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Lundi
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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 November 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 novembre 2019

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let us pray.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to acknowledge this territory as a traditional gathering place for many Indigenous nations, most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

This being the first Monday of the month, we are going to sing O Canada. I am going to ask the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to lead us off.

Singing of O Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members may take their seats.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to introduce two guests from Wellington–Halton Hills who are here today: Dean Broadfoot and Wayne Booth. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I am very proud to welcome a friend and guest from the amazing riding of Humber River–Black Creek: Farooq Ali Khan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Will Bouma: It's my pleasure to welcome to the House today Crystal Kuan, mother of page Christian Kuan from my riding. Welcome to our House.

Mr. Michael Mantha: A good friend of mine, along with many of the guests, is from the fur traders' association. I want to welcome Robin Horwath, and I look forward to talking with you in a very little bit.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I want to recognize my friend Howard Noseworthy, from North Bay. He's with the Fur Harvesters Auction.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I would like to welcome Talia Bronstein, who is here with the Daily Bread Food Bank. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I would like to welcome the proud parents, Zuber Gangat and Zulekhabibi Gangat, along with Zakariyya Gangat and Zaheerah Gangat, the family of my page, Zakiyya Gangat. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce Joe Hill, president of the Beef Farmers of Ontario; Eric Schwindt, chair of Ontario Pork; and Judy Dirksen, director for Veal Farmers of Ontario. They're here as part of the agriculture sustainability coalition, an organization that promotes the economic importance of agriculture and food. They will be hosting a lunch reception in room 228. Everyone is invited.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome the family of page captain Madison Booth, who is from my riding of Essex: Julie Love, Michael Booth, Alexandra Booth, Parker Booth, David Love, Brianna Booth and Morgan Love. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to introduce three people to the Legislature today. We have Walt Freeman, who owns a fur farm in my riding, joining us today. As well, Michael McSweeney, from the Cement Association of Canada, is here. Last but not least, a terrific, wonderful constituency employee, Rae Ann Litle, is here. She's at the royal winter fair showing her horses this week. It's lovely to have her at Queen's Park today as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask the members to keep their introductions brief and non-political.

Mr. Kaled Rasheed: I would like to welcome Suresh Joachim, from Mississauga, founder and creator of World Peace Marathon. Suresh holds 72 Guinness World Records and has run across six continents, 72 countries, and is the number one record-holder in Canada. His campaign aims to raise awareness for poverty, disease and war. He is joined by David Gold. Welcome, Suresh, to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Well, it's Queen's at Queen's Park day, so it is absolutely my pleasure to introduce, from the greatest post-secondary institution in all the land, Patrick Deane, principal and vice-chancellor; Alex da Silva, the rector; Michael Fraser, vice-principal; Kim Woodhouse, vice-principal; Ann Tierney, vice-provost and dean of student affairs; and Craig Leroux, associate director.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I'd like to welcome the administration from Lennox and Addington County General Hospital: Wayne Coveyduck and Allan MacGregor.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm proud to welcome once again to Queen's Park Amy, Michael and all the fantastic folks who are here to support autism awareness.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park this morning Clifford Meness, who is here with the Ontario Fur Managers Federation. Clifford is also a former chief of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the Ontario Association of Radiologists to Queen's Park. We have association president Dr. Mark Prieditis and executive director Ray Foley with us today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I wanted to welcome a good friend of mine, and MP for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Eric Duncan—highest percentage in Ontario in the last election.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to welcome Melanie and Adelaide Minor, and thank them for all the good work they do for SickKids hospital. Welcome.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'm thrilled to welcome four talented and outstanding Ontario youth to Queen's Park today, who will be representing Canada at the Hollywood Music in Media Awards on November 20, in Los Angeles, California. This is the first time we have six Ontarians representing Canada. Please join me to welcome Selena Rosatone, Liron Menahem, Alessandra Marianne Paonessa and Carla Sacco to Queen's Park.

1040

Ms. Lindsey Park: I would like to welcome constituents I have sitting in the east members' gallery: Mr. Robert Schwartz and his sister, Petra Schwartz.

We also have, in the public gallery, Bill Asselstine and Ruben Plaza from St. Marys Cement. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: From Springbrook Fur Farm in St. Agatha, Ontario, I would like to welcome Rob Dietrich and a fourth-generation fur farmer, his son, Matthew Dietrich.

Mr. Mike Harris: The member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington pre-emptively announced some members from my riding who are here today as well: the Dietrichs. I would love to welcome them here to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ross Romano: I also want to welcome Queen's University to Queen's Park here today for question period. To my friend Patrick Deane, the principal and vice-chancellor at Queen's University, I want to say welcome and thanks again. We had a great breakfast earlier this summer at Morrison's in Kingston, which I'm told is an institution in Kingston. And to the rest of your team, Alex, Kim, Michael and Ann—welcome to question period and to Queen's Park.

I also want to invite everyone to the Queen's reception happening after the proceedings today in room 228, starting at 5 p.m.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I also join members here in welcoming those who work in Ontario's historic fur industry, and particularly my neighbour up the road, Robert Bollert.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I would like to welcome Mr. Charlie Lyons in the public gallery. Thank you for joining us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my first question is to the Acting Premier. Last week, Ontario families heard concerning news about the growing wait-lists for long-term care and that the hallway medicine crisis that started under the Liberals is going from bad to worse under the Ford government.

Only 21 new long-term-care beds have actually been created after the Ford government's first year in office. The Premier claims his government has allocated over 7,500 beds. Can the Acting Premier tell us how many of

those beds were announced, but not built, by another government?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I would like to start by thanking the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario for his very thorough report. The report states that between 2011 and 2018, the number of long-term-care beds in Ontario increased by only 0.8% while the over-75-year-old age group grew by 20%. That 0.8% means that they only built 611 beds over that many years, while the seniors population grew by 176,211—many, many, many times more than the beds that were allocated.

Our government, in contrast, is investing \$1.75 billion to create 15,000 new beds and redevelop another 15,000 in five years. Additionally, our government has added \$72 million this year more than last year. We've already got almost 8,000 beds allocated this year so far, 50% of the requirement.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what I was asking was how many of those beds that they claim they've allocated were actually announced and not built by the previous government. The answer is 5,000. Of the 7,500 beds that are proudly being announced by the Ford government, over 5,000 of those beds had been announced before by the previous Liberal government, yet over the last year, only 21 beds appeared.

Under the Liberals and Conservatives, long-term-care beds have been announced and reannounced. Why are they not being built?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I can tell you that for the first time in Ontario's history, we are prioritizing long-term care and putting our seniors and long-term-care residents and caregivers first.

Our government has been working with the sector to understand their needs, and we are well on our way to the allocations and to meet that 15,000 long-term-care commitment that we made through our government. In fact, the FAO has also said it's the first meaningful investment in long-term care in many, many years.

We know that we're heading in the right direction. We're collaborating with our sector, and we are creating a 21st-century long-term-care system that will put our residents at the centre and treat our residents with the dignity and respect that they deserve.

We are well on our way to creating those beds and creating the capacity that is so long overdue and that our previous Liberal government ignored while the NDP supported it for 15 long years.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, in the last year, over 2,800 seniors joined the list of people waiting for a long-term-care bed, but only 21 beds were created. Instead of addressing the crisis, the Ford government was recycling press conferences.

On October 5 last year, the Ford Conservative MPP for Durham announced 53 new long-term-care beds in Port Perry, the same announcement that her Liberal predecessor made, almost word for word, six months earlier, in April 2018.

The Durham region has some of the longest wait-lists for long-term-care beds. Is the Ford government actually creating new beds, or are they, like the Liberals before them, just reannouncing the same projects while the wait-list continues to grow and grow and grow?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again for your remarks. We recognize that Ontario has an aging population. We've known this for many, many years, and the previous government ignored it.

We are looking at making sure that we have innovative programs, as well as building capacity. We know that, on average, an approved long-term-care bed takes about 36 months to establish and get to fruition, from the allocation. This is absolutely clear to us, and we've been working with the sector to make sure that we streamline processes, reduce red tape and reduce administrative burden to get those beds open.

We're well on our way to doing that, with almost 8,000 beds allocated. It does take time. It's not just add water and up pop long-term-care beds. The previous government had 15 years and they ignored it, and you supported them.

We are looking at—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The House will come to order. Restart the clock.

The next question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. It's not just happening in Durham. Last October, the Minister of Transportation announced 12 new beds in Keswick, the same 12 beds that had been announced in March by a Liberal MPP.

This July, the Minister of Long-Term Care joined Ford Conservative MPPs in Brampton to announce 40 new beds at the Faith Manor home, but those same beds had also been announced a year before. And on and on it goes.

Of the 7,500 beds the government claims to have allocated, over 5,000 have been allocated before. When will they actually get built?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. We are working actively with our sector to understand their issues. We have addressed the high wage transition fund and the structural compliance fund. We wanted to create certainty for our sector by confirming those allocations, and we've actually put money behind them: \$1.75 billion for long-term care, 15,000 new beds, 15,000 beds to be redeveloped.

We're also creating more capacity with innovative programs. The Minister of Health—I'm very pleased to be able to work with her—\$155 million more for community care.

People want to stay in their homes longer. They want to stay in their community as long as they can. We're creating those innovative programs, and building not only capacity in long-term care but also in the community.

We are hard at work creating capacity that the previous government ignored.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's a pretty sad day in Ontario when innovation means actually building the homes that the previous Liberal government didn't bother to build for 15 years. But while the Liberals and Conservatives re-announce the same beds, the list of seniors waiting for beds keeps growing and growing. The list doubled over seven years of Liberal government, and 2,800 seniors waiting for care joined that list in just this last year. Yet under the Ford government, only 21 new beds have been created. And under the Liberals, the record was even worse: 611 beds over seven years.

Over 40,000 seniors will be waiting for long-term care next year. Is this the best that the government can do?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. Our government takes the issue of long-term-care wait times extremely seriously. That's why our government is prioritizing 15,000 new beds and redeveloping another 15,000, and is working with our sector to address issues surrounding the alternate-level-of-care—ALC—issues in hospitals. This is an issue that has been building for a long time. Population growth, the aging of our population and the neglect by the previous government—with your support—allowed this to happen. That means we are working harder than ever to hit the ground running, making sure that our allocations are up and confirming certainty with our sector. We are creating more capacity than ever before over the last 15 years.

We're doing it. We're working hard. The previous government neglected this area. We have a lot of catch-up to do. We're getting this done, in conjunction with other ministries—a government-wide, ministry-wide effort.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, here's what families see: a crisis in hallway medicine, where hospitals are operating at over 100% capacity; a long-term-care crisis, where an estimated 40,000 seniors will be waiting for a home; and governments, first Liberals and now Conservatives, that have left our hospitals scrambling, announcing and re-announcing the same projects while nothing happens.

Does the Acting Premier think that that's good enough?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. This year alone, we have allocated 1,814 new beds and reaffirmed our commitment towards building 6,085 previously allocated beds. We are committed to this. We are dedicated to making sure that we catch up to where the previous government dropped the ball. As part of our commitment, we are adding more dollars: \$72 million

more this year than last year, and another \$1.75 billion to get this done.

Our government is prioritizing projects and working with our sector, and we know that we can get to 15,000 beds with the funding, with our commitment—something the previous government ignored, supported by the NDP—1,814 new beds allocated, with our commitment to 15,000 new beds. The previous government, over an entire span of many years, only built about 600, while—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I will remind the members that the standing orders prohibit interjections. They're always out of order.

Start the clock. Next question?

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Acting Premier. For months, the Premier insisted, against overwhelming evidence, that his decision to cut classroom funding, to dramatically expand high school class sizes and to cut support for after-school programs wouldn't hurt kids in the classroom or lead to job loss. Is this government ready to admit that they were wrong?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite. What the government is committed to doing is investing in front-line services to improve student outcomes for the young people of this province. It is why our government undertook an initiative to invest over \$700 million, the largest investment ever expended in provincial history in public education in the province of Ontario. It is why, today, we're moving forth with new initiatives.

The fact that today CUPE ratified a deal with this government shows that we can get deals that keep kids in class. It is that proposal alone that helped ensure parents have the predictability they deserve while knowing that our government will continue to invest in a modernized curriculum, updating our schools and giving every student the ability to reach their full potential.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The fact is, the Ford government is scrambling to run away from damage they caused by their own cuts.

A new independent report confirms what the Financial Accountability Office has already told us: Ontario will be losing 10,000 teaching positions due to the Ford government's cuts. In Toronto, over 1,000 positions will disappear. In Ottawa, nearly 400 will vanish. But worse, the courses these teachers offered will also vanish, and the quality of our kids' education will suffer.

If the Ford government is now admitting that their education cuts are hurting students and leading to layoffs, why won't they simply admit that they got it wrong and reverse tracks?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Our focus, under the leadership of the Premier, is to invest in and defend public education.

That's why we're investing more than any other government in our history.

But in addition to that public expenditure, it's also about what we're doing to modernize our curriculum to ensure it is aligned with our labour market needs. It's also about ensuring we have positive mental health supports. It is this government—it will be in the report that came out today—that more than doubled our funding allocation to ensure young people have the strength, the resilience and the capacity to go through school knowing that the system will be responsive and proactive to their needs.

It is why our government is investing more than \$3.1 billion in special education funding, given the report last week from our autism task force, to ensure that every child knows that they have the dignity and the support to get through school and, ultimately, one day maybe even get the dignity of work.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to invest in education. We've proposed reasonable options to our unions that will help incent them to stay at the table and get them to deal with our government.

FIRE SAFETY

Mrs. Robin Martin: My question is to the Solicitor General. Over the weekend, members of the Toronto Fire Services battled an intense, three-alarm fire near Shuter and Mutual Streets. I understand that two of our Toronto Fire Services members were seriously injured due to a fall from the roof of that building. Thankfully, they were quickly rushed to St. Michael's Hospital but, as of last night, one remains in the intensive care unit and in critical condition.

Can the Solicitor General tell this House about the incredible bravery and selfless service demonstrated by Ontario's first responders?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Unfortunately, this weekend's incident is another example of why we have to support and empower our first responders.

To the two injured firefighters: I know that I speak for everyone in this chamber, that we are praying and hoping for a speedy recovery. I am sure they are getting excellent care at St. Mike's. It really shows how valuable these individuals are who choose to work in our emergency services and as first responders. They put themselves in harm's way in a very real way every time that fire bell goes off.

To the Toronto Fire Services: I echo Chief Pegg's sentiments that if those family members, if those colleagues need help, please reach out. This is a challenging time for the service, and I know we're all thinking of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Speaker, through you, I'd like to thank the Solicitor General for her touching words about our first responders. I'm sure that everyone in this House is grateful for their tireless work to keep Ontario safe.

