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Mardi
10 avril 2018

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 10 April 2018

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 10 avril 2018

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 3, An Act respecting transparency of pay in employment, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy; and

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet on Tuesday, April 17, 2018, and Wednesday, April 18, 2018, from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the notice of public hearings; and

That the deadline for requests to appear be 4 p.m. on Monday, April 16, 2018; and

That witnesses be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis; and

That the Clerk of the Committee distribute a draft copy of the agenda to the committee members by Friday, April 13, 2018, at 11 a.m. and again at Friday, April 13, 2018, at 4 p.m.; and

That each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members, divided equally among the recognized parties; and

That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 18, 2018; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 11 a.m. on Thursday, April 19, 2018; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Monday, April 23, 2018, from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

On April 23, 2018, at 4:30 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the Committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or

amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period, pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Tuesday, April 24, 2018. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report immediately, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 81(c), the bill may be called more than once in the same sessional day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties; and

That, during this time, there shall be no motion for either adjournment of the debate or adjournment of the House permitted. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the votes on second and third reading may be deferred, pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Madame Des Rosiers has moved government notice of motion number 4.

I turn it back to Madame Des Rosiers.

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Today is Equal Pay Day, which is the day when we wear red to notice that women are still in the red. It serves as a symbolic reminder that every time, each year, it takes a woman longer on average to earn as much as a man. It reminds us of the work that we still need to do to close the gender wage gap.

Today we are putting forward this transparency-of-pay bill, which is important. Let's get it done. I urge all members to step forward and finish the work on this bill. It's really important that we shorten our remarks because time is passing for women and I think they want to get the work done. It's about time that we ensure women are treated fairly in the workplace.

C'est le temps de travailler pour l'équité salariale. Le temps presse pour les femmes en Ontario.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to offer remarks and thoughts on Bill 3, which is the Pay Transparency Act, 2018. I'm not happy with the fact that it's a time allocation, which means they're limiting debate.

We're debating yet another time allocation motion on a government bill. Again and again, the government has shown disrespect for the democratic process by cutting short debate in the House.

It is pay equity day. This government has been in for 15 years, so now we're rushing through time allocation on a bill they just introduced—I don't know—a few weeks ago. I can't even remember the exact time—March 20, I guess. There it is; I have it right in front of me here. It just seems that their reasoning to rush it through is pay equity day and, "Chop-chop. Let's get it done."

We've seen this act play out so many times. It's actually quite irresponsible when the government introduces the bill and then time-allocates it a few short weeks later.

Soon after they introduced this legislation the first time, they ended by sabotaging their own bill by proroguing the Legislature to deliver their partisan throne speech. So the process had to start over again on March 20, which is the date that I had read previously. So they introduced it before, and then they thought, "Uh-oh, we need to reset the channel in the province of Ontario. Let's prorogue." Then they have to reintroduce it again, and then it's like, "Hurry up and get it through." It's one example of just how sloppy the government's approach on this important issue has been.

0910

The main question is, why are they now, all of a sudden, rushing to pass a pay transparency bill just before an election? I don't know. What do the people of Ontario think? As I said, they've been in for 15 years. Since we're talking about transparency, I can tell you their intentions are pretty transparent to Ontarians. They're playing politics, as always. They're trying to score political points with Ontarians after having ignored this issue for many, many years.

Let's just look at the facts, Mr. Speaker. This bill has only come out now, four years after the Minister of Labour was given a mandate letter to lead the development of a gender wage gap strategy. Come on; let's look at the timing. Four years to prepare an eight-page bill that is heavy on symbolism and rhetoric, but light on substance—that's very disappointing. It's especially disappointing to the women and girls across this province who may have taken this government at its word when it talked about its commitment to women.

Lots of good titles in their bills, but not a lot of actions—and their timing, as I said, is very political and partisan.

This government is an expert at saying things that people want to hear without having any intention of acting on their commitments. They tell you that they created a stand-alone ministry for the status of women, and named a four-person expert panel to make recommendations on closing the gender wage gap, but the fact is they have largely ignored the recommendations that they've received from their own experts. So much time, effort and goodwill have been squandered by the government when it comes to addressing this issue.

Instead of advancing a legislative agenda that would make a real and practical difference in helping employers and employees work together to advance pay equity, this government basically ignored the recommendations made by its own Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee in its final report. Those recommendations focused on better ways of ensuring the fair valuing of work done by women; improving workplace practices for women; challenging stereotypes; supporting women and families in balancing work demands and caregiving responsibilities, specifically child care and parental leave; and leveraging the government's size and purchasing power to close the wage gap.

What did the government deliver in response to these recommendations, Mr. Speaker? The answer is, really, not much.

For my part, I was disappointed but not surprised that the government did not accept the offer I made one year ago this week, on the 30th anniversary of the passage of the Pay Equity Act, to create a special legislative committee to sit through the spring and summer of 2017 to develop amendments to strengthen the Pay Equity Act. I made that proposal in question period to the Minister of Labour. I made the suggestion—and I thought it was a good suggestion, to get things moving, to make the government act—because, in the mid-1980s, all three parties worked in committee for close to a year to develop the landmark Pay Equity Act.

On June 15, 1987, the Pay Equity Act was passed unanimously, but almost 30 years later this government's Minister of Labour has no interest in non-partisan cooperation on this very important issue. Instead, he was very busy ignoring many of his own Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee recommendations. Meanwhile, for over a decade, they flatlined the budget of the Pay Equity Office, and in doing so they neglected pay equity. They may have even interfered with the ability of an independent agency of government to advance pay equity.

The fact is that under the watch of this Minister of Labour and of this Premier, the financial resources of the Pay Equity Office have been the lowest in the 30-year history of this internationally respected agency. Despite this neglect, the agency continues to investigate workplaces and work with employers to comply with the law. I know the third party on the other side—we have had this discussion many times and they have brought up the same issue.

On page 14 of the most recent annual report, in 2016-17, we read that between 2011 and 2016, the small group

of investigators at this agency completed approximately 2,000 workplace pay equity reviews and identified over \$27 million in wage adjustments. It's an impressive result, considering the limited resources they had to deal with. Maybe with more resources and with better access to new technology and analytics, they could achieve even more for women and be better positioned to address wage issues.

Then, all of a sudden, the most recent budget, tabled on March 28, announced a 25% increase in the Pay Equity Office's annual budget, out of nowhere. They again try to pretend that they care about this issue, but this just shows their cynicism. Not only is it too little, too late, but this Liberal government's support for the Pay Equity Office remains near its lowest level in its 30-year history.

Coming back to this legislation, I wonder why this government hasn't strengthened Ontario's Pay Equity Act by amending it to give this agency, which works well with the private sector on compliance, the authority and the resources to work with employers to regularly provide pay equity compliance reports.

During its consultation, the four-person expert panel on closing the gender wage gap heard strong support for revising the act, to state how pay equity "can be maintained in workplaces that need to make changes to their compensation systems or add new job classes, for example."

They also thought that "all employers, especially new ones," need to be made "aware of their pay equity obligations."

They also recommended re-examining "the role of workplace parties" and "consider who needs to be covered by pay equity, in light of the changing nature of workplace relationships."

These are all recommendations that the government asked for.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Good recommendations.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, very logical, very good recommendations. They've been wanting the government to listen for a long time.

But this government bill, after they asked the expert panel—I don't think they really wanted to listen to them, because they're famous for, "Let's do an expert panel, but let's ignore the recommendations." I can go through many, many ministers with that example.

But this government bill does none of that. In fact, the government's bill, which is now being time-allocated—which, I say to those that may be watching at home, limits our debate and discussion—has been criticized by a key member of the government's gender wage gap strategy working group—it's a mouthful, Mr. Speaker. It has been criticized by the government's own gender wage gap strategy working group. This member said that it is a bit rich for the government to claim that its approach is based on consultation with the Equal Pay Coalition, when the Equal Pay Coalition is calling the bill a "missed opportunity" and "timid," and suggesting that it is lower than the lowest common denominator and re-

quires substantial and substantive amendment to make it all relevant.

0920

I couldn't get all the time allocation deadlines for committee, but I'll look at that towards the end of my comments. But, really, it's suggesting it is lower than the lowest common denominator and requires substantial and substantive amendment to make it all relevant.

On March 7, 2018, this stakeholder called for significant amendments to strengthen the act and bring it in line with employers' existing legal obligations. They asked for amendments so that the new act would apply to all private and public sector employers with more than 10 employees, to match the Pay Equity Act that we have and to see that the Pay Equity Office has responsibility for the administration of the Pay Transparency Act. They asked for it to apply to all government procurement and government contracts, a very fair ask. They asked for it to include mandatory timelines for the filing of annual transparency reports. They wanted it to clearly set out what information must be in the transparency reports, including compensation structure and wage grids, job classification and job status, full-time, part-time, casual, seasonal and temporary agencies.

It's pretty detailed. They did not do this in a "quick, let's rush this legislation through," not thoughtful way. The government had asked for all this input. It has got to be very disappointing to the Pay Equity Office and to the members of the working groups that the government, again, had asked for recommendations, and then for the extra panel that the government wanted to look over the working group's work.

I mean, it just goes on and on in the delay in not really tackling this very serious issue.

They made very thorough recommendations and had very thorough expectations because they actually want to accomplish things. They want to do much more work on pay equity.

I was hoping we would have the time to consider and debate these recommendations, but, again, given the time allocation, I'm sure we won't.

I've got to look to see here. It's going to go to the social policy committee. It's Tuesday, April 17, and Wednesday, April 18, for two and a half hours for public hearings. The deadline for requests to appear is Monday, April 16; that would be next week. Witnesses are first-come, first-served. The deadline for written submissions is next Wednesday at 6 p.m. Let me see: They are going to meet the next Monday, April 23, for six hours for the clause-by-clause consideration, which means—to everyone at home—amendments, changes to the bill.

There are a lot of recommendations out there that I don't know if the government will incorporate or not. They are the ones that asked for the working committees to make these recommendations. They time-allocated all this to go so quickly. Let me see the dates. There will be a report back to the House no later than Tuesday, April 24. Then we're going to have to hurry up and debate it, and, again, will have limited time—limited time to listen

to amendments that may come forward, limited time in committee hearings, and limited time for third reading debate.

This has gone on for years. I even asked last year, last summer, to do a special committee to sit through the summer to push this further ahead, to give the government more material, if they felt they needed it. This, again, has gone on for years, and now we're close to an election, so we're, "Hurry up and put this out there, to pretend that we're actually doing something."

Mr. John Yakabuski: It does nothing.

Ms. Laurie Scott: No.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It is.

I've read from the committee members who are incredibly, incredibly disappointed about how unsubstantive this bill is and what they would like to see. It's disappointing. It's disappointing for women and girls in the province that this government hasn't really taken their issues seriously in respect to pay equity and taking action, as the government always pretends they're doing but doesn't actually do.

Back to what the bill actually does: The proposed bill supposedly establishes requirements relating to the disclosure of information about the compensation of employees and prospective employees. Again, "supposedly," because it's unclear whether the provisions will actually apply to many private sector employers.

Section 4 prohibits employers from seeking compensation history information from an applicant for a position, but how will this be enforced and what will the penalty be for non-compliance? Who will individuals complain to? Does the ministry have the resources for this work? I'm sure they're going to say, as always, "It's in regulations. Stay tuned." But, really, those are pretty genuine questions. How is this all going to function?

Section 5 requires employers to include in any publicly advertised job posting information about the expected compensation or range of compensation for the position. Again, how will the government enforce this?

We've had some briefings. I appreciate that we had some briefings but, again, the devil is always in the details—in regulations. Again, if there was more time, we could be discussing this. We're going to have to hurry up and get stakeholders to appear before committee—not everybody lives in the city of Toronto—and make recommendations. We, in opposition, do not hold the power on the committee, so if the government does not agree with the amendments, then we don't have a whole lot of choice.

Again, it's unfortunate that time allocation is coming on a bill that we've been asking for. I've been saying since last summer, "Come on. Let's get a special committee and let's get things going."

I don't know if I have lost my place.

Section 6 requires prescribed employers to prepare pay transparency reports that include information about the employer, the employer's workforce composition, and differences in composition in the employer's

workforce. I wonder what the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business have to say about that. Which part of the Ministry of Labour already collects this type of information for employers? Does this not just represent unnecessary red tape if employers already have to submit separate reports on accessibility, for example? If we really want this done, we have to ask these practical questions.

Section 7 prohibits employers or persons acting on their behalf from intimidating, dismissing or otherwise penalizing employees for, among other things, making inquiries about the employee's compensation, disclosing their compensation or asking the employer to comply with the act or the regulations. Complaints by employees that an employer has contravened this provision may be dealt with by arbitration or by filing a complaint with the Ontario Labour Relations Board. My question would be: Is this a problem in Ontario? Where is the evidence? They haven't listened to the recommendations of the working group. Have they thought through this process?

Sections 8 to 11 address the powers and duties of compliance officers who may be appointed to enforce the act. Compliance officers may conduct compliance audits. If an officer believes that a person has contravened a provision of this act or the regulations, the officer may issue a notice of contravention to the person, under section 12. Are these compliance officers actually in place? How many does the government think will be needed? What's their budget? Again, we don't know.

It's really unfortunate that, 25 years after a Progressive Conservative government of Canada proclaimed Women's History Month to mark the achievements of Canadian women, and 30 years after the Ontario Legislature unanimously passed the Ontario Pay Equity Act, this government has little to show for itself on this file. They have shown a lack of commitment to lead, to collaborate, and to make positive changes to get better results. They've delayed developing and implementing many of their own much-advertised strategies, like the closing of the gender wage gap strategy and the Women's Economic Empowerment Strategy. They've failed to support Ontario's Pay Equity Commission, Ontario's enforcement agency, by systemically cutting its budget and staff levels year after year over the past decade. And they have failed to work co-operatively with the opposition on legislative amendments to the Pay Equity Act. Despite its talk about promoting economic opportunities for women, encouraging women and girls to take leadership positions, shifting social attitudes to promote equality, it has very little to show for itself.

0930

The current government has become expert at raising expectations, spending taxpayers' funds unwisely and delaying progress. It's unfortunate that women's issues have been more of a communications exercise than a policy priority or program achievement.

I've spoken quite a lot on this bill that we're rushing through the Legislature, on something the government should have acted on a long, long time ago, and on which the opposition wanted to co-operate with them.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sharing my time with another colleague later on. I thank you for the opportunity I had today for the comments—and how the really colourful titles and thoughts that are brought in are timely, just before an election, but no real action is taken on women's issues and closing the gender gap.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to have a little bit of time to speak to the pay transparency motion before us, although now we're into time allocation. I find it interesting that on Equal Pay Day, we're talking about pay transparency and pay equity. We're talking about transparency—that's what is in the name of the bill—and yet what the government is doing is trying to shut down debate and not really be transparent. They don't want to talk about what's in the bill. They don't want to hear from the other members in the House. They don't want to hear from our constituents. They want to shut it down. Maybe they need to rename the bill to accurately reflect what it is we've seen time and time again from this government, because they consistently bring forward time allocation motions and try to shut down debate and rush through their agenda in this House.

It's also interesting that on the eve of an election—we're going into an election—suddenly now this is so important to the Liberal government. But I want to point out that for 10 years—10 years—this Liberal government has not given base funding increases to agencies that support people with developmental disabilities. What that means is those agencies can't meet their pay equity obligations. So we have a government that is trying to talk a good talk but they certainly don't walk the walk when it comes to pay equity.

Something else that I think is important to point out: When we're talking about pay equity and we're talking about pay transparency, but more specifically pay equity, one of the best ways to achieve pay equity is for someone to be a member of a union. I am proud to be part of a team—

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I just got the thumbs-up from the member from Barrie, because I know she was a union member. Well, I'm assuming she still is a union member—who voted against her own members and stripped them of their collective bargaining rights and forced them back to work. But she's still a union member.

I want to point out that I am proud to be part of a team, to be part of the NDP, the only party—not the Liberals; not the Conservatives—that proudly has unionized staff. We don't just talk the talk on pay equity and workers' rights; we walk the walk, because our staff are unionized. We encourage that, and we support that and celebrate that.

So again, this government wants to pretend like they have been working on this for a long time—and I would say that 15 years is a very long time. They've had 15 years to actually do something about this, 15 years to get it right. Where we are now is with a government who is

only doing this because there's an election looming. On Equal Pay Day, the Liberal government themselves are not ensuring that their own public service employees are receiving pay equity, and that is shameful.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I guess it's me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. I guess the government chooses to invoke the cone of silence. They don't want to speak to their own motion, another time allocation motion brought before this House—which, I might say, would have been completely unnecessary had the government not decided to go through this big ceremony of a throne speech, proroguing the Legislature so that the Premier could have this walk in with the trumpets and the whole bit, to tell the world how great she was, one more time, and how they were going to save Ontario from the Liberals themselves. Because the Liberals have changed. They now care about the people of Ontario.

In fact, they called the throne speech “care and opportunity.” What it should have been called is “opportunity and care,” because it was the Liberals, once again—which has been the practice of this Premier, since she was elected as leader. It has been the practice of this Premier to practise opportunity and care. Every chance she's gotten, she's taken the opportunity to care for the backroom Liberals and the Liberal-friendly people who have made donations to that party. This is no different. This is the way the Liberals work: taking an opportunity to care for those people who are advancing the cause of the Liberal Party, not the people of Ontario.

This bill—we're going to get into why we think that the use of time allocation is a bad thing. But I would say, Speaker—I would myself propose a time allocation motion: I would like to ensure that the people of Ontario time-allocate this government, so that after June 7, its time has run out. Let's do a motion in this House, a time allocation on the Wynne Liberal government. On June 7? It's over. That would be the time allocation. I would suspect I would have the support of the people of the province of Ontario on that time allocation motion, not the 40-some time allocations that I have been witness to in this chamber since this government came into office. One more time allocation motion is what we need, and that's to time-allocate this government's time in office.

They preached against time allocation over and over again when they were in opposition. I won't have enough time to go through them all, but the member from St. Catharines, the chief whip, who sat in various portfolios as a cabinet minister as well in his over 40 years in this chamber, used to rail against the use of time allocation when another party would invoke it. He just railed against it, the injustice and what an affront to democracy it was and how absolutely wrong it was to invoke that and end the opportunity for members of this chamber to debate. He called it a “guillotine,” and now he's the man

that pulls the lever on the guillotine. He and the House leader are the ones that pull the lever on the guillotine, cutting off the head of the chamber in debate.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Here he is right now, the member from St. Catharines.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Here he is, the guillotine man himself. Of course, he was the House leader for a long period of time too, and I tell you, it was just amazing. He could bring in that motion and, on the other side of the House, look so innocent, as if, "Oh, I'm doing the right thing." My God, he must have had himself twisted in knots sometimes, writing out those motions for time allocation.

0940

But Speaker, to the bill itself—and I want to give credit to my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who has probably done more in her time in opposition to prod and drag the government, kicking and screaming, to advance the cause of women than anyone else. What would we have done in this chamber on the issue of human sex trafficking if not for the work and the initiatives of my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock? She has forced the government to focus on it and start to change their tune and recognize what an absolutely universal crime it is across this province and how much it affects people born right here in the province of Ontario, which was not considered to be the norm in the past. But by putting that pressure on the government, they've actually brought in some new legislation and also put some money to the task forces and the police forces themselves to try to combat human sex trafficking. I know that there have been some high-profile cases and high-profile snares, if you want to call it that, where some people who are involved in that sick crime of human sex trafficking have been caught and are being brought to justice. The more we can do to combat that, very much the better.

But she also talked about the pay equity situation as well, and she has got a handle on this that the government doesn't seem to have. You know, the members opposite don't seem to understand what the pay equity challenges really are. The reality is that this bill does nothing, and for the past 15 years this government has done nothing. She pointed out how their own panels have had their recommendations ignored by this government, and now, at the eleventh hour, they bring in a bill which the critics have said is nothing more than a skeleton—nothing more than a skeleton of a bill. And they now are pretending that they're doing something on the issue of closing the gender wage gap?

As my colleague said, she offered to work with all parties to set up an all-party select committee to sit through the summer, to find out how they could help the Pay Equity Commission enforce the legislation that exists today. As she said, 30 years ago this chamber unanimously voted in favour of pay equity legislation—unanimously voted in favour of pay equity legislation. Today, they've got, my colleague says—oh no, we won't even get into the pay disparity between different chambers.

But pay equity legislation has advanced little. They've done nothing to advance the legislation, and are doing nothing to enforce the legislation that exists. But now they bring in a new bureaucratic bill that's going to be really enjoyed by the bureaucrats because there will be all kinds of new bureaucratic positions created, but it's not enforcing the legislation that exists today.

As my colleague said—I might get this wrong—the gender wage gap working strategy group has basically been ignored by this government in making recommendations on how they would improve and close that gender wage gap much more quickly. I mean, that really is kind of an admission of failure, that 30 years after you pass legislation on pay equity, we still have such a gap. Why is that? Well, it can only be because governments—successive governments, but this government has been the government for half of that 30-year period. Let's understand, Speaker, that in the early stages of pay equity legislation, there were all kinds of legal issues and court issues; nothing gets off the ground like that. But after 15 years had passed, when this government came to office, there were all kinds of opportunities and all kinds of progress that should have been made. This government has capitalized on none of it.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Not like maple syrup.

Mr. John Yakabuski: "Not like maple syrup," my friend from Peterborough says.

Now, why, for 15 years, when they had all kinds of information and expert advice telling them that these are the things that you need to do to close the gender wage gap, have they sat on their hands? They basically did nothing. But now, as I said, when they like to say "care and opportunity," I say "opportunity and care."

Another one of the favourites of this government is an opportunity to take care of themselves. When they see what they perceive as an opportunity to purport themselves as the champion of a social-justice cause, which pay equity could certainly be considered, they take it, because that's what they want to go out there and say. They are going to go on to campaign on this and say, "Look what we're doing."

But their own critics are saying, "This bill actually does nothing. Enforce the legislation that exists and you will do more to close the gender wage gap. Accept the recommendations of the people that have been giving them to you for years and you will do more to close the gender wage gap."

No, what they want to do is bring in a piece of legislation that says, "We want access to your pay equity plans. We want to be able to go into your place of business, inspect your books and look at your pay equity plans." Well, that's going to be a great opportunity for somebody who will be hired by this government, probably a very Liberal-friendly person: "You're the new pay equity inspector. You're the new Inspector Gadget, going into these businesses. You're going to look at their pay equity plans and look at the books."

That's going to be small consolation to the people who are still being paid less for the work that they do. But I'll

tell you, those Liberal-friendly people that get those jobs are going to be paid very well. They will be paid very well to go in there and drive all around the province, burning fuel at high gas prices—no problem. More emissions in the environment? No problem. Let's make a trip up here and there and all around the province. Lunches on the road, hotels—no problem; let's run up the bill and send it back to the people of Ontario.

Do you know what we will accomplish? Nothing. We have been accomplishing nothing for 30 years. Why would we want to accomplish anything more? But man, it's a good life: travel around the province, spend all this money, more emissions in the atmosphere and no progress on pay equity. All they had to do was enforce the legislation that currently exists. But what an opportunity for a big splashy press conference and a big splashy news item. Bring in the cameras, and the Premier and the minister for women's issues would be there, and the labour minister would be there, and they'd say, "We've got it now. We've been working on this for some time and we've got the answer."

The answer was right in front of their faces all along. All they had to do was look at the legislation that's in place. Could that legislation itself be improved? Could more be done to strengthen the legislation so it had the teeth required to ensure that that gender wage gap would narrow and at some point, hopefully in the near future, would be closed completely? Yes, it was sitting there right in front of their faces.

But that doesn't create the opportunity to care for themselves or their Liberal friends. As I said, opportunity and care. What they are constantly looking for, this party, is an opportunity to care for their friends and themselves. It's about time that they took the opportunity to care for the people of Ontario, because the people of Ontario are not being hoodwinked anymore. They've got it. They've figured it out. They looked at this throne speech, they looked at this budget and they said, "Methinks I'm being bribed with my own money."

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I'm looking at this spending, when they froze hospital budgets for five years, and now, on the eve of an election, there's money to spend. "But we'll have to run a massive deficit in order to do that." In the history of this province, or any other jurisdiction in western democracy, it has been traditional at times to run a deficit when there needed to be some impetus put to the economy—or small deficits—but not to go from a so-called balanced budget—

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, we've hit a nerve. Bragging only weeks ago about balancing the budget—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order is a good thing.

I will now return to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. Sometimes I can't hear myself in here, and that takes a lot.

