the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell here, and I know that he supports the initiative—would call on the government to remove the cost of mandatory water testing from non-profit organizations like Legions, local churches and local community halls. It would remove that cost of mandatory water testing for organizations operating under the small drinking water system. It's something that churches, Legions, municipal community halls and not-for-profits are very happy with. It has been on the order paper several times.

I have called on the government, through some of my order paper questions, to support my county; for example, the united counties of Leeds and Grenville and their request for 132 new beds for Maple View Lodge, and capital funding for another 192 class-A beds under Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. I had to re-table that motion and again call on the government to support my county.

I'm asking if the Attorney General will explain why the Brockville Courthouse remains one of just two courthouses in eastern Ontario that aren't equipped for witnesses and accused persons to appear by video. I want him to provide the technology. I've mentioned this, Speaker. The reason I'm going to bring this up again—I've mentioned this twice: once last October and once a few weeks ago. I want the Attorney General to right this wrong. I've called on him to ensure the safety of those police officers from the Brockville city police service.

My worst fears were realized last week, when one of those officers, while they were transporting a prisoner to court, was injured in that transfer for a remand. That injury of that police officer would not have happened had this government not played postal code politics and put that video remand system in Brockville. As my order paper question and my questions to the Attorney General have said time and time again, this is an issue of public safety. It's an issue of public safety for those front-line men and women who are members of the Brockville Police Service.

There's no reason that we should upgrade one jail near the minister's riding—upgrade a courthouse, sorry, for \$7 million—when a courthouse like Brockville is one of only two that don't have this service. It's terrible, and it should never happen that an officer be put in harm's way because of this government's neglect of our courthouses, so again, I'm going to call on them.

The other questions are just planning. For example, we had an accident a year ago on the 401, a chemical spill. It was a major accident on the 401. A number of first responders were injured, because there was an acid spill. We've had a number of meetings with my local mayors; I think one is going on right now up near the airport. What we were shocked to find, Speaker, is that the planning for

Highway 401 in eastern Ontario has not been done, and the government has not prioritized it. I don't even believe they've done a study to look at the costing of having the 401 be six lanes in eastern Ontario. It's ridiculous that the government has not done their due diligence to at least do a study to plan for six-laning the 401 in eastern Ontario. I've asked that it be included in their ministry's southern highways program.

People on this side of the House have stood up for families with children with autism, and we're going to continue to do that. I've asked the government about the wait-list and wait times for families in Leeds–Grenville to access services under the Ontario Autism Program. I want the ministry to provide the number of children who are on that wait-list. I think it's important for openness, honesty and transparency that the government provide that information.

As well, I'm going to talk about the Brockville General Hospital in some of the time I have left. I'm asking about the current wait times of 263 days for cataract surgery at the BGH, the Brockville General. I'd like to know what the government is doing to reduce those.

I'd like to know why Highway 15, which, by the way, was identified in 1999 as needing upgrades, has now been placed on an upgrade list for 2045. Here's a highway, Highway 15, that was identified in 1999, yet this government has now changed that priority to be 2045. Speaker, I'm going to be 85 years old in 2045, and I just think it is absolutely ridiculous that this government has changed that priority where there's been a significant amount of concern for public safety.

I've stood up in this house for Victim Services Leeds and Grenville, which now has a base caseload of 849 new victims and they are on pace for 2,000, yet their funding formula for victim services in Leeds–Grenville hasn't been increased. It's terrible that those front-line workers have to go through that stress when the government knows full well that they're serving over double than they are being given dollars for.

As well, I've put a new order paper question on regarding a meeting I had in my riding on break week. Habitat for Humanity and its affiliates are asking the government to consider \$25 million in funding over four years so that they can build up to 500 homes and help more families realize their dream of home ownership. My hope is that the government will support it.

Speaker, in the couple of minutes left, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to use a couple of props to identify government waste. I tried to use some pictures this morning and the Speaker shot me down, so I'd like approval to do it today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Leeds–Grenville is seeking unanimous consent to use props. I heard a no.

Mr. Steve Clark: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to show that a staffer here could create a logo for the Ontario Cannabis Store in about a minute using Microsoft Word, as opposed to spending \$650,000—and then not be able

to say that there's not government waste. I'll respect your decision and not use the prop.

I think it's just pretty petty on your part that you won't allow me to actually show people the difference between \$650,000 and about a minute's time using Microsoft Word.

In fact, we've got a great crop of new pages, and I'm sure that any of those new pages would have designed a better logo than the Ontario Cannabis Store logo for \$650,000. We might have a competition later. As part of your education, I might ask you to organize a logo.

Speaker, I just want to, in conclusion, talk about my leader, Doug Ford, and about something that he said over and over again about our competitiveness in business. I have a riding on the banks of the St. Lawrence. We over-

look the United States of America. And I'll tell you, he talks about putting a sign up at the border that says, "Ontario is Open for Business." I've got a couple of spots that—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is warned.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. Thank you very much. Put them down, please.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now 6 o'clock, and this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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