Thankfully, in the case of this weekend's fire in Toronto, the building in question appears to have been

abandoned. However, in many cases, that is not always so. Fire poses a very real danger to life, home and property, often coming when we least expect it.

Can the Solicitor General tell this House how our government is strengthening fire protection and what Ontarians can do to keep themselves fire-safe?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and for her interest in this. It is unfortunately a very strong reminder for all of us to encourage our constituents, our friends and neighbours to make sure that they have a fire safety plan, an escape route, if you may, if the very unfortunate situation happens, if the building that you are working in or living in does have a fire emergency.

1100

Emergency measures do an excellent job educating us, but we also all have a responsibility to make sure that we echo and respond and react, and remind people in our constituencies and in our communities that fire safety plans really, truly can save lives.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last week, the government announced that they had established new procedures for vetting government appointments. My question to the Acting Premier is this: Under this new process, will the former PC Party president, who was handed a lucrative job in Dallas, or the former PC campaign tour director, who was handed a lucrative job in Washington, or the former chief of staff of the Premier's brother, who was handed a lucrative job in Chicago, or the Premier's family lawyer, whose part-time government appointment nets him \$166,000 a year—will any of these appointments be rescinded or even reviewed at any time?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the question from the honourable member.

As was highlighted last week, we are making changes to the public appointments process. The President of the Treasury Board has been working closely with the Public Appointments Secretariat to make sure that appointments are in the best interests of the people of Ontario. We've taken a number of the recommendations that the Auditor General has put forward and put them in a more open and transparent process. We're referring some of these appointments, as we increase the conflict-of-interest screens, to the Integrity Commissioner.

These are good changes that we're making, but we'll continue to work on this process because we want to make it better. We want to make it more open. These are people who do a lot of good work for the people of Ontario, and I suspect all members of the House want these people to be doing it in the best interests of the people of Ontario. I appreciate the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: A simple “no” would have sufficed. That was a long way to get to “no.”

The Premier spent his first year on the job rewarding friends and insiders with lucrative government appointments. He and other Conservative MPPs have blocked efforts to the government agencies committee actually reviewing appointments. If he is even remotely serious about clearing things up, he would make any review of the process public, or better yet, allow an all-party committee, like the government agencies committee, to do a genuine bipartisan review. Will the Premier do this?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, I thank the honourable member for the question.

The committee, of course, are masters of their own work process. I know that when the committee meets, the members will bring forward a number of suggestions, and we're prepared for that.

But when he talks about what the Premier has been doing for the last year, I think we all know what the Premier has been doing for the last year: He has been helping to create the conditions that have created 272,000 jobs in the province of Ontario.

He has been working on a new transit plan to unleash the potential across the entire GTA, where gridlock has been the hallmark of the previous 15 years of Liberal government. We now have a transit plan that will bring real change and get people moving in the province of Ontario.

The Minister of Long-Term Care has highlighted today a number of times that we are also building long-term-care beds. For the first time in 15 years, we're making progress on long-term-care beds.

The Minister of Finance, of course, has been working very hard to make sure that our budget is in balance, and we're making great progress on that.

All of the members on this side of the House—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The next question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, since I last asked you about the redevelopments of the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital and Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston, nothing much appears to have happened. The hospitals feel that they're no further ahead than they were during the 15 years under the Liberals.

The hospitals were told by health ministry bureaucrats to keep planning for their redevelopments but at their own expense and with no approvals in sight. In fact, these same bureaucrats tell the hospitals that they are waiting for political direction. So, Minister, will you please give that political direction today so that we can move forward with these redevelopments?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question.

We have been working both with respect to Stevenson and Collingwood at the Ministry of Health. With respect

to Collingwood, we have been working closely with the Collingwood hospital team to review their proposed hospital redevelopment project. We are committed to making investments in this area, because I know they're very important to the people within your riding. The ministry has provided Collingwood with a \$500,000 planning grant to support planning in 2018-19. We are continuing to work with the hospital on the stage one submission and hope to have some more particular news very shortly.

With respect to Stevenson, we are, again, working closely with Stevenson on their project as well. The project is going to expand the emergency department and make key updates to in-patient, surgical and diagnostic services. We expect to provide the hospital with approval of their stage one master plan in the coming days.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: That's great news. Thank you, Minister, for the answer. I just want you to know that it pains me to ask these questions, because I like you so much.

The last time I did ask in this House about the two hospitals, you also mentioned that perhaps you would like to tour, or you might tour, each of the hospitals. I was just wondering if that offer still stands. It would be great for morale and great to help move the redevelopments forward.

Will you please tour the hospitals?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Yes, I would be very happy to. Thank you. I appreciate the offer. I know these hospitals are very important to you and to the people in your communities, and that they are anxious to see things move forward.

I know for all of us, some of these projects seem to take a lot longer to get started than any of us would want, but that is the approval process that is in place within the ministry. That said, we do hope to be able to provide approvals to move forward very shortly in the coming days. I'd like to give you a particular date, but I can say that that is coming very soon.

I hope to be able to tour both hospitals with you very soon. Thank you.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: My question is for the outstanding minister responsible for small business and red tape reduction. Minister, some people I've spoken to in my community don't have a clear understanding of what red tape is or why we need to address Ontario's regulatory problems. Can you tell me why addressing red tape and regulatory burdens is particularly important to Ontario and our future?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you to the member from Mississauga-Lakeshore for his advocacy and leadership on behalf of small businesses across the province.

Mr. Speaker, our open-for-jobs, open-for-business policies, under the leadership of the Premier and the Minister

of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, have helped create an environment for over 270,000 new jobs in the past 16 months.

Our competitiveness in both the Canadian and global markets has suffered because red tape hurts Ontario's investment climate. The province has seen report after report, whether it's the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the University of Toronto's global Ontario 360 institute or Deloitte's chief economist this past month, speaking to how Ontario and Canada's regulatory burden is out of step with other provinces and US states that we compete with for good jobs and higher wages.

Mr. Speaker, Canada ranks 38th in the world on regulatory efficiency. Our government is looking to fix that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you very much, Minister. We know that Ontario has lost standing and risked our competitiveness because of cumbersome regulations that are ineffective and outdated. Can you tell me why the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act is so important for Colossus on Lakeshore, and Lorenzo's hair salon in Mississauga-Lakeshore?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Our bill, if passed, will help protect seniors and families from drug shortages and expand access to lower-cost generic drugs. It will help safeguard our environment for future generations by creating strong, clear penalties for environmental violations.

With this new bill, we're ensuring Ontario's regulations are targeted, effective and focused while maintaining Ontario's high standards. Our goal is to make Ontario better for people and smarter for business, and to continue on the path of economic prosperity and growing jobs in Ontario, increasing the number from 270,000 to many more.

Mr. Speaker, under the previous government, we lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Building on our open-for-jobs policies will make Ontario more competitive and the economic engine of Canada once again.

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WATER QUALITY

Mr. Jeff Burch: My question is to the Acting Premier. A new report shows tap water across Canada could have high levels of lead, with potentially dangerous health repercussions. Ontarians are rightly concerned about water quality. The Walkerton disaster shows how precious clean water really is, and our neighbours in Flint, Michigan, know we can't take our drinking water for granted.

Should Ontarians be worried about the safety of their drinking water supply?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much for the question opposite. The member opposite should know that Ontario's water is in great shape. In fact, 99% of municipal residential drinking water systems met Ontario's drinking

water standards; 95% of schools and children's centres, with over 87,000 test results, met Ontario's standard for lead in drinking water.

Our government is committed to continuing to take strong action to protect water and ensure the health and safety of Ontarians.

As noted in the media recently, Ontario has the best reporting structure across the entire country with regard to lead standards. We are going to continue to monitor and ensure that water safety is key in our government's position. We'll continue to look forward to working with municipalities to ensure the ongoing systems of clean water continually flow to residents and businesses throughout Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan, supplementary.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: To the Acting Premier: The Toronto Star investigation found that in my community of Thunder Bay, lead in the water is still a problem. Our water is pristine, but the pipes, not so much. Even after treating the water, investigators found high levels of lead in people's drinking water in over 100 failed tests.

What will this government do to partner with municipalities like Thunder Bay to ensure people have access to safe and clean drinking water?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Again, thanks to the member opposite for that question. I do have to reiterate that 99% of the drinking water tested in the province of Ontario was meeting our standards.

We continue to work with municipalities to ensure that drinking water is clear of lead. We have specific criteria which are defined within the regulation. We do two types of testing in this province: the actual plumbing at homes and businesses and schools, at the site where water comes out of the tap, and also through distribution throughout municipalities, such as taking fire hydrants and testing that water. We can say it's kind of a backup to the system.

We have put in over \$1.4 billion in renovations in our school system. Schools can take the opportunity to replace their water systems if they so please.

We have the green stream, which we have announced through the Ministry of Infrastructure, with the federal government. Municipalities can look to revamping the systems in their municipalities. The hard part for municipalities, though, is actually locating where those lead pipes are within the municipalities. We're—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Next question.

MILITARY FAMILIES

Mr. Michael Parsa: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. As members of this House know, today marks the beginning of Veterans' Week. Our government has been clear on the commitment that we have made to providing services and support to active and former members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

As I'm sure all members of this House can appreciate, Canadian Armed Forces members and their families can

find it challenging when moving to a new province. Last Veterans' Week, our government also announced that it will establish a telephone hotline for Canadian Armed Forces members and their families, to help them get information and services more easily when transferring to Ontario. We know that relocation is a major cause of strain for services members, their spouses and their children.

Would the minister provide an update on last year's military hotline announcement?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you to the great member from Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill for your thoughtful question.

It's a very thoughtful question, because as we kick off Veterans' Week, I think it's fair to say that Ontarians across this province join all of us in this House when we express our gratitude and our thankfulness for the service and sacrifice of all our men and women in our Canadian Armed Forces.

I'd like to share with everyone today that last week, during this same Veterans' Week, our Premier, along with Minister Smith and Minister Walker, kicked off an extensive consultation with military families to learn what it is like moving across provinces, and how hard it is to get re-established in a community. We really received valuable input, not only through our online surveys, but also with in-depth, one-on-one conversations.

Canadian military heroes and their families told us that getting timely and affordable access to government service was a significant concern. Speaker, today I'm pleased to share with you that we're acting on those concerns and improving access—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The supplementary question.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Speaker, I want to thank the minister for her response. I know that many service members and their families will appreciate the additional resources that our government has made available to them.

For many military families, especially those relocating to Ontario, busy schedules make it difficult to find a time to access many of the services offered by our government. Even with the new dedicated phone line that connects families with subject matter experts within the Ontario government, it can be difficult for service members and their families to find a time to get a new provincial health card or register their vehicle.

Can the minister tell this House what our government is doing to ensure that Canadian Armed Forces members and their families are able to use the resources available to them in a timely and accessible way?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, thank you very much for that question. Our government made a promise to the people of Ontario, as well as to our brave Canadian Armed Forces service members, that we would enable the adoption of digital practices across government to make it easier for accessing the top services through Service Ontario, so that they can easily work through transactions that are involved in moving from community to community.

For military personnel and their families, we've established an online portal, ontario.ca/militaryfamilies, for up-

to-date information about health care, education and schools, child care, driver and vehicle licensing, as well as job opportunities—because it's so important to connect those families quickly into their communities.

To Ontarians who prefer accessing government services in person, I'm pleased to say we continue to offer all of our Service Ontario services in person throughout our communities across Ontario.

We're committed to giving Ontarians great access—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The next question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning. My question is to the Acting Premier.

In a matter of months, Ontario's students will be forced into mandatory online learning courses, but the government still can't tell us how the program is going to be structured, who's developing the curriculum or who will teach it. They can't even share with us another jurisdiction that requires four mandatory online classes to graduate—because there aren't any.

When pushed at estimates committee to justify this very reckless decision to ram through mandatory online learning, the education minister cited the state of Alabama. Does the Acting Premier believe that Ontarians should be following the lead of Alabama, a state that ranks among the worst in the US when it comes to education?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I thank the member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, what I affirmed at committee, what my predecessor and what we believe today, is that we want to build an online learning platform which is made in Ontario, made for the students of this province, that embraces the ingenuity of the people of this province. I committed to that at committee. I regret that the member opposite was not able to hear that message, but I want to reaffirm it today: Our government is going to move forward with a plan that embraces modern learning, that embraces technological fluidity and that gives our young people the ability to learn new skills, have more course offerings and embrace the technology that exists in a disruptive economy.

This is part of our plan to modernize our education system and to invest in the public education system for the people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Again to the Acting Premier: Look, Ontarians don't want a made-in-Ontario online learning model; they don't want it at all. They don't want it at all and they are right to be afraid.

Students are no strangers to life online, but they are already reeling from the government's cuts. They are struggling to make up credits as their courses and their teachers disappear—courses like economics and college physics. Now they are left wondering if they're going to

fall further behind, thanks to this untested e-learning scheme.

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Speaker, there is still time to do the right thing. Will the Acting Premier put this reckless decision on ice and stop the cuts to our kids' classrooms?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: What I also affirmed to the member when I had the benefit of meeting with her over the summer is that—she raised the question of exceptions for children online. I want to make clear for parents in the province, particularly those who have children with intellectual or developmental disabilities, that there will be exceptions built into our program, because I accept the premise that not every child should be learning through e-learning. So we've committed to that. I've done it at committee; I'm doing it again today, because I want families to know that we're going to build a plan that has the flexibility to make sure that every child can get ahead and every child can get the course offerings that they otherwise could not have.

Mr. Speaker, this plan will allow more students to access more courses in the province. Some 60,000 students utilize online learning today, a 17% increase since 2011 year over year. We're going to build the promise of a made-in-Ontario plan that strengthens the course offerings and gives young people the ability to compete in the global marketplace.

SKILLED TRADES

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question is for the minister who is skilling up Ontario, the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. In the first half of 2019, Ontario employers had, on average, 200,000 job openings across all occupations and industries. The construction sector alone had 13,000 of them.

In 2016, 31% of skilled trades journeypeople were age 55 and over. As more and more of these hard-working individuals retire, Ontario needs to attract and train the skilled workers we need for tomorrow. Can the minister please tell us how the government is addressing the issues of building Ontario together?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you to the honourable member from Barrie–Innisfil for that question, and for her being a true champion of the skilled trades and for all young people in Ontario. Thank you for that.

Mr. Speaker, there is a problem on Ontario's horizon: Our province is facing a shortage of workers in the skilled trades. But the solution is clear: We need to let young people and their parents know that a career in the skilled trades is exciting, fulfilling and great-paying.