They go from bragging about balancing the budget once in eight years—helped along by the sale of Hydro One—and telling us only weeks ago that they'd have balanced budgets through 2022 because of their great fiscal management, and all of a sudden, again, they saw that opportunity to care for themselves and table a budget with a deficit of almost \$7 billion, which over the next four years will add about 20-some billion dollars to the debt. We'll be chasing \$400 billion in debt before these guys run their time, if we give them that time.

The people of Ontario say, "It's time to time-allocate the Liberals. You're gone."

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm not going to say that it's a pleasure to speak to time allocation because it really isn't. Where I find it meaningful and valuable, as the MPP from London–Fanshawe, in bringing my concerns for the people I represent is when we're actually having debate on legislation and we can bring those concerns forward. Time allocation does nothing to facilitate that. Time allocation shuts MPPs' voices down, because we only have a small amount of time to really hold this government accountable in this Legislature when we're debating legislation, and time allocation doesn't allow us to do that.

One of the fundamental features of the pay transparency legislation is that it requires employers to disclose the wages to prove that they are complying with the existing legal obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Pay Equity Act. That's one of the fundamental pieces in the bill. Then, at that point, we're talking about that it's actually transparent, that we know what employers are paying the employees. That's a good first step, right? But all of us are not going to be able to comment on this bill and talk about, yes, there are some small steps that we see that are addressing transparency under pay equity, but the effectiveness of how to have the act be implemented and enforced isn't in this bill.

Bill 3 is slow in implementation. It begins with the public service, then it extends to employers with over 500 employees and then it goes to employers with 250 employees, and those requirements don't even match the current obligations that Ontario employers have under the Pay Equity Act, which applies to all employers with 10 or more employees of this province. That's a bit of a contradiction.

I understand that there's a phase: "Let's deal with the public service, with the 500-employee sector and then the 250," but it's not dealing with the actual obligations that employers have under the Pay Equity Act, which applies to all employers with 10 or more employees in this province. Those are things that would have been helpful for us to continue to debate in this legislation.

The requirements of Bill 3 don't come near to matching an employer's requirements under the Ontario Human Rights Code, which obligates every single employer in this province not to discriminate on the basis of

gender. It is important because, fundamentally, a gender-based wage gap is a human rights issue.

The Ontario Equal Pay Coalition has studied this issue intensively, and they have prepared a document titled 12 steps to closing the gap, which I urge all members to read. This document puts forward a comprehensive strategy to actually close the gender wage gap.

I think part of the government's failings in much legislation is that they go through the motions. They go through the motions of the Legislature. They go through the motions of committee. They don't actively allow the participation of MPPs who bring forth amendments that will strengthen and help this government make the legislation a better working document for the people whom they are representing.

The first step in the Ontario Equal Pay Coalition's strategy is to consider that pay equity is not a privilege or a frill. It is the law. And we talked about it being the law. It was legislation that was passed in this House 30 years ago, under, I have to say, an NDP government. That is something that is core to our values, that if people are working in an environment where they are doing the same job, they should be getting the same salary, the same pay.

The Pay Equity Office reports that 54% of employers have gender pay gaps contrary to the Pay Equity Act, and the government reports that the pay gap has only closed by 6% in 30 years. So it hasn't been working the way it was intended. That's my point. If pay equity was passed 30 years ago, why has it not been implemented so that it's effective, so that we're not discussing something that actually helps people and that was enacted 30 years ago? Yet here we are today.

Like I said, the fundamental piece of this bill is the pay transparency piece, where legislation requires employers to disclose the wages they are paying so that they can prove they are complying with the existing legislation and legal obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Pay Equity Act. That's really the fundamental piece of this bill. They're going to put it on their website and people will be able to know what they are being paid, so that the co-worker beside you who is doing the same job is being paid equally. That's one constructive piece that we see in this legislation.

Doing this would benefit all vulnerable workers. From Statistics Canada and the census data, indigenous women face a 57% wage gap. Women with disabilities face a 46% wage gap. Immigrant women face a 39% wage gap. Racialized women face a 32% wage gap. Effectively, the pay transparency legislation will at least result in the public becoming more aware of employers' gender-based pay discrimination. That's what it's going to do. It's going to allow us to see that.

This act does contain important anti-reprisal protections and new posting provisions requiring employers to advertise the salary range for a position, and it prohibits asking about prior salaries. Again, that's a good step forward.

We believe that the pay transparency legislation is overdue for this reason, and we want to support the gov-

ernment's attempts to make progress on this issue. We certainly do. There's no doubt about that. But when we time-allocate something, it really doesn't do justice to pay equity. I understand the government right now is in a hurry—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Sorry, what was that?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I just said "desperate."

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Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "Desperate," yes; that's a good word too. I said "in a hurry"—they're desperately in a hurry to get this legislation passed.

Today is a significant day because it's pay equity day. People are here today wearing red, symbolizing the struggle for pay equity in our society, and that we need to do better and make sure people are getting paid for the work they do, especially women. Dynamics of families have changed so much over the years. Many households are women supporting their families. We need to make sure that they have the tools to do that and provide for their children and their families and their partners and even their senior parents. Women's roles today are not just in a box. We are so diverse and versatile; we're even looking after our elderly parents while we're looking after our young children. There's a lot of responsibility.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: And everything else in between; exactly. There's so much responsibility on the shoulders of women.

One thing we can do to get it right is to have legislation that's effective and enforceable so that we can have pay equity in our society. We haven't been doing that in the last 30 years. There hasn't been a lot of teeth around that. The member from Windsor West alluded to that, of course. We've had workers come from developmental services telling us that they are not getting pay equity in their workplace. They're looking after vulnerable people in our society and they're not getting pay equity. That doesn't seem right.

When this government then time-allocates bills for their own purposes—today is the acknowledgment of pay equity day. Some of us are wearing red. Some of us remembered and some of us didn't, but I know all of us here, including me, support pay equity. So it just seems a little suspect when we have time allocation on that day to rush this legislation through.

The Minister of Labour has taken the first tentative steps in this direction, but, again, I urge the Liberal government to also implement the amendments that the Ontario Equal Pay Coalition is calling for and give this legislation more than symbolic weight.

Speaker, we all know that there is an election coming up. The writ is, I think, May 3.

Interjection: May 9.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Or May 9, someone has said. I look at May 3 simply because of the private members' bills. The last ballot date item is May 3, but it could very well go to May 9.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It does. It's official, May 9?

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, that would be nice to know. We said the first week of April and we're really not sure—pin that down. I've heard May 9, and I've heard May 3.

There is a reason for this government to try to expedite their agenda in this House. Let's face it: They prorogued the government to bring forward their budget platform. What a great way to highlight everything you're going to be promising in the next election. But promises are cheap. When there isn't delivery—we know this government has made a lot of promises, and people have stopped believing those promises; they really have. They've become so cynical and hard. I've gone to the doors and people are upset about the way this province has been run for 15 years. This is not a cliché. Sometimes this government thinks that when we are in question period and we're asking these questions, that somehow we're exaggerating some of these things that are happening. That's exactly what the member from Windsor West said.

I remember the Minister of Health said I was fearmongering about long-term care. That's the furthest thing from the truth. I am not going to come here in this Legislature and take someone's personal story and exaggerate it. Are you kidding me? When I hear these stories, it really gives me goosebumps to think this is even happening and that I have to bring their whole private life and let this government know how bad things are. And then the response is, "You're fearmongering"? Oh, my gosh. We're in a public enquiry under long-term care.

Again, we ask this government to take it to a level where they're going to find things that are wrong, because there are things in every workplace, in every sector, in life where we need to look at what's going on and we need to make solutions. We need to find the problems, fix the problems and work together with the people involved, from front-line workers, from loved ones who have people in residence, from the CEOs to the RNs, to the RPNs, to doctors. That's how you're going to get a full solution. And then, once you get that solution, once you find those problems and you fix those problems, your job is not done. We forget that we have to revisit those things and find out what's working.

Let's look at this legislation, or any legislation that we create: What's working with it now? Let's take an inventory. What's not working? Let's tweak it. Because then we don't get to this point where there are crises and things; we're not getting to the point where we've neglected that for so long that now there's that hospital hallway medicine, overcrowding.

Mental health is huge in London—it's huge. I've been talking about mental health since I got into this Legislature. The Legislature acknowledged that mental health is an issue. They had an all-party select committee that travelled this province for I think it was 18 months. They had a report in 2010. I brought that report forward and

said, "Let's look at this bill and let's look at these recommendations and take these things seriously."

That is the kind of work that we need to take into account when we create legislation: An all-party select committee, a non-partisan compilation of people goes out and listens to people and then they come back. They listened to mothers and fathers and people with lived experience of mental health and mental illness. They listened to the doctors, all the agencies and organizations, not-for-profits. They travelled the whole province and they listened to all of these recommendations. That would inform good legislation, like I said. And then after that's done, you go back—I'd say you go back after three years and you talk about—and I see the member nodding. That's good practice; right?

Because when you have legislation that was implemented 30 years ago under an NDP government—which was so futuristic, really—about pay equity, and then we're all saying that it's not being enforced—how does that happen? Good intentions are great, but we need to have actions from those intentions, and we need to make sure that the people we represent see hope the next day. Whether the government likes to hear this or not, people are not seeing that. It's a very tough time right now for people, with all that's going on globally, and we need to make sure that we do things properly. This is an opportunity under the pay transparency legislation here to actually give it some teeth. So if the government does want to do that, I say listen to the Ontario Equal Pay Coalition and really examine those 12 steps and figure out which steps you can really work with.

Again, it's about getting together and understanding what the needs are, what you can bring to the table to help those needs, and if everything isn't met, because sometimes you can't do it all, you look back in the next three years and you find out, "Okay, from the needs that we've created, what's working? What's not working? What can we implement that we didn't before?" Taking that approach, a proactive approach, a productive approach, we're not going to get into a climax situation or a crisis situation—and I'm going to talk about long-term care.

I asked that government, I asked the minister at the time, "I don't want any credit for the second enquiry where you find and fix the problem. Just go ahead and do it. You can take the limelight. You can do the media," because ultimately we're all here not for that purpose. So today, when we're talking about time allocation, you get the sense that that's what it's about. The member talked about it—I can't remember; Mr. Yakabuski—that it feels like a photo op, a media opportunity about this. Those are things you should capitalize on when the work is being done, when the legislation actually meets the requirements of the people you're representing. By all means, have that media so you can educate people on how it's working—not just the facade, not just the fakeness of putting legislation into place, and then it actually doesn't work.

I'll give a really small example of it. When we were discussing renovations for seniors in their homes, we said

we were going to give them a tax break. The government said, “This is a wonderful piece of legislation. If you spend \$10,000 on renovations in your home to remain in your home”—to help people who are aging to have accessible facilities in their home—“we’re going to give you back \$1,400.” That was a tax break that we were going to give them. We said, “That’s good, but it isn’t going to work for the majority of the population. It’s not effective. It isn’t what people are able to use. It sounds good.”

I remember that, in my office—they had pamphlets printed out. I put them on my counter so I could encourage people to use this legislation, to use this tax break, to remain in their homes as long as possible. Shortly after it was passed, do you know what happened? They repealed it; they took it away. They took away that legislation because there weren’t enough people using it.

It always sounds good, but people are tired of it now. They don’t want to just hear about how good legislation is; they want to hear about how effective legislation is and that it’s working and that when they want to use it, there is enforcement to those pieces.

When we’re here today talking about time allocation, I think this government does a disservice to itself and a disservice to the democratic process in this House. Every MPP who’s here who is going to bring the voices of their constituents forward—I think that’s the reason we’re here. We have to change the culture of this Legislature and understand that when we bring those voices of our constituents in this Legislature, we’re actually trying to help this government acknowledge that there are problems.

There are problems in health care, there are problems in education and there are problems in the workforce, but they’re not insurmountable. There are solutions to those things. We are here to help with those solutions. We’ve given many examples of ways to help and the government has adopted some of those, but again, it doesn’t take it to the full level. It just touches on it and makes it sound good and then it hopes that people won’t pay attention.

They get a lot of media coverage over it, but in the end, it’s not helping people who are looking for some relief, who are looking to have—and dental care is huge. It’s a big one with seniors, specifically. I’ve been hearing that for years: that when you retire and people don’t have benefits that follow them into their retirement, they allow their teeth to be neglected because they do not have the money. They’re on fixed incomes. They don’t have extra money to add in to fixing their teeth.

Time allocation, Speaker: I understand it’s a tool that the government wants to use, but it has been using it far too often. If they could use it in tools that would actually have legislation to speed up things, to make things work better for Ontarians, I think we’d be on board with that. But when it’s legislation that sounds good and it’s just kind of frilly and there is really nothing to it, then that’s when we have an issue with time allocation.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It’s now 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I’d like to welcome the Ontario Home Builders’ Association, in particular the OHBA president, Peter Dufresne, and the CEO, Joe Vaccaro, who will be here a little later. The OHBA is here on their annual Queen’s Park day and will be holding their reception tonight in the dining room. I want to thank them for coming to Queen’s Park and sharing their #homebeliever pledge.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to welcome Jeff Cornett. Jeff is the executive director of the Canadian Cancer Society of Ontario; Kelly Gorman is the senior manager, public issues, at the Canadian Cancer Society; and they have three volunteers with them: Larry, Pamela and Marietta Carriere. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I’d like to introduce the aunt and uncle of our page captain, Rowan, today: Kashyap and Maya Majmundar. It’s a pleasure welcoming you to the Legislature. Take care.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I’d like to introduce Ms. Deb Robertson, director of district 4 for the Ontario Society of Medical Technologists. She’s from my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I’m sure she’s in here somewhere; if she is, just wave. Anyway, thank you. Welcome.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It’s my pleasure to welcome Olympia Morfetas, who is the mother of our page, Ryan-Michael Harding.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to welcome Pauline George. She’s from Pickering–Scarborough East, my riding, and she’s here today with the Ontario Society of Medical Technologists. Welcome, Pauline.

Mr. Bill Walker: I’d like to welcome Jade McMeekin, a registered massage therapist; Steve Kenny, whose birthday it is today—they’re both from the great city of Owen Sound and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—and Heather Hill, a constituent and the director of district 6, Ontario Society of Medical Technologists. Welcome. Happy birthday, Steve.

Miss Monique Taylor: I’d like to introduce Tania Toffner, from my riding of Hamilton Mountain, who is here today with the Ontario Society of Medical Technologists. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to welcome to the Legislature the Ontario Home Builders’ Association. Some of their members that I’d like to introduce are current president Pierre Dufresne, past president Neil Rodgers, first VP and incoming president Rick Martins, and second VP Bob Schickedanz.

Speaker, I would like to remind members, as well, that there will be a reception this evening—somewhere in the building, sometime this evening—that I hope will be attended by some of the members for part of the show.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I’d like to introduce my wife of 42 years. Gale Simko-Hatfield is here, with my daughter,

Lacey, as well as two grandchildren: Katana, the first-born, and—we're always looking for a little clarity here—little Clarity is here today, as well.

Speaker, I told them Poppy works in a castle with a kind king, who's a good ruler of his castle.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Somebody doesn't want to get warned today.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have two very special people to introduce. First of all is my constituency assistant in our Mississauga–Streetsville constituency office, Mr. Ran Zhou.

Also, representing the riding of St. Paul's, page Joseph Berman is entertaining his mother here, Pearl Gropper Berman. She will be in the public gallery this morning. Please welcome them.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to welcome Robert Scheuermann of the Ontario Society of Medical Technologists and also from the great city of Woodstock in Oxford county. We had a meeting this morning and I want to thank him and his colleagues for coming to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm proud and I'm humbled to introduce a fantastic and dedicated group of road safety advocates today.

We have Pat Brown, road safety advocate and vulnerable road users coalition leader; Melissa Dowrie, the executive director from Bike Law Canada; Albert Koehl from Bells on Bloor; Kerry MacLean from the Brain Injury Society of Toronto; Meredith Wilkinson, victim and Friends and Families for Safe Streets advocate; Tanya Jewell from the Ontario Brain Injury Association; Alan Wayne Scott from Hoof and Cycle; Anthony Smith, victim and Friends and Families for Safe Streets advocate; Jessica Spieker, steering committee, Friends and Families for Safe Streets; Heather Sim, victim and Friends and Families for Safe Streets advocate; and Margaret Harvey, who is a victim of road violence.

Also, a special welcome to Heather Caron from Waterloo region—she is a Kitchener-based lawyer and cycling advocate, and she is with her friend Sandy Spiegelberg in support of the vulnerable road users legislation today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mississauga–Brampton South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mississauga–Brampton South.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It is my pleasure to welcome a group of lawyers and paralegals from Pace Law Firm who specialize in immigration and personal injury. They are Andy Semotiuk, an author, prominent lawyer and a very close family friend; Khrystyna Yankovska; Victoria Synytsya; Rachel Brown; Jasmine Companion; and Alex Voudouris. Please help me in welcoming them to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Fraser: Today, representatives from the Canadian Cancer Society join us in the gallery to observe question period and to kick off their annual daffodil

campaign during the month of April. Please join me in welcoming Jeff Cornett, executive director of the Canadian Cancer Society of Ontario; Kelly Gorman, senior manager; Marietta Carriere and Larry and Pamela Carriere. Marietta has been a volunteer with the association for a long time.

Hon. Laura Albanese: It is a pleasure for me to introduce the family of page Eric Albishausen. We have Eric's mom with us today, Janet Churchill; Eric's dad, Dirk Albishausen; and Eric's grandfather Bob Churchill. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome the Ontario Society of Medical Technologists and their executive director, Michelle Hoad; une francophone de Timmins, M^{me} Aline Letourneau; and Corinne Atkinson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait bien plaisir d'accueillir le père, le papa de notre page d'Ottawa–Orléans, M. François Dufault, qui est avec nous, et de remercier son fils qui est avec nous pour les prochaines semaines : M. Maxime Dufault, notre page extraordinaire d'Ottawa–Orléans.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased to introduce some family members of page William MacDonald: grandparents Beverley and Peter Baulch—I hope I said that name correctly—brother Robert MacDonald and cousin Natalie Doughty. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to introduce today's page captain, Abinaya Chandrasegaran, and her mother, who is here, Umahsekari Chandrasegaran. I would like to welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park Peter and Beverley Baulch with their two grandkids Natalie and Robert. They are all from Port Hope and they are here to visit their other grandson, page William MacDonald.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to extend a warm welcome to Ronnie Gavsie and Rachel Levy from the Trillium organ donation foundation; as well as Colin Beale from our IT department; as well as the principal from Queen's University, Daniel Woolf; and Craig Leroux from the government relations department, also of Queen's University. A warm welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I would like to introduce Corinne Atkinson, director at large, Ontario Society of Medical Technologists. She is from St. Catharines.

1040

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm really excited that Rowan Watchmaker is the page from Ottawa Centre. She is the daughter of good friends of mine: Prashant Watchmaker and Lisa White. Today in the gallery are Rowan's great-aunt and great-uncle Maya and Kashyap Majmundar. We welcome them to Queen's Park.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'd like to introduce a fantastic young fellow, Matthew Acheson, who is a co-op student in my constituency office. He's from St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School in Aurora. Welcome, Matthew.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I just became aware that today is a very special day for my seatmate; it is her birthday. Happy birthday to the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me pleasure to introduce the members of the Clean Economy Alliance who are here at Queen's Park: Keith Brooks from Environmental Defence; Cara Clairman, who is with Plug 'N Drive; and Sarah Petrevan from Clean Energy Canada. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome Jennifer Hamilton, mother of page Sophie Hamilton from my lovely riding of Durham, who is in the public gallery this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I would also like to welcome Durham Region Home Builders Association president Manuel DeSousa, as well as Victor Fiume, who are constituents of mine from Durham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would also like to welcome John Milne and Garnet Northey from Peterborough and The Kawarthas Home Builders Association to the Legislature this morning.

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: the 2018 Energy Conservation Progress Report, Volume One, from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We also have some guests in the Speaker's gallery today, friends of mine. Today we have, from the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation's elected council: Chief R. Stacey LaForme, Councillor Veronica King-Jamieson, Calvin Jamieson, Councillor Stephi L. LaForme, Councillor Erma Ferrell, and a respected elder and former chief, Carolyn King, a good friend. Welcome.

WEARING OF PINS

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members of this House be permitted to wear a daffodil in recognition of cancer care and Daffodil Month, in the month of April.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nickel Belt is seeking unanimous consent to wear the pins. Do we agree? Agreed.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

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

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I believe that we have unanimous consent that all members of this House be allowed

to wear green ribbons in recognition of organ donation month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kingston and the Islands is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons. Do we agree? Agreed.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Seeing no further unanimous consents, I would ask us to please assemble for the legislative pages who are serving in the third session of the 41st Parliament to be introduced: Abinaya Chandrasegaran from Scarborough-Guildwood; Amelia Wendling from Welland; Colin Robinson from Kitchener Centre; Curtis Metcalf from Huron-Bruce; Dwight Gross from Dufferin-Caledon; Ekroop Walia from Mississauga-Brampton South; Émilie Hominuk from Gengarry-Prescott-Russell; Eric Albishausen from York South-Weston; Faraaz Jan from Nepean-Carleton; Hannah Arsenaault from Etobicoke Centre; Harsaajan Dhillon from Brampton West; Joseph Berman from St. Paul's; Madeline Buss from Cambridge; Maxime Dufault from Ottawa-Orléans; Rhys Hoskins from Trinity-Spadina; Rowan Watchmaker from Ottawa Centre; Ryan-Michael Harding from Toronto-Danforth; Shivanshi Patel from Oakville; Sophie Hamilton from Durham; Stephanie Shen from Markham-Unionville; and William MacDonald from Sudbury.

These are our pages for this session of the Legislature.
Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please reassemble. It is therefore time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. When Ontario's credit rating agencies saw the 2018 budget, they gave a stark warning. The rating firms stated, "The fiscal plan set out by the Liberal government ... would harm the province's credit profile over the long term."

Moody's said, "The planned return to deficits is credit negative as it will raise borrowing requirements, adding to Ontario's already elevated debt burden."

DBRS said, "It demonstrates in the clearest terms that the province is not committed to disciplined ... fiscal policy."

What that means is the Liberal government is putting all of Ontario at risk with their reckless spending. Mr. Speaker, is it really worth risking Ontario's future to try and win this election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Today is Equal Pay Day. What that means is that from January until today, basically, women in this province have worked free because of the gender wage gap.

This morning I was with the Minister of the Status of Women, and we were talking about our investment in free preschool child care. The number one thing that we can do as government is to provide child care—accessible, high-quality, affordable child care—for families so that women can get into the workforce. That is economic policy; it is social policy; it is fiscal policy. Having more women involved will mean that the economy will grow. That is why we are making the investments that we are making: to see this economy grow with everyone included.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: We're also seeing the harmful effects of this Liberal budget on Ontario's bonds. When Quebec and Ontario offered up their bonds last week, the market told this government what they thought of their budget. The market picked Quebec's bonds, making Ontario's bonds more costly.

We are getting a raw deal because this government can't control their spending. As our costs go up, front-line services are crowded out. We've seen this from the Liberals: nurses fired and hospital beds closed.

Mr. Speaker, why are the Liberals risking Ontario's future, reducing front-line services, just to try to win an election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I believe deeply that the future of this province depends on its people. That is our advantage. We have people who are hard-working. They deserve to have the supports that they need to be able to care for themselves and to care for their families.

When I talk to businesses in other parts of the world, they look to Ontario for a strong, educated workforce, and that's what we have. If we do not make these investments in people, if we do not invest in child care, in tuition so that everyone can go to post-secondary, if we do not make sure that people have the supports that they need to be able to thrive—having balanced the budget is a great accomplishment; it is a very important accomplishment. But, Mr. Speaker, the party opposite would have us put the future at risk by not investing in people. We're not going to go down that road.

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: In a remarkable business turnaround, Quebec and Ontario are literally trading places. Referring to the fact that the market paid a cheaper price for Quebec bonds, Brian Calder of Franklin Bissett said, "No way, nohow did I ever think we would see Quebec trading through Ontario...."

"Simply put, Quebec has been better behaved."

1050

Quebec outlined their plan to deliver five consecutive balanced budgets, pay down debt and lower taxes. In contrast, Ontario will plunge us into six years of deficits, add billions in debt and increase taxes. A decade ago, what was unimaginable is reality in Liberal Ontario. More nurses fired—100 in my own community. More hospital beds closed—60 in my own community.

Do the Liberals really want to put Ontario at greater risk?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Here's the reality: Ontario's debt-to-GDP outperforms Quebec's. Furthermore, Ontario has \$30 billion in liquid reserves right now because investors have oversubscribed on the bonds issued by the province of Ontario, outperforming Quebec. We have more liquidity in our bonds, and it trades well. Furthermore, Quebec receives \$11 billion from the federation. Ontario is a net contributor to the federation, always has been, even when we qualified for equalization, to the tune of \$11 billion.