I am proud today to kick off National Skilled Trades and Technology Week. Over the coming days, our government will be promoting the rewarding and vibrant career opportunities in the skilled trades. We're putting the people at the centre of every single decision, and this week they have the opportunity to learn about these many exciting careers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Minister. It's great to hear our government recognizes that Ontario's skilled trades are vital to the health and growth of our economy. Just this morning, the President of the Treasury Board, addressing the Barrie chamber, talked to that exact fact. Many people around the table were talking about the need to work together to solve this problem, as we expect that one in five jobs will be in the skilled trades and related professions. This means there are tremendous opportunities available in the skilled trades in this province that are left empty.

People who enter Ontario's skilled trades choose important careers that lead to secure jobs, rewarding and quality work and quality of life. These are tremendous, driven individuals who help build and boost up our economy. So I'd like the minister to tell us more about all the things that our government is doing to make sure that these people succeed.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you again to the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, today we're launching a new website: ontario.ca/trades. At this new hub, people can explore the trades and learn how to become a tradesperson. For employers and current tradespeople, they can get help with hiring and learn about changes to the skilled trades and Ontario's apprenticeship system. We've now got a one-stop shop that makes it easier for people to explore career opportunities in the skilled trades and for employers to hire apprentices and tradespeople.

Mr. Speaker, our government is building the workforce Ontario needs. We're making the province open for business and open for jobs.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ian Arthur: Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks: Bill 132 is the government's latest attack on Ontario's beautiful environment. The bill dramatically cuts fines that polluters would pay for violating environmental protections, lowering those fines from a maximum of \$6 million to \$200,000. The worst offenders are simply going to factor these insignificant fines into the cost of doing business.

Why is this government claiming that it is doing more to hold polluters accountable when it is actually cutting the penalties producers face?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks for that question. I only wish the member opposite actually read the legislation and really understood it. Perhaps he needs to take a technical briefing.

Right now, only 140 facilities in this province can be fined through monetary penalties. We're opening it up to 150,000 different facilities in this province. We are adding a new tool. In fact, we're also changing the rules so that if a company is breaking the rules and making an economic benefit out of breaking the rules, not only will they be fined under this new system; they will be charged for that economic benefit as well; and it can go further to prosecution. We've made it much tougher on those businesses.

What we are doing right now—it's another tool for the environmental officers in the province of Ontario. Not only will they be able to fine with these monetary penalties, but if they need to, they'll continue with investigation and take it to the court.

Mr. Speaker, we are improving the environmental standards of this province, and we are forcing the people behind it who are being paid—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The supplementary question.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Speaker, through you to the minister: I assure him I have read the bill in great detail.

Again to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks: Environmental protections are not red tape. They are critically important to protecting the health and well-being of all Ontarians. According to Environmental Defence, these proposed changes "will make it easier and cheaper for industry in Ontario to illegally dump sewage in our water, use toxic pesticides and pollute the air." They warn that reducing the fines polluters will pay "will lead to severe consequences" for both the environment and our health.

Will the minister commit to reversing this callous decision today?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is just wrong and doesn't really understand the situation going forward.

What is currently happening today, before these AMPs are put out there, is that in only 140 different facilities in this province can an environmental officer lay a monetary charge. Otherwise, there is a huge gap where those people who were violating or causing damage to the environment were going scot-free. They couldn't be charged. Right now, we're going to expand it to 150,000 different facilities across this province.

Not only that, but if a company is violating the law and hurting the environment, and they're gaining some economic benefit, the changes we are making—not only will they have a fine, but they'll also be charged for the economic benefit they have received, and it can go further to prosecution.

Mr. Speaker, we are strengthening the laws in this province. We are expanding what can be covered. We are making polluters pay. We are going to continue going forward to protect our land, air and water—which is creating a balanced, healthy economy and a healthy environment.

FUR INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry: Today is fur managers day at Queen's Park, and we're privileged to have trappers here in the audience. Many members are meeting with them today.

For generations, the trapping and harvesting of fur has been an integral part of our heritage. The industry in Ontario is comprised of thousands of people who contribute both to the economy and to proper wildlife management.

The Ontario Fur Managers Federation represents over 6,000 people who ensure that this important part of our heritage continues to thrive. They are leaders in protecting and managing Ontario's sensitive and important ecosystem.

Speaker, will the minister please tell this House what measures our government is taking to support those who work in this industry?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I thank the great member from Haldimand–Norfolk for that question.

I want to acknowledge the work being done by the Ontario Fur Managers Federation. Their dedication and passion for the industry are truly inspiring to see. One example of our continued partnership is the training and licensing of trappers in Ontario, which the Fur Managers Federation has the expertise to run and administer. Our government recognizes the value of their first-hand experience and recently renewed their contract to continue administering this program on behalf of our government.

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Their efforts in wildlife management have been a tremendous asset in maintaining the rich biodiversity that Ontarians enjoy today. I'm happy to say that I have met with them on a number of occasions, and their understanding of the industry has been of great assistance in my role as the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you to the minister. I couldn't agree more that this organization has been doing an excellent job for over 20 years. Ontario has benefited from their hard work. I'm glad to hear of our government's continued support from MNRF.

Management of predators, such as wolves, is key to protecting moose populations. The volunteers with the Fur Managers Federation have been working to ensure a scientific approach to wildlife management. We need more of this mentality, to ensure experts are given the tools to get the job done and to get the job done properly.

Back to the minister: What actions is he taking to ensure wildlife management is based on science rather than ideology?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thanks again to the member for his question and also for his tremendous advocacy for many, many years on behalf of the Fur Managers Federation.

The member is absolutely correct, and our government takes this issue very seriously. I've been working with the fur managers to ensure they have a seat at the table when it comes to managing Ontario's ecosystem. We need to continue utilizing their knowledge and to work with them as partners to ensure that this province and its many resources are there to enjoy for future generations.

Conservation in this province must be guided by facts, not ideology. That's why, as Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, I'm committed to ensuring wildlife management decisions will be determined by science, now and into the future.

POVERTY

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is for the Acting Premier. Food bank use in Toronto is up 4% over last year. That is twice the population growth—over a million visits in the GTA alone. As *Who's Hungry?*, the just-released profile of hunger in Toronto, states, "Hunger is a symptom of poverty. It" is "a public policy issue that cannot be outsourced to charity."

What is the government going to do about dramatically rising rates of poverty on its watch?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member opposite for the question. It's a very, very important question for all of our communities, and we're actually doing quite a bit, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you that, just last week, I was at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Elementary School with the Minister of Health and our Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, where we were talking about reducing red tape for food banks like the Daily Bread Food Bank, who released their report this morning. We appreciate the good work that organizations like the Daily Bread Food Bank are doing in our community, along with many churches and gurdwaras and synagogues and temples, in making sure those most needy in our community are getting fed—and that we're not burying them in red tape. That was just one announcement.

I can tell you that last week I was at Ontario 360 with the Munk school, hearing their report, and we thanked them for the good work that they've been doing. We're implementing a number of their recommendations as well. You may have read about those in the *Toronto Star* over the weekend.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Poverty costs Ontario between \$27 billion and \$33 billion a year. It is the result of systems that push people into poverty and make it hard for them to get out. That is why Black families are twice as likely as white ones to experience food insecurity. Unaffordable housing and unavailable mental health supports are also part of those systems. So are the cancelled basic income pilot, a minimum wage that didn't rise to \$15 an hour and unaffordable child care.

When is the government going to take a systems perspective to eradicate poverty? It would be good for the people of Ontario and good for Ontario's economy.

Hon. Todd Smith: I appreciate that. We have made a significant investment, I can tell you, in the Ontario Child Benefit in the last year—a \$31-million increase in the Ontario Child Benefit.

I can tell you that the main thing that we're doing on this side of the House, though, is to try and lift people out of poverty by getting them into employment, and we're doing that. There are 900,000 people in Ontario today that

are living on one form of social assistance or another: Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program. Many of those individuals want to work, and they have the ability to work. That's why, with programs like the one that the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development was talking about earlier during question period, we will be able to move people from social assistance into employment.

And I can tell you that we have seen great success in creating jobs in Ontario since this government has taken office, Mr. Speaker. Some 273,000 new jobs have been created in Ontario since we've taken office. We're taking this very—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The next question.

SKILLED TRADES

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question is to the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, who leads by example. Speaker, I am very excited that this week is skilled trades week. On this side of the House, we understand the fundamental appreciation for the role that skilled trades play in our society. But we know that despite skilled trades being so important, women only hold 4% of the jobs. This is unacceptable. I think we can all agree in this House that we need to do more to work towards the goal to have more women in skilled trades.

So I ask the minister: Can the minister explain to this House why it's so important to get more women and more girls into skilled trades?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member from Barrie–Innisfil for that great question. It's such an honour for me to rise for the first time as the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Speaker, for such a large sector of our economy, skilled trades need more women. As a woman who grew up in a skilled trades family, I know the value of skilled trades in our province. It provides individuals with lifelong, transferable skills, and is a rewarding experience. We also know in this House that when women in our society and economy succeed, we are all stronger. When we promote women's full economic participation in all sectors, we support Ontario's growth and prosperity. I am proud to be part of a government that values women and encourages them to enter into the skilled trades.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Minister, for that excellent answer. I know your passion really shows, from the examples and the work that you have done in your file.

Speaker, we all know many women in our lives who have contributed to their communities in the skilled trades. The Premier was in Barrie to visit Brotech Precision CNC in my riding—where it's women like Crystel Sampson, who is a machinist; it's women like Cathlena Beaudet, who is a machinist; it's people and women like Mellissa Cave, who is an inspector; and Krystal Fisher, who is an inspector. If it wasn't for them, Brotech would not be as successful today, as it will be tomorrow and the next day.

This is an example of how we can get more women into skilled trades and give more women hope, like Abigail Brito, a 15-year-old student who is looking to get into the skilled trades, who is at St. Joseph's high school, but she needs the resources and examples.

So I ask the minister: What more are we doing as a government to lead women into skilled trades?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for your question.

Speaker, one of my priorities as minister is to work with my ministerial colleagues to encourage all Ontarians, but especially women, to get into the skilled trades sector. I was honoured to stand with the Minister of Education, the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development and the member from Niagara West last week, when we announced the expansion of the province's Specialist High Skills Major program. As my colleague the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development said, we need to get the word out that jobs in skilled trades are stable, fulfilling, exciting and pay good money.

Through commitments like the SHSM program and the 17 projects our government funds that provide employment, pre-employment, pre-apprenticeship and entrepreneurship training for low-income women, we can bring more women into the workforce, into the skilled trades, and increase their earnings. I am so excited to work in this House and with all sectors to get more women into skilled trades.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Acting Premier. We recently learned that the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit was forced to lay off nine registered nurses from the healthy families and schools program, a crucial program that provides immunizations to children in schools, support for newborns and maternal care, and education about healthy living. The health unit and the president of ONA Local 8 say that these front-line layoffs are happening because of this Conservative government's sweeping cut to public health. Our health care system was left hanging by a thread thanks to consistent underfunding at the hands of the Liberals, but now the Conservatives are dragging us further backwards.

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Does the Acting Premier think that cutting public health and firing front-line nurses is good for our children and our communities?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, what we are doing is strengthening our public health system. This is something that goes back several years to comments that were made by the Auditor General in a report in 2017, where she indicated that our public health units were duplicating work, that they were not well coordinated, and that they were having difficulty attracting the trained professionals that they needed to have a strong, healthy unit in each of our locations across the province.

There was a subsequent committee that came forward that recommended a number of things, but also recommended reducing the number of public health units from

35 to a smaller number. We are following up on that because we know it's important in each geographic area in Ontario to have a strong public health unit that's going to be able to take up the issues in their area, to make sure that immunization rates are reached, to make sure that students are healthy in schools, and to make sure that our seniors are protected. This is done to protect people and to strengthen our public health units, which are going to become even more important as we integrate care for patients as a result of our transformation of our health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: To the Acting Premier: Just in case you didn't hear it, there were nine public health nurses laid off in Windsor, who provide immunization to schoolchildren and who provide care to newborns and to new parents. That is not strengthening health care.

Back to the Acting Premier: The Conservatives have wasted no time cutting the critical public health services that people rely on, yet just recently they hired another special adviser to hold consultations on their plan to overhaul public health and emergency services. Many stakeholders have told us that they haven't been consulted yet, and it's unclear why the Premier continues to cut first and consult later. I'm sure the public health nurses in Windsor would have appreciated the opportunity to be consulted before they were laid off.

Why is the Acting Premier holding these consultations if they are already plowing through with plans to cut public health? Again, nine public health nurses in Windsor—that's a huge blow to our community. That is not providing care to schoolchildren. That is not providing maternal care. That is not providing support for newborns.

Hon. Christine Elliott: It is important to understand the facts. The facts are that we are strengthening our public health care system. In fact, the funding has been maintained for this year. There are no retroactive changes. There are some changes that are happening as of January 1, but we are making sure that there will not be more than a 10% increase for any one public health care unit. So it is something that we are working on. We want to make our system is even stronger than it actually is now.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is for the Associate Minister of Energy. Our nuclear industry in Ontario is an example for the whole world. It's energy that's clean, it's low-cost, and it's reliable.

It is also responsible for 60,000 high-paying jobs all across the province—in Durham region at Darlington, in Pickering and also at Bruce Power, which I know the associate minister actually used to work at in the beginning of his career.

Can the minister please tell me what we're doing as a government to support our nuclear industry?

Hon. Bill Walker: I want to thank the honourable member from Durham for that great question and all the great work she does on behalf of the people of Durham.

The member is absolutely correct. Safety, affordability and reliability are at the core of what Ontarians expect when it comes to our province's electricity system, expectations that our nuclear producers more than meet.

At a time when global leaders are looking to nuclear energy for innovative solutions, the NDP sadly continues to resist and deny the true benefits of nuclear power. All they have to do, Speaker, is listen to leaders like Bill Gates, who said, "Nuclear is ideal for dealing with climate change, because it is the only carbon-free, scalable energy source that's available 24 hours a day." Leaders like Gates understand that nuclear is the most viable option to reduce global carbon emissions while producing safe and reliable energy.

Mr. Speaker, our government understands the benefits of investing in nuclear energy, and we will always stand with Ontario's outstanding nuclear producers.

EDWARD SHAW

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand there's a point of order by the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Mr. Speaker, I really do appreciate the opportunity to recognize the 84th birthday of my father, Edward Shaw. He couldn't be here today. I know he's watching, so happy birthday, Dad.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you for that. This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.
The House recessed from 1145 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Suze Morrison: Today, I rise in the Legislature to highlight the struggle that tenants across this province, especially in my riding of Toronto Centre, are facing to maintain affordable housing.

In particular, I want to congratulate the tenants' association at 140 Carlton Street, whose hard work paid off last week when they spoke out at the Landlord and Tenant Board and successfully negotiated to reduce an above-the-guideline rent increase.