We support all of Canada. We're the engine of Canada, and they are talking down the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

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

After round one, clearly indicated to me, we're in warnings.

New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My new question is for the Premier. Almost a year ago, on May 5, 2017, a Canadian Press headline read, "Ontario Prepared to Lower Corporate Taxes ... in Response to the US."

It has been almost a year. Will the government lower taxes to help grow and attract businesses?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We did, Mr. Speaker. We reduced taxes for small business by 22%, and our corporate income taxes are already the most competitive in North America.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin—Caledon is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The United States recognizes that they need to be competitive, and they're trying to catch up to Ontario's rates.

Interjections.

Hon. Charles Sousa: They're laughing again at the province's prosperity and the growth that we've intended. We have been a top destination for foreign direct investment for a reason: because we are competitive. We'll continue to be. We're going to take the respective actions that are in the budget. Chapter 2 talks all about remaining competitive and providing supports for businesses, to continue to become one of the best provinces and jurisdictions in North America.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: Last year at this time, the US was talking about dramatically cutting corporate taxes. Our former economic development minister then said, "We'll do whatever we need to do to maintain our competitiveness." A year later, the US did indeed drastically reduce their corporate taxes. How does the Liberal government respond? They are doing exactly

the opposite of what they said they were prepared to do and of what this minister just said. Yes, in the budget, they are raising taxes. Between personal income tax and new taxes on business, the government is raising your taxes by almost \$2 billion. While the US cuts taxes to become competitive, why is Ontario raising our taxes?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm going to pass on a supplementary to my colleague from economic development and trade. But let's be clear: The member opposite is talking about the closure of loopholes, tax avoidance measures—things that the federal government is doing, and every province has to emulate some of those practices. But what the member is also saying is, "Let's cut programs"—

Interjection.

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

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member knows that almost 87% of personal tax filers are not being affected. In fact, 700,000 tax filers are receiving tax cuts. The member opposite would like to portray something that is going to continue to harm the very investors that he's speaking of.

Ontario has the lowest tax rates and the lowest tax revenues compared to other provinces, including Quebec. We will continue to be competitive. We'll continue to be the leanest government in Canada, while providing and safeguarding the programs and services that the people of Ontario rely on.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: In the US, taxes go down; here in Ontario, personal income taxes are raised, 1.8 million people have a raise in their personal income tax, and tens of thousands of businesses are also taxed. This is a government that says one thing and does the complete opposite.

The minister said, "The competitive edge is important to Ontario's economy," and he wants to "assure the business community"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is warned. I have about four more that I'm waiting for you to have one more chirp.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, we lost our competitive edge years ago under this Liberal government, and it is only getting worse. The government has been told that they have made Ontario the most expensive jurisdiction in North America in which to do business.

Why are the Liberals raising taxes instead of making Ontario more competitive?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: The members opposite make it abundantly clear that today in Ontario, if you're a Doug Ford Conservative, the truth is not your friend or your ally. We know, with a trumped-up question like the one that just came from the acting Leader of the Opposition,

that they actually seem to specialize in talking down our province. The people of Ontario have every reason to feel hopeful and optimistic about the future, and all of the statistics point in that direction: the lowest unemployment in 17 years, lower than the national average for nearly three consecutive years. We see job creation month over month, week over week.

On this side of the House, we will continue to invest in our people, we will continue to invest in our infrastructure and we will continue to invest in a hopeful and optimistic future for the people of this province, because that's what they expect and deserve.

I would caution members opposite that it's most important for us to work together, to collaborate to build the province up, instead of consistently talking it down.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Hospitals in Ontario are overcrowded and underfunded. Who is responsible for years of frozen hospital budgets and overcrowding?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the leader of the third party was pleased last year when we increased hospital funding by \$500 million. I'm sure that she will be pleased. I'm sure, given the question, that she will support the budget that increases hospital funding by more than \$820 million.

We recognize that the health care system has been undergoing a transformation. More people want to be in their homes. There have been billions of dollars that we have invested in home care, and there is more that is needed on that front. But we also recognize that the changes that hospitals have made require that we make a substantial investment this year, as we did last year, in the operations of hospitals, so that people can get health care faster in the hospitals, as well as in the community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This problem didn't appear out of nowhere; it was completely predictable. The Liberals froze and cut hospital budgets, and the result is that people are treated in hallways, shower rooms, bathrooms, waiting rooms, broom closets.

Over 30 days from December 15 to January 15 of this year, Trillium Health Partners ran 316 beds in hallways or unconventional spaces. In fact, there were only two nights during that month, during that 30-day period, when someone wasn't in a hallway. Those two days happened to be Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. That means, if it wasn't Christmas, people were being treated in a hallway.

Who does this Premier think is responsible for that?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to comment, but I just want to say that the people who work in our hospitals deserve our utmost support and respect. It is hard work.

The reality is that we have pockets of the province where the population is growing, but all over the prov-

ince we're seeing an aging demographic and that means there are pressures on our hospital system. Every single budget we have brought in, since I've been Premier and before, has increased the funding to health care, including increasing funding to hospitals.

But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I recognize there have been transformations that have happened, meaning there are more people getting care in their homes, in the community, as they wish. We recognize there is a need. We have included more than \$820 million in this budget directly to hospitals.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Gee, Mr. Speaker, I thought the Premier was just going to say she was sorry that she made such a mess of our hospitals. That's what she should have done.

One night in January, Trillium had 193 unfunded beds. From December 15 to January, they had 4,555 unfunded beds. The occupancy rate never once, for a single day, dipped below 99%. To remind the Premier, Speaker, the safe level of occupancy in our hospitals is 85%.

This problem didn't just appear out of nowhere. It is the completely predictable result of years and years of cuts and underfunding. Will the Premier own up to a hallway medicine crisis that she has created in our province?

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

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, here are the facts: Hospital operating funding in Ontario has increased by more than 65% since 2003, to almost \$19 billion. In the past two years alone, we've increased operational funding to hospitals by almost \$1 billion. Of course, the investment we're proposing to make in this year's budget—and I hope, obviously, that we will get support from the third party for our entirely progressive budget this year. We're making a historic investment of an additional \$822 million in Ontario's publicly funded hospitals.

The types of quotes we are getting from various hospital CEOs are incredibly impressive. From Eric Vandewall, president and CEO of Joseph Brant Hospital: "I would like to thank the provincial government for their investment in quality health care. The provincial government's funding announcement for Ontario hospitals is very positive news for"—

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

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Every three minutes someone in Ontario ends up in a hospital or a doctor's office because their mouth hurts so badly. Last week, I met with Vanessa Giuliano, director of Operation Sharing. Operation Sharing helps raise money so families can see a dentist, because, for 15 years, the Liberals have ignored the fact

that too many people can't see a dentist. Telling a mom or dad that they have \$300 to split between medication and a visit to the dentist isn't going to fix that problem. Organizations like Operation Sharing will still have to do their important work. The Liberal scheme will not fix the problem, Speaker. Why not?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say that the leader of the third party and I do not disagree that there is a challenge in terms of dental care and pharmacare in this province, and, I would suggest, across the country, Mr. Speaker, because when medicare was introduced in the 1960s, those were two areas that were not covered. I think if we can agree on that, then we can agree that if we were building a medicare system today, we would include pharmacare and dental care. We would find a way to do that.

What we are doing here in Ontario is we're taking great steps forward. The OHIP+ program is already covering free prescription medication for 4,400 medications for kids from their birth until their 25th birthday. We recognize that we need to expand that, so next year seniors will have free prescription medication. And we recognize that everyone in between needs some support as well, and that's what the dental and pharma plan is about, and I'll speak more about that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Cindy Blair and her 17-year-old son live in Cambridge. Cindy works three jobs, and none of them have benefits. Fifty bucks is not going to get her son's teeth looked after; it wouldn't pay for half a filling.

The PCs don't have a plan, except for over \$6.1 billion in cuts.

Under my plan, Cindy could look her son in the eye and say, "It's going to be okay."

Fifty bucks is not enough for children's dental. Why doesn't this Premier care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I do care. In fact, if it's a mom and one child you're talking about, it's \$450. If you're talking about a family with two adults and two children, you're talking about \$700. That \$700 can be used to offset costs. Whether it's pharma costs or whether it's dental costs, that can be used to offset those costs. But if it's pharma costs and if it's a child, that child will already have their prescription medications covered—all 4,400.

I know that the third party is putting forward their plan. Under the NDP's pharma plan, people with certain allergies would have to pay for drugs; there would be a lack of choice for mental health drugs; women would lose choice on the contraceptives they choose to take; and there would be less coverage for therapies for conditions like cystic fibrosis or Crohn's or colitis.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to take lessons from the leader of the third party on how to put—

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

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, here's a lesson for the Premier: Families who can't afford dental care don't have 700 bucks to pay up front, to then get it refunded by this Premier's inadequate plan. This Premier is completely out of touch with the families of Ontario. Her plan is completely inadequate and everybody knows it.

Here's a story about Steve. I met Steve in Oshawa. Steve is 60 years old, and he is able and ready to retire. His 80 factor plan has kicked in, he's ready to go, but he can't retire. He can't retire because he needs \$21,000 in diabetes medication, and he doesn't have the \$100,000 in his pocket that he's going to need over the next five years to pay for his diabetes medication. He needs pharmacare, and he needs it today. The Premier thinks he should wait five more years. Doug Ford probably thinks Steve shouldn't have any pharmacare whatsoever.

Can the Premier explain to Steve why she doesn't care that Steve has to postpone retirement for five years because he needs a prescription drug plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I can certainly agree with the leader of the third party on what the Conservatives might think about this, but the leader of the third party does not have the corner on caring.

The reality is that the budget we have brought in is absolutely focused on providing those supports for people so that they can care for themselves and care for their families.

I do not disagree with the leader of the third party that we need to have a comprehensive national pharmacare plan and that everyone needs to be covered by that. I agree with her on that, which is exactly why, for years, the Minister of Health in this province has been advocating at the table with the other Ministers of Health and exactly why I have been advocating with my fellow Premiers that we need a national pharmacare plan. We've been very clear about that.

So there's no disagreement here. The only disagreement is that we've moved forward and put the OHIP+ plan in place. We're going to continue to move forward. We've made the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation, and we're going to keep going.

TAXATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is to the Premier.

Last fall, I called on the Premier to condemn the federal Liberals' massively unpopular tax hikes on small business, but she refused.

Well, the 2018 budget from her government shed new light on why she wouldn't stand up for Ontario small businesses, and it's because she had plans to pile on.

Speaker, the Ontario government announced in their budget that they will put 20,000 employers on the hook for \$100 million more in employment health tax over the next three years. Some businesses will also be phased out of the small business deduction, resulting in an additional \$350 million in new taxes in the same time frame.

Why is this government taxing away the jobs of the hard-working people of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker: The member opposite is talking about tax loopholes that the federal government is trying to close. We are actually targeting the employer health tax to benefit more businesses. Many more businesses are actually going to see benefits as a result of the measures we've taken in this budget.

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The member opposite is saying, "Yes, but those companies that are big umbrellas and they're big conglomerates that subdivide themselves into little pieces so they then skirt the ability to pay the employer health tax for their employees and for the benefit of Ontarians"—they say that's okay. The federal government is closing those loopholes and all provinces are being aligned with it.

The members opposite may want to make tax cuts so they can support even further taxing and the cutting of programs; that's up to them. In the end, they're going to have a huge hole to fill.

We want to protect the people of Ontario. We want to protect our universal health program to ensure that it's well funded.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: These tax changes are new salt in the wound for small businesses and job creators already struggling to cope with dramatic labour reforms, the minimum wage hike, high energy costs and increasing pressure from international competition.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has been clear that these changes will hurt our local businesses. Chamber president Rocco Rossi has a message for this government: "We need government to reduce the ... burden, not add to it."

Our economy depends on small businesses. Why do the Liberals continue to punish small business in Ontario by raising taxes?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear: Once again, many small businesses are going to benefit from the targeting of these effects. They'll be targeted through the EHT to provide greater exemptions for those small businesses. Some are taking undue advantage of that loophole and that's what's being closed.

It's not small businesses that are doing it; it's big businesses that aren't paying their fair share. It's a matter of equity, it's a matter of being transparent and it's about being simplistic in terms of the way it's being created. That's all that's being done.

We've increased the R&D tax credits. We've provided for increasing the innovation tax credit. We reduced taxes for small business by 22%. We're providing apprenticeship programs up to \$17,000 for individuals in those sectors. We're allowing \$2,000 for every new employee that is a youth.

They're voting against those very measures that will ultimately benefit small business. We will continue to help small business.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Today is Equal Pay Day and women across Ontario are wearing red to signify how far into the next year a woman must work to earn what men earned the previous year.

In 15 years under this Liberal government, the 30% gender wage gap has barely budged. Today, the actions that are finally being taken to close the gap are more symbolic than real, half measures like a child care plan that ignores the needs of women who require infant care. At the same time, this government is engaged in a lengthy legal battle at the Human Rights Tribunal to oppose women like midwives who are fighting for equal pay.

Will the Premier show some leadership, do the right thing and settle these human rights cases?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I remarked earlier in question period that it's Equal Pay Day. This is a really intractable issue that governments have been dealing with for many years. It was a Liberal government in 1987 that introduced pay equity legislation, and we recognize there is more that we have to do.

It is not coincidental that the number one recommendation of the group that we asked to give us advice on the gender wage gap—the number one recommendation—was to provide affordable, high-quality child care—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: How about when they need to get back to work when they're infants?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation is warned.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The bulge of children and families who are looking for child care is at two and a half years. That is exactly why the plan that we are introducing starts at two and a half years to four years. That builds on the full-day kindergarten that is already in place in this province. That is wonderful for kids. It gives them a great start, but also saves families \$6,000 a year per child.

Mr. Speaker, we're taking a great step forward, and it is about those kids, and it is about those families and those women who want to get back into the workforce.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Premier: Speaker, the Premier knows that front-line workers in the community and social services sector are overwhelmingly female. These workers deliver important public services to Ontarians in nursing homes, in developmental services and other community agencies, but they typically earn \$3 to \$8 an hour less than their comparators in hospitals and

municipalities. These workers have been waiting decades to achieve pay equity. It didn't happen when the Conservatives were in government, and it certainly hasn't happened under 15 years of Liberal government.

Will the Premier show women the money? Will she agree to fund pay equity wages for the women who work in community and social services agencies?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I stood in the gym at St. Helen Catholic School with the MPP for Davenport and the Minister of the Status of Women—

Mr. John Yakabuski: For another photo op.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member for Renfrew talks about a photo op. It was an unusual photo op, Mr. Speaker. It was five women standing on a stage making a very significant announcement about child care and about closing the gender wage gap in this province. I'll be the first to say that it should have happened 25 years ago; it should have happened 30 years ago. We should be farther along. We should have closed the gender wage gap.

Mr. Todd Smith: Why didn't it happen five years ago?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, why not five?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned. Someone else was close.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When I came into this office as Premier, we immediately put increases into early childhood educators, developmental support workers and personal support workers because they were at the bottom of the wages, and we knew that that was important. We made that increase. We're introducing a pay grid as part of the child care changes.

I know the best time to have done this would have been 50 years ago. The second-best time is today, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

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

New question.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Today we recognize Equal Pay Day in Ontario and across Canada. Today serves as a symbolic reminder of the extra time each year that it takes a woman, on average, to earn as much as a man. We are recognizing the pay gap that still exists between men and women and the work that still remains to close that gap. It reminds us of the work that remains to be done. It is 2018 and it should not take 15 and a half months for a woman to make the same as a man did in just 12 months. The women of our province deserve better.

Minister, can you please tell us on Equal Pay Day what you have done to close the gender wage gap?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member from Barrie for what is a very, very important question on Equal Pay Day. I'm proud to speak about the government's strong commitment and the work we've done on the gender wage gap.

We began this process about four years ago. We brought together representatives from equality advocacy groups, labour organizations, HR professionals and business, and we formed the gender wage gap steering committee. I believe we may even have a few members of that committee with us here in the House today, Speaker. I'd like to thank them for the positive work they've been able to do to advance this. They went around the province, they held extensive consultations and they developed a report that gave us some great recommendations.

We took immediate action on some of those recommendations. Then we brought together a similar group to talk about the implementation. They discussed the steering committee's report and they provided very practical input. Based on their expert advice, we've taken some very concrete steps that are before the House today. They need to get through this House to be put into action.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Minister. When I look around the Legislature I'm very proud to see so many women working hard for their communities and for all the people of Ontario. We know that while women are present in all industries and sectors, there are still barriers that remain to prevent their full participation in the workforce. Most notably, women continue to earn 30% less, on average, than men. That gap is larger for racialized women, and even larger for women with disabilities.

1120

This is unacceptable. It is time to close the gender wage gap. It's time for a comprehensive plan that recognizes that women's economic empowerment isn't a quick fix, and it isn't one-size-fits-all. We know that increasing women's economic participation is the right thing to do, for the sake of equality and for the good of our economy.

Minister, what steps are you taking to close the gender wage gap right now?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you again to the member for the supplementary.

We've invested in child care; we've invested in health care; we've raised the minimum wage; we've brought in measures such as equal pay for work of equal value and equal pay for equal work.

We know there's more to be done. We have introduced—and as I said, it's in the House today—the pay transparency legislation. We're the very first jurisdiction in all of Canada to introduce a comprehensive package of measures that are going to increase pay transparency and workforce composition aggregated data.

The legislation is going to be a new tool in our toolkit that's going to promote workplace equity. It's going to help put some sunlight—shine a light—on pay inequities and biases that already exist.

It's not clear where the official opposition stands on this issue. It's disappointing and it's surprising.

Speaker, women's economic equality should not be a partisan issue. The best day is today—

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Speaker, a few weeks ago, it was brought to my attention that MobilityFit Physiotherapy, located in St. Thomas, will no longer be taking on clients.

When I contacted both the LHIN and the Ministry of Health on whether they knew of the fact of this closing, I received the same set of talking points. Both were unable to confirm if the clinic was closing. This runs contradictory to both a Facebook post and voicemail from the clinic itself, indicating they are no longer taking on clients.

My question for the minister: Are both the ministry and the LHIN unaware of the closing of MobilityFit, or are they knowingly letting this potential gap be created in Elgin county?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, we know that providing patients with access to physiotherapy helps them to stay healthy and to stay at home longer, where they want to be.

This is why, across the province, we do have a very comprehensive program for community and primary care physiotherapy. We introduced this five years ago as part of our ongoing commitment to improve our health care system over the time that we've been in government.

From time to time, we know that there are changes. I believe this clinic is a private clinic. Of course, we expect our LHIN in the southwest to be working very closely with this clinic so we can ensure that patient care is provided where it is needed and when it is needed, in a timely fashion. We'll continue to work in this regard.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: The closure of MobilityFit Physiotherapy and the complete lack of action on the part of both the ministry and the LHIN is going to have devastating consequences for the people in Elgin county and St. Thomas.

This closure leaves only one clinic to serve a large population of my constituents. If the government continues to ignore this issue, wait times will continue to climb and many will go without proper treatment. I already have the orthopedic surgeons on red alert, knowing that this clinic will not be available to them.

It's unfair for this government and the South West LHIN to expect my constituents, especially those who have just undergone surgery, to travel to London to search for treatment. They should not be treated as second-class citizens in this province.

My question to the minister: What is the ministry doing today to ensure there is OHIP-covered physiotherapy in my riding for all the residents of Elgin county and St. Thomas?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: The LHIN has informed us that there is actually no indication that this particular clinic is closing. There's rumour and innuendo, apparently, out there in the community. Obviously, our LHIN is going to be working closely with the clinic to look at the particular circumstances in this case.

Our goal is always to ensure that people receive the appropriate health care that they need, including physiotherapy. Clearly, it's very important, post-surgery, that this be available, and we will continue to work in this regard.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Premier, each year, thousands of people are seriously injured or killed while using our roads. One of those people is a cyclist named Anthony Smith. While Anthony was cycling in Barrie this past October, the driver of a pickup truck suddenly swerved left across his path and Anthony became trapped under the truck. Anthony's spine was fractured. He has undergone two surgeries. He has spent weeks in the hospital. He has gone to nearly 100 medical appointments. The driver of the pickup truck was only charged with hiding his licence plate. He received a \$125 fine.

Why is it acceptable in Ontario that a driver who seriously injures a vulnerable road user—a pedestrian or a cyclist like Anthony—only receives a \$125 fine?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to thank everyone who joined the member from Kitchener–Waterloo this morning in sharing this story in the media studio. As a former trauma ER nurse, I very much can relate to having to manage not only the victims who came in from accidents and collisions on the road but also the families. I had to make some of those calls and to sit and care for the families afterwards. So nothing is more important to me, as Minister of Transportation, than road safety.

This past fall, our government announced our bold plan to keep our most vulnerable road users safe. It came in direct response to what we heard from road safety advocates, but also those who have been personally impacted by the loss of a loved one or a friend on our roads. In particular, I want to reference the President of the Treasury Board, who has been one of the strongest advocates for changing our laws for careless driving.

The new charge of careless driving causing death or bodily harm comes with up to a \$50,000 penalty.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Premier: Thousands of vulnerable road users like Anthony or Heather, Meredith, Margaret, Jessica or Albert are put in danger every year because Ontario's laws do not hold drivers accountable when they seriously injure or kill. A driver can kill or seriously injure a cyclist or a pedestrian, and most of the time the driver will likely just receive a fine of maybe a few hundred dollars. They do not lose their licence, they are not required to take driver training, and

they do not even need to attend court to hear the victim impact statement and face the consequences of their actions.

Does the Premier agree that drivers should face meaningful consequences when they seriously injure or kill? And if she does believe this, why hasn't her government passed a vulnerable-road-user law like the one that was tabled in October and that I will have to table today?

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

Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: In direct answer: We passed it last spring. It's a new charge of careless driving causing death or bodily harm. It comes with up to a \$50,000 penalty, up to two years' imprisonment and a licence suspension for up to five years, making this the toughest penalty in the Highway Traffic Act. It is among some of the toughest penalties in Canada. Ontario was the first in Canada to introduce the penalties. It has yet to be enacted; they are continuing to do the work to do that. But we passed that law last spring.

We continue to ensure that the new charge provides the law enforcement—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A wrap-up sentence, please.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Let me be clear: It's a penalty that was not previously available to our enforcement officers, who have been asking for this. This new charge provides them with that strong tool, and one that enforcement officers have asked us to respond to for many years.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique, the Honourable Chris Ballard. Speaker, my question is on cap-and-trade, or, as some may have called it, "cap and invest." But in addition to asking about specific details, I'd like to know specifically from the minister: Does he have a written plan, and are its many details too long and too elaborate to fit on a bumper sticker or a label?

1130

Speaker, we know that climate change is one of the most serious problems we face today, both globally and here in Ontario. Broad consensus, of course, exists that the best way to deal with climate change is to put a price on pollution. In Ontario, our cap on pollution from businesses guarantees reductions in pollution, and it does so at the cheapest price possible for Ontario businesses and residents.

Can the minister please explain to the House how this government is continuing to take action on climate change by putting a price on carbon?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke North for a very important question. I can assure him that Ontario has a very comprehensive plan to fight greenhouse gas emissions. Our Climate Change

Action Plan has some 90-plus points. I'm sorry that we can't fit it on a bumper sticker, Mr. Speaker, but it is exceptionally detailed.

We are proud here in Ontario to be recognized as a leader in the global fight against climate change, and the medical doctor from Etobicoke North knows this. He knows, as well, that a report released yesterday by the Clean Economy Alliance said, "Ontario is a leading jurisdiction when it comes to efforts to fight climate change." That report also noted that since 2005, carbon emissions in Ontario are down by 20%.

We've taken real leadership. We've done things like shutting down dirty coal-fired plants, we've introduced our cap on pollution, and we've achieved—

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I appreciate the minister's reassurance of having a full and detailed and elaborate climate change plan, unlike the party opposite, which to my mind is running on empty—no plan, no juice, just pitches and one-liners.

Speaker, while the opposition seems to be supporting the current US President and looking forward to "Trumping" Ontario, we, of course, welcomed Al Gore, the former Vice-President of the United States, very recently. Do you know what he said about Ontario? He said that when he travels to other parts of the world, he points to our province and our Premier when he talks about climate leadership and action. When leaders of governments across the world ask him where to look for models of responsible leadership and action, he says, "I always point to Ontario."