The Carlton Street tenants' association's leadership did an excellent job organizing and educating tenants on how to collectively assert their rights; but Speaker, despite this outcome, the tenants are still facing a significant rent increase. Many of them are still worried about how they're going to keep a roof over their heads as their rent becomes more and more unaffordable.

Many of them left that Landlord and Tenant Board meeting feeling like the law, as it stands, is imbalanced in favour of the landlord, and they're not wrong. As a tenant myself and as a representative for tenants, I strongly believe that this needs to change. Tenants should never have to be in this situation. The Landlord and Tenant Board has favoured landlords for far too long.

Housing is a human right, and that includes having safe, reliable housing without the fear of being priced out by predatory landlords whose only concern is their bottom lines. My office and I have been working hard to support tenant associations across Toronto Centre, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same in their respective ridings.

The system should be fair and balanced, and the tenants in my riding and across Ontario deserve better.

GURU NANAK DEV JI GURPURAB

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: This year on November 12, we're celebrating the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji—the founder of Sikhism—in Canada, India and around the world as Guru Nanak Gurpurab.

In his life, Guru Nanak Dev Ji sought to teach us that there is one fundamental barrier that we each must overcome: haumai, literally meaning “I myself.” His is a message that says that we are not individuals who should struggle against one another, but a global community that has a duty to each other to fight division and injustice, and promote harmony, equality and peace. His teachings uphold the key Sikh principle of egalitarianism, which rejects discrimination in any form whatsoever.

Coming from a Sikh family, I am extremely proud of the achievements of generations of activists and campaigners who have come before me, and the visionaries like Guru Nanak Dev Ji who espoused this principle of equality before its time.

I'm sure Guru Nanak Dev Ji's life and his teachings will continue to be an inspiration for millions of Sikhs and non-Sikhs across the world.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to use my time today to talk about Murchadha House in my riding of Essex. Murchadha House is a not-for-profit charity started by Sandy and Darrin Murphy.

Sandy and Darrin recognized the need for more supportive housing in our region when they realized that their son Joshua could wait as long as two decades for placement into a group home in our region. Sandy and Darrin established the charity and began raising money. In April of this year, they broke ground on their first location, in Cottam. I'm happy to report that soon, Murchadha House will open and provide supportive housing for up to four people and will be operated by Community Living Essex County.

I'd like to recognize Sandy, Darrin and Joshua for their hard work and for stepping up to fill a gap in our community. I also want to thank the corporate and private sponsors who gave so generously to see this project completed.

This is also a challenge to all of my colleagues here in the Legislature. We have an obligation to work every bit as hard as the Murphy family has. We all have a responsibility to ensure that every Ontarian has a safe and secure home. The wait-lists for supportive housing in Ontario are

a shame, but we can solve this problem by making better choices and by having priorities that reflect the values of Ontarians.

Two-decades-long wait-lists are not acceptable to families in my riding, and they should not be acceptable to us here at Queen's Park.

CHATHAM COLOURED ALL-STARS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I recently had the pleasure of celebrating the 85th anniversary of the Chatham Coloured All-Stars baseball team. “Coloured” was the predominant term for Black Canadians in the 1930s, and Chatham was home to a vibrant Black community ever since the Underground Railroad had made Chatham one of its end destinations for freed slaves in the 1800s.

In the 1930s, however, there were still many obstacles rooted in racism and bigotry that Black Canadians faced. That is why the story of this baseball team is so momentous. In 1933, they toured the province in exhibition games, then made history by joining the Chatham City League as an official team, becoming part of the Ontario Baseball Amateur Association. They went on to win the OBAA Intermediate B championship in 1934, becoming the first Black team to win a baseball title.

It was great to see relatives of these former all-stars. Among them was Dorothy Wright Wallace, an incredible leader in Chatham with the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society.

So far, the only Canadian to be inducted into Major League Baseball's hall of fame is Ferguson Jenkins, as we all know. He must have gotten some of his playing ability from his father, Ferguson Jenkins Sr., who played on this team.

I've been privileged to play ball over the years with relatives of members of this very special team.

Thank you to the Sons of Kent brewery for hosting this very well-attended event, and thank you for this time, Mr. Speaker.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: A new home is the single largest investment most people will ever make in their lives. New homeowners need to know that the government has their back when it comes to their rights being protected, and that their warranties are honoured. But for 15 long years under the previous Ontario Liberal government, this was simply not the case, and Tarion was left to self-regulate without any real government oversight.

For years, NDP opposition MPPs raised this issue here in the Legislature, but the Liberal government of the time would repeatedly side with Tarion and their developer friends, even ignoring changes recommended by Justice Cunningham to strengthen consumer protection and improve warranties.

Last year, a successful NDP amendment in committee finally granted the Auditor General the authority to audit Tarion and figure out what was really going on. The results

of this audit were shocking and revealed a culture at Tarion that appeared to view consumer protection as secondary to the needs of developers, and a corporate structure whose primary goal was to maximize its own profits.

While nearly 10,000 claims by new homeowners were rejected simply for missing convoluted deadlines, Tarion paid its own senior executives up to 60% in salary bonuses. This is so wrong.

This summer, I visited the riding of Orléans and attended a packed meeting of homeowners of the Cardinal Creek Village development, who were outraged about major defects in their new homes and about either delayed or non-existent help in having their claims fulfilled.

None of this, of course, appears in the Ontario Builder Directory, which is supposed to allow consumers to make an informed choice.

The time for action is now. The Auditor General has laid out a number of key recommendations to help fix this broken system. Let's get it done.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Next Monday, all over Ontario and across Canada, we will recognize the sacrifice of veterans and their families, from past generations to the present day. In every community in this province, memories of loved ones and memories of the terror of war live on in the hearts of veterans themselves and in their families.

In Don Valley West at 11 o'clock on Monday morning, I will attend a service at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre on Bayview Avenue. The Warrior's Hall will be filled with men and women who served our country in World War II, in Korea and in theatres of conflict around the world. They will be accompanied by their daughters and sons, grandchildren, their wives and husbands and friends. They'll be joined by fine caregivers, medical staff and hard-working Sunnybrook volunteers. All of us will be there to recognize what veterans have done for us and to offer our respect and gratitude.

Sunnybrook has a long history rooted in caring for people suffering the casualties of war. In 1928, Sunnybrook Farm was donated to the city of Toronto by the Kilgour family. In 1943, with the agreement of the family, 400 acres were transferred to the government of Canada to build a 1,590-bed veterans' hospital. The first patients were treated in 1946, but the Sunnybrook Military Hospital was officially opened in June 1948 by Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. Since then, Sunnybrook has served veterans with care and compassion.

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Mr. Speaker, my own personal experience with Sunnybrook is that of a little girl visiting her grandpa; he was there. He moved within five minutes of Sunnybrook hospital in 1952 because he'd been gassed in the Battle of the Somme, and he went there to have his lungs cleared. I can still remember the deep, rattling, scary cough from Charlie Wynne. What I know is that Charlie would not

have lived that long without Sunnybrook. He died at the age of 77.

Sunnybrook is many things now. It's a provincial centre of excellence in many aspects of health care. But Sunnybrook began as a place for soldiers to heal, and on November 11, every year, we feel that acutely and are grateful.

LOIS JAMES

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I want to take this opportunity to pay homage to the late Lois James, who recently passed away at the age of 95. She was a passionate fighter for the preservation of Ontario's biodiversity, nature and environment.

For over half a century, she championed the cause of conservation, founded and led the Save the Rouge Valley System campaign, and fought for environmental and social justice issues. Her work inspired those around her and generations of young people. In 2003, her lifetime of achievement was recognized when she became a member of the Order of Canada. She's lovingly known as the "Mother of the Rouge," and her work helped establish Canada's first national urban park, the Rouge Park, from which my riding takes its name. The Rouge National Urban Park is a testament to her passion, and her legacy still continues to inspire those who desire a better country.

Although she has passed on the torch to the next generation, the work she started has only just begun.

Lois, you will be dearly missed.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: London is facing one of the worst housing crises we have ever seen. A record-high real estate market is putting new homes out of reach of many first-time buyers, increasing pressure on already limited rental stock. Condo conversions are taking affordable units out of the rental market. Social assistance rates are woefully inadequate to cover market rents, and the failure of both Liberal and Conservative governments to invest in social housing has left London public housing with a \$230-million repair backlog.

The lack of supply means that women fleeing domestic violence are staying in shelter longer. Last year, women were turned away from Anova emergency shelter more than 2,500 times. It means almost 5,000 London families on the wait-list for rent-geared-to-income units, an estimated 1,000 Londoners without a place to call home, and thousands more on the brink of homelessness.

I want to commend the efforts of the city of London to address this crisis by holding its first-ever Housing Stability Week. In just five days last week, 70 families facing homelessness were housed and 550 people were provided with immediate supports. I'm proud of the way the city, community partners and private landlords worked together on this unique rapid-response approach. But there is only so much locally we can do. When will this Conservative government step up and provide the leadership

and funding for affordable housing that Londoners so desperately need?

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Lorne Coe: Today is the start of National Skilled Trades and Technology Week. During this week and beyond, the government will continue to modernize skilled trades and apprenticeships in Ontario.

The skilled trades play an important role in making Ontario open for business. Yet, when we formed government, Ontario lagged behind other jurisdictions in apprentice regulations. The Ontario College of Trades contributed to a backlog in the system and created unnecessary red tape for skilled trades employment. The college did not have stakeholder buy-in, it lacked enforcement, and concerns were raised about its excessive membership fees. That's why the government is winding down the Ontario College of Trades. Renewal fees for apprentices have been eliminated and fees for journeypersons have been reduced by 50%.

It's time, Speaker, for a system that puts people first. By breaking down the barriers to skilled trades, we are helping young people tap into good, well-paying jobs. We're building Ontario together.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Donna Skelly: With the recent announcement of the \$100-million expansion of DHL Express at Hamilton International Airport, I would like to take a moment to highlight some of the other investments being made and why I believe they indicate our province is on the right economic track.

Earlier this year, KF Aerospace, Canada's largest commercial aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul facility, announced a \$30-million investment, also at Hamilton International Airport. This will nearly triple its current workforce, from 150 to 425 employees, and expand its commercial maintenance and repair facility as part of a four-year plan. Moreover, KF Aerospace has partnered with Mohawk College, which will give students access to highly skilled and well-paying jobs.

This approach is also being taken by the Liburdi Group, a leader in the nuclear energy field, which recently moved its Hamilton operation into a new 40,000-square-foot facility.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't stop there. Stryker Corp. and L3 Wescam, large companies that require highly skilled workforces, have both, this year, announced they are expanding and moving into larger state-of-the-art facilities in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook.

This all speaks to our government's multi-pronged approach to ensuring our post-secondary institutions offer programs that will fit the jobs of the future, and that businesses see Ontario as an attractive place to invest and grow. Mr. Speaker, this positive economic growth in my hometown of Hamilton is just more evidence that our government is creating jobs, cutting red tape and making sure Ontario is open for business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have this afternoon for members' statements.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 124

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins has informed me he has a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I believe we have unanimous consent amongst the parties to be able to move a motion without debate in regard to the time allocation motion on Bill 124.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice with respect to time allocation of Bill 124. Did I get that right?

Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated October 31, 2019, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 124, An Act to implement moderation measures in respect of compensation in Ontario's public sector, the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet until 6:30 p.m. on Monday, November 4, 2019.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bisson has moved that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated October 31, 2019, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 124, An Act to implement moderation measures in respect of compensation in Ontario's public sector, the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet until 6:30 p.m. on Monday, November 4, 2019.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

598968 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2019

Ms. Sattler moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr11, An Act to revive 598968 Ontario Limited.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

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PETITIONS

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly called "Don't Take Away Social and Economic Rights for Women and Marginalized People," and it reads:

“Whereas Bill 47 erased many of the legislative gains achieved through Bill 148, the fairer labour laws and working conditions that had a particularly positive impact on women and marginalized people;

“Whereas statistics show that women, particularly women of colour, are most likely to be employed in precarious work, and the Bill 47 amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and Labour Relations Act, 1995 create conditions that lead to a growth in precarious employment while also eliminating protections for millions of Ontario workers;

“Whereas Bill 66 further erodes women’s and marginalized people’s social and economic rights; and

“Whereas the Ford government continues to remove, cancel or freeze funding for other supports, programs and regulations that would increase women’s equality in the workforce and beyond;

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

“—reinstate paid sick days, the scheduled increase to a \$15 minimum wage, legislation to increase pay transparency, regulations that support equal pay for equal work, and all other worker protections gained under the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act;

“—reverse changes to daycare regulations that allow more children per caregiver;

“—reverse the retroactive cuts to funding for the Ontario College of Midwives;

“—reinstate funding increases to sexual assault centres;

“—restore the round table on violence against women; and

“—restore the child and youth advocate commissioner’s office.”

I fully support this petition, affix my signature and I’ll give it to page Nathan to take to the table.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Dave Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the ban on hunting and trapping in sections of Ontario to protect the eastern hybrid wolf was put in place without regard for the overall ecosystem;

“Whereas this ban has adversely affected the ability of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), hunters and trappers to properly manage animal populations and Ontario’s ecosystem; and

“Whereas this ban is no longer needed and is in fact causing more damage to Ontario’s ecosystem and increasing unnecessary encounters between wildlife and Ontarians;

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

“That the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry immediately lift the ban on hunting and trapping set in place to protect the eastern hybrid wolf.”

I agree with this petition, will sign it and give it to page Olivia.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Ms. Suze Morrison: I have a petition here from CUPE.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the” Conservative government’s “cuts represent an all-out attack on municipalities, health care, schools, universities and social services; and

“Whereas the” Conservative government’s “cuts are harming families, children and the most vulnerable across Ontario, making the services we all rely on less accessible and accountable; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will strip workers of their charter-protected right to free collective bargaining; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will force front-line public sector workers to accept contracts below inflation, compounding cuts that make the delivery of services more difficult;

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

“That the government of Ontario stop dismantling our social infrastructure, properly fund our public services, withdraw Bill 124, and support communities, not cuts.”

I fully endorse this petition. I will be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Owen to deliver to the Clerks.

TAXATION

Mr. Will Bouma: This petition is entitled “A Carbon Tax is Not the Only Way to Fight Climate Change.

“Stop Justin Trudeau’s Carbon Tax.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government for the people was elected on a mandate to make life more affordable for Ontarians; and

“Whereas the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan is currently working to reduce targets by the previously agreed upon Paris accord targets without a carbon tax; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province that is meeting the goals of the 30% reduction rates agreed to in the Paris accord; and

“Whereas the seniors, workers, families and small businesses of Ontario cannot afford another tax burden on every purchase they make;

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

“Fight the federally imposed Justin Trudeau carbon tax with every tool at the government’s disposal.”

Mr. Speaker, I completely endorse this petition, will be placing my signature on it and giving it to page Mackenzie.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I’m going to be reading a petition from CUPE.

“Whereas ... Conservatives’ cuts represent an all-out attack on municipalities, health care, schools, universities and social services; and

“Whereas the ... Conservatives’ cuts are harming families, children and the most vulnerable across Ontario,

making the services we all rely on less accessible and accountable; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will strip workers of their charter-protected right to free collective bargaining; and

“Whereas Bill 124 will force front-line public sector workers to accept contracts below inflation, compounding cuts that make the delivery of services more difficult;

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

“That the government of Ontario stop dismantling our social infrastructure, properly fund our public services, withdraw Bill 124, and support communities, not cuts.”

Speaker, I support this petition, will be signing it and will be giving it to our page Bernat.

FOOD SAFETY

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, states that ‘every room where food is prepared, processed, packaged, served, transported, manufactured, handled, sold, offered for sale or displayed shall be kept free from live birds or animals’; and

“Whereas low-risk food premises serving only beverages and/or only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods have for many years in this province allowed customers to be accompanied by their pet dogs for their convenience and social benefit; and

“Whereas the decision whether or not to allow dogs on site should be driven by the business needs of such premises, so long as sanitary and safe conditions are upheld;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create an exception to Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, for low-risk food premises serving only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods, for the benefit of all Ontario pet owners and the businesses that serve them.”

I affix my name to this petition and hand it to page Alisha.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled “Time to Care.

“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 as follows:

“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.”

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

FOOD SAFETY

Ms. Donna Skelly: This petition: “Whereas Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, states that ‘every room where food is prepared, processed, packaged, served, transported, manufactured, handled, sold, offered for sale or displayed shall be kept free from live birds or animals’; and

“Whereas low-risk food premises serving only beverages and/or only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods have for many years in this province allowed customers to be accompanied by their pet dogs for their convenience and social benefit; and

“Whereas the decision whether or not to allow dogs on site should be driven by the business needs of such premises, so long as sanitary and safe conditions are upheld;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to create an exception to Ontario regulation 493/17 part III, section 14, for low-risk food premises serving only prepackaged or non-hazardous foods, for the benefit of all Ontario pet owners and the businesses that serve them.”

I will sign it, Mr. Speaker, and give it to page Ella.

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WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: J’ai une pétition intitulée « Improve Winter Road Maintenance on Northern Highways ».

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Highways 11 and 17 play a critical role in the development and prosperity of northern Ontario;

“Whereas the former Liberal government introduced private winter maintenance contracts, and the current Conservative government has failed to improve winter road conditions in northern Ontario;

“Whereas injuries and fatalities are twice more likely to occur on northern highway than on a highway in southern Ontario, per capita;

“Whereas current Ministry of Transportation classification for winter highway maintenance negatively impacts the safety of drivers of northern highways.

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

“Classify all 400-series highways, the QEW highway and Highways 11 and 17 as class 1 highways;

“Require that the pavement on class 1 highways be bare of snow within eight hours of the end of a snowfall.”

J’endors cette pétition, et je la signe. Je donne la pétition à Zakiyya.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Billy Pang: This petition is about public and private infrastructure initiatives.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the past 15 years of provincial mismanagement has resulted in outdated and dilapidated infrastructure across Ontario;

“Whereas the costs of maintaining such infrastructure will be a significant and preventable burden for future Ontarians;

“Whereas current infrastructure is not adequate to efficiently facilitate the movement of goods and individuals across the province;

“Whereas the government has already committed to funding and facilitating Ontario’s largest P3 pipeline infrastructure projects, worth \$65 billion, and are driving economic growth and development in Ontario;

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

“To call on the Ontario government to continue to support public and private infrastructure initiatives that will tangibly improve logistical capacity and facilitate travel in Ontario.”

I affix my name to this petition and submit it through page Elizabeth.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I rise to table this petition, and I want to thank the residents of York South–Weston who support the Green New Democratic Deal.

“Whereas Doug Ford is going in the wrong direction on the environment by ignoring our climate emergency and cutting funding to deal with the climate crisis;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the government of Ontario to implement the Green New Democratic Deal to:

“—achieve net zero emissions by 2050, starting by cutting emissions 50% by 2030;

“—create more than a million new jobs;

“—add billions of dollars to Ontario’s economy;

“—embark on the largest building retrofit program in the world by providing homeowners with rebates, interest-free loans and support to retrofit their homes to realize net zero emissions.”

I fully support this petition. I’ll be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Bernat to deliver to the table.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Dave Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas currently Peterborough city and county has seen a major increase in the amount of opioid-related overdoses, poisonings, and deaths;

“Whereas in Ontario and across the country it has been deemed that there is a current opioid crisis; and

“Whereas Peterborough currently does not have a consumption and treatment site to help in the reduction of overdoses and deaths in the area;

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

“Work to put forward an application for a treatment and consumption services site to follow the mandatory services, such as:

“a) supervised drug consumption (injection, intranasal, oral) and overdose prevention services;

“b) on-site or defined pathways to addiction treatment services;

“c) on-site or defined pathways to wraparound services: primary care, mental health, housing, other social supports;

“d) provide proper harm reduction services such as education, first aid/wound care, distribution and safe disposal of needles, and provision of naloxone and oxygen;

“e) removal of any discarded harm reduction supplies around the consumption and treatment area;

“f) support ongoing discussions to address local community and neighbourhood concerns on an ongoing basis.”

I have another 50 signatures to give in today. I’ll hand them to page Nathan.

OPPOSITION DAY

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move the following opposition day motion:

Whereas the previous Liberal government left Ontario hospitals underfunded and unable to meet patient demand; and

Whereas the current Conservative government has continued with these policies; and

Whereas communities such as Brampton are struggling with long hospital waits and hospitals that are routinely operating well over capacity; and

Whereas the Peel Memorial Centre has been overcrowded, to the extent that for every 100 patients it is funded to see, 500 have walked in the door needing care;

Therefore the Legislative Assembly calls on the government of Ontario to ensure that the fall economic statement provides hospitals across the province with funding that reflects patient need, and allocates necessary funding for the immediate phase II expansion of Peel Memorial Centre, as well as the necessary funding for the immediate construction of a new hospital in Brampton.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 1. I look to the Leader of the Opposition to lead off the debate.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It’s certainly an honour to rise this afternoon to speak to this motion, but I can tell you, I would much rather not have to do so.

We fought for years to try to get the Liberals to do the right thing by Brampton. Of course, people might remember that when the one Brampton hospital that exists

came online, it was a P3 construct. It was the Conservative government of the day that put that together, and we ended up, of course, spending way more money than we should have, as a province, for that hospital and ended up shorting the community by about 100 beds or so. So here we are now, a decade and a half later, and the people of Brampton still do not have their health care needs being taken care of—particularly a lack of opportunity to get the kind of care that they deserve in the hospital system.

Last week, the NDP shared some pretty alarming numbers that we obtained through a freedom-of-information request. Those numbers show that from July 2018 to June 2019, the Peel Memorial urgent care centre in Brampton was over capacity. “Over capacity” means they’re operating with more patients than what it’s funded to operate for. In fact, the overcapacity ranged from 557% more than they had the funding for to 587%. That is pretty serious stuff, Speaker. That means that for every 100 patients who walked in the door of Peel Memorial that the facility actually had the funding to be able to provide services for, more than 500 more walked in the door needing care but there was no funding for that care.

Of course, the wonderful front-line staff who work at Peel Memorial did everything they could and still, to this moment, are doing everything they can, as the front-line workers at Brampton Civic Hospital are doing everything they can to try to provide service to the people of Brampton. But we’ve seen a Liberal government that failed the fastest-growing community in Ontario, frankly—probably in Canada. The Liberals failed them for years and years on end. Now we’re well into the Conservative term of government, and again, we’re not hearing anything about their commitment to relieve the pressure in Brampton and provide the good people of Brampton the kind of health care system that they deserve, like every other Ontarian deserves.

1340

The fact that Peel Memorial Centre was at 587% capacity in and of itself is pretty alarming, but the numbers also show that while that was happening, Brampton Civic Hospital and Etobicoke General Hospital have also been over 100% capacity for each and every month. Just to put that into context, the internationally agreed-upon standard for hospital capacity—in other words, what does the international community see as being the amount of occupancy that creates a safe environment for patients and workers in hospitals? Our Ministry of Health has signed on to the same international standard. That standard is 85%. So when the standard is 85% for safe operation of a hospital for patients and staff, and we have hospitals routinely in our province operating at 100% capacity or greater, we know that we’re in a big crisis. Everybody realizes that the Liberals left hospitals hanging by a string, our health care system hanging by string, but unfortunately this new government, although they like to talk a good game, are not doing what they need to do to start to fix the problem in our hospitals.

What that means for Brampton families, in particular, is that families will go to the emergency ward with a child perhaps who is in pain and crying, and that child and

parent will sit in the emergency waiting room for hours and hours on end. That means that patients in Brampton Civic might be left on a gurney in a hallway for literally days.

I’ve had the pleasure of visiting the Brampton hospital a number of times now—at least three, perhaps more—and each and every time I’ve visited, two things have really concerned me: one in a negative way, and maybe the other one is not a concern so much as a realization of the caring work that gets done there. But the thing that’s concerning is just the amount of people in that hospital looking for care: gurney upon gurney upon gurney, emergency rooms overflowing, people desperate for help, people who tell stories about the fact that they can’t get the services they need. I’ve talked to parents and other family members in Brampton who have told me that they have chosen to drive further distances to hospitals that take them 20 minutes more to get there, just because they’re worried that if they went to Brampton, to their own hospital, they wouldn’t get the services their loved ones needed.

But by the same token, we see that hospital staffed by heroes—literally heroes, Speaker, people who go into work each and every day knowing how stressful it’s going to be, knowing the strain that’s going to be upon them and their colleagues to try to meet the needs of the good people of Brampton. I can tell you, every time I have visited that hospital, I have been nothing less than impressed by the dedication and the commitment of those workers, who are not getting any help from the provincial government, either now under the Ford Conservatives or before under the Wynne Liberals, when it comes to alleviating that pressure and giving them the opportunity to provide the kind of services, frankly, that they want to provide, which is another big problem that I hear about often across the province. Our front-line workers in hospitals—and in other health care facilities, but hospitals particularly—are doing their best, but they leave work stressed to the max because they just cannot put out the amount of effort they need to put out because it’s not human to do so. They go to inhuman lengths to do what they have to do already, and some of those folks leave work each and every day just completely stressed out from their inability to do what they know they should be doing and what they really want to do in terms of provision of quality of care.

Look, when those folks are in hospital hallways and when they are sitting in emergency rooms, waiting to be admitted into hospital, they can sit there, as I said, for hours or days. And what happens? You sit either in a chair or on the side of a gurney or lie down on a stretcher, and people are walking by you morning, noon and night. There’s all kinds of activity going on. There are bright lights. There’s all kinds of noises. So it’s not really the kind of place you want to be if you’re really sick. But, of course, that’s why you’re there: because you’re really sick. So those hallways and those emergency wards are not the optimal place to be housing patients in the first place, but they are there and they don’t have the quality of care that they should have. They have no call bells for nurses. They

have no easy access to a private place to use the washroom. Often their medical situation and their state of being at any given time is being described to one health care professional or another for everyone to hear, so there's a complete lack of privacy in terms of their condition and their prognosis, what might be happening in terms of their stay in the hospital. On top of all of that, there's no dignity to that. I mean, if you don't have any privacy, you also don't have any dignity. You're basically sitting on a stretcher in a space while the world goes by, and people can quite obviously have a look and see how you're doing.

I heard horror stories of people having dressings changed behind makeshift curtains that other people are holding up in hallways. That wasn't in Brampton; that happened to be in London, but, nonetheless, this a horrifying situation for people in Ontario, and it's because the Liberal government underfunded hospitals for years. Unfortunately, the same track that the Liberals were on is the track that the Conservatives have jumped on as well. They're chronically underfunding hospitals, and, in the case of Brampton, what the people of Brampton have been having to deal with for years and years now is beyond the pale.

What we do know as well is that there is a way to make this stop, that we can take the kind of action that will make this untenable situation end in Brampton. It is quite clear that hallway medicine was where the Liberals left us after years of underfunding. Hallway medicine is what we have now, and that hallway medicine comes from frozen budgets, as I've already mentioned, and from underfunding our health care system.

But 15 years they were in office, the Liberals—15 years—and Brampton was growing during that time, growing by leaps and bound, and continues to grow today, and all that time the Liberals insisted that a singular hospital was all that was needed for Brampton. They turned their backs, frankly, on the people of Brampton. After 15 long years in charge, they left our health care system, as I said, hanging by a thread, with hallway medicine as something that they've left the rest of us now to deal with.

The crisis was raging when the Liberals were voted out of office, and the crisis continues to rage with the Ford government in office. Premier Ford, of course, famously claimed—maybe infamously claimed—about a year ago that he would end hallway medicine by next summer. But it looks like once again he was just talking out of his hat, because that is absolutely not going to happen. In fact, what this government is doing is taking hallway medicine from bad to worse. That is something that I think everybody in this province is worried about.

The Premier isn't giving hospitals enough funding to keep up with rising costs, and his government's first budget sets the stage for health care spending to plunge by \$2.7 billion over the next two years. Now, you're going to hear through the course of this debate, Speaker, I'm sure, Conservatives get up and say, "No, it isn't so." But what we're talking about is the evidence provided by the Financial Accountability Officer, an independent officer

of the Legislature, who pegs the shorting of our health care system by \$2.7 billion in the next two years by this government.

I don't know how the Liberals can underfund health care and hospitals for 15 years, get kicked out of office because the hospitals and the health care system are hanging by a string, and then this Ford government can get elected and think that they can take \$2.7 billion out of a system that's already in crisis and expect people to be happy about that or expect people to be able to get better services. Well, that's absolutely not going happen. They are cutting hospital budgets and they're cutting hundreds of jobs out of the health care system. They're laying off nurses and laying off hundreds of health care workers throughout the province. That is not a prescription for fixing the hallway medicine crisis. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

So the motion that we are debating today will mean that Bramptonians can have some hope—hope that the long, painful waits and overcrowding will get better, and get better not at some point down the road, but get better soon.

I was really disappointed that this government didn't stand up for Brampton in the 2019 budget. It was a no-brainer. It was an obvious crisis that needed to be fixed, and I was quite clearly expecting that they would take that on in the 2019 budget. I was shocked to not see that commitment in the 2019 budget. There should have been money there for a new Brampton hospital. There absolutely should have been money there. It's shameful, in fact, that the members for that area, from Brampton South and Brampton West, failed to fight for that funding to be in the budget—at least, that's what appears to be the case.

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What I think needs to happen now is that the government needs to stop ignoring the needs of the people of Brampton. We know what they've already done to Brampton as a government in their short term so far, just over a year now. What is it? Fourteen months in office so far, with this government. They cancelled—

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Sixteen months.