I'd like to ask the minister, first of all, will he answer this question; and will he also present himself for questioning and scrutiny, or will he prefer to hide from the press and not come out of the basement?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Speaker, I'm delighted that the member from Etobicoke North talked about basements, because I can tell you that here in Ontario, one of the serious repercussions of climate change is flooding in our basements. You have to look to Windsor, you have to look to Burlington, you have to look to Toronto—multiple basements across the province where Ontarians see first-hand the price they're paying for climate change. They average \$45,000 to \$50,000 per cleanup in those basements.

I am delighted to be transparent and open and talk about what this province is doing when it comes to climate change. I will say right now that protecting Ontario's basements by fighting climate change is at the top of what we're doing. I—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Protect the basements. Protect the basements.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I let the first one go, but not this time. The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is warned.

Wrap-up sentence, please.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Speaker, we're appalled to see that the PCs are refusing to take any action on climate

change, and I know Ontarians will hold them accountable.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

The minister is aware that Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is considering the futures of Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and South Muskoka Memorial Hospital. Just last week, MAHC's task force released descriptions of the three models they are considering, saying they will be making a recommendation this spring. The three options they are considering are: two acute sites, maintaining the existing hospitals and services; one in-patient and one outpatient site; and a one-site model.

Speaker, the people of Muskoka and Almaguin have been very clear: They want their two hospitals maintained. Will the minister encourage MAHC and the task force to listen to the people who rely upon these hospitals and recommend maintaining two hospitals?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: The member opposite is obviously a well-known advocate for his community. We've heard from the Muskoka Algonquin CEO on a number of issues in relation to plans for the future.

I really do want to commend the way the Ontario Hospital Association has stepped up to the plate in assisting us in looking at how we move forward with looking at efficiencies and centres of excellence, and yet providing care as close to home as possible. All of these pieces are very much in the mix. It's really quite remarkable how our advisory council, chaired by the Ontario Hospital Association president, has looked at the whole spectrum of hospitals in this province: academic health science centres, psychiatric hospitals, rehab hospitals, all the services that are provided through small hospitals, large hospitals etc.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Minister of Health: One of the challenges facing Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare and other small and medium-sized hospitals is that their funding has not kept up with their costs. Many of these costs are not things the hospitals can control. In fact, some, like hydro costs and collective bargaining agreements, are things the province controls. The province has increased hospital costs without increasing funding to cover these costs. As a result, some hospitals have run deficits for many years.

In the lead-up to the June election, the government has been touting the 4.6% increase they are supposedly giving to Ontario's hospitals. But MAHC received only 1.4% and West Parry Sound Health Centre has been told they will receive approximately 1%. Will the minister explain why these hospitals in my riding are not receiving the full 4.6% increase in funding?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We made it very clear that our increase, the \$822 million this year, would provide an average of a 4.6% overall increase to hospitals in this province. Clearly, in some communities, high-growth

communities such as ones that I represent, the need, the increase in population and the increase in acuity is greater than in some other areas of the province. This is precisely why we consult with the Ontario Hospital Association as well as the local health integration networks as to the distribution of these funds. It's based on evidence; it's based on need.

In particular, in this situation, I know that my predecessor, the former Minister of Health, met with the city council and asked them to come back with a unified plan for the hospitals in the member's riding. We look forward to that. We're awaiting that kind of community decision to inform us, and we'll move forward in that regard.

LABOUR DISPUTE

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

Speaker, 3,000—and yes, I said 3,000—York University contract faculty, teaching assistants and other part-time academic workers are still on the picket line this morning. They're continuing to take a stand against the insecure academic jobs that have become pervasive throughout the sector.

The underfunding of post-secondary education that caused this will be one of the legacies of the Liberal government. The recent changes to labour laws under Bill 148 did nothing to change that fact. These workers want to get back to the important work that they do supporting students.

The member from London West already recently raised these issues with the Premier in the House, as have many of my colleagues. Will the Premier show some leadership today and ask the publicly funded administration of York University to quit stalling and get back to the bargaining table?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. On this side of the House, we want to see our students back in the classroom as soon as possible. The best path to that resolution is at the bargaining table, so we are urging both sides to get back to the bargaining table. It might require some compromise on both sides in order to do that, but we have to keep the interests of the students first in this situation.

I know that there has been support from the Ministry of Labour all the way through this process. We're strongly urging both sides to do that right thing, get back to the bargaining table and start talking to each other. Yes, it might require compromise on both sides but this is all about the best interests of our students. We want to see them getting back to the classroom so that they can resume their studies, without interruption, as quickly as possible.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Speaker, this is not unique to York University. We know that recently Carleton was out

on strike. For 10 years, since 2008-09, Ontario has been the lowest of all provinces in university funding per student. This downloads the costs onto the students, onto their families, creating record student debt, and has led to the explosion of precarious contract work.

Students know what the problem is. The contract, part-time precarious faculty know what the problem is. New Democrats know what the problem is. My question, Speaker: Does the Premier?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to say that the situation at Carleton has been successfully resolved. There was a settlement at the table that was voted on and ratified by the members. That is the collective bargaining process, and we can see where it has worked. That is what we want to see with respect to the situation at York. We want both sides to come together with a focus on a resolution so that we can prioritize the needs of students and they can resume their studies.

The member opposite talked about funding for post-secondary education, and I want to say no government in the history of this province, under the leadership of this Premier, has funded post-secondary education for students as it relates to the new OSAP program—235,000 students are now attending post-secondary education for free—tuition paid—because of this program. Access has increased—

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

PAY EQUITY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: As you know, today is Equal Pay Day, and it was my pleasure to welcome the Premier and Minister Malhi to my riding of Davenport this morning to mark this day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To whom?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of the Status of Women.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That comes first.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Today is the day to reflect on the value of equal pay for all workers in our province. It is a day where we measure just how much more men are paid for the same work as women. In Ontario, we know that the gender wage gap sits at about 30%, and we know that this pay gap is even greater for racialized, indigenous, LGBTQ+ women, women living with disabilities and newcomer women. Equal Pay Day acknowledges the work we still have to do, work that will create a better future for young women and girls.

Women in Ontario continue to face challenges and barriers to achieving full economic participation. Can the minister please tell this House how the government is helping to close the gender wage gap and ensure women are given equal opportunity for access?

Hon. Harinder Malhi: I want to thank the member for the question. I'm very pleased to rise today in the Legislature to recognize April 10 as Equal Pay Day in Ontario. The gender wage gap is real and far too many women in this province are being held back in the work-

place, passed up for leadership roles, and working multiple jobs to make ends meet. But we are all working to change that.

Last summer, my ministry consulted province-wide to create *Then Now Next: Ontario's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment*. Working with my colleague the Minister of Labour, we have introduced historic pay transparency legislation, because women deserve the tools to negotiate for a fair wage. We're leveraging the government's buying power to encourage large firms to meet a 30% target of women on their boards.

It is clear that child care remains a significant barrier to women's full economic participation. In fact, our gender wage gap steering committee's top recommendation was to invest in child care, and we have: 100,000 new child care spaces—

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Again to the Minister of the Status of Women: The government plans to increase pay transparency and empower women to bargain for a fair wage. We're introducing historic legislation that would require employers to disclose pay rates and pay scales for publicly posted positions. But the reality is, 58% of minimum wage earners are women. Many women find it difficult to find meaningful, well-paying jobs. We must support women who are entering the workforce for the first time or returning after an absence.

My question is: What are we doing for those women?

Hon. Harinder Malhi: Thank you again for the question. *Then Now Next: Ontario's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment* is a multi-ministry strategy that will ensure that every woman in Ontario can access their full potential in the economy at all income levels. Our government is empowering women workers and leaders by expanding women's centres so they can provide much-needed support to women rebuilding their lives, including those living with violence, and enforcing *Get on Board: Ontario's Implementation Plan to Promote Women in Corporate Leadership*, because increasing the number of women on private and public boards is a step in the right direction. We are removing barriers to indigenous women's leadership through targeted programming developed with our indigenous partners, and we're investing in mentorship and networking for women who face higher barriers, like racialized women. We are also establishing an Ontario Women's Entrepreneurship Association, to increase women's access to opportunity and to scale up and expand ventures.

Women deserve action, and we are delivering a whole-of-government approach.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Construction of the WPD wind project on the south shore of Prince Edward county is creating havoc for local residents. Road issues, noise issues and other problems are a daily occurrence as construction is under way, in spite of the fact that the municipality wants no

part of this wind project. Your government insists, though, on pushing ahead with a project that's actually going to cost electricity customers over \$100 million in the future on their bills.

Speaker, how much of Prince Edward county is this government willing to tear up to accommodate this unnecessary wind project?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I do want to thank the member for the question. I know he's actively involved in this project. He and I talk about it often.

The one thing that we try to do—in the last procurement through our LRP process, we really worked hard at trying to strike that right balance between early community engagement and achieving value for ratepayers by putting an emphasis on the cost.

Now, it also is important to note that all LRP projects are administered by the Independent Electricity System Operator. It's overseen, through that process, by an external fairness adviser. When that contract is offered, we need to make sure that they know that the project isn't over. Project developers then must obtain all required licences and approvals, such as renewable energy—

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

Mr. Todd Smith: I just want to remind the minister that this has been a very controversial project in Prince Edward county. It started off as a 29-wind-turbine project, and by the government's own Environmental Review Tribunal was reduced down to nine turbines. How in the world is this even economically viable, given the fact that the Environmental Review Tribunal, for environmental reasons, has decided that 20 of these turbines need to be eliminated?

The latest update on the active contract generation page for the Independent Electricity System Operator shows that the WPD project hasn't been given notice to proceed, but the latest update was three months ago. Is the government trying to get this expensive, unneeded wind project—and I know the minister knows that. Are they trying to get this completed before the election, and have they given notice to proceed to WPD?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know the honourable member is very, very active in this file, so he should know that the IESO and this external fairness adviser are the ones that are administering this contract. If he wants the clarification on that, he can easily contact the IESO and talk to them about it as well.

When you're looking at what we're doing on this side of the House, making sure that we're investing in renewable energy and investing in sustainable energy, it is this government that is creating jobs and creating an affordable and clean electricity system, right across the province.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The President of the Treasury Board on a point of order.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I'm proud to welcome to the Legislative Assembly today staff from the great city

of Burlington, joining us in the public gallery: Jennifer Knight, Colleen Black, Janet Boguslawski, Muriel Brouwers, Annemarie Cumber, Wendy Garside, Debbie Hordyk, Carmela Marchesan, Tracy O'Neil, Amanda Ridgway, Patti Sullivan, Tara Thorp, Kwab Ako-Adjei and Helen Walihura. Welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you for coming.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I would like to correct my record, Speaker. I said that the legislation that contains the new charge of careless driving causing death or bodily harm was passed last spring. It was, in fact, passed December 12, 2017.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members have a right to correct their record. I thank you for that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor–Tecumseh is warned.

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, sorry. I just thought I'd offer you that. Hansard, do not record that.

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

The House recessed from 1150 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome Ronnie Gavsie and Rachel Levy from the organ donation foundation, as well as my executive assistant, Anna Majetic. Welcome to Queen's Park.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: There was once a man from Windsor

Who liked to drink pints of Brador

When he took a big sip—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is this an introduction?

Mr. Arthur Potts:—Foam stuck to his lip

And he smiled, like a great troubadour.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. I don't know how we're going to classify that for Hansard, but that's an interesting introduction. Introduction of the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, I guess.

It is, therefore, now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO SCOTTISH COMMUNITY

Mr. Bill Walker: Twenty-seven years ago, this House declared April 6 as Tartan Day in Ontario in honour and

celebration of the significant and many contributions of the Scottish community, who were among the first people to settle and help build this great province we're proud to call home.

To Scots, April 6 is a special day, as it's when Scottish independence was declared in the form of a letter submitted to the Pope to confirm Scotland's status as a sovereign state. The Arbroath Declaration of 1320 also laid out a key principle on defending the Scots' freedom and it said, "It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we are fighting, but for freedom—for that alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself."

This principle is fully embraced and articulated by notable Canadians of Scottish descent, including Agnes Macphail, born near Chatsworth in my riding, who championed freedom and self-determination while fighting for women's equal share in democratic participation. Macphail became the first woman to sit in the House of Commons.

It's a proud heritage that was also championed in this House by another Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound native and former MPP, Bill Murdoch. Murdoch, as most of you know or have heard, is a true Scot at heart, and not because he gave Ontario its own provincial tartan colours, but because he did not like being told what to do and always pounded on partisanship in the Legislature with the reminder that, "We get elected to speak our minds and that's what I've always tried to do."

I wear my tartan tie today to salute Bognor Bill and all things Scottish, and I thank all of you for doing the same this week as you pay respects to our proud and strong Scottish community in Ontario.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: As the old folk song goes, "This land is our land, this land is your land, from Bonavista to Vancouver Island." I think NDP MP Scott Duvall had the song in mind when he started out on his End Pension Theft cross-country tour. So far, he's been to Vancouver Island, Ladysmith, Edmonton, Saskatoon and more, and he's not stopping. He has already started into the Ontario leg of his tour, planning to be in London tonight and Toronto tomorrow night. He's also planning on visiting many spots in Ontario, including Sudbury, Thunder Bay and our hometown of Hamilton. After that, he'll be continuing out to the east coast.

Throughout this great tour, the message he has shared has been loud and clear: We need pension reform in this country. This includes changes to our country's lopsided CCAA and bankruptcy and insolvency legislation. Too many hard-working pensioners have been ripped off, and we're not going to stand for it anymore, Speaker.

I'm happy to be joining him tomorrow night at 7 o'clock at United Steelworkers Hall in Toronto. If you're watching from your TV screens or in the Legislature, consider this a formal invitation to come out to talk about much-needed pension changes.

I have spoken out many times in this House of the need for better pension security for Ontarians. This

certainly includes Sears pensioners, Stelco pensioners and many more whose plans are based in Ontario. We want to see a meaningful commitment made by this province. This should include a strengthened PBGF fund, which serves as a backup relief when applicable funds go insolvent. Right now, the PBGF fund only covers pensioners up to \$1,500 a month, meaning that many could be living below the poverty line if this happens. That is why I've always advocated for PBGF coverage of at least \$2,500 a month. This type of upgrade is long, long overdue.

Let's make sure our pensioners have a real voice in this province, in this country. See you tomorrow night.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I am honoured to rise today to celebrate the month of April as Be a Donor month in support of organ and tissue donation awareness.

The daughter of a dear family friend was in a fatal car crash last October while working as an au pair in New Zealand. Angelika Loukas's bright life—her love of life itself, of children, animals; her infectious smile that lit up every single room that she walked into; her full and happy spirit—was wiped out in a second. It is hard to imagine the Loukas family's loss, just as it is hard for us to imagine the families of the Saskatchewan Humboldt Broncos hockey players. Angelika's heart was donated to a woman in her forties, her lungs to a woman in her fifties, her liver and one kidney to a man in his fifties, her pancreas and other kidney to a woman in her thirties, as well as her eye tissue.

I would like to thank Ronnie Gavsie and Rachel Levy from the Trillum Gift of Life Network for your tremendous work and leadership. I'd also like to congratulate Shillane Labbett of Kingston, who received TGLN's Advocates in Action Award this year.

Every single one of us has the power to change and save someone's life. One organ donor can save eight lives and, through tissue donation, enhance the lives of 75 others.

Angelika's mom, Anne, encapsulated the importance of organ donation beautifully when she said, "There's an amazing heart that someone has beating in them now.... Her heart was so big."

Be that change that you want to see in the world, and take that two minutes. Register at beadonor.ca and say yes.

DELHI ROCKETS

Mr. Toby Barrett: We congratulate the Delhi Legion peewee rep team on becoming OMHA C champions. The playdowns saw the Delhi Rockets face off against the Minto Mad Dogs. With the series tied at two, game five was tense. Minto took a 2-0 lead, which was left unanswered until the third, and then there was an incredible 12-minute Rocket scoring frenzy that saw a final 4-2 win.

The quarter finals: Delhi defeated Aylmer in five games. The semis saw East Lambton also fall to Delhi's playoff magic in five. Defeated MPPs Randy, Jeff and Monte—the other Randy—we can arrange some Rocket jerseys to be sent up for some pics.

I'm told this team, in spite of being down at times, never gave up and played their hearts out until the buzzer, winning games with 0.7 and 0.8 seconds remaining. These comeback kids played the final game to a packed barn, and their victory still has the town of Delhi talking.

Perhaps the team's success stems from the true camaraderie, as summed up by veteran centreman Carter Dwornikiewicz: "They were like my second family," he said. "We all support each other, we all do good things off the ice, on the ice and do what we all do together."

Sincere congratulations to all the boys and to the coaching staff of Steve Wesseling, Steve Griffin, Shawn Hare and Billy Hobbs. It's obvious that you not only instilled skill into your team, but also the genuine meaning of sport.

INJURED WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today to speak about WSIB practices and the sometimes catastrophic consequences on injured workers.

In 2015, miner Cory Lankshear's ankle was crushed, knees broken, and lower back injured when a rock fall occurred underground. After ignoring the advice from his own doctor, WSIB deemed him fit to become a clerk and enrolled him in a college program. Mr. Lankshear was not able to complete the clerk program, but WSIB used this partial training to deem him compensation of \$13.50 an hour, when he used to make \$51 as a miner before his work accident.

He states: "It has only been with the ongoing support of my family that I have been strong enough to stand up to the bullying that WSIB has inflicted upon me."

A second injured worker, Mr. Laurier Chartrand, suffered a head and neck injury in a mine. He had unbearable pain in his head, his arm, his chest, but a head scan was always denied. He asked two neurologists assigned by WSIB if acupuncture might be beneficial. They did not answer his question.

After 27 years of not being able to sleep properly because of the pain, his family physician sent him to a physiotherapist, he received acupuncture treatment and, after a few treatments, his pain finally went away.

The WSIB tells; it deems; it doesn't listen. It denies equitable access to diagnosis and treatment. The WSIB is failing injured workers and needs to change.

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PAY EQUITY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Earlier today, I was joined by the Premier and the Minister of the Status of Women at St. Helen Catholic School in my riding of Davenport to

mark Equal Pay Day. Equal Pay Day is a symbolic day when we recognize the paramount role that women play in our economy and the concerning reality that women, on average, still earn less than men.

From my personal experience as a mother and the first female MPP for Davenport, I know that the steps taken by this government to correct the gender pay gap and the steps taken to get women back to work after a long absence are vital for the health of Ontario's economy.

Our gender wage gap steering committee's top recommendation was to invest in child care. Since receiving that recommendation, our government has announced 100,000 new child care spaces, and we are making licensed child care free for children two and a half to four. Access to affordable child care is key to gender equality at home and at work. I know that when I am out in my community and I am out knocking on doors in Davenport, this is exactly what families are telling me.

I wanted to extend a warm thank you to Vice-Principal Bucci at St. Helen's, as well as the coordinator of the EarlyON centre at St. Helen's, Antonella Totino, and to all the staff at St. Helen Catholic School for the warm welcome this morning.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Laurie Scott: Today marks Equal Pay Day in Ontario. As the PC critic for women's issues and as a PC MPP, I have been fighting for women in this Legislature for many years.

Last year, I called on the government to strike a special legislative committee that would work across party lines to develop amendments to strengthen the Pay Equity Act, but sadly, that offer was refused by the Minister of Labour. What a missed opportunity to work together to improve the lives of Ontario women and girls.

It is especially unfortunate because, 31 years ago, all three political parties in this Legislature co-operated on the development of the Pay Equity Act, which ended up passing unanimously.

Instead, after having sat on their hands for 15 years, ignored expert recommendations from their own advisory panel and cut the budget of the Pay Equity Office to its lowest levels ever, this government tabled and then time-allocated last-minute legislation that actually does very little to advance pay equity in this province.

Ontario women deserve more than symbolism, rhetoric and political games from their government on Equal Pay Day. The PC Party is proud to stand up for women and all the hard-working people of Ontario, and we are willing to match our words with real results.

SIKH COMMUNITY

Mr. Vic Dhillon: As we ring in the Sikh Heritage Month and Vaisakhi day celebrations for 2018, I would like to take a moment to appreciate and acknowledge the hard work, struggles and sacrifices that the Sikh community across Brampton, Ontario, Canada and various parts of the world has made over the years.

The Sikh community is committed, generous and enthusiastic towards the progress of all Ontarians and that of our great province. The 200,000-strong community members are active socially and politically and have achieved great success in diverse fields and disciplines.

It therefore pains me when the mainstream media singles out a few from the community who may have at times in the past acted in a deviant manner. I see reports of the Sikh community being mentioned in a negative light, post the India visit of our Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. People who have not read about the history and sacrifices of the Sikh community are calling the community members terrorists.

Let me be very clear: The Sikh community in Ontario and Canada respects democratic institutions and has always worked to strengthen these institutions. Members of the community strive to uphold the rights and freedoms of all Ontarians. The community members have contributed in the past and continue to contribute to the economic success of our great province.

I'm not going to name anyone's names or discuss the act of a specific individual or small fringe group that does not in any way represent the Sikh community. Not just in Ontario or in Canada, but a sizable population of the Sikh community resides in the United Kingdom and the United States. In both the UK and the USA, Sikh community members have always advocated for freedom of speech and the upholding of democratic traditions and values.

No one should pass judgment on the community based on the actions of one or a few in the distant past. The community shall always continue working to build a more prosperous Ontario and Canada.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURLING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, the 31st annual Ontario elementary school curling championships were hosted in Carleton Place this past weekend. Seventy-two teams from across the province participated, consisting of over 300 young curlers plus all their coaches, family, friends and spectators. Everyone from beginning curlers to experienced players participated, with teams seeded into pools and each pool competing to find a champion. The tournament was split between the four sheets at the local curling club and the six new sheets installed over one of the rinks at the Carleton Place arena just for this event.

I'd like to extend my sincere congratulations to all the participants and especially mention the A division winner, team Aldom of J.D. Hodgson Elementary School in Haliburton; the B division winner, team Stratton of Harrow Public School in Harrow; and the C division winner, team Malette, also of J.D. Hodgson Elementary School in Haliburton.

I'd also like to extend further congratulations to the tournament co-chairs, Brent Litle and Rebecca Hughes, the Carleton Place Curling Club, the Carleton Place arena, the town of Carleton Place, and the many, many

volunteers who made the tournament a resounding and memorable success.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING VULNERABLE ROAD USERS ACT, 2018 LOI DE 2018 SUR LA PROTECTION DES USAGERS DE LA ROUTE VULNÉRABLES

Ms. Fife moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of harm to vulnerable road users / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant le Code de la route à l'égard des dommages causés aux usagers de la route vulnérables.

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. Catherine Fife: This bill amends the Highway Traffic Act. It is about the legal consequences of a collision that seriously injures or kills a pedestrian, a cyclist, a mobility device user, a roadway worker, an emergency responder outside their motor vehicle or another individual listed in the bill. The driver in this instance who caused the injury or death is guilty of an offence if they caused it by breaking one of the rules of the road listed in the bill. The listed rules include rules about unlicensed drivers, driving while intoxicated, driving while using a cell phone, speeding, careless driving, disobeying signs or lights at intersections or pedestrian crossovers, proper signaling, sharing the road, safety near emergency vehicles, safely opening car doors and other rules.

A driver convicted of the offence is subject to the consequences for breaking the rule and to a mandatory probation order. The order will require the driver to take a driving instruction course and perform community service. The community service must include activity related to improving driving safety and public education on driving safety. Their driver's licence will be suspended during the probation. The driver must also attend the sentencing hearing. Victim impact statements may be presented during the sentencing hearing.

YOUTH POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT ACT, 2018 LOI DE 2018 SUR L'ENGAGEMENT POLITIQUE DES JEUNES

Mr. Potts moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 38, An Act to amend the Election Act with respect to voter eligibility / Projet de loi 38, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale en ce qui concerne l'admissibilité des électeurs.

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. Arthur Potts: This will be a short statement. The bill amends the Election Act to lower the age for persons to be eligible to vote in an election to the Legislative Assembly from 18 years to 16 years. Related amendments are made throughout the act.

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PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE SENIORS IN THE COMMUNITY ACT, 2018 LOI DE 2018 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES VULNÉRABLES DANS LA COLLECTIVITÉ

Ms. Wong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui et la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

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. Soo Wong: The bill amends the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992, and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

The Substitute Decisions Act, 1992, is amended to require regulated health professionals to report any reasonable suspicion that a senior is being abused or neglected. The Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee is required to investigate the report to determine whether an application for a temporary guardian is required.

The Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, is amended to make it an act of professional misconduct for a regulated health professional to fail to report a reasonable suspicion that a senior is being abused or neglected, as required by the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992.

GARRETT'S LEGACY ACT (REQUIREMENTS FOR MOVABLE SOCCER GOALS), 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LE LEGS DE GARRETT (EXIGENCES RELATIVES AUX BUTS DE SOCCER MOBILES)

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to provide for safety measures respecting movable soccer goals / Projet de loi 40, Loi prévoyant des mesures de sécurité pour les buts de soccer mobiles.

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. Todd Smith: Garrett's Legacy Act establishes requirements for organizations or entities respecting the secure installation of movable soccer goals that they make available for use by members of the public. The act provides for inspections and requires the minister to establish a mechanism to report complaints of alleged noncompliance with the act. It's named in honour of Garrett Mills, who was a 15-year-old boy from Napanee who died last May when one of these movable soccer goals fell on top of him.

MARRIAGE AMENDMENT ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE MARIAGE

Ms. Wong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Marriage Act / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le mariage.

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. Soo Wong: The bill amends the Marriage Act by adding a new section 7.1, allowing any person to lodge a caveat with an issuer of marriage licences objecting to the marriage of the person named in the caveat. Once a caveat is lodged, the issuer cannot issue a marriage licence until the matter is looked into and the issuer is satisfied that the objection set out in the caveat should not obstruct the marriage. The issuer's decision may be appealed to the Registrar General.

PETITIONS

LYME DISEASE

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

"Whereas Public Health Ontario's risk map for ticks currently underrepresents the risks of encountering ticks throughout the province; and

"Whereas black-legged ticks which spread the disease can be found anywhere in the province, but current methods for tracking are labour-intensive; and

"Whereas other jurisdictions have employed new methods for tracking ticks, such as mobile apps, to better inform the public and make it easier to report and map ticks;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take concrete action to improve black-legged tick mapping throughout the province

of Ontario to increase our awareness of the location of ticks while providing health care professionals with better information when encountering potential cases of Lyme disease."

I totally agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Curtis from Huron-Bruce.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents' increasing acuity and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

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

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

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

I fully agree. I will sign and give it to Mia to bring up to the front.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled "Update Ontario Fluoridation Legislation," and it's signed by a number of folks from the Windsor-Essex area. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

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

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

I’m pleased to sign and to support this petition and to send it down with page Stephanie.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Laurie Scott: “Petition to Improve Tick Tracking in Ontario:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Public Health Ontario’s risk map for ticks currently underrepresents the risks of encountering ticks throughout the province; and

“Whereas black-legged ticks which spread the disease can be found anywhere in the province, but current methods for tracking are labour-intensive; and

“Whereas other jurisdictions have employed new methods for tracking ticks, such as mobile apps, to better inform the public and make it easier to report and map ticks;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take concrete action to improve black-legged tick mapping throughout the province of Ontario to increase our awareness of the location of ticks while providing health care professionals with better information when encountering potential cases of Lyme disease.”

I’ll hand that to page Curtis from Port Elgin.

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EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition to stop the unfair clawback of auto workers’ emergency leave days.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario auto workers have been unfairly singled out with an Employment Standards Act exemption in regulation 502/06; and

“Whereas auto workers are hard-working people, who juggle strenuous physical labour in the workplace, rotating work shifts as well as six-day work weeks and 12-hour shifts, all while balancing the challenging demands of taking care of a family; and

“Whereas clawbacks to auto workers’ bereavement days and personal emergency leave under the Employment Standards Act exemption in regulation 502/06 will have detrimental impacts on workers, as well as their families and their work; and

“Whereas these changes to the Employment Standards Act are discriminatory against one particular sector in Ontario; and

“Whereas auto workers deserve the same rights and protections as every other worker in Ontario;

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

“Immediately repeal the regulation to the Employment Standards Act which limits the number of emergency leave days for auto workers, as compared to other employees in the province.”

I wholeheartedly support this, affix my name to it and will send it with page Colin.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas:

“—In the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth;

“—The tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on-screen;

“—A scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking;

“—More than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least 30,000 lives and half a billion health care dollars;

“—The Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada;

“—79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A (increased from 73% in 2011);

“—The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act via cabinet;

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

“—To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

“—That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare a response.”

I have affixed my name, and I will hand it to Hannah.

LYME DISEASE

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Public Health Ontario’s risk map for ticks currently underrepresents the risks of encountering ticks throughout the province; and

“Whereas black-legged ticks which spread the disease can be found anywhere in the province, but current methods for tracking are labour-intensive; and

“Whereas other jurisdictions have employed new methods for tracking ticks, such as mobile apps, to better inform the public and make it easier to report and map ticks;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take concrete action to improve black-legged tick mapping throughout the province of Ontario to increase our awareness of the location of ticks while providing health care professionals with better information when encountering potential cases of Lyme disease.”

As I agree with this, I have affixed my signature and am giving it to page Will.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Ashley MacLellan from Val Caron in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Hospital cuts ...

“Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major budget shortfalls leading to a decrease of 87,000 hours of nursing care in psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical unit, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care, and the emergency department, the closure of beds on the surgical unit, as well as cuts to support services including cleaning;

“Whereas Ontario’s provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for the last eight years in a row; and

“Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are reduced all across the hospital;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect beds and services.

“Increase overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces.”

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

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Orkambi was approved by Health Canada for use in cystic fibrosis (CF) patients with two copies of the F508del-CFTR mutation, aged 12 years and older;

“Whereas Orkambi is the first drug to treat the basic defect in the largest population of Canadians with cystic fibrosis. It can slow disease progression, allowing patients to live longer, healthier lives;

“Whereas CF specialists have established clinical criteria for Orkambi, including start and stop criteria; these

specialists are best suited to manage access to medications in the treatment of CF patients;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to negotiate a fair price for Orkambi and to make it available through Ontario public drug programs for those who meet the conditions set by Health Canada and the clinical criteria established by Canadian CF clinicians.”

I agree with this petition. I affix my name and send it with page Harsaajan.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition to improve tick tracking in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Public Health Ontario’s risk map for ticks currently underrepresents the risks of encountering ticks throughout the province; and

“Whereas black-legged ticks which spread the disease can be found anywhere in the province, but current methods for tracking are labour-intensive; and

“Whereas other jurisdictions have employed new methods for tracking ticks, such as mobile apps, to better inform the public and make it easier to report and map ticks;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take concrete action to improve black-legged tick mapping throughout the province of Ontario to increase our awareness of the location of ticks while providing health care professionals with better information when encountering potential cases of Lyme disease.”

I support this petition and send it down with page Madeline.

POLITIQUES ÉNERGÉTIQUES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier M^{me} Nicole Shank de Hanmer dans mon comté.

« Entendu que les factures d’électricité sont devenues inabordables pour un trop grand nombre de personnes et que la réduction des factures d’électricité de 30 % pour les familles et les entreprises est une cible ambitieuse mais réaliste; et

« Entendu que la seule façon de réparer le système hydro-électrique est de s’attaquer aux causes de base des prix élevés, y compris la privatisation, les marges de profits excessives, la surabondance d’électricité et plus; et

« Entendu que les familles ontariennes ne devraient pas avoir à payer des primes du temps d’utilisation, et celles qui vivent dans une région rurale ou nordique ne devraient pas avoir à payer des frais de livraison plus élevés et punitifs; et

« Entendu que le retour de Hydro One comme propriété publique remettrait plus de 7 milliards de dollars à la province et à la population de l’Ontario; »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « de réduire les factures d'électricité pour les entreprises et les familles jusqu'à 30 %, éliminer les délais d'utilisation obligatoires, mettre fin aux coûts de livraison ruraux inéquitables et rétablir la propriété publique d'Hydro One. »

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer et je demande à Hannah de l'amener au greffier.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I present a petition on Bill 167, fairness in credit reporting.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas an undisclosed number of Canadian consumers' personal information was hacked in the recent Equifax breach; and

“Whereas impacted person(s)' credit ratings are affected by breaches of this nature, which has repercussions for impacted person(s)' day-to-day living; and

“Whereas breached data of this nature includes names, addresses and social insurance numbers; and

“Whereas the number of impacted person(s) cannot be confirmed; and

“Whereas there is no mandatory requirement for private sector entities in Ontario or other Canadian provinces to report a potential and/or actual privacy breach; and

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“Whereas government must prevent future security breaches and access to critical consumer information; and

“Where government must enhance consumer protection in Ontario, which effectively builds consumer confidence;

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

“That the province of Ontario enact Bill 167, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act, to mandate that consumer reporting agencies respond to consumer inquiry no later than two business days after receiving the inquiry; provide a copy of the person's consumer report free of charge; and that a consumer may request that a consumer reporting agency place a notice of security free on the consumer's file.”

I have signed it and I am passing it to Eric.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The time for petitions is through.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES TRANSFORMATION ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LA TRANSFORMATION DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 9, 2018, on the motion for second 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): Further debate? Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on Bill 6, the Correctional Services Transformation Act. I will be sharing my time with the members from Barrie and Guelph.

I am greatly honoured to speak on this very important piece of legislation, a piece of legislation that perhaps is one of the boldest transformations of the correctional system that we have seen in a generation in our province, a transformation that is much focused on the reintegration and rehabilitation of people who are in our care and custody, as opposed to just incarceration. There is a very distinct difference between the two.

Speaker, obviously I am standing here today in my capacity as the Attorney General, and I will take most of my time to speak about things that we're doing from the perspective of the Ministry of the Attorney General as it relates to correctional services and some of the key elements of transformation that are outlined in Bill 6.

But I also stand here today and speak as the former Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services who has seen, and as previous ministers and critics of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services have seen, some significant challenges within the system. Very much from that perspective, I wholeheartedly endorse what's proposed in this bill. In fact, Speaker, I recognize that, at one point, you were also a critic of correctional services and have visited many correctional institutions. You will recognize a lot of the things that we saw and felt needed to be changed—and things that experts and practitioners in this area around rehabilitation and reintegration have told us need to be addressed are found in this bill.

I will take a moment to thank the members of the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre Task Force, which we had created while I was the minister to actually give us practical advice as to how we improve the conditions of confinement and bring in that culture of rehabilitation and reintegration at OCDC, fully understanding that by talking about one specific detention centre, we should be able to learn things that could be applied across the system. I'm pleased to say, Speaker, that the implementation of those recommendations that were given to us by the OCDC Task Force, which was made up of community groups, lawyers—both crown and defence—academics, our correctional officers and those who work within the correctional services, not only has helped us improve the conditions at OCDC, but I will say to you it is reflected in this legislation.

Speaker, I also want to take a quick moment to thank Howard Sapers, who is the former federal correctional investigator who then came to our province as an independent adviser to the minister to assist with this work. He brings a wealth of knowledge and information that has informed his analysis of the current system and recommendations on how to improve it, which is now reflected in this legislation.

Speaker, one of the biggest challenges that I saw when I was the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—and which I thought to myself that if I'm ever the Attorney General, I would want to address—is the rate of remand; in other words, the number of people who are being held in our correctional system who have not been convicted yet. They are being denied bail and they are on remand; in other words, they are still innocent until proven guilty—and to see how we can reduce the number of those people.

I think, as we know, the remand rate in Ontario detention centres—which, by the way, in parentheses, is pretty much aligned with the rest of the country, as well; you see similar high rates—is roughly around 70%. In other words, roughly about two thirds of the inmates in our correctional facilities are on remand. In Ontario, I think currently right now there are probably close to about 8,000 people in our care and custody—maybe a little under 8,000 people. Two thirds of them are on remand. In other words, they are not yet convicted and are awaiting trial.

The challenge for us is: How do we reduce that rate of remand? How do we make sure that people who are vulnerable and are of less risk can be released on bail in the community?

There are two aspects to that issue that my ministry, as the Attorney General, has dealt with. One is on the policy side as to how decisions are made, both by the crown and the defence and, of course, ultimately by the judiciary, to determine whether or not a person is not a threat to the community, is of lower risk but vulnerable, may perhaps need services around mental health and addictions and may be released into the community as opposed to being remanded in a correctional facility. Secondly, it's to make sure that there are appropriate services in the community setting that that person can avail so that while they are on bail, waiting for their trial date to come, they are able to receive those appropriate services.

Speaker, we have moved on both of those fronts. In response to the Supreme Court of Canada's Jordan decision, which imposed very strict timelines, not only did we, of course, introduce new resources into the system to the tune of about \$25 million a year by hiring new judges, crowns, investing in defence through Legal Aid Ontario and also staff, but we also announced a bail action plan to address the front end of the system, to see how we can make the front end of the system better, to make sure that it runs faster and smoother, but also that those, again, who are low-risk and vulnerable are released into the community with appropriate services.

Part of that bail action plan was to invest in services in the community. We did that primarily—and I won't go

through all the details, but just to give you a highlight, we did it primarily by expanding the bail verification and supervision programs in our community. They are run by organizations like the John Howard Society, the Elizabeth Fry Society and many other community groups that differ from community to community like yours or mine or other parts of the province. We worked with them to expand the eligibility criteria around those programs so more people could qualify for those supervision programs at a local community level. And we invested more money in these programs to enhance their capacities so that they can take more people in the community, especially in remote communities and in rural communities, of course, not to mention urban communities.

The other thing we also did was that we invested money with these organizations so they can hire mental health support workers so that not only could they be supervising an individual who is on bail but, if that person needs mental health or addiction support, there is an individual dedicated and available to provide that. It's kind of remarkable, Speaker, because we were able to use justice dollars for mental health services. We felt very strongly that that was the right and appropriate approach because those targeted resources, money from the justice ministry to allow for mental health supports, will go a long way in not only helping and stabilizing this individual, but also reducing pressure from the correctional system and not unnecessarily detaining this person.

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The other innovative thing that we did was creating something called bail beds. Again, these are individuals who may have complex needs, and one of the biggest reasons that they may be denied bail and be remanded to a correctional institution is because they have no stable housing. That seems to be a big knock against somebody, because where would you go? You'll go back to a shelter; we will never be able to find you; you won't reappear for your court date, etc.

By creating bail beds—about 75 in the province—we were able to create this opportunity for these individuals to again be released in a community, under supervision, with a specific bed to go to, a place that they can call their own while they are on bail, and be there and receive those important health care services like addictions and mental health, but be in a stable environment.

Like I said, we have done that with about 75 beds across the province. I'm really happy to note that the budget that the Minister of Finance announced speaks of funding for more beds, especially in remote and rural communities and northern communities, so that we can start covering those communities as well. I'm excited that that program is already showing success and is being expanded through budget 2018.

Very quickly, I want to talk about the policy side of things. We undertook to review our crown bail policy. We asked three experts to look at our existing crown policy. Those three experts are former Chief Justice Brian Lennox, former Deputy Attorney General Murray

Segal and former Deputy Crown Attorney Lori Montague, who is now an Ontario Court of Justice judge. We gave them some time and said, “Go consult across the province with indigenous communities, racialized communities and experts out there to see how we can better write our crown policies.” That, again, enforces the point that I’m talking about, which is starting with what the law requires with the least restrictive conditions based on the risk factors around the individual, focusing especially on those who are low-risk and vulnerable to be released in the community with the least restrictive conditions around them, as opposed to just remanding.

In the meantime, while they were doing the work, the Supreme Court of Canada came out with another decision called the Antic decision, where they reinforced that principle that’s allowed in criminal court. There was a perfect opportunity for us to take the Antic decision by the Supreme Court where they said one should not just be risk-averse; one should look at a method to determining what conditions should be applied, and one has to start with the least restrictive conditions and move up the ladder, so to speak—it’s the analogy that’s used—to determine what conditions should be applied and whether somebody should be given bail or denied bail.

Our crown policy fully embraces that—not only the Antic decision, but what’s required by the Criminal Code. It has been the most significant rewrite of crown policies on bail in a very long time. It came into force in November 2017. It has been put into action. Now it’s being applied across the province.

My time is running out, so I will just say that these steps in combination are starting to have a significant impact. We’re starting to see a reduction in remand rates and we’re starting to see more people who are low-risk and vulnerable being released into the community, as opposed to just being sent to the local detention centre. The impact is that you are also then seeing fewer people in our detention centres. That helps to improve the conditions of confinement and that helps to improve more space being available so that proper services can be given to those who are in custody. Of course, some people would be in custody because they would pose higher risk, and from a public safety perspective, we want to make sure that they are held in custody. There’s obviously a balance that has to be reached. But for those then who are in custody in a detention centre, we need to make sure that they are in appropriate situations and circumstances.

This bill goes very much hand in hand with the work that the Ministry of the Attorney General is doing on the front end of the spectrum in reducing the remand rate—which, as I said earlier, is fairly high—and making sure that what has been outlined in terms of steps is what this bill does. Bill 6 ensures that we have appropriate conditions of confinement and we are truly moving towards a rehabilitative and reintegrative form of confinement as opposed to just pure reincarceration.

I’m quite excited, Speaker. This is a topic I could speak to for a long time. I would just say to you—and these are not just my words; this is talking to a lot of

people in the judiciary, people who have practised criminal law and those who provide services to these individuals. They will tell you that this is the most significant movement they have seen in our province—in fact, across the country—in a very long time, in building the right foundation around the kind of incarceration system that is humane and that really focuses on the fundamental issues around an individual.

Of course, this also means better working conditions for our correctional officers. These are the kinds of things they’ve been asking for so that they are not dealing with jails that are just packed with people stacked over each other but actually dealing with a smaller group of people and focusing more on providing those important services that are needed within our correctional facilities.

As I mentioned, I will be sharing my time with the members from Barrie and Guelph, so one of them will speak to this bill further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I’ll continue debate with the member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you very much, Speaker. I rise today to speak in favour of Bill 6. I have read this over extensively. As MPPs, we have representatives who come from both sides of an issue. I have talked with the correctional services people and I have also heard from the other side, from people who have experienced incarceration.

The Correctional Services Transformation Act, if passed, will become the foundation for the boldest transformation of our corrections system in generations. Our proposed changes are the result of tireless work with corrections staff, partners, and several comprehensive expert reviews, including those of Howard Sapers.

Our shared goal has always been the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals within our system. The proposed legislation would result in better support and care for those in our custody and improved outcomes for those under our supervision. The proposed legislation would modernize corrections by setting rules around and clearly defining segregation by aligning with international standards and eliminating its use for vulnerable individuals. It would also improve conditions of confinement by requiring minimum living standards that would apply to all adult inmates and would bring consistency to the system.

It also would increase transparency and accountability by establishing an independent inspector general to ensure compliance with the legislation and all policies.

It would clearly define in legislation the health care services that incarcerated individuals should have access to. It would also better support rehabilitation and reintegration by requiring individualized, evidence-based assessments for every inmate.

As I travelled the province with the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, we heard, in the first year that I was involved, very clearly that there were facilities that were outdated and absolutely in terrible condition. This bill will work on improving infrastructure by investing in enhancements across the system and

building two new correctional facilities, one in Ottawa and the other one in Thunder Bay. Thunder Bay was the one that we heard just horrific stories about, so I'm very pleased to see that that is going to be corrected.

We will continue to work with our dedicated correctional staff and partners to make this transformation a reality. Modernizing our corrections system is part of our government's plan for a 21st-century justice system.

One of the big discussions, of course, is about segregation. There has been over-use of segregation, especially for vulnerable inmates who have a significant mental illness, a developmental disability or who are pregnant. Our goal is to create a system that has appropriate supports and services so that we develop a system where the use of segregation hopefully will no longer be required.

To help achieve this vision, we are proposing a number of changes to segregation, including aligning with international standards to define segregation not as a specific physical area but rather as the physical and social isolation of an individual for 22 hours or more a day. These are known as Mandela rules.

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It also would prohibit segregation of our most vulnerable inmates, and it would be phasing in time restrictions prohibiting the use of segregation beyond 15 consecutive days.

It would also establish independent decision-making panels to reduce segregation decisions. We need to make sure that no inmate falls between the cracks, and these changes would help us to do that.

To ensure inmates get the health care services they need, we are proposing that inmates in segregation be visited daily by the superintendent and a member of the new health care services team. They would also be visited by a member of a mental health care services team at least once every five days.

We're working closely with front-line staff and managers to ensure that these important reforms are implemented.

For situations where segregation is absolutely necessary, our focus is to improve conditions of confinement and ensure that inmates have access to the right programming in order to effectively rehabilitate and reintegrate them back into society.

I'm very glad that I have someone who volunteers. She goes and she meets the van that comes to bring the inmates when they're released. She goes and hands out Tim Hortons coffee coupons, and she gives them mitts if it's cold and socks and things like that. She's very adamant that this is good news.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to give comment on Bill 6, the Correctional Services Transformation Act.

I listened to the Attorney General and the member from Barrie. I get a very different picture when I speak to the people who work at Central East corrections services. Probation officers, for example, are overworked and

overstressed. They can't communicate or work together because the workload is so huge. It's a major issue. They can't do the job properly to the standards, and it's been that way for over a decade. Again, we get a last-minute bill that they say is going to do things to help improve the system, but in actuality, since 2015, the workloads have only increased.

We have criminalization—and those are the words they used—criminalization of mental illness in our jails. We all know that the training for corrections officers or probation officers or parole officers or social workers was never done so that they could actually try to do rehabilitation.

They said that they have got training now called the STICs program. What it does is increase their workload, and there's no recognition for that, for all the extra work they have to do. So again, you have a government that brings in programs but doesn't support those programs.

The Attorney General spoke of how two thirds of the inmate population is in remand. They need remand and sentencing to get the same level of support services so that they have a better chance of success when they go back into the community.

Social workers at the jail have told me that she's only talked to five POs in 10 years. They don't see a lot of these individuals until the day they are being released. What chance of rehab do they have if they don't see them until the same day as they're released into the community? That is not providing community safety, Mr. Speaker, and there's a lot more to be said on this topic.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to add my two cents in response to the government's comments, those of the Attorney General.

I'm glad to hear that we're finally taking on the bail system, because that has been one heck of a challenge. To the Attorney General's point: He said that two thirds of the folks in our jails and detention centres are on remand. I was in some jails as critic where the whole board that had everybody in the jail listed—they were all on remand. So we have a long way to go. We have a lot to accomplish. Remember that those on remand don't have access to that programming. They don't have access to the same things that they do once they've been sentenced. So they are in limbo. It is quite a situation, so I'm glad that they are taking that on.

His home jail—well, I say "home jail," but the jail in his area, the OCDC—I applaud the work of the task force. I know that there were a lot of folks involved there in making recommendations, but holy jumpin', did there need to be recommendations. I've been through that jail twice, and there were some pieces to that jail that were the stuff of nightmares: older sections with the mail slots that were just tiny and small and no one could see out or through and have that interaction. That's where the practical segregation was. That is beyond imagining. You have to stand there and see it to understand it. So I'm glad that they're making improvements. It's about darn time.

To the member from Barrie: She read a beautiful laundry list of promises, but if you can't resource them, you can't accomplish those things. To talk about eliminating the use of segregation for vulnerable inmates—okay, except that there are so many exceptions. Where are you going to put them, and what is that plan going to look like? To talk about rehabilitation and dealing with recidivism, let's actually put the staffing and the resources behind that so that's a thing that can happen.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 6, the Correctional Services Transformation Act.

When I was first elected here, my first job was as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I actually, in that role, had the ability to visit a number of correctional institutions and see what happens inside.

Of course, Guelph has many correctional officers living in Guelph because there used to be what was originally the Ontario Reformatory at Guelph—it became the Guelph Correctional Centre—and there was the Wellington Detention Centre. Both of those were closed by the previous Conservative government, and the inmates were all moved to Maplehurst. So, lots of correctional officers in my riding.

One of the things that we need to recognize is that for the legislation to be successful, there are other things that we need to do that aren't legislation.

Just to give you an idea: more staff. We absolutely agree we need more correctional officers. In fact, we've hired over 1,400 new correctional officers since 2016. That's part of the commitment to hire 2,000 new correctional officers. Of course, we can only hire people as quickly as they're trained in the programs. We are incrementally working on that to make sure that we do have adequate staffing levels.

People have also mentioned mental health issues and how so many more people with mental health issues are ending up incarcerated. The COs can't do anything about that; that just is. But what we are doing is creating 71 new mental health nurse positions, so that there will, in fact, be specialized care for our most vulnerable inmates. We have also implemented enhanced mental health training for all of our correctional staff. So a lot of things are going on in the jails.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: At the end of the day, we need to make changes to the legislation, specifically with respect to our custodial facilities. The problem is real, Speaker.

In my previous profession, I did a lot of criminal work in law. I saw first-hand the level of problems within our custodial facilities, the number of people in segregation and protective custody coming in directly through bail court, who end up in the criminal justice system and wind up in jails. The types of measures that are being suggested here aren't going to cut it. They aren't going to satisfy the level of the problem that is there.