They cancelled the university that was the hopes and dreams of Brampton. I don't know how many times I was in Brampton meeting with young people and with entrepreneurs and with community leaders, all excited and talking about the bringing of a university into Brampton and about how kids who are in university now sometimes travel two and a half hours to get to school and two and a half hours to get back from school on transit, but they're doing it because they're dedicated and they want to build a great life for themselves. Those young people could have an opportunity to go to university much closer to home and spend those hours and hours, instead of being on transit, on their studies and on building their life. But, no, this government says, "We don't care about that for Brampton. We don't worry too much about this growing community and all of the young people there and their costs of travelling back and forth to school. We're just going to pull that dream of a university right out from under them."

And that's, of course, what the government did. So Brampton's university—gone.

They're making deep cuts in Brampton schools, like they're making cuts around the rest of the province.

What's happening is, the people of Brampton are seeing their community being punished by this Conservative government, and I think what we need to do is turn that around. I think that a good indicator for the people of Brampton that things are being turned around by this Ford government in regard to the way they've been treated thus far is to start investing in the future by investing in a new hospital for Brampton. That is something that we can do right now. We can do that today.

So what our motion does today, and what I'm asking everybody to support is to use the fall economic statement, which is the next opportunity for the government to lay out some plans for the future of our province—use that opportunity to make an announcement that the dollars that are needed in Brampton are going to flow, and that those dollars are not only for a brand new hospital to be built in Brampton, but also for the taking of the Peel Memorial centre to a full-service hospital. So there are a couple of pieces that are in this motion that will make a huge difference to the quality of health care and access to hospital services that the people of Brampton should be able to rely on.

What could be a more valuable use of Ontario's funds than providing health care and hospital beds in a growing community, a very rapidly growing city?

The NDP is going to keep fighting to bring this new hospital to Brampton until the doors of that new hospital are actually opened and the health care workers are at the bedsides of patients in need. We're going to do that. We fought the Liberals tooth and nail and tried to get them to do the right thing, and 15 years later, they didn't. So now we're putting you on notice, as the current government. We're going to continue to fight for the people of Brampton. They need to have new hospital resources in their community. They need the Peel Memorial centre to be upgraded to a hospital, and they need a brand new hospital, a third hospital, to be built in their community. We're going to make sure that fight continues. We're going to keep fighting for all of the people in Brampton. And we're going to make sure that the next opportunity we have to step forward with a motion would be maybe one where we can be celebrating the fact that the pleas of the people of Brampton that have been brought forward to this chamber, not only with the last government, but now with this government, have finally been heard by someone, and that, in fact, the shovels will be getting in the ground as soon as possible. So I hope that at the end of the debate, that's where we end up—where we see the members on the government side acknowledge and recognize the failure of the Liberal government before them.

But the thing is, when you're elected and a failing government is kicked out of office, it's then your job to fix the problems; not to keep doing the same thing over and over that the failed government was doing before you. It might be easy in the first little while after forming government to just keep pointing at those big, bad Liberals. Hey,

we're going to point at them with you, because we agree that they did a terrible job. They left our health care system in an absolute mess. They created hallway medicine in our hospitals, and they've made it really, really difficult for people to get the care that they need. But guess what? Now it's your job, as the government, as the relatively newly elected government to stop just complaining about the previous government and to actually take steps to fix the problems that the Liberals left all of us with after 15 years in office.

I am hoping that we'll get a sense from the government today that, in fact, they are going to support us—especially the members from Brampton—in this motion, and that not only will that happen, but then hopefully next week—sorry, not next week; the day after tomorrow—when the fall economic statement is unveiled, we will see a wonderful announcement that includes the funding not only at Peel Memorial to be expanded to a hospital, but the third hospital funding as well in that fall economic statement.

I'm looking forward to hearing the debate.

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I certainly understand that the opposition has concerns about the state of Ontario's hospitals and the patients that they serve. I take the well-being of Ontarians very seriously, and our government does as well.

It's in this light that I want to acknowledge the exceptional work done by Minister Elliott in transforming our public health care system. She is putting the needs of our patients front and centre and taking strong measures to integrate services, build capacity and end hallway health care, and I am very appreciative of her partnership in accomplishing this.

In June of this year, the Premier named me the Minister of Long-Term Care and entrusted me with creating a stand-alone ministry dedicated to long-term care in our province. Before I was elected, I spent almost 30 years practising medicine on the front lines as a family doctor in the west end of Ottawa, in Kanata, and I have witnessed at length the challenges inherent in Ontario's long-term-care system.

It really is worth pointing out that it is the NDP that supported the previous government for 15 years, including during a minority government, when you could have been doing something about this. This has been a long time building. You could have done something about it, and you did not.

Like many other people across the province, I have experienced these challenges first-hand with my own family. The reality of long-term care in Ontario is that homes are operating at 99% occupancy, with over 36,000 people on wait-lists, and this unmet demand has created pressures in hospitals and left many Ontarians unsupported.

As of August 2019, the wait for placement in a long-term-care home is 138 days on average. That's almost half a year for a member of your family or a loved one, waiting for a safe place to call home. In some cases, it's even

longer. The numbers are jarring, and we know that improvements need to be made.

I repeat that, under the previous government, it was the NDP, including during a minority government—that you supported the whole health care agenda that the Liberals had.

The current mode leaves people unsupported. It leaves families unsupported. We know that it's creating backups in hospitals. The hospital is not the most appropriate place for patients who should be more appropriately in long-term care. The beds are tied up. The flow through emergency is blocked. We need to be getting people into long-term-care beds as quickly as possible, and we're working on that.

Our government believes that Ontarians deserve a sense of dignity, a place to call home and to receive appropriate, high-quality care, where and when they need it. We are creating a 21st-century long-term-care system that is resident-centred, that builds capacity and accessibility for the residents and caregivers who are depending on this service, allowing people to get the care they need when they need it. It needs to be responsive and flexible for residents, their caregivers and our sector partners. We need to reduce regulatory burdens and administrative barriers that are slowing down the capacity from being achieved.

We also need to address gaps in the system, and we've been working with our sector to determine what those are, understand them completely and build capacity and access.

We are creating a modern, 21st-century long-term-care system that will be respectful and treat people in a dignified way, allowing them to get the care they need when they need it.

We are looking at the front line, redirecting money to front-line services, where it belongs, to provide better, faster and more coordinated and integrated public health care.

We've committed to adding 15,000 new long-term-care beds and spaces in the next five years, and to upgrading an additional 15,000 long-term-care beds to modern design standards. In just over a year, we have already allocated half of those new beds that we are creating.

We are proud to be giving more seniors, families and caregivers access to the quality care that they deserve.

1400

We will not be satisfied until we fulfill our commitment to Ontarians. That's why I am pleased to highlight for you several exciting investments that our government is making to modernize the long-term-care sector that has been so sadly neglected over the past 15 years, supported by the NDP.

This summer, we invested in Peel region by allocating 320 new beds to a seniors' care partnership project between Indus Community Services, Trillium Health Partners and the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care. We allocated an additional 220 beds to the Trillium Health Partners project, and we allocated a further 137 new beds and 55 redeveloped beds in order to build a new 192-bed home at Schlegel Villages in Mississauga.

Over in Brampton, there are three active long-term-care development projects under way that will bring 168 new beds to the community. Our government has approved funding for 40 new beds at Faith Manor, which will expand the size of the current home. We have also allocated 128 brand new long-term-care beds to Brampton's Revera Living, and we are also supporting the redevelopment of 160 long-term-care beds at the Tullamore Care Community to modern design standards.

Further east, in Ottawa, a brand new development has been allocated at the Montfort Hospital that will create 128 much-needed beds for the community. An additional 84 beds will expand the Seniors Village at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre, ensuring that our local veterans have a place to call home when they need it.

We are committed to building capacity across this province. We look forward in the coming weeks to share more positive news and more allocation, allowing our doctors and nurses to work more efficiently and provide better, faster health care for all of us.

Stories like this are taking place in communities across the province, where our government is taking swift action to build resident-centred long-term-care capacity that will alleviate pressure on overburdened hospitals and provide our most vulnerable with care that is appropriate for their needs. I tell you, when I was a family doctor on the front lines, I wondered who the heck was looking after this. Under the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, you did almost nothing to address the issue.

Our investments are significant. We have invested \$72 million more this year than last year in Ontario's long-term-care system, money to support more beds, more nursing, more personal support care, and programs and services for residents and families. Our government has also invested an additional \$155 million this year in home and community care that will help seniors remain at home longer, while receiving a high level of care, reducing strain on hospitals.

I used to say to myself when I was on the front lines, "Why are the previous Liberal government and the NDP not investing in community care and home care?" We saw this over and over and over again. You sat on your hands. You supported a minority government when you had the opportunity to change it, and you did nothing.

A cornerstone in this government's commitment to ending hallway health care is our \$1.75-billion investment to add 15,000 new long-term-care beds and spaces in five years, and upgrade an additional 15,000. This is the first meaningful investment in the sector in 15 years. Our government is going to continue to working with our partners in long-term care to innovate in the ways that we provide service, and to build up the infrastructure and the staffing capacity that we know we need to support Ontario's growing population of seniors. This should not have been news to the NDP or the previous government. This was decades in coming. You all knew and you chose to ignore it.

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care are working together every day to make sure any

proposed projects meet the unique needs of the communities that they serve in Mississauga, Brampton and across the province. Together, we are building a 21st-century health care system that will meet the needs of Ontarians in the future and today, and that will be here to provide a high quality of care for our children and grandchildren in the future.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to achieving the capacity and creating a modern, 21st-century long-term-care system, which the previous government and the NDP sorely neglected to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member from Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: It's an honour to rise here to speak on behalf of the good people of Brampton and the riding of Brampton Centre in support of our opposition day motion to provide the much-needed funding here in the city of Brampton. Mr. Speaker, it's no surprise to anyone that Brampton is ground zero for hallway medicine, and we have been for many decades. This is not a new problem. As the opposition leader has pointed out, this is something that was created under the previous Liberal government but continues with our current administration not funding our hospital at the rate that it needs to be.

Some of the facts, Mr. Speaker, are that Brampton has 55% fewer hospital beds available to our citizens than the rest of this province. Peel Memorial is funded for 10,000 visits, and we actually get more than 75,000 people walking through our doors who are not getting the health care that they deserve. Brampton receives \$1,000 less—I'm going to repeat that: \$1,000 less—in health care funding per person in our city than the provincial average. These numbers are unfair, and it is not right that our city continues to be neglected by this government.

As the latest FAO report shows, for every 100 patients that walk through our urgent care centre that we are funded to handle, more than 500 patients walk through that door and do not get the care that they need when they come into our spaces. This would be alarming enough on its own, but the numbers also show us that Brampton Civic Hospital and Etobicoke General Hospital have been over capacity, filled and overfilled, every single month, Mr. Speaker. It is astonishing to me that we have been at capacity since the day the doors opened at Peel Memorial urgent care centre and Brampton Civic Hospital, and no government yet has acted to restore the funding that we need in our community.

What that means for us in Brampton is that we have people waiting in the hallway—be it mothers holding their crying children for hours while they wait for a doctor. It means that senior citizens are waiting in the hallway on a gurney with the lights on 24 hours a day without a call bell to call for help when they need that care. That is the reality at Brampton Civic Hospital and our Peel Memorial urgent care centre, and it is shameful that that continues to take place.

Not only are people in our community not able to access the services they need, and that is having a direct economic impact in our community; those folks are now travelling

to neighbouring communities such as Mississauga, Georgetown, Orangeville or even into Toronto in order to get the health care that they deserve. Nobody should have to travel out of the city that they live in in order to get the health care services they deserve because other cities have the infrastructure in place. That is unfair and it is having an economic impact, not only in my community but in the other communities around us. So I urge the members from those ridings to also consider the strain that this is putting on their health care system because ours is, sadly, not funded at the rate that it should be.

We also don't have access to long-term-care beds, mental health facilities or additional health care services that we need in our community, further contributing to the backlog that we see in our hallways.

Hard-working health care professionals go to our hospital day in and day out and try to provide the services but, frankly, Mr. Speaker, they do not have the resources they need in order to meet the needs of the patients walking through their doors. So I urge the members of the government today to support our opposition day motion to ensure that this province adequately funds the needs of Peel Memorial hospital and Brampton Civic Hospital to ensure that our patients, frankly, get the health care services that they deserve.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I welcome the opportunity. This is a very important issue to be dealing with this afternoon. For way too long, as this motion indicates, Ontario patients and their families have been getting lost in our health care system. They're falling through the cracks and they are waiting too long, often in the hallways, for care. Obviously, a situation like that has a negative impact on the well-being of those involved as well as their loved ones.

Our health care system, as the phrase "hallway health care" suggests, has been facing capacity issues for many years, and we've been hearing examples of that this afternoon. It does not have the right mix of services. It does not have the right mix of beds or digital tools to be ready for what's coming. We hear so much about our growing population in areas like Brampton, and certainly our rapidly aging population in areas like my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk and across rural southern Ontario. We're looking at a population with much more complex needs.

1410

Problems range from hallway health care, for one example, to wait-lists, poor value for money and ultimately a poor patient experience. Essentially Ontario's health care system has been on life support. Patients are forgotten on wait-lists. Something like 1,000 patients are receiving care in hallways every day. The average wait time to access a bed in a long-term-care home is something like 146 days, and we saw a tremendous increase, certainly, over the last five or six years.

I am seeing some positives in my riding. I appreciate the opportunity to describe some of those. Last January, a

number of hospitals in Haldimand–Norfolk received funding through what’s referred to as the Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund: Haldimand War Memorial Hospital, \$518,341; Norfolk General—that’s where I was born—\$2,312,296; and West Haldimand General Hospital—that’s in Hagersville—received \$657,518.

The health and safety of patients and their families is a priority. We’re making the investments in our hospitals—and I’ll mention a few more investments if people care to hear about them—to ensure that providers in these facilities can continue to provide the best quality of care possible.

Just last month—October—I had an opportunity, as MPP for my riding, to announce additional funding for the local hospitals that I’ve just mentioned as part of the province’s initiative to roll out increased hospital investment. This means \$1.5 million in increased funding for Norfolk General; a \$118,000 increase for West Haldimand, the one that is in Hagersville; and \$133,000 for Haldimand War Memorial Hospital, which is down in Dunnville—a great little hospital down there. I’m very pleased to see our government support local hospitals, the rural, small-town hospitals. Norfolk General is a medium-sized hospital; it’s a hospital that kind of falls in that no man’s land between the very small ones that seem to get along with their budgets, and of course in contrast to the research and teaching hospitals. Again, it’s what I consider an example of how Ontario is doing what it can. Money is not the sole answer to support high-quality care and timely access.