We have people sometimes double- or triple-bunked within cells, within our institution in Sault Ste. Marie, the Algoma Treatment and Remand Centre. The measures that they are proposing are not going to address those. To talk about setting up all of these different review procedures and different types of processes to alleviate these concerns doesn't solve the problem that is present at its immediate juncture.

If a person comes through bail court and needs a cell and there is no cell for them, where are they going to go? They end up in segregation; they end up double- or triple-bunked, sleeping on two-inch mattresses on a concrete floor. That's what happens, for 20-plus hours a day.

When a lockdown happens in a facility, sometimes for five or more days, and it is frequent because of different types of—riots is not the appropriate term, but different types of—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Disturbances.

Mr. Ross Romano:—disturbances—yes, thank you very much for that—that occur within the facility. Those types of issues occur regularly. It's because of understaffing, underfunding, and we're not giving our correctional officers and our facilities the tools and the resources they need to be able to properly manage the facilities, let alone all the issues with mental health care individuals who end up in custody—a lot of people who sometimes don't necessarily have the resources in the community to assist them.

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These problems are not going to be addressed by this bill, but certainly something needs to be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Barrie for final comments.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the members from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Oshawa, Guelph, and Sault Ste. Marie. We appreciate your input and comments on this bill.

We believe the time has come for us to completely revamp the system. We do agree that, yes, there needs to be more staff, and we are working on doing that, as the member from Guelph said.

We are proposing fundamental changes in the use of segregation, and setting minimum living standards for inmates that align with recommendations from the Sapers report. We believe that people, whether they're incarcerated or not, have the right to decent living conditions, and we will be working very hard to make sure that happens.

It is important that inmates have contact and communication with family and friends to help with their rehabilitative efforts. The proposed legislation would give us the opportunity for at least two in-person visits per week with a family member or friends. These minimum standards would include reasonable access to natural light, fresh air, adequate bedding and a clean environment. I think everyone understands that whether you're incarcerated or not, you should have the right to all of those things.

Improving living conditions in our institutions is critical to our transformation, as it strikes at the heart of safety, human rights and dignity for all inmates in our system. No one should go to work and feel they are not safe, so we want that to happen for our correctional officers, as well.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 6 today.

We have a crisis in corrections, and the response on the part of the government is to bring in a bill that, quite frankly, makes a choice. It targets the people who work in our institutions—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Not at all.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Absolutely. The member for Barrie says, "Not at all." Well, maybe she needs to talk to the people who are working there.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I have.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, you may have talked to them, but you haven't listened. I can tell you that, because to a person, they say that what the government is doing in the institutions is actually—they want to make life easier for the inmates and harder for those who have to police the institutions.

We're not suggesting that we have to be cruel in our institutions—quite the contrary. But the people who are in there didn't get there because of the people who are working there. They earned their way there through our justice system. They've been convicted of something and sent to the institution.

The government talks about the use of confinement—and absolutely, when people are suffering from mental illness or something like that that really challenges their abilities to make sound decisions and judgments themselves, we have to be very judicious about how we place people into confinement.

Speaker, when I talk to the people who work in corrections every day—and I had an absolutely wonderful chat with a social worker from the Central East corrections facility in Lindsay about how 90% of the people who are in confinement are there because they choose to be there, for various reasons. The government uses only the raw numbers about how many people have been placed in confinement, and they use that as a number, saying, "Well, we've got to stop this. It's just way too many people in confinement." Some people are choosing to be in confinement. They do the very things that they know will ensure that they get into confinement. They feel safer in confinement than they do in the general prison population, so they've made that decision.

When I spoke to the social worker, she agreed wholeheartedly that this is making it harder and harder for the people who work in those correctional facilities on a daily basis to do their job in making sure that order is kept in those facilities. They're not working in a hospital; they're not working in a school; they're working in a correctional facility.

In order for them to do their job, there has to be a delineation of power. The people who are paid and sworn to make sure that the facility runs well have to have authority over those who are actually incarcerated in the facility. The fear on their part is that that power pendulum is being swung in the favour of those incarcerated versus those who put their lives on the line every day to make sure that there's order in those facilities. The government, as they always do, is trying to create politics here where it makes it look like they're the ones that have this tremendous awareness of social justice and that that has to be the order of the day. Well, you also have to be able to control the population.

Like any other situation, control and power is what people and facilities like that seek. In every cell block there is going to be that one person or that one group that is the one that is in charge. You see it in the movies. We're not in the movies; we're in real life, but it's not entirely removed from real life in the movies where you're in a cell block and there's a group in that cell block that really does control it. This is making it harder and harder for those who are paid to keep order to actually maintain that order in the cell block.

They're doing the same thing with Bill 6 that they did with Bill 175. In Bill 175, you start out your day as a police officer under suspicion. They're doing the same thing with Bill 6 and our correctional officers in our correctional facilities. They're making them out to be the problem. It's unfortunate that these are the choices that this government has made.

I've talked to police officers, particularly those who are nearing the end of their careers with regard to getting closer to retirement. When they look at legislation like Bill 175 and how it has vilified them, they have a little saying called "FIDO." I won't tell you what it means, Speaker, but you might be able to figure that out—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, yeah, you could say—well, that could be, yeah. We'll paraphrase it: "Forget it; drive on." There's another word that could be used in there as well but, "Forget it; drive on." Because our police officers are so afraid of being under the gun and being attacked themselves if they go into a situation that they feel uncomfortable with, because of what this government has done to them in Bill 175 they're just going to ignore it. How is that going to make our streets safer?

The same thing applies in our correctional facilities, where guards who have been assaulted themselves are afraid to get involved in situations because they're the ones who have had charges against them; they're the ones who have been suspended. I know of one case, right in that Central East, where the person I spoke about—we still have people who have not been back to work in two years, but they don't know what's going to happen to them.

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But one of the things in our whole system that also troubles me—one of the best parts of the conversation I

had with the social worker from Lindsay was the Basil Borutski situation. Now, you might remember that name: Basil Borutski. Basil Borutski came from my riding. He was in jail a few times, and the last place he was released from was Central East—is it Central East?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes. Central East correction facility.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Central East correction facility. And this was the social worker that evaluated him. She was shocked that he was released, because normally, she said, it's a one-page or two-page evaluation of an inmate. For him it was five or six pages.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Five pages.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Five pages? And she indicated that not once in her career—I think she was there I can't remember how many years now. But not once in her career was there an inmate released that she felt was at a greater likelihood of reoffending—not once in her career. But our system, with a lack of parole officers and a lack of supervision on probation—on parole or probation—allowed Mr. Borutski to be free enough to kill three women in my riding on September 22, 2015.

So how did he get released, in a system that is supposed to protect not only those people within that facility that are there guilty of a crime, convicted of a crime, not only the people who work there on a daily basis, but to protect society at a time when they could or would be released? She said she has been troubled ever since—the fact that he was released and went on to commit those crimes. There was no proper supervision of Mr. Borutski after he was released.

I tabled a piece of legislation here and it was—what's the word?—passed. I'll be okay. It was passed on second reading by this assembly. It has since died, and died a couple of times on prorogation. It died once more this year when the Premier decided to have a public relations prorogation—"public relations prorogation". I like the way that rings, Speaker—because she needed more photo ops and a little ceremony bringing her friends in here to sit in the middle aisle and all look important, you know?

So, Speaker, her public relations prorogation killed my bill once again. I'm going to be tabling it again tomorrow. But when I had it approved before, the current Attorney General—who was then the Minister of Correctional Services—and Madeleine Meilleur, who's no longer a member of the assembly and was the Attorney General, said they really, really wanted to see this move ahead. Well, that was debated, I'm going to guess, early in 2016. I don't have the exact dates in front of me, but I tabled it shortly after those murders.

Basil Borutski has since been convicted of those murders—the trial took forever—and he's going to spend the rest of his life behind bars. I think he'd have to be 150 before he got out, and that's not going to happen.

But they gave me a strong indication that they were very supportive of the bill and wanted to see it advance. What this bill would have done, Speaker, it would have—first of all, Mr. Borutski refused to sign the orders on his release, which to some degree is an admission that

you were guilty of the crimes, you've served your time and you want to reintegrate, and you've accepted the release plan that has been laid out for you. He refused to sign it. As the social worker told me, never once in his entire time there in any time that he was interviewed or anything else did he show any remorse for those crimes or any indication that they were his fault at all. Everything that happened to him was somebody else's fault. And then he was released and, of course, as I've said, he murdered those three women, three women that he had been involved with on some level or another: Carol Culleton, Nathalie Warmerdam and Anastasia Kuzyk.

My bill not only would have required him to sign those papers of release with an admission that he had done wrong, but it also would have allowed us to put an electronic monitoring device on Mr. Borutski so that we could have kept track of his whereabouts. I'm not a prophet; I don't have a crystal ball. I can't categorically say that had Mr. Borutski been monitored, those three women would be alive today, but I really do like their chances versus what did happen to them with no monitoring of Mr. Borutski whatsoever. I wouldn't have the time to go through the whole history and chronology of what went on with him through those years while he was released, through the time when he had committed assaults on these women before he murdered them—yet he was walking free, threatening police officers, threatening members of the public, and our system failed.

And now, we want to make it harder for our corrections people to even deal with people like Basil Borutski when they're in jail. Now we want to make it harder on our corrections people to do their job when they're in jail.

As I said, Speaker, there are no guarantees in life, only death, taxes and higher taxes under Liberal governments. But it's a pretty good chance that if we were to monitor released criminals like Basil Borutski, we would have a safer society and safer streets. So what is taking so long? No time to monitor Basil Borutski, but all the time in the world to make it harder for our correctional officers to do their job in our jails and prisons. No time to monitor or follow up: The parole system is a joke. The number of parole officers out there is so vastly insufficient. They would rather bring out a bill on monitoring somebody's pay equity plan and hire all kinds of inspectors to do that than to make sure that the people who have been released on society are actually being watched to see that they're following through and doing what they were required to do as terms of their release. They're not really interested in that. They would rather make sure that they hire some of their Liberal friends to be inspectors.

Our correctional officers, who have a very, very difficult job, more and more of them, and when you don't think—I know I'm rambling a bit, but when you don't think, Speaker, that your boss has your back, how does that make you feel about doing your job? No matter what the job would be, Speaker, if you felt that when push comes to shove, you will be thrown under the bus rather than supported in doing your job, if there's a situation where—and it's tilted completely. A guard is assaulted

by an inmate; the inmate goes back to his cell. In order to control an inmate—there's an injury to the inmate? Well, that guard just about might as well kiss their career goodbye. This is how they're being treated in our correctional facilities.

They don't feel that the government, this Liberal government, has their back. They feel that they're expected to maintain order, but if at any time, they have to use force in order to maintain that order, it's game over for them. What are we supposed to think in society, that we put people in a correctional facility and then we say, "Now you're in jail. Now you're in prison. You have to be good now"? I mean, they weren't good in order to get there. They did something wrong. There are varying degrees of crime, but they did something wrong, and that they were convicted of, to get there. But now we just give them a free pass when they're in jail and say, "Behave yourselves. This is where you're going to have to behave."

1630

Let me reiterate, Speaker, lest the folks on the other side would like to misinterpret something, that we are not talking about holus-bolus use of segregation. It has to be done in a constructive, positive manner, and those people who are suffering from mental illness or other extenuating issues have to be treated differently. Our prisons shouldn't be treated as a place to house the mentally ill. Unfortunately, in many cases, that's what they are. That's what they've been used as.

But remember again—and this government doesn't want to talk about it; they just throw out the numbers. They know that the vast majority of people who are in segregation are there because they choose to be. They have either intentionally done something that gets them segregated or—and there are legitimate cases where they're segregated for serious breaches.

Sit down and talk to our correctional officers. Sit talk and talk to the people who work there every day and have to deal with that every day. They have to take it home with them. I was getting to a point and I kind of lost track there, but how many of our correctional officers currently, today, are dealing with PTSD because of how they feel they have been mistreated in the system that they put their trust in? They're giving their working lives to that career because they believe in it, and now they're being told, "Well, if anything goes wrong at all, we're going to side with the inmates instead of you." This bill is all about that.

Liberals don't want to talk about that because they somehow think that they can wish and hope and everything will be fine. We're always going to have a correctional system that has to be tough enough to make sure that there's a deterrent for re-offending. It can't be Club Med. Maybe they think they can actually create that.

Speaker, I apologize; I wasn't watching the clock. My time is up. But they've got this bill wrong. Before this goes through, get it right.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, good afternoon to you. It's always a pleasure to follow my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He started off by saying that here was a crisis in corrections. He weaved us through 20 minutes, brought it back to a crisis in mental health and talked about segregation, and that's where I'll pick up the narrative.

I'm not trying to make a poster child out of Adam Capay, but for four years he was held in segregation in the jail in Thunder Bay. He's not a nice man. He's a murderer, or an accused murderer, and he has killed people who have family left behind, mourning those who are no longer with us. But the issue of being held in segregation for four years under four separate ministers—because they keep changing them every year or so—is that he shouldn't have been in a jail; he should be in a psychiatric hospital. That leads us back to the crisis in mental health.

I use the example in Windsor, where we have this wonderful facility that deals with mental health for children and youth. For 15 years, they have not had a one-penny increase at Maryvale in their base funding. Speaker, as you know, if we don't handle mental health issues with children and youth, they are going to get a lot worse.

Adam Capay was mentally deranged. He had all these symptoms, and yet he was kept in segregation, which compounded his mental illness, as opposed to being transferred to a psychiatric hospital, where you would think he'd at least get some counselling; that somebody would try to drill down and find out, at the core of his mental illness, what it was and if it could be corrected in any way or at least stabilized somehow on medication. But that didn't happen. He was left to rot in isolation, 23 hours a day, 1,500 days—four years. There's only one party that has to answer for that, and that's the Liberal government.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I enjoyed the comments of my colleague and friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Most often we talk about different subjects; it's a pleasure to join him in the conversation on this one. He talked about some of the resources available in the corrections system and also talked about something that I think this bill addresses, which is that the system is about corrections more than it is about punishment.

One of the key metrics, of course, is, how many people have we got? Since April 2016, just two years ago, the province has hired more than 1,400 new correctional officers. It's part of Ontario's commitment to hire an additional 2,000 correctional officers.

This goes to some of the comments heard down through the years, which is the importance of appropriate staffing levels. It's the things that the staff have been telling the ministry. It's essential to ensure the safety and the security of our institutions to have those staffing levels right, especially pertaining to mental health issues, where we're becoming both more conscious of them and they appear to be becoming more prevalent.

Just in the short term, the province has created 71 new mental health nurse positions. This type of specialized care is important for—I'll use the phrase—vulnerable inmates, but it also means enhanced mental health training for all correctional staff to further ensure that they're able to identify problems before they occur and also to get the support that they need exactly when they need it most.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to give comment again to the Correctional Services Transformation Act.

As I've talked to social workers, rehab officers and corrections officers at the jail, there is a crisis in corrections. Unfortunately, there isn't a week goes by that I don't see a tweet from the Central East Corrections facility in Lindsay, where a corrections officer has been assaulted, and sometimes very much a repeat person, so the same inmate is assaulting the corrections officer.

They are burning out at a very young age. They are extremely stressed out. The system is so heavily burdened that they cannot do their job well enough. They are told, really, a lot of times not to even obey the rules because there's just such an overwhelming workload that they could never be done. So they come into work unsure of what's going to happen because, because of the workloads, no one is able to follow the path that should be followed when inmates come into the system.

In the last 20 years, it has gotten more negative for staff and offenders. They've seen the number of social workers go down by half. I know that they used to see them a month in advance; they now see them maybe the same day of discharge. The government says that they're doing something classic—developing programs—but they've had 15 more programs but decreased the number of staff, so they just continually fall behind.

My colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke gave the Basil Borutski example. The social worker said in five pages, “This man is a very-high-risk reoffender,” and he was released into the community. Three women are dead. Those social workers are devastated, but what could they do? They're caught in a system that's not listening to them. Basil Borutski did not sign his release forms. There is not a bigger red flag to be seen than that, Mr. Speaker. That was a dangerous offender, and the system put him back out.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I agree with my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing that there is a crisis in corrections. As MPPs, we have this privilege that we are allowed to go into our provincial correctional facilities, which is something I did when I was first elected. I have gone back on a number of occasions. The Sudbury jail is 100 years old, and I guarantee you that there are parts of that jail that have not been dusted or cleaned for 100 years, where inmates and COs have to do their work. It is just gross.

1640

The first time I went through, I was 25 years in health care. I had set up the Corner Clinic. We had a lot of

vulnerable patients with severe mental illness. When I toured the men's side of the Sudbury Jail the first time, I would say that I knew 80% of the people in there. Why? Because I knew that 80% of the people in there had a diagnosis of severe mental illness. Most of them should never have been in there had we had a mental health system that was able to support them. But our mental health system failed them, and then they got picked up by our correctional system, which is often the worst possible place for them.

Then, you look at the working conditions of the people who work there. When we walked through, they had little cups full of urine and little cups full of feces, which they throw at the correctional officers as they do their walk-through. The whole place is gross. It stinks. It is just disgusting.

Do we need to fix the crisis in corrections? Absolutely. Do I think that Bill 6 is going to fix it? Absolutely not. There are some good ideas, but no fixes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for final comment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to thank the members from Windsor–Tecumseh, Mississauga–Streetsville, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Nickel Belt for their comments.

I really appreciate the comments from the member from Nickel Belt, indicating clearly that she has seen herself some of the conditions in these facilities. These correctional officers are not making it up. You know who makes it up? The people on the other side. They like to make things up.

I want to talk a little bit about what I said and what my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock said on the release of Basil Borutski and the report that had been written, which clearly recommended that that shouldn't happen. I'm going to do what I can to get a copy of that report. I don't even know if it's available to me, but a report like that should be available, because we should know—the people should know—what was in that report and have the right to ask those in authority that if this social worker felt that, in her career, no one was at a greater risk of re-offending than he, should he have been released—we have a right to know who made the decision to actually release him. When I say “who,” I don't mean that it was one individual but our entire system.

As a result of that, he went on, within a few years, to murder three women, of which he's been convicted and is back in. He's incarcerated now; I don't even know where. As far as we know, he's never going to get out. But that's not going to bring back those three women. There's nothing we can do to restore their lives.

We need to get it right. We've got a crisis in corrections. As my colleague from Nickel Belt said, this bill is not going to fix it. We've got an entire justice system—and I hope the Attorney General, who used to be the minister of corrections, looks at that bill of mine when it's tabled and maybe we can do something to actually protect innocent women in this province.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to have my kick at the can and be able to speak to government Bill 6, the Correctional Services Transformation Act, which I was hoping would do more to address the crisis in corrections that we have been talking about at length since we've been here.

I am glad that I had the opportunity to serve as one of our critics for this ministry, for community safety and correctional services. Before I came to this Legislature, when I was teaching grade 7 and 8—I could make whatever jokes I want about the nature of a grade 7 and 8 classroom and comparing it to corrections; I will not. However, I did not think I would know as much as I do or be as invested as I have become in our correctional system. I had the opportunity to visit 17 of our jails and correctional centres and about a dozen of our probation and parole offices across the province. You can never unsee what you've seen; you can never unlearn what you know. I'm glad to have a full 20 minutes today to speak about this bill.

I'm going to start out by saying what's in the bill, just a broad overview. This seems to be a broad piece of legislation. It doesn't drill down into what I know our correctional officers would like to see, what I would like to see, what advocates across the province would like to see. It misses lots of opportunities. So I'm going to talk a bit about what's in the bill and then I'm going to tell you what isn't in the bill and come back to some of the specifics.

Fundamentally, this bill is proposing to overhaul the rules governing the correctional system. This legislation is largely a reaction to the findings from the independent adviser. The main reforms in this bill are around segregation and the use of isolation and also the creation of a role that's the inspector general. It sets out rules around investigations, inquiries and inspections and, as I said, it sets up this chief of investigations, essentially. It accomplishes those two things and there are lots of other specifics in this bill.

I'll get into what isn't in this bill and then come back to some of the specifics if there's time. As I said, it was my unexpected opportunity to become the critic for community safety and correctional services; Speaker, you still have connections. It was interesting listening to the Attorney General earlier because when we started, he was the minister.

Having travelled across the province and done a northern jail tour and some of the jails in our area, 17 different jails gives you an interesting perspective of just how different the needs are, not just of the communities but certainly based on the actual institutions themselves or the probation and parole offices that are in remote and rural areas that have very distinctly different needs.

Across the whole province, of course, you have these consistent themes when it comes to understaffing, when it comes to under-resourcing, when it comes to overcapacity, caseload, workload, all of these things. I would love

to have seen more resources in this bill because even what it sets out to accomplish, it doesn't resource. It doesn't tell us how on earth we're going to accomplish this government wish list. Unless they're willing to put their money where their mouth is and staff these programs and staff corrections, I don't see how we can get there.

Being behind the scenes and not behind bars, but behind the walls, is a humbling opportunity. It is an eye-opening opportunity. I actually did have the opportunity to be behind bars for a short period of time because, for example, in Monteith, which is way up north—I'm going to say it's a small, little jail, and it was built in a time and for a purpose that it was made for and it can't really meet the current needs with what it has.

Even the inmates there were willing to lock themselves up. They were out on the range and they were willing to put themselves into their cells and lock up so that I could get behind bars so that I could get into the range and actually go into the shower area, the washroom area and see the mold and the breakdown there, and really take a look. It was awful. It's disgusting. It really is. We don't see that in this bill, but we wouldn't, of course. That's actually drilling down to specifics—but making sure each institution, each facility has what it needs to address their problems.

I heard the member earlier mention how awful the Thunder Bay situation was. I remember being on the phone that night with the hostage situation, with the riot, the end of that still unfolding. I will never forget that. I have been glad to meet with the officers involved. We haven't yet corrected that problem. We haven't addressed the need for appropriate staffing. We haven't yet physically remedied the situation there. The government has promised a replacement jail, and that's a replacement. But correcting the situation now—things are still unsafe—that still hasn't been addressed.

1650

We're going to talk about PTSD. The government can point to it in their budget, expanding PTSD presumption. Although the budget was—anyway, we still don't have everybody in yet. I'm glad that we are recognizing that PTSD and stress are a huge part of the work that our correctional professionals do. But like I said, in Thunder Bay specifically, I know very little has been done to ensure it can't happen again. That physical infrastructure work and that staffing complement has not been addressed. But across the province, this government still has not made the changes to staffing. They have not been listening to the front lines, and that is a problem.

I'm going to take the opportunity, while we're talking about staffing and resourcing, to read a couple of things from our probation and parole folks. As I said, I've had the opportunity to visit I think about a dozen of their offices—not as far and remote as one can get, but the needs there are very different than they might be in the greater Toronto area. But the workloads and caseloads remain ridiculous and unmanageable—to imagine that these professionals already have an average of I think it's

about 50 offenders per worker, per officer. That is unbelievable when you imagine the range of needs there.

When it comes to offender support in the community, when it comes to caseloads and expectations—forget visits. How do we manage that? If we're not seeing that in this bill, if we're not seeing that in the budget, if we're not seeing it coming from the government, how on earth do we make that happen?

I'll share something here, actually, while I mention the budget. This came from a MERC member, Scott McIntyre, who is focused on probation and parole. He said:

“We should all be extremely disheartened, dismayed and (quite frankly) extremely”—I'll substitute the word “ticked”—“ticked off that the Ontario Liberals quantify that a mere 44 additional PPOs is all it'll take to resolve the workload crisis in P&P. Shame!!!

“This is mere skin on a potato and amounts to a measly 2.2 million dollar increase for new staff (44 x \$50,000/yr.), which equates to a 0.3 staffing increase per P&P office”—a 0.3% staffing increase, when we are hearing about caseloads that we can't even imagine.

He goes on to say, “We've made it very clear to the Liberals ... that, in order to truly rectify the workload crisis and to effect real change in both offender services and public safety, we need a minimum of a few hundred additional PPOs.”

Well, there it is. It's a clear ask, and I know that this government is clearly going to ignore it, because that's what they do.

I'm going to focus a bit more on staffing. We've already heard today, as I knew we would, that the government is going to celebrate that they have committed to hiring an additional 2,000 correctional officers. Okay, hiring is not the same thing as staffing. When I've been in some of our newer facilities or some of our older facilities—our smaller, our larger, our whatever—they all vary. All the nooks and crannies are different; all of the needs in the institutions are different. If you don't take that into consideration and staff appropriately, you don't have safe facilities. You don't have programming the way that this government is pretending matters to them.

Staffing is about the number of people in the facilities doing the actual work. This government can hire people, back to back to back to back, and get them to line up as casuals, hoping that they're going to be able to even have part-time employment—they can't cobble together enough hours to make ends meet. They are there as back-fill, so that if the full-time officers are off, then there are just that many more people in line. That is not resourcing and that is not staffing, so stop heralding all of your hiring as something positive when it has only resulted in a total, as OPSEU has said, of 26 full-time staff. That is not appropriate.

I keep hearing from correctional folks that there were audits done, or that there were audits, I think, a couple of years back. The government was doing them. Anecdotally, I've heard that that individual who was going through the facilities was making recommendations. The

presidents there and the correctional officers were getting a sense that the numbers projected for staffing were going to significantly increase their complement.

Well, guess what? We have no idea what those official numbers are because those audits were not completed. There is no formal report. I don't know whose shelf that ended up on. I don't know how to interpret the data because we can't see it. I don't know what the government decided to do with it or didn't do with it. But they were sending somebody through saying, “There's another place there that doesn't have good visibility. You'll need someone there, looking at hours, looking at needs.” My understanding is that those audits were stopped. But where are they? What happened? Why can't we actually staff based on need? I'll tell you why: It's because this government does everything halfway.

Case in point—and again, there's nothing about scanners in this bill. The bill talks about searches and puts parameters on that and lays out some thoughts on that.

Let's talk about scanners. For example, Speaker, my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo and I went to Maplehurst and did a tour there. This was at the beginning, when we were all talking about scanners and having an understanding of what would be needed to try to tackle the weapons and drugs issues and get contraband out of the jail and make things safer. That was when we clued in. It was my colleague Catherine Fife who mentioned that maybe the government would like to hear about scanners at the pre-budget consultation. That was the session where we had, I think, were seven correctional presentations, and they got heard, which was good. They asked for scanners. It was based on a pilot project at Toronto South, based on a scanner model that then, when the government committed to scanners—and I'm not challenging that. The government committed to scanners, but they didn't actually order those pilot models. They didn't order that scanner that was giving great results. They ordered a different scanner. Speaker, your guess is as good as mine on why—I'm going to go with cheaper, but I'm guessing. Perhaps they can correct me. They ordered different scanners. Well, the problem is, the scanners, we're hearing anecdotally, can't even see through heavy winter jackets. Then I think there was a software upgrade or something like that, and it's just—do things right. There was something that worked. You committed to it. But then somebody wanted to cut a corner or cut the bottom line—I'm not sure—and then we end up with tools that work kind of when they could have worked well.

We're still fighting to develop staffing protocols, still begging to do institution scans. There was a minister before this minister, then-Minister Oraziotti. I remember having a conversation here about using those scanners for full institution searches. We both agreed that that would draw a lot out of the institutions, to be able to scan everybody through, to staff that day and maybe get mattresses through; to scan the institution and see what comes out of it in terms of contraband, weapons and

drugs, and then start from that point, with everything a little bit safer. But the government and their management says, no, it's too expensive to staff at the level needed for a day or so to take everyone through the scanners. Can you even imagine? We read about, on a regular basis, drug overdoses and deaths in our facilities. More inmates are dying of drug overdoses. We have another tool in this fight, but this government won't pay staff to even search to get weapons and drugs out of the institutions, which I think is irresponsible. I think it's dangerous, but fundamentally, it's irresponsible.

I'll put a reminder on the record: We've had 18 inquests in 10 years and over 100 recommendations. We have a lot of work to do when it comes to keeping inmates safe in our facilities. We do have tools and we should be using them. We should be staffing appropriately so that that can happen. But I digress.

Also, when it comes to this bill, I know that when the minister gave her speech here, she talked about redefining segregation, which I think is an interesting way of putting it—to talk about alternative living units. It isn't about changing the name; it's about changing the situation. As it stands now, inmates in segregation are supposed to have the same access to things as other offenders in the facility. They're supposed to have—is it two hours? Now I'm getting confused. Two hours is a—now I'm tangled. Hold on.

1700

In order for an area to be deemed “segregation” or “isolation,” there are certain things that have to happen. They have to, on a regular basis, have an observation sheet that correctional officers tick off: that they've put eyes on them and that they are being observed in isolation or in segregation. That's a piece of it. If you make changes to—I think it's that more than two hours out of their cell disqualifies it from being called “segregation.” That's what I'm trying to say. So if you have these alternative living units, or whatever they're going to name them, and someone is out for two hours and five minutes, technically it no longer meets the definition of “segregation” when practically it still is.

I don't want to get into just renaming; we need to actually provide alternative arrangements. That's a challenge with this government: to actually put something in place that's going to accomplish what they say they want to accomplish.

How the heck has it already been almost 20 minutes? I've hardly gotten into anything. Okay, Speaker. I'm running out of time, which happens.

We want to make sure that everyone in our correctional system has what they need, and that comes down, fundamentally, to resourcing. When you have inmates and officers and management all begging for the same thing, which is basic levels so that everyone can do their job and so that people, whether they be inmates or correctional officers or nurses, are not going to be traumatized, when we have a basic level of humanity—we're not there yet. So when the government talks about programming and rehabilitation and all of these things in

this bill, we're glad to hear that talk, but in order for that to happen, you have to physically have officers to either administer the programs or to take offenders from program to program. If you're not going to staff it, you can have every program on paper, but you're not going to have it in practice.

We need to get there. Jail should be a safer place, fundamentally. Again, that comes down to appropriately resourcing the system. We're seeing more and more assaults and violence. Yes, we see it on Twitter. We see it every day. There are cries for help because we have a real crisis in corrections that is not being addressed sincerely.

We've got all of these loopholes. The government has put in pieces about segregation. They've put limits on this, and that's okay as long as they actually mean it. When you have all of these loopholes and exceptions, and if you're in lockdown—and, by the way, some of our facilities are almost always in lockdown—how do you accomplish these goals?

We have many of our inmates in segregation. They're in isolation. They're in effective segregation. We've already talked today about what happened with Adam Capay, but what we haven't said is that all of those tripwires that they are talking about in here—the 55 days or if it's still 30 days—the ministers all the way were getting phone calls. They knew. They knew about that over four years. However often it was—if it was every 38 days that it was going up the chain; we figure it was 25 times in four years that the minister would have known this.

What happens then? What could the system look like? We need better resources when it comes to health care and mental health. Still, in Lindsay, which is the jail near me, Speaker—they have an infirmary that was built into it, but now it houses female offenders and has never been used for health care and has never been used for what it was intended for. We see that over and over: that the government just makes it up as they go and makes it sound good but isn't doing the work to address the actual crisis in corrections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments? I recognize the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, thank you for that recognition; it is much appreciated.

I have to get something on the record. I've been listening to the debate all afternoon, and I want to just clearly put in the record the following points. Number one: Be assured, everybody who's listening to this debate, that the safety of our staff is important. It's incredibly important to us. We know that we need to give staff the support and the resources to safely and effectively do their job.

This transformation process that we're undertaking will unfold over a period of years. Over those years, there are going to be multiple consultations with front-line staff and their representatives. They are integral partners in this transformation. There will be consultation. We

want to provide the safest of safe working conditions for them.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise today and add my voice to this debate because it's something very, very important that we get right, because this crisis in corrections has reached a threshold that has to be addressed. I think of my sister-in-law's family. Her father, her stepmother and her uncle are all correctional workers. Their career was in Walkerton until this Liberal government shut down the Walkerton jail and caused overcrowding problems in both London as well as Penetang.

But the realities are that the conditions they have to work in have gone from bad to worse. Speaker, it's unacceptable. We are hearing that it's not just about the spitting and the throwing of different things upon the correctional services. It's about the punching. It's about the biting. And, more so, it's about the fact that this government is turning a deaf ear to their concerns.

Speaker, there's no better solution than what comes from the people who live, eat and breathe this type of reality every day. It's time that correctional workers and supporting people such as parole officers have the ear of a government that cares. That opportunity will be coming very shortly, in just 63 days or so. But we are counting and keeping track, because the reality is, you know, this government says they are doing reports and they are doing studies. They never listen to front-line staff.

I think if we take a step back, admit the problem, admit they have created a crisis in corrections and start listening to front-line workers, then the relevant realities will be identified, solutions will be brainstormed and actual remedies can be employed. This particular area of concern has an opportunity to improve, but only if the government listens, and that's going to be a PC government in Ontario after June 7.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise today and add some comments to the member from Oshawa's 20 minutes. I just want to say to the member that just made a comment, the member from Huron-Bruce talking about change coming on June 7 and how the Conservatives would do so much better than what the Liberals have done, let us not forget that what the Conservatives do is privatize. They would privatize our corrections system, which is not a step forward. It would be dialing it back even worse to where we are now. I think that's important to point out.

The member from Willowdale, the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, said that the safety of our staff is important. I ask him: Why in 15 years have you not actually put action behind those words to protect the front-line workers in our correctional system? I have been here four years. When I was first elected, I was the critic for community safety and correctional services. I've toured facilities myself, unan-

nounced tours, not the tours that the ministers do where they know you're coming and they move inmates out to another facility so you don't see that there's three or four inmates in a cell that's meant for—so that you go in and you can actually see what the corrections offices are dealing with.

I did an unannounced visit to EMDC while they were on a lockdown, and they had been on lockdown for days. This is what our correctional officers, our nurses, all the staff in those facilities are dealing with. So don't stand here now after you've had 15 years and on the eve of an election say, "We have this legislation and we care about our workers and their safety," when for 15 years they have been crying out for help and you have done nothing.

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I just wanted to make a point. One of the members opposite raised concerns about a lack of physical infrastructure—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. Stop the clock. I need you to be in your appropriate seat.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, what kind of special circumstances is this?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): In the matter of fairness, I recognize that it was a legitimate error, and so I will allow you to continue with your two minutes. Back to the member from Barrie.

1710

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you. I'm not going to be two minutes, but thank you. One of the members opposite raised concern about a lack of physical infrastructure in Thunder Bay. We announced, and I talked about it earlier, that we are building new correctional facilities both in Ottawa and in Thunder Bay. We are committed to creating facilities that serve as models of innovation and renewal.

Thank you, Speaker, for your indulgence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Oshawa for final comment.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I was glad to have a full 20 minutes and I can't believe how quickly they went by. I had two desks worth of notes, but we've had four years worth of conversations. I would say that this is one of the most neglected sections of any ministry that I have heard of or seen. I'm glad that we're having the conversation, that we have a bill in front of us, but again, there are so many missed opportunities.

What's in the bill is okay, but what isn't in the bill is so important. We need to see appropriate staffing and complements dealt with in here when it comes to our probation and parole officers, addressed to handle that caseload issue. We need to, when it comes to safety, have our jails and facilities properly resourced. If we're going to do any of the programming and rehabilitative work that needs to be done, we need to physically have the staff in order to take them from point A to point B, in order to administer the programs if that's what it takes.

When our facilities are constantly in lockdown, well, that's an exception to some of their segregation pieces. There are workarounds throughout this bill that the government has tucked in there

There are other things. I wish we could get into the nitty-gritty here and define things properly when it comes to use of force and when it comes to different pieces. I know the officers have questions around what constitutes "immediate." They're concerned for their safety just as they are for the inmates' safety and well-being.

This government needs to not just listen to the front lines; they have to believe them. And they have to be willing to work with them. Let's not forget that this government is their employer. They seem to have a vested interest in keeping these things quiet, so I don't actually believe that they mean to make the changes that they say they're going to, and we don't see the ones we should in this bill. I'm reminded, too, that the government keeps saying "care" and "custody." They always forget the control part. I wonder if that's because the government has no control over what it is they're doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or a minister specifies otherwise.

Hon. Michael Coteau: No further debate, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

PLAN FOR CARE
AND OPPORTUNITY ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2018
LOI DE 2018 POUR UN PLAN AXÉ
SUR LE MIEUX-ÊTRE ET L'AVENIR
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Sousa moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 31, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member for Etobicoke Centre.

It's an honour for me to speak about the fiscal and economic plan of Ontario. Bill 31, Plan for Care and Opportunity Act (Budget Measures), would enact important legislative components of that plan. But first, I'd like to talk about how we got here.

Mr. Speaker, we got here thanks to the talent, ingenuity and resilience of the people of Ontario. The great recession hit our communities hard. It hit in 2008 and continued to impact our economy for many years afterwards. People were worried about their jobs, their

savings and their security. They worried about their future and how to care for their children and their parents in a world that seemed to have taken a drastic turn.

But the hard-working men and women of Ontario stood up and took on the work of recovery. They stood and they worked hard, Mr. Speaker. Our government's job was to support them as they led us out of that recession. We did it by maintaining and expanding the vital public services that people rely on. We did it by boosting investments in health care. We did it by committing to an historic infrastructure plan: \$230 billion over 14 years in new hospitals, new schools and new highways. We did it by supporting businesses of all sizes to grow and expand and compete in a global economy. All the while, we eliminated waste and programs that no longer offered an adequate return.

But make no mistake: It is because of the hard-working people who get up in the morning and head out to the office, the field, the factory, or the work site that our economy has not only recovered but has continued to grow better than Canada and better than all G7 nations.

Our unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in almost two decades. Ontario has created over 800,000 jobs since the recession, and most of them have been full-time in the private sector and in industries paying above-average wages. Last year alone, 500 net new jobs were created on average every single day in our province, and our debt-to-GDP has fallen steadily, lowering the burden that would otherwise be passed on to future generations.

In the year 2000, Ontario was paying about 15.5 cents of every dollar of revenue to service our debt. This year, we'll be paying eight cents. That's the lowest it has been in 25 years. Thanks to this improved economic growth, combined with our government's strong and steady fiscal management, we have eliminated the provincial deficit that we took on, Mr. Speaker, while helping Ontario recover from the recession. In fact, we've exceeded our fiscal targets every single year since 2009. As promised, we are projecting to balance—in fact, we have a balanced budget in 2017-18 and a surplus of over \$600 million in this fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, we didn't get here by recklessly slashing services. We didn't get here by going on an ill-advised spending spree. We did it by maintaining and improving services that families rely on, like health care, education and infrastructure. We did it by putting our trust and confidence in the people of Ontario, those same people who, when the great recession hit, took care of each other. In the face of job losses and economic uncertainty, they refused to give up, determined to look after their families no matter what pressures they faced. The strength and resilience of the people of Ontario inspires and humbles all of us who are honoured to represent them in this Legislature.

The people of Ontario have done their part to bring us out of the recession. With the 2018 budget, our government is doing its part to make sure that their hard work, their determination and their commitment to look after each other create long-term prosperity for all. Whatever

your political affiliations are, we all share a common value and a common belief, and that is an economy and a society where we are only strong when as many empowered and informed people as possible can participate in it.

I firmly believe that a society where the benefits of market growth are not accessed equally is a society with one arm tied behind its back. It is a society that isn't resilient and is more prone, in fact, to shocks and slowdowns—because, you see, the economy and society are not a separate issue. One cannot thrive if the other isn't doing well. An economy where people have to choose between caring for a loved one and pursuing an opportunity doesn't make a strong economy. It's not a resilient economy. A working parent who has to give up shifts in a gig economy because they cannot find daycare for their child, they cannot afford the prescriptions for their elderly parents' needs or they cannot afford or contribute to their families' well-being and cannot contribute to the province's growth—that's not good enough. We need to ensure that everyone has an opportunity. In order for people to succeed and thrive, they need the greater peace of mind of knowing that those closest to them have the care they need.

We cannot ignore the families, and especially mothers, today who are struggling with the cost of care. Their anxiety comes from being pressed on multiple fronts: the cost of child care and the cost of elder care and long-term care, the cost of prescription drugs and dental care, and the enormous financial and emotional costs that come from loved ones who struggle with mental health. Taken in whole, these costs overwhelm families financially and emotionally.

We've all faced situations where our worries over a child's daycare or a parent's health crisis or a sibling's job loss keeps us up at night or bring us down as we try to focus on our studies, our work responsibilities or our commitments in our community.

1720

People are facing difficult situations where they feel they have to choose between caring for a loved one and taking hold of an opportunity to make their lives better. Mr. Speaker, I don't think people should have to make that choice. I don't believe that it's fair. If they have to make a choice between helping themselves as opposed to helping another, that's not necessarily fair, and I don't believe that's actually good economic policy.

As a father, a husband, a son and a proud representative of my community of Mississauga, and, before I was elected, as a banker and a small business owner—in all those roles, I've seen how the numbers, in and of themselves, don't paint the whole picture. While this province has experienced economic growth, and will continue to grow in a rapidly changing and uncertain global environment, the benefits of this prosperity have not been shared by all, so we must work to ensure that opportunity reaches everyone, so that everyone can gain from and contribute to a strengthened economy.

We've worked with the people of Ontario to recover from the recession, and now we will work with them to

put families and neighbourhoods and our province on a path to sustained growth and economic fairness. That's why, with this budget, our government has chosen to make investments to support the economy and create jobs while also funding infrastructure and implementing transformative actions to strengthen vital public services.

These new investments will total \$20.3 billion over three years, to 2021. They will focus on priority areas that will help create opportunity and make care more affordable in areas such as health care, education, child care, seniors and social services.

Our 2018 budget commitments build on existing investments. They have led to improvements in hospital wait times, in lower electricity bills, in more affordable post-secondary education, in greater access to child care, in more support for seniors and in funding to unleash the talent and ingenuity of Ontario's small businesses.

This bill supports people in their everyday lives. For example, last fall, we took steps to increase the maximum guaranteed monthly payment of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund by 50% to \$1,500. With this legislation, we're proposing to make this amendment retroactive to May 19, 2017, to ensure that the former Sears Canada employees could benefit from receiving this additional support.

This bill also supports seniors and retirees by amending the Pension Benefits Act to strengthen the Superintendent of Financial Services' oversight of pension plans of companies in financial distress.

This legislation also supports those living with mental illness by expanding the entitlement to claims under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act for help with post-traumatic stress disorder for people working in high-stress or high-conflict jobs, people such as nurses, bailiffs and correctional systems officers.

This bill supports indigenous learners by reducing barriers to First Nations in provincially funded schools, helping them get the education they need to compete in the innovation economy and get good jobs that give them the options and resources to care for their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, balancing the budget is not an end in itself. It's a means to an end, and in the end is a stronger Ontario. A stronger Ontario provides more opportunities for everyone. A stronger Ontario allows us to provide more care for those who need it.

We're choosing to put our strength and fiscal position to work to address the priorities of the people of our province. As a result, we project a deficit of \$6.7 billion next year, less than 1% of GDP, with a clear plan to return to balance, because a stronger Ontario sets the stage for a return to balance.

Our choice is deliberate and based upon a clear message from the people of Ontario to continue to manage the finances of the province responsibly and create more economic opportunities for everyone and help Ontario families shoulder the burdens they face.

Mr. Speaker, this is the sixth budget I've had the honour to present to this House. In preparing each of these budgets, I've travelled across the province to

consult with Ontarians about their priorities and what role they want government to play in their everyday lives. We've heard that people in Ontario want their government to create an environment for them to succeed. Our government has listened because, regardless of the state of the global economy, investing in our people is always the right choice. I firmly believe you have to invest to create growth. You cannot create jobs by begging our future prospects. Our government knows that more needs to be done, of course, but to support people especially as they work to create a better future for themselves and their loved ones.

We also know that more must be done to prepare the people of Ontario for success in a rapidly changing and uncertain global economy. We know that the best way to build a stronger future for more people in Ontario is by continuing to invest and strengthening our economy, by continuing to invest in public services that boost opportunity while making care more affordable for families across the province.

Let's not fool around with half-truths, Mr. Speaker. We have to invest even more, and that doesn't come cheap. So here's a choice: Ignore the cost of care to stay in balance or use our fiscal advantage to invest more in mental health, long-term care and child care. We could choose not to support mental health, and we could choose not to support our hospitals. We could choose not to support students and more education. We could choose not to support seniors. We could choose not to do those very important things to stay in balance today, but that's short-sighted and it's shortchanging our people and our province's long-term prosperity. So we choose to let our values, our fundamentals, pilot us through this uncertain time.

The people of Ontario have spoken loudly, and we've listened. The 2018 budget reflects their priorities. They want government to manage its finances effectively while helping families manage theirs as they care for those close to them. They want our government to help lessen their burden while boosting their opportunities to participate in a growing economy. The 2018 budget does just that.

A resilient economy is one where potential future business leaders, groundbreaking scientists and technology innovators can pursue their educational goals because they have access to free post-secondary education in Ontario. It's an economy where hard-working students can become the professionals and tradespeople who will lead us into the future. And where the seniors who have guided us with their wisdom and experience can overcome health barriers because they'll have access to free prescriptions in Ontario.

It means parents can say yes to an offer of a well-paying job because they know they can rely on affordable child care for their young ones in Ontario. It means those parents, those students and seniors can come together for a family meal because they have access to reliable and efficient transit and transportation infrastructure in Ontario. It means entrepreneurial and ambitious small

business owners can hire those students and those parents because they have access to the tools and supports they need to be competitive and to grow their company in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, these are just some examples of how a fair and resilient economy results in a win for individuals, for families, for businesses and for our society.

A healthy economy is where everyone can participate. It means more opportunities taken, more insights shared, more problems solved and more potential fulfilled. The more people are able to bring their talents and insights to our workplaces and communities, the more it strengthens our social interactions and economic innovations and the more everyone in Ontario benefits. A strong economy, a resilient economy is one where everyone has a hand in its growth and where everyone has a fair share of its growth.

My hometown of Mississauga has helped shape the careers of some extraordinary hockey players, legends like Paul Henderson and Paul Coffey; Olympic medal winners like Lesley Reddon and Cheryl Pounder; and current NHL stars like Jason Spezza and John Tavares. If you talk to any of them, they'll tell you how important the fundamentals are to their success. No matter the score, you focus on the fundamentals—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: What about Hazel?

Hon. Charles Sousa: —because what gives you the best chance for success is our ability to enable it. Like Hazel.

1730

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A hockey player.

Hon. Charles Sousa: A hockey player and destined for the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Our plan focuses on the fundamentals of a fair, resilient and sustainable economy. Have no doubt that we will respond and adapt to changes in the global market. But it is our fundamentals—a strong health care system, an educated and diverse workforce, a competitive business environment, 21st-century infrastructure and a commitment to innovation—that will help to create a more prosperous Ontario today and tomorrow.

We returned to balance after the worst global recession since the Great Depression by investing in the people of Ontario and by investing in their success. The achievements of Ontario's entrepreneurs—small business owners, working parents, innovative students and ambitious young people—combined with our strong fiscal management, have put Ontario in the best position to lead and succeed in a time of rapid economic change.

Irresponsible cuts to programs and services didn't get us here. Reckless spending didn't get us here. By investing in the people of Ontario—they did get us here. Investing in the people of Ontario will guide us through this period of global uncertainty, and investing in our people will form the foundation of long-term, sustainable and equitable economic growth. While the global economic conditions may change, our confidence in the resilience and ingenuity of the people of Ontario will not.

The 2018 budget reflects Ontario's fundamental values. This budget uses our strengthened economic

position to address people's priorities. This budget makes the choice to help the people of Ontario better manage the pressures of everyday life. This budget provides greater care for our children, our students and our seniors and keeps us on our path of building Ontario's economy, boosting growth, creating more jobs and opportunities and expanding access to care.

I urge my colleagues in this chamber to support the budget measures legislation before them.

Mr. Speaker, all of us care for our loved ones, and we all want to leave a better legacy for our future. This budget enables us to do just that: to work together for the benefit of others.

I would like to invite my parliamentary assistant, the member from Etobicoke Centre—whose riding doesn't boast the same wealth of hockey excellence as does mine but who has been an invaluable contributor to our government's plan—to speak more about our plan and the lack of hockey heroes in the riding of Etobicoke.

Mr. Speaker, he wishes he had Hazel McCallion. We have her, and we'll loan her there every now and again. She's got sharp elbows.

This member, this individual, has been fighting hard for the people of his constituency, recognizing that the investments we're making in this budget will help his constituents. They will help their families. They will help their businesses. They will help the economy of Ontario and, ultimately, the economy of Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing debate, I now recognize the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about Bill 31, the Plan for Care and Opportunity Act (Budget Measures).

As Minister Sousa said, we all wish we had Hazel, but I think Hazel belongs to all of us now.