The most recent announcement went over very well, as one can expect, down my way. I’d like to quote one of our area hospital administrators: “The additional funding for both West Haldimand and Norfolk General hospitals is certainly appreciated, and will help both hospitals to continue providing exemplary care to our communities.” This came from Kelly Isfan, president and CEO of the Norfolk General and West Haldimand hospitals. I’ve had regular meetings with Kelly Isfan over the last 10 or 15 years that I was in opposition, and I appreciated keeping in touch. She went on to say, “We are grateful to both the Minister of Health and to our MPP, Toby Barrett, for making these investments in our hospitals.”

I’d also like to quote Dunnville’s administrator, Mr. Montgomery: “News of this additional funding is wonderful and greatly appreciated.” That’s David Montgomery, president and CEO of War Memorial. “It comes as a welcome relief as we continue to manage costs and push ahead towards the realization of an Ontario health team for Haldimand county.”

I draw the House’s attention to the phrase “Ontario health team”—yet again, a fairly new approach to attempt to enable those efficiencies and effectiveness that are so important for our system to strive for if we are to do something about hallway health care.

I spent 20 years working for an agency of the Ontario Ministry of Health. I went through the district health council system. I spent endless, endless evenings and afternoons on DHC committees. Many here have gone

through the LHIN system. We are doing our best to ensure the next system, the next restructuring—the Ontario health teams—will address some of the issues we’re dealing with this afternoon.

Overall, in that recent announcement, our government is investing an additional \$68 million, again, targeting the small and the medium-sized hospitals, on top of the \$384 million more that Ontario’s hospitals received this year, as announced last spring in our 2019 budget.

The problem is, too much time in the past over the years was spent propping up a fragmented, dysfunctional system. Far too many people erroneously believe it is the patient’s or the family’s job to navigate this complicated system during what is already one of the most traumatic and stress-filled periods in their lives. Ontario has ballooned with a large network of provincial and regional agencies, clinical oversight bodies and 1,800 health service provider organizations. Obviously this creates confusion for patients, for the general public and for health care providers themselves, who have difficulty navigating the maze.

Surely people in Ontario deserve something better, something a little better connected, something that would put their needs first. They deserve a system that’s accessible and sustainable regardless of where people live or how much money they make or the kind of care that they would require. The improvements are desperately needed, in my view. They are obviously long overdue.

People in Ontario will continue—I want to stress this—to access reliable service through OHIP. There are no changes to OHIP. The goal: to improve the health care system so that people have access to a faster system, a system that’s better coordinated, a public health care system that’s there when you need it and where you need it, regardless of where you live in the province of Ontario.

Regrettably, in our province, care is not patient-centred; it’s system-driven. That’s a large part of the problem, in my view. Much of my work before being elected was health service delivery and the establishment of various programs. I use the example of detox. For a number of years, there was tremendous pressure on our hospitals, taking up resources. I was involved in developing Holmes House, a detox in Simcoe right across the street from the hospital. When you bring people in in need, oftentimes late at night after a night of drinking, you don’t take them into the emergency department; you take them into the detox. We can continue with that line of reasoning with so many other services.

There is a need for change. Merely tinkering is not the answer. You don’t leap a canyon in two jumps. People feel that their health care system and the government are not working together. Over the last five years, Ontario spent 30% more than the Canadian average on administration. People have not seen a 30% improvement in care. It’s care that’s presently fragmented, as I mentioned, particularly at those transition points between hospital and home care.

The promise of alternative level of care: We can do a lot more in that department. Families and caregivers experience the gaps in care and have to reiterate their

health concerns over and over again because of a lack of digital tools and the lack of continuity within our care system.

One of the most frustrating aspects is that Ontario is home to some of the world's best doctors—we all agree there—and some of the best nurses and health care teams. They work very hard. They provide the best possible care in our publicly funded system, in spite of the challenging circumstances we're talking about today.

While universal access to publicly funded health care is not up for debate, the structure and the effectiveness of our system are. This is now on the table for discussion. We do need a patient-centred, well-coordinated, publicly funded health care system in Ontario that's there for people when they need it and where they need it.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker.

It's no secret that the previous Liberal government had priorities that were out of step with the rest of Ontario. In health care, the Liberal legacy lives on in hallway medicine, in astronomical wait times for long-term-care beds and a chronic underfunding in mental health and addictions.

Normally, we in this House are proud to stand and brag about the good things happening in our individual regions. By nature, we're community boosters, so it's painful to stand today and lift the curtain on health care funding that does not paint a good picture of our home communities.

My heart goes out to the people of Peel region. Underfunding at Peel Memorial is so bad, when 500 sick people walk in the doors, the hospital only has available funds to treat a hundred of them. They make do, they cut corners, but it shouldn't be that way in Ontario in 2019.

In my region, we were ahead of the curve, or so we thought. Six years ago we underwent the most complex hospital restructuring in decades in all of Ontario. We did it to justify the need for a new state-of-the-art hospital with modern equipment, to serve not only the city of Windsor but also the county of Essex. One of our hospital sites is 130 years old; the other is more than 90. They're held together by band-aids. The previous Liberal government was on board for a new hospital. We were inches away from moving into stage 2 funding but we've been put on hold since the last election. Niagara is in the same boat.

Our regional hospital had an optimization review this year. Results show it's one of the most efficient hospitals in Ontario, with very positive patient outcomes, but the funding promised after that review still hasn't been released. On the other side of town, at Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare, the Liberals funded 60 mental health care beds but never released the operational funds to open that ward. That remains a shameful reminder of the Liberal legacy in health care in my region. Today Hôtel-Dieu Grace has a number of cases on the table for programs in need of funding. They need money for programming in autism, for example; for a frail and elderly assessment clinic; for the new cardiac wellness program in Tecumseh; for urgent assessment of people with mental health issues.

Speaker, it's time for the Ford administration to fix the mistakes of the former Liberal government. Chronic Liberal underfunding has scarred all of us, and it's time the Conservatives changed the priorities and healed the Liberal wounds to health care. Our regional public health unit has been underfunded for years. It's getting worse. The new Conservative funding formula just cost us nine jobs—all registered nurses; yes, a 10% cut in public health nurses last week, nurses from the healthy families and schools program. That means there won't be as many nurses going out to look after the measles in the schools because they've cut it. Instead of looking at back office inefficiencies, the leadership team at the health unit slashed front-line staffers, and it's shameful. This should be corrected, and the time to do that is now.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting; we can actually all agree that the Liberals left a mess. That is one thing I hear consistently on both sides of the House.

But first, before I start on my speaking notes, I'd like to give a shout-out to the dialysis unit at the Brampton hospital. That is one I visited regularly while I worked with the Kidney Foundation of Ontario. I want to say hello to the fantastic team that works there. They do a lot of great work for those patients, so hello to the team at the dialysis unit at William Osler.

Our government, under the leadership of both the Minister of Health and our Minister of Long-Term Care, has a plan in place to give Ontarians the treatment that they need and deserve. Ontario has a comprehensive plan to end hallway health care, including increased investments for the province's hospitals. For example, the hospital in my riding, Cambridge Memorial Hospital, recently received \$1.49 million in a funding increase this year. This was great news for my riding, my constituents and, of course, Cambridge Memorial Hospital. This was just one of the small to medium-sized hospitals that received support from our government.

We are investing \$68 million to support small and medium-sized hospitals and multi-site hospitals to assist with their unique situations and funding challenges. This new investment is on top of the \$384 million more that Ontario's hospitals received this year as part of the province's 2019 budget. This funding includes a province-wide increase in funding of 1% for 66 small hospitals, 1.5% for 23 medium-sized and multi-site hospitals, and targeted funding for some small and medium-sized and multi-site hospitals.

Ontario will invest \$27 billion over the next 10 years in hospital infrastructure projects across Ontario, including the addition of 3,000 new hospital beds. Working with our hospital partners, we have identified long-standing structural funding issues particular to small and medium-sized and multi-site hospitals. We have listened to patients, front-line staff and key stakeholders to determine how we can fix historical inequities to provide financial stability and relief to hospitals, regardless of their size.

Our government is the government investing in new capital projects. Our government is investing \$27 billion over the next 10 years, as I mentioned before, in hospital infrastructure projects across Ontario. I feel the need to say that twice, Mr. Speaker, because of the constant words about cutting that I keep hearing from the opposition and others in the public. As you can see, we are clearly investing in our hospitals and our front-line care.

This government is committed to building a 21st-century long-term-care system that meets the needs of Ontario's most vulnerable people. This will take time. We are investing \$1.75 billion over the next five years to build 15,000 new long-term-care beds and renovate an additional 15,000 beds. This year alone, we have allocated over 1,800 new beds and reaffirmed our commitment towards building 6,085 previously allocated beds. We are one step closer to fulfilling this commitment with our recent call for applications from current and potential long-term-care home operators to build new long-term-care beds and redevelop existing ones in our province.

As part of our commitment towards modernizing the long-term-care system, we are also investing \$72 million more this year in long-term care. We are actively engaging with the sector to identify where the most pressing needs are in the system, and working across government to streamline processes and get shovels in the ground faster so that we can get people off wait-lists sooner. To date, our government has allocated 7,889 new long-term-care beds, fulfilling more than 50% of that commitment.

Our government is moving one step closer to fulfilling our commitment to create 15,000 new long-term-care beds and the redevelopment of the 15,000 existing beds over five years, as I previously mentioned. The call for applications that we have designed is designed to address the remaining beds, which we expect to have allocated well before the FAO's estimated timing of March 2021.

I'm also glad that the report acknowledged the other important work being done by my colleague the Minister of Health, with a series of important initiatives such as home and community care, which are vital pillars of the health care and long-term-care system. Our government invested an additional \$155 million in home and community care services to help seniors remain at home longer, and, in doing so, help ease capacity pressures in our hospitals.

Our government is working to build a system that focuses on residents and a place that our province's most vulnerable can call home. Together, we can improve long-term care for all Ontarians.

Our government recognizes the vital service that long-term care provides Ontarians, which is why the government created a ministry dedicated to long-term care in Ontario, headed by our favourite, Minister Fullerton, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

As our government invests \$72 million more this year in long-term-care homes, we are working with our partners in the sector to help ensure that they can realize the maximum value of this funding. That means looking at ways to offer homes more funding flexibility to priority areas

and responsibly cutting red tape. Our government is committed to helping long-term-care providers be more responsive to the needs of their patients while also maintaining safety and the highest quality of care.

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For the past 15 years, the Liberal government—who, I might add, were propped up by the NDP—failed to address the long-term-care needs of Ontario seniors, leaving a major gap between the number of beds and the demand for them. This led to a situation that was unsustainable for long-term-care operators and left homes underfunded, understaffed and unsupported. This neglect created a ripple effect, with patients forgotten on wait-lists. More than 1,000 patients are receiving care in hallways every day, and the average wait time to access a bed in a long-term-care home is 146 days.

For the first time in the province's history, Ontario is prioritizing the long-term-care sector and making long-term-care residents and caregivers a priority. We recognize that there has been a significant increase in the need for long-term-care beds, so again I say, for a third time, that's why we are investing \$1.75 billion over the next five years to improve access to the long-term-care system, adding 15,000 new beds and renovating an additional 15,000 beds over the next five years. Building more beds and redeveloping older beds to help address pressures on the hospital system will help us work to end hallway health care. This is an important step to ending hallway health care and ensuring that every Ontarian has the support they need, when and where they need it.

Our government has been transparent about the need to increase access to long-term care and reduce wait times. We know that we need to take a cross-government and cross-ministerial approach to better serve people on the wait-lists and their families. While we work to improve the system, our government will continue to invest in alternative supports like home care and community services. We are also working with industry partners to streamline processes. We need to get shovels in the ground faster. We need to get people off wait-lists sooner. Ontarians deserve better than what the previous government provided. Our government is committed to providing a health care system that supports all Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for your time and I look forward to further debate.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Of course, the Brampton Civic Hospital is in my riding of Brampton North, the one we've been talking about, and I'm so happy to rise here today in support of this motion. Brampton is the second-fastest-growing city in Canada, and yet there's only one full-service hospital. Our health care system has world-class innovation and health care professionals working together—we all know that—but we must strive to provide high-value health care for all Ontarians.

However, there are many barriers that patients and providers face. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care said, "Everyone in Ontario deserves to have access

to the services they need at home, in the community or at a hospital,” and that, “Patients are waiting too long for care.” Explain this to a Brampton resident who went to the Brampton Civic emergency department in excruciating pain and with internal bleeding following complications of abdominal surgery. She spent a total of five days being treated in the hospital’s hallways with no privacy and no comfort. Unfortunately, she is not alone. Since that, over 5,000 patients have experienced hallway medicine in Brampton.

At this point, it is a humanitarian issue—not a political issue; a humanitarian issue. People who need immediate care can’t be lying on stretchers for days. People should feel safe. People should feel that they can go to the hospital to get the quality care that they need and get better while they are there. This should not happen to anybody, regardless of how old they are. People can’t be treated this way, and this needs to stop. We need to provide more access, because right now we are at a breaking point in Brampton. This is completely unacceptable. What we have is a critical overcrowding problem.

The emergency department at Brampton Civic is built for about 90,000 patients per year; however, on a year-to-year basis, we see over 140,000 patients. Brampton’s Peel Memorial urgent care centre, as our leader mentioned, is operating at 587% volume compared to what it was funded for. That means that for every patient who comes in for treatment, five more have sought care. What we have, in essence, is what is called “code gridlock.” This is when the emergency department is so overcrowded that patients are treated on stretchers in hallways.

Brampton Civic is a busy emergency room. We all know that. This hospital was built to see about 200 to 220 patients per day. Right now, we’re averaging 380 to 400 patients per day.

As we all know, hallway medicine started on the Liberals’ watch. The Liberals were in government for 15 long years, and they left our health care system hanging by a thread. They cut, they underfunded, and they turned their backs on Brampton.

It is time now, Mr. Speaker, for change in Brampton. Myself, along with my other two Brampton colleagues, from Brampton East and Brampton Centre, as well as the entire NDP caucus and our leader, believe that Ontario families deserve better, Brampton families deserve better. We know that it doesn’t have to be this way, and it shouldn’t be this way. This is why I wholeheartedly support this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the Associate Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to see you in the chair. This is the first time I’ve spoken in the House since returning, and it’s just great to be with you in the House.

I want to thank my teammates for the opportunity to speak today—this is a very important debate—and let people know that I was the critic, for two and a half years, when we were in opposition, for long-term care. I travelled the province and I saw first-hand the needs, and I applaud

the operators of these great facilities, the front-line workers especially: the nurses, the PSWs and the doctors that provide care in our wonderful long-term-care facilities.

I also want to commend my colleague the Minister of Long-Term Care, the member from Kanata–Carleton, Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, for the great job she has done since accepting this portfolio. I’m proud of the job she’s doing. She got right to work. She’s actually making a difference right off the bat. I want to thank her and the commitment by Premier Ford and our PC government for making this an absolute priority of our government. Our seniors deserve nothing less.

I believe that across party lines we all understand the importance of protecting our province’s seniors and ensuring that seniors in communities across the province have access to affordable long-term care. That said, it has become very clear that the approach taken by the previous Liberal government was simply not working, was not enough. In fact, a recent Financial Accountability Office report on long-term-care beds begs the question of whether or not the previous government even had a plan to address this very real and pressing problem. I would suggest to you, as the former critic, they did not have any concern or any plan to move forward with this.

I want to thank the FAO for his thorough review and for bringing this to the attention of all Ontarians. His report notes that during 2011 and 2018 there was a meagre 0.8% increase in capacity at long-term-care facilities in the province. Meanwhile, the senior population grew by a staggering 20%. Mr. Speaker, to put these percentages into perspective, this means that over seven years the Liberals built only 611 beds, while the number of Ontarians aged 75 and over, our most valued seniors, increased by 176,211.

Not only were the Liberals not keeping up with an aging population, they were in fact falling behind—way, way behind. Their plan was effectively ensuring that seniors in our province would have to wait longer and longer to be able to access long-term care.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the public out there listening, and people across the aisle, that over the time the Liberals were in government they wasted billions: \$1.2 billion on gas plants, the eHealth scandal and the Ornge scandal, not to mention the \$12 billion a year that was spent on interest payments to actually to fund the debt that they created in their 15 years—\$12 billion. How many long-term-care beds, how many seniors could we positively improve the lives of if we had had that \$12 billion every year?

To make it even worse, they went out and they made their supposed Fair Hydro Act, which is nothing fair at all. Now that I’m in that role I’m figuring out exactly what they did. That act that they made as they ran out of office trying to buy another election is going to cost us between \$43 billion and \$93 billion by estimates from the FAO and the Auditor General. Again, that’s \$43 billion to \$93 billion to pay that back, which could have gone into long-term care. The beds we’re talking about today would be

built if we had that money in the bank. At the end of the day, quite frankly, it's unacceptable, it's deplorable and it's simply shameful. No government should ever have neglected this problem and our seniors like the Liberals did.

For 15 long years the Liberals ignored our province's seniors and allowed the wait-list to reach more than 34,000 people. Sadly, it is because of this neglect that the wait-list is tracking to reach 50,000 by 2021. We can and we must do better.

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I am proud that since taking office, our government has shown a true commitment to rectifying the situation after years and years of Liberal neglect and ignorance. In contrast to the Liberals, our government is actually investing \$1.75 billion to create 15,000 new long-term-care beds and redevelop an additional 15,000 older long-term-care beds to bring them up to modern standards.

On top of that, our government is investing an additional \$72 million more than last year into Ontario's long-term-care system. This money will support more beds, nursing and personal support care, as well as programs and services for residents and families.

We are taking action and our plan is working. We have already fulfilled more than 50% of the 15,000 promised beds and have started accepting applications from current and potential long-term-care home operators to build new beds and update existing beds. We have allocated 7,889 new long-term-care beds, and we are accepting applications for new beds and redevelopment beds as we speak.

Furthermore, our government also recognizes that many seniors in Ontario would like to access services from the comfort of their own home. To that end, our government has invested an additional \$155 million in home and community care services. This allows more seniors to remain at home while also alleviating some of the pressures put on our hospitals.

This is what action looks like. When you ignore something for more than 15 years, it takes a lot of work to reverse the damage done by that kind of neglect. We are working to get our long-term-care system back on track, but I hope people understand it is going to take time.

I want to conclude my remarks by painting a picture for the House of what our government's investments look like at the local level in my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I was proud to host the Minister of Long-Term Care in Owen Sound recently, where she made an important announcement that has given many seniors in my riding hope that beds will be there when they need them. The minister announced our government's backing of several local long-term-care projects with the allocation of nearly 200 new beds and redevelopment of 300 existing beds. The grand total is more than 500 new long-term-care spaces being created in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and my constituents could not be happier. Seniors in communities such as Owen Sound, Durham, Meaford and more will all benefit from this investment.

An important aspect of this plan is the redevelopment of existing beds. As many in the House will know, many

long-term-care homes across the province are operating as older class C- and D-bed facilities, which can no longer accommodate the needs of our seniors. Furthermore, the licences for many of these facilities are set to expire in the coming years. So it's absolutely critical to invest in these homes to get them rebuilt as soon as possible, to meet modern standards and ensure that seniors are housed in safe homes with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Again, we would never have reached this urgent situation had it not been for 15 years of neglect by the previous government.

I just heard the member from Brampton North talk. The words he used, I believe, were the Liberals "cut" and "underfunded" in his riding—and which happened across the province. But I think he has to have some sober second thought with his leader and colleagues, because they supported that government for many years, while it was doing nothing for 15 years and running up that debt and deficit I talked about.

I can accept certain aspects of this motion insofar as it recognizes the failure of the previous government, but I cannot agree with the claim that our government has continued with the policies of the Liberals. I'm going to repeat it again: We are creating 15,000 new long-term-care beds and redeveloping an additional 15,000. We are investing \$1.75 billion, Mr. Speaker—\$1.75 billion. On top of that, our government is investing an additional \$72 million more than last year into Ontario's long-term-care system.

I would suggest that our minister and our government are committed to seniors. We're proud to stand here and say we are working on behalf of our seniors, and we will continue to do that.

For 15 long years, we sat by and watched the Liberals talk a great game; it was always headline politics. But at the end of the day, the people in the last election held them to account—particularly our seniors, who said, "What have you done for us?" The people who were waiting for those long-term-care beds for years and years stepped up with a voice and said, "No longer."

I'm pleased to say that with our government, we have made a commitment. We are truly concerned and passionate about our seniors, who built this great province. I'm proud to be one of the colleagues here who are turning that boat around. We're taking action right off the bat. We're making those announcements, we're making those investments and we're not wasting billions and billions on things we shouldn't be doing. We are actually doing the things to put more money in people's pockets, doing more things like long-term care.

I'm proud to be part of this, and I look forward to opening some of these new homes and new beds in the very near future. I continue to work with all of my colleagues across this province to ensure that we have a better province than what we inherited.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: This summer, I met with the folks from Lakeridge Health. The pressures are mounting,

the population is aging, and we must address the needs in our hospital and health care sector now.

This NDP motion calls on this government to ensure that the fall economic statement provides hospitals across the province with funding that reflects patient need and allocates necessary funding to meet the immediate needs of Peel Memorial Centre and families in Brampton.

Speaker, folks here will remember former Premier Mike Harris. In my neck of the woods, Harris first cut and then froze spending on health care. That was bad—but worse, we have been frozen in time at those levels ever since. Liberals did nothing. It was fine with them. Our region has continued to grow and the population continues to expand in age, but our funding remains frozen. We have among the longest wait times for folks to get a bed in long-term care, and families and seniors are languishing and dying before they get the care they need.

Today, this Premier can make a different choice. This government can fairly fund areas like Oshawa, Durham region and Scarborough that are growing and straining and needing appropriate investment to support the health needs of all community members—neighbours like the families I met with this summer whose adult children with special needs are being housed inappropriately in hospitals, taking up psychiatric care beds instead of being properly housed in the community with the specialized support they need. Our hospitals were never intended to house all those who are vulnerable. People are stuck in beds in our hospitals because there's nowhere else for them to go.

Lakeridge Health has the highest number of alternate-level-of-care beds in Ontario. Patient beds—medicine beds—are being filled by ALC patients. Roughly 75% are waiting for long-term-care spaces. In Oshawa, in August, 27.6% of our beds were being utilized for ALC—45% of our medicine beds are for ALC. That is off the charts. Just for comparison's sake, Scarborough has 100 ALC beds; Lakeridge Health has 250 ALC beds. According to health care professionals, anything above 50 is considered dangerous, and we have 250.

This summer, Lakeridge Health hospitals across the region were at 103% occupancy. Our hospital in Oshawa was at 109% occupancy. Lakeridge Health is the lead for the new Durham Ontario Health Team. I hope this government will be a strong partner and support those health teams as this new system tries to support growing and aging community members and individuals living with frailty and complex conditions. I hope it will fund and support those struggling with addictions and mental health.

Our community desperately needs transitional care beds in the community. My 98-year-old grandma lives in a retirement residence where there is a pilot project partnering with the hospital to house transitional care patients who are waiting for long-term care. Will this government support the care that health care professionals in hospitals are recommending?

Hospitals need infrastructure improvements, modernized resources, front-line staff, redevelopment and expansion dollars. I really hope that they will support this

motion and make this commitment to address immediate local needs in health care and commit to facing the growth and needs of Ontario communities before their health care needs become as desperate as those in Brampton.

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I rise in this House as a proud representative of the hard-working families in Brampton and as a part of a government committed to building Brampton into all that it can be.

When I was elected by the people of Brampton, meeting the needs of our local health care demands was one of my key commitments. I am proud that our government is following through on our commitment to end hallway medicine and the disastrous legacy of the previous Liberal government, which was supported by the members opposite over 90% of the time. That's why, Mr. Speaker, when our government talks about ending hallway health care, we're speaking to Brampton patients.

But actions speak louder than words. In our past budget, our government made the largest investment in health care in Ontario's history, with over \$1.3 billion more into health care: \$384 million more into hospitals, \$155 million for home care, and an additional \$72 million for long-term care, as well as ensuring that we have \$27 billion for hospital infrastructure spending.

We are undertaking transformational change in the health care system that was left on life support by the previous government, supported by the members opposite, and our government is walking the talk on health care priorities for Brampton families. To date, we have invested over \$3 million into improved mental health care access for Brampton residents at facilities like William Osler, and more than \$500,000 for phase II planning at Peel Memorial Centre for Integrated Health and Wellness. We made a historic investment this past summer into more than 325 long-term-care beds for a city like Brampton that was neglected for 15 years, with the support of the members opposite. William Osler also received a \$1.5-million investment from the hospital infrastructure investment renewal fund, Mr. Speaker.

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I'm pleased to say that our government's plan to continue improving health outcomes for Bramptonians should also be encouraging for the future. In our 2019-20 capital funding, we'll see that the William Osler Health System receives \$70 million in annual service and planned construction payments, \$46 million of which will go to Brampton Civic Hospital. William Osler is set to receive over \$26 million in base funding, \$1 million for critical care adult level 3 beds, and nearly \$150,000 for critical care nurse training.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is, every action we have undertaken since the people of Ontario have elected us to be their voice at Queen's Park has been done to make life better for Brampton. We know that there is a health care need in Brampton, and we're currently awaiting a report on the progress of phase II expansion at Peel Memorial Centre, and we're looking forward to receiving it.

Do we face challenges? As a rapidly growing and changing city, of course we do. And after 15 years of inaction by the previous government, we know that these issues didn't arise overnight. Solving them will take focus, commitment and time. But I'm proud to belong to a government that is putting the health care needs of Bramptonians and those across this province as a priority, and even prouder still to be a voice and advocate for the people of my community.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Brampton is facing a health care crisis. Brampton Civic, our city's only hospital, is operating at over 100% capacity. That means that for every person that walks through our hospital doors, another person attends who can't get the care they need.

At Peel Memorial Centre it's even worse. The health centre is operating at over 587% capacity. That means that for every person who walks through the door, five people couldn't get the care they needed.

Let's be clear: We're in this position today because of the decisions made by Conservative and Liberal governments, and it shouldn't have to be this way. That's why we in the NDP are fighting for Brampton. We're fighting to get our city the investment in health care that we need and we deserve. That means fully funding Brampton Civic, converting Peel Memorial from a health centre into a hospital, and building a third hospital in Brampton because Brampton deserves three hospitals—and the NDP is going to fight to get them.

That's why I'm asking the Conservative MPPs from Brampton to choose our city over your party. Vote for Brampton, because if you won't stand with us now, when will you stand with us?

It's about priorities. Whenever it comes to investing in health care, we always hear the same thing from this government: "We don't have the money." Yet the Conservatives are able to cut taxes for the richest corporations. It's about priorities, and the Conservatives have made their priorities crystal clear. They're more interested in taking care of their insider friends and more focused on buck-a-beer than in fixing Brampton's health care crisis.

We in the NDP are prioritizing you. We are prioritizing the families, the working people of Brampton, because we believe the health care needs to be better in Brampton, and we're going to fight for it. But the reality is that continually being left behind has left people in Brampton feeling disappointed. It has left us feeling angry—straight up. We are angry at having to wait hours to be seen by a doctor. We're angry at the thousands of people who are treated in hallways, having to receive care without any privacy because there are no rooms available. We're sick and tired of having only one hospital in our city that is chronically overcrowded and underfunded. We are the ninth-largest city in Canada. We are one of the fastest-growing. If we don't do anything, our health care crisis will be—and is—getting worse.

Conservative and Liberal governments have left our city behind for far too long, and we have had enough. We

don't just deserve investment in our health care; we need it. That's why the NDP is fighting for Brampton's health care, so that people can visit a hospital in our city with dignity and receive the care that they need.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'm grateful for the opportunity to rise today and speak to this opposition motion. It's a great opportunity for our government to assure Ontarians that although the opposition is playing partisan games, we are making health care investments in our system, in hospital infrastructure, and in front-line care. We know that following 15 years of Liberal mismanagement, our health care system was left on life support. The members opposite, who like to speak about priorities, apparently forgot to prioritize the people of Brampton or, frankly, the people of Ontario when they supported the former Liberal government 90% of the time.

We also know that there is more work that needs to be done. We are focused on our public health care system and improving it. It's what we were elected to do, and we remain dedicated to ensuring Ontarians have access to health care that they want and access to the health care that they deserve. Our government invested an additional \$384 million in Ontario hospitals this year, which represents a 2% increase. And as you've heard from my colleagues, our government has taken further action to ensure funding concerns for small and medium-sized hospitals have been addressed. This is something the minister and I heard a great deal about at AMO.

Our government recently announced that we have invested an additional \$68 million to address this problem, and we continue to work alongside the Ontario Hospital Association to find a long-term solution that will ensure that Ontario's hospitals have the funding that they require.

Speaker, this motion makes specific reference to Brampton, one community where there have been significant concerns about access to care and alternate levels of care in hospital. We are aware that Brampton is a community that is growing quickly. The number of people moving into the area can create concern around increased pressures for the hospital. We recognize that we need to place a strong focus on Brampton and other areas experiencing similar growth and concern, which is what we are doing. Our government is working hard at addressing the needs of all regions that are experiencing this kind of growth and facing pressures.

I'm happy to speak today to the investments we're making in Brampton and Peel region. However, first I would like to recognize the hard work