I'm going to talk about hockey in Etobicoke in just a moment, but before I do, Speaker, I just wanted to share with you what a pleasure it is to serve as parliamentary assistant to Minister Sousa. I say that because he's an incredibly hard-working MPP, an incredibly hard-working minister and, really, one of the hardest-working people I know. He's a great finance minister. He's a great advocate for his community in Mississauga, or as I like to refer to it, the "gateway to Etobicoke." So I'm really thrilled to be here to follow up Minister Sousa and to say a few words about this budget and what it means to my constituents and the people of Ontario.

Speaker, before I do, I just wanted to share a quick story with you. One of the people who had a major impact in my upbringing was my—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm having a little difficult time listening to the debater, so I would ask that the conversations that may be going on—I'm speculating there, but they may be going on—that they tone it down considerably. Dial it back so that I can hear.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I totally understand, Speaker.

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

I now return to the member from the hockey land of Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for that. I appreciate it. "Hockey land"—I like it.

I have to say that one of the people who had a major impact on my upbringing was my grandmother. Once in a while, I'll share a story about her and my grandfather here in the Legislature. I wanted to share a story that I don't think I've shared with you before, Speaker. When I was a kid, my grandmother told me about what it was like when she got her citizenship. My grandmother immigrated to Canada with my grandfather after World War Two. They, like so many people who came to Canada at that time, faced tremendous hardship before they came to Canada, and they had to work incredibly hard and make incredible sacrifices to get on their feet and provide for their family once they had arrived here in Canada.

My grandmother told me that back when she got her citizenship—this was in the early 1950s—the citizenship ceremonies were held down at a courthouse here on University Avenue. My grandmother told me that when the judge pounded his gavel and declared everybody in the room citizens at this ceremony in the early 1950s, most of the people in the room started to cry. I said to her, "Grandma, why did you cry?" She said, "I cried because I was relieved, but mostly I was just proud that I was now a Canadian." Then she said to me, "But you know, as proud as I was on that day, I was prouder and prouder in the years that followed, because for me, Canada got better and better in the years that followed."

I share that story because when I think of our role when we pass legislation here on a range of issues—whether it be health care or infrastructure or education or whatever the issue might be—I think that we have to be thinking like that. We have to be thinking about how we can make Canada better for the future—not just for today, but also for our generation in the future and future generations. I think that this budget, Speaker, helps to do just that, and I'm going to share with you why I believe that.

Minister Sousa spoke about the government's fiscal plan. I would like to share a few details about some of the measures in this legislation and how they support the budget's objectives. This budget doesn't exist in a vacuum; it reflects the reality of life in Ontario today and our approach that supports the people of today, and tomorrow, and the years to come. It's an important step forward in a strategy to put Ontario on a long-term path to prosperity. It's a continuation and an evolution of the plan that the minister alluded to to bring Ontario out of the great recession and toward prosperity in the years to come, to ensure our economy is able to handle the slings, the arrows and the unpredictability of a rapidly changing global economy that we are a part of.

Four years ago, in 2014, I was granted the opportunity to serve the people of Etobicoke Centre—"hockey land," as you like to refer to it. Actually, Etobicoke can claim

some incredible hockey players. One of the future Hall of Fame hockey players that we claim is Brendan Shanahan, actually. He's an Etobicoke native. Hopefully, we'll soon be able to refer to him as president of the Stanley Cup-winning Toronto Maple Leafs. We've got a ways to go, but we're proud of him nevertheless.

In fact, Speaker, I could tell you that several years ago, just after my election—six months to a year after my election—I had the privilege of attending a charity event in Etobicoke and meeting Wayne Gretzky. When I introduced myself and told him that I represented the community of Etobicoke Centre, he said, “Before I played professional hockey, I played minor league hockey and for two years lived in Etobicoke.” So we've a great hockey heritage. It's tough to match Wayne Gretzky and Brendan Shanahan, so I challenge the minister to come up with more credentials.

Before I was elected, I taught in the MBA program at York University, at the Schulich School of Business. I owned a small business of my own and I worked for a consulting company called the Boston Consulting Group. The minister spoke about an economic plan driven by values. I not only took classes and taught classes about economic plans and financial plans, but I also lived it, as a small business person and as a person advising businesses on how to prosper in our economy. I want to emphasize, as I experienced in my own academic and professional careers, just how important our values are to our long-term success. Values are the foundation on which a successful plan is built, the foundation on which a successful budget is built.

1740

To help Ontario recover from the recession and the new normal it brought to daily life for everybody in this province and, frankly, in North America and many parts of the world, we focused on the fundamentals; we focused on values. We knew that a successful and prosperous economy that could grow in a sustained way would need to be built on some certain key values, values such as inclusion, values such as collaboration. These aren't just social values. We often use these terms in that context. But these are also economic ones, because at its core economics is about how we interact: how the markets interact, how people interact in that economy. It's about our society.

Inclusion means that people can fully participate in the economy; not only to benefit from it but to contribute to it as well. Because the more people are involved in the economy, the more gains they will derive from it. People need to know that when they take part in the economy they have opportunity, they have a decent chance to use their skills and abilities to make a better life for themselves and their loved ones if they work hard.

My grandparents, when they came, they just worked hard. They worked incredibly hard to establish themselves and to seize that opportunity. That's the opportunity that I want to make sure we have and future generations have in our economy.

Collaboration means working together—employers and employees, private and public sector, full-timers and

part-timers, farmers and factory workers and financiers working together to improve our collective quality of life, people's lives, and as a result grow the economy.

Adam Smith, a well-known economist, coined the term “the invisible hand,” and maintained that society benefited from collaboration and competition. This observation is as true today in Ontario as it was in Adam Smith's 18th-century England. These values, these fundamentals, these principles of economics endure and they're the bedrock on which a successful, dynamic and resilient economy is built.

Just as important as the values on which we have based our plan for the province are the values that we choose not to follow. In this budget and past budgets, we have not slashed programs and supports, drastic measures that would have left the vulnerable to fend for themselves, and we didn't indulge in welfare state spending sprees where individual initiative and ambition would have been undervalued. If you read Adam Smith, if you listen to people like my grandparents, they believe very strongly that we need to value individual hard work, individual ambition, individual initiative. That's really, really important to a successful economy, and that's part of my core values. Instead, what we did was we focused on patiently and diligently building a solid foundation for the province's post-recession economy.

Speaker, what I want to do is talk about a number of ways in which we've done that through this budget and this legislation. First of all, I want to talk about infrastructure, how we focused on the physical foundations. The government is building modern and efficient infrastructure that benefits people and the economy. It's creating jobs and enhancing the quality of life today and in the future. We are investing about \$230 billion over 14 years, starting in 2014-15, for priority projects. This includes initiatives and infrastructure in every riding represented here, Speaker, such as hospitals, schools, transit, bridges and roads. The next 10 years of investments are expected to support about 140,000 jobs, on average, per year.

Some highlights of our record investments in infrastructure include \$79 billion in public transit, \$25 billion in highways, \$19 billion in capital grants to hospitals, and \$16 billion in capital grants to build new schools and improve the condition of existing ones. Like I said, Speaker, this covers ridings all across Ontario, in my riding of Etobicoke Centre—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Barrie.

Mr. Yvan Baker: —in my colleague Ann Hoggarth's riding of Barrie, and in many others, whether it's committing to help fund transportation infrastructure, development in the Ring of Fire or supporting the expansion of broadband connectivity in rural and northern communities. We're updating and modernizing four historic theatres in Niagara-on-the-Lake to make the renowned Shaw Festival more accessible for patrons of all abilities.

We're committing to support the construction of Canada's first high-speed rail line. The Ontario economy

of today and tomorrow depends on the ability to move people and goods quickly and efficiently. It depends on the ability to attract business investments. It depends on our ability to expand opportunities for skilled workers who are willing to work hard and take that initiative that I was talking about. It depends on our ability to reinforce the strength of our communities.

Our plan does that. We are focused on strengthening a key thread in our communities, which is health care. Universal health care is part of our values. It's a reflection of our values as Canadians and how we collectively care for each other. For families concerned about loved ones who are sick, nothing is more important than getting them the care that they need. That is why we committed to not only maintaining but expanding our investments in health care.

Regardless of what the global economy may throw at us, our investments have resulted in expanded facilities that reduce wait times for hip and knee replacements. This is particularly important to me, Speaker, as in Etobicoke Centre we have one of the highest populations of seniors of any riding in the country. This is something I hear about regularly, and I'm proud of the fact that we're trying to do more there.

This has resulted in new critical care units that provide state-of-the-art dialysis and cancer treatment services. Etobicoke General Hospital is an example of that. It has resulted in improved access to health services in underserved areas such as the north. It has resulted in easier ways to get the prescriptions people need.

In the fall of 2017, Ontario announced an additional \$618 million for health care to improve access to key hospital services and to reduce wait times. In this budget, we are investing—and I want to underline this—an additional \$822 million in 2018-19. This is contributing to a 4.6% growth in funding for hospitals, bringing the total to nearly \$19 billion. This is not just about dollars and cents, however; this is about reflecting our values, about investing in the health care that the people of Ontario need and deserve.

We made prescription drugs free for young people through OHIP+, making Ontario the first province to provide drug coverage at no cost to children and youth under the age of 25, regardless of their family income. With this budget, Speaker, we are proposing to expand that coverage to everyone 65 and older. I am incredibly proud of this.

Every month I hold a seniors' advisory group meeting in my riding. Very often I hear from my seniors about how they're struggling with the daily costs of living, including prescription drugs. This is going to help those folks very much, and I'm proud of the advocacy that I and others have done here to make that happen. Starting in August 2019, seniors will be covered under OHIP+. The Ontario Drug Benefit annual deductible and copayment for seniors will be eliminated. This will save the average senior about \$240 every single year.

With this budget, the government is also introducing the new Ontario drug and dental program for people and

their families who do not have drug coverage from an extended health plan, starting next summer. I talked about the changing economy. One of the things that has resulted from the changes in our economy is that fewer people are working in jobs that provide benefits. This is a challenge because those benefits are something that families rely on to provide the most essential dental services, for example, or the most essential prescription drug support.

What we are doing here is responding to the needs that we've heard from people across Ontario. I'm proud of this. This program will reimburse participants for up to 80% of eligible prescription drug and dental expenses. It will reimburse up to an annual maximum of \$400 for singles, \$600 for couples and \$700 for a family of four with two children. This is helping to provide some of that care to help people respond to a changing economy, to support their families. This will provide seniors and people of all ages the support they need to get the dental care they need and to get the prescription drugs they need as well.

Mr. Speaker, as a society we've come to understand something else. We've come to understand that mental health is essential to good overall health. Our former Minister of Health, Minister Hoskins, used to often talk about how there is no health without mental health. Unfortunately, we know that mental health challenges affect one in three people in Ontario at some point in their lives. In this budget, the government is investing in a more integrated high-quality mental health and addictions system for people of all ages. In addition to the \$3.8 billion per year that we provide in ongoing support for mental health and addiction, we're investing an additional \$2.1 billion over the next four years to treat mental health and addiction. This is helping people to recover and to live healthy and meaningful lives in their communities. This brings our total investment in mental health and addiction services to more than \$17 billion over four years.

1750

We're also helping up to 350,000 more people with anxiety and depression, including children and youth, by increasing access to publicly funded psychotherapy, and we are strengthening mental health for all learners by investing \$175 million over four years to expand school-based supports for mental health and addictions services. Mental health supports will go directly to our young people.

Speaker, we also know that access for families—when I knock on doors in my community, when I speak to people, one of the things I hear about is that they are struggling to access child care, and with the costs. It is critical that families be able to provide the care for their children, particularly in these formative years, that their children need.

For children, quality child care gives them the best possible start in life, and for the parents, particularly women, it gives them the opportunity to return to work earlier. That's why we've already chosen to invest, to

provide access to 100,000 more child care spaces. That is why in this budget we're choosing to go further. Beginning in 2020, we will implement free preschool for children aged two and a half until they are eligible for kindergarten, and this builds on the savings families already get from full-day kindergarten. An Ontario family could save, on average, \$17,000, and our future leaders and innovators can get a stronger start to their learning journeys.

This is foundational to our values. This is a reflection of our values. It's important that we lay the groundwork to provide for an even more prosperous economic future for future generations. This helps reduce the burden of cost for families and eases the transition from child care to school for children.

Over the next six years, our government will also invest \$534 million to build 10,000 more preschool child care spaces in schools and 4,000 in other public spaces. For First Nations communities, we will double the current on-reserve child care capacity, creating 4,500 new spaces starting in 2019.

We are also giving families with children up to age 12 better access to before- and after-school care programs by requiring school boards to provide those programs in most elementary schools. We are also helping over 100,000 kids access high-quality child care and offering additional financial supports to families with subsidies for approximately 60% of all new spaces.

Our government is also supporting the dedicated, skilled and knowledgeable child care professionals who look after our children. We are increasing their wages and investing in hiring, retention and professional development, so that not only is there more care but that quality of care is higher as well.

We are also developing a wage grid to guarantee that high-quality child care continues to be delivered by engaged and knowledgeable educators. In addition, the province is moving forward with a new investment of \$30 million over two years to create an Early Years and Child Care Innovation Fund. The fund will support the development of flexible and unique solutions in the not-for-profit sector, which could include addressing the need for irregular care hours and transportation in rural and remote communities.

Speaker, I've talked about health care. I've talked about how we're taking steps to support families with the cost of living and seniors with the cost of living with either prescription drugs or dental care. I've talked about how we're helping families access and afford child care. Now, I want to talk about a group of folks who are very close to my heart. I started by talking about my grandmother, but as I told you, I have a community that has one of the highest numbers of seniors of any riding in the country, so I want to talk a little bit about seniors.

I know that everybody in this House has a great amount of respect and gratitude for our seniors. Their wisdom, their experience and their knowledge have helped make Ontario the great place it is today. That's one of the reasons I hold my grandparents in such high regard. It's why I speak about them regularly.

Seniors helped build this country. That's part of our values, and our budget has to reflect that value. We know that seniors as a demographic are having an increasing influence on our home life, our public life and our economy. Our government is dedicated to helping seniors lead safe, engaged, active and healthy lives. Many Ontario seniors want to live independently and prefer to stay in their homes, but they may worry about the cost of living, about money and savings, and we recognize the costs associated with older seniors living at home. That is why we are proposing a new seniors' healthy home program, which provides a benefit of up to \$750 annually for eligible households led by a senior 75 years and older. This is meant to offset the costs of maintaining their homes. This would help improve their quality of life, helping them live independently when illness or reduced mobility may affect their ability to maintain their home.

I've already spoken about how we intend to expand OHIP+ to cover seniors. With this expansion, OHIP+ would cover over 4,400 prescriptions, such as medications for cholesterol, hypertension, thyroid conditions, diabetes, asthma and others. With this expansion, prescription medications will now be free for nearly one in two Ontarians. That's about 6.4 million people.

Long-term care is a foundational value, and that is why our government is also creating 30,000 new long-term-care beds over the next 10 years, adding 5,000 new beds by 2022, to help people who can no longer live independently and to provide peace of mind for the people who care for them.

I remember what it was like when my family, when my mother, was caring for my grandmother in her final years. Speaker, I know that many of us in this room, if not all of us, have had experience with a family member as they age. I can tell you that I was incredibly proud that we were able to help my grandmother to live with my mother, to get the care that she needed and that she deserved. I want every Ontario senior to be able to have that same care.

These long-term-care beds that I was referring to are in addition to the 30,000 existing beds being redeveloped.

We are also improving care for 14,000 people newly diagnosed with dementia, regardless of where they live. The government recognizes that the best care is often provided in comfortable, familiar surroundings, and that is why, in this budget, we are providing more access to home and community health care services, including 2.8 million more hours of personal support and 284,000 more visits by nurses, through a \$650-million investment over three years.

This is one of those issues that I feel strongly about. I believe that home care is foundational to providing our seniors with quality care. To be able to do it close to home is what I know so many seniors would like and so many seniors would prefer, and this investment takes a step in achieving that goal.

We recognize how integral for seniors a reliable pension is, as well. This government, under the leader-

ship of the Premier and Minister Sousa, was a driving force behind the decision by the federal, provincial and territorial leaders to enhance the Canada Pension Plan, which will enable greater retirement security for working Ontarians and for all Canadians. But this is not all that Ontario is doing to enhance retirement security. We're also creating a new funding framework for defined benefit pension plans.

Speaker, one more thing I want to talk about is education. I talked about how this budget provides supports in health care. I talked about pharmacare. I talked about long-term care. I talked about home care. I talked about how we care for our seniors. Education is the foundation to making sure that the young people of tomorrow are able to achieve their potential, to compete and succeed and prosper in this new economy that I was talking about.

Ontario is already a sought-after destination for research and investment, thanks to our skilled workforce. This government has made education one of its highest priorities. Getting a good education at every stage in life enables greater personal fulfillment, opens doors to more opportunity, makes us better citizens and helps us better understand our world, our neighbour and ourselves.

Our help starts with the places where our young people learn. That is why we are investing almost \$16 billion over 10 years for new and improved schools. This includes \$510 million since 2013 in construction, additions and retrofits at 62 French-language schools across Ontario. More than 600,000 francophones call Ontario their home.

But a great education is more than buildings and classrooms. One in five Ontario students has special needs. With this budget, we're announcing over \$250 million in new funding over three years to tackle the wait-lists for assessments and improve special education services.

Grades 7 and 8 are an important time for many students to start exploring their options for the future. That is why this government will invest more than \$120 million over the next three years, hiring over 450 new guidance counsellors to help students better prepare for the transition to high school and beyond, because a good start today means a better future tomorrow.

Speaker, I can tell you, I've been an advocate on this, and I'm very proud that we're doing this.

Good decision-making early on, informed decisions early on, will lead to better outcomes down the road for our young people and for students.

As you know, we've already made changes—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. You will have an opportunity to finish when this bill is called again, as you do have time on the clock.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I must now say that pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. If no one is going to move, then I will continue.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Minister of Finance, who was the Acting Premier at the time. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister may reply for up to five minutes.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member is not here.

FIRE SAFETY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Perth–Wellington has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yesterday I questioned the minister about my private member's bill, the Rea and Walter Act. I noted that the bill passed second reading unanimously. It died, however, when this government, for political reasons, decided to prorogue the Legislature. I asked the minister to fast-track the bill so we could have it passed into law before the June election. After all, everyone agrees with it. This should not be controversial.

But in the minister's answer, she injected partisanship where there should be none. First, she told me to re-introduce the bill this session. Well, I'm happy to report that that was done two weeks ago. It's been on the order paper since March 27, in fact. Then, in her second response, the minister tried to blame the new leadership of the PC Party for her own failure to advance the bill. That's funny, since Doug Ford has only been on the job for, what, four weeks? It's astonishing that this minister, as part of a Liberal majority government, would blame Doug Ford for its own failure to act. It's astonishing that this minister would do that after spending a whole year of doing absolutely nothing to move this forward. What an insulting response.

To her credit, the minister spoke about creating an expert fire table. That's all well and good, and I support that effort. Indeed, the government recently issued a bunch of regulatory changes under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. The changes dealt with issues like mandatory training and certification of firefighters and conducting community risk assessments. Well, what about truss and lightweight identification?

The minister said in her answer that the expert fire table had, in fact, reviewed my bill. What was the outcome of that review? It's very odd, because the government supported my bill at second reading back in April.

They were wise to do so. The Rea and Walter Act is broadly supported by many local fire chiefs and stakeholder groups across the province. That includes the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, the Insurance Bureau of Canada and the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. I was honoured to have their support.

During second reading debate last April, we had about 40 people in the galleries above you, including firefighters from Perth–Wellington and across the province, and, of course, the Rea and Walter families. It was a proud moment, and also an emotional moment, for everyone who was involved.

In the months that followed, however, our optimism turned to disappointment. The government allowed the Rea and Walter Act to languish. Firefighter safety is something we should all be able to agree on. This is not a partisan issue. It's not time to take a cheap shot at PC leader Doug Ford. But it is time to act, and there is still time to fix this. The bill has been reintroduced, and the government has a chance to do the right thing.

To my colleagues across the aisle, it's time to take action. Let's get the Rea and Walter Act passed to ensure that firefighters have the potentially life-saving information they need. We do not need any more deaths because of this government's failure to act on something that makes so much sense.

The firefighters who supported the bill, the people who keep us safe every day, are paying attention. Many of them are watching this debate, so I sincerely hope the government, in its response, will do three things: (1) explain the reasons for their inaction over the past year; (2) stick to the facts, not misinformation or partisanship; and (3) promise to fast-track this bill, as they know they should, because it's the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services may have up to five minutes to respond.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I may take my five minutes. We'll see.

As I said yesterday, I believe, when the member asked me the question, I felt happy to respond to his questions. I know how passionate and engaged he is on this issue. He also gave me an opportunity to say that what happened in North Perth seven years ago was a terrible tragedy. I think we can all agree on this. As I said before when the bill was debated and when I reached out to those individuals who were here—the families, the friends, the firefighter services and the entire community—my condolences go to the loss and the tragedy that happened. Certainly I'm very sad, and I shared that with the member.

I've also been part of his technical briefing. When he introduced his private member's bill, I agreed to meet with him with my staff.

Fire safety is a shared responsibility. It's vitally important that all levels of government, fire experts and the public work together. As he said, he's very engaged, and certainly the Rea and Walter Act is a bill that has

very good intentions. As the member also alluded to, it was discussed; after our conversation, I committed that since January 2017, the member opposite share—what we've established was a Fire Safety Technical Table, and I committed with him that we would be bringing his private member's bill to that table where we have experts, fire chiefs, expert individuals who deal with fire safety issues in our province. It was reviewed; it was discussed.

Certainly there is broad support, according to the member opposite, but my understanding in speaking with others is that there is a component part of the bill that when it comes to the time and what we potentially can move forward in terms of ensuring the safety of our firefighters—the decals are difficult to maintain. I look in terms of province-wide—

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Why didn't you bring it to committee?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: —in terms of Toronto and everything. It may not be apparent for responding crews and would convey a false sense of security maybe to certain—

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Why didn't you bring it to committee?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Perth–Wellington, come to order.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Sorry. The member is arguing with me, and I'm fine. I know how passionate he is about it. I was a member. I brought a private member's bill myself into this House.

Mr. Speaker, we are as a government in the process of modernizing fire safety in Ontario. This includes ensuring that our firefighters are as protected as possible in the face of life-threatening conditions. We are looking at new innovative tools and supports that will help keep firefighters safe when responding to an incident. We're also working to find modern solutions that will help our firefighters, who are among the best in the world, do their jobs.

I know the member opposite talked about politics here and his new leader, Mr. Trump—Mr. Ford; excuse me—but I'm going to say that we have actually proposed a comprehensive deal with the opposition party to carry over all private members' bills in the House. It was actually the member's party's new leader who refused this agreement. So when you talk about politics over the great work of the members of this Legislature, I would say—I'm very sorry, Mr. Speaker—I disagree that we're playing politics here.

The member also knows that private members' bills in this House have been negotiated among all government leaders, and we've actually moved forward. I was very pleased to see that in the past four years our government has worked with the opposition and the third party in ensuring that the members who are working so hard in this House actually get their private members' bills carried through.

So if we are going to talk about politics here, let me be clear that the new leader of the Conservative Party has put politics ahead of the work of his caucus members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank all members for the lively debate today, but there

being no further matter to debate, I now deem the motion to adjourn to have been carried.

This House now stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1811.

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| Colle, Mike (LIB) | Eglinton–Lawrence | |
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| Gates, Wayne (NDP) | Niagara Falls | |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) | Nickel Belt | |
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| Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Oxford | |
| Harris, Michael (IND) | Kitchener–Conestoga | |
| Hatfield, Percy (NDP) | Windsor–Tecumseh | |
| Hillier, Randy (PC) | Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington | |
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| Martins, Cristina (LIB) | Davenport | |
| Martow, Gila (PC) | Thornhill | |
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| Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord | |
| Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) | Northumberland–Quinte West | |
| Romano, Ross (PC) | Sault Ste. Marie | |
| Sandals, Liz (LIB) | Guelph | |
| Sattler, Peggy (NDP) | London West / London-Ouest | |
| Scott, Laurie (PC) | Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock | |
| Sergio, Mario (LIB) | York West / York-Ouest | |
| Smith, Todd (PC) | Prince Edward–Hastings | |
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| Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB) | Mississauga–Erindale | |
| Taylor, Monique (NDP) | Hamilton Mountain | |
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| Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) | Huron–Bruce | |
| Vanthof, John (NDP) | Timiskaming–Cochrane | |
| Vernile, Hon. / L'hon. Daiene (LIB) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport |
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| Wilson, Jim (PC) | Simcoe–Grey | Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle |
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| Vacant | Parkdale–High Park | |
| Vacant | St. Paul's | |
| Vacant | Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | |

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Catherine Fife
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Monique Taylor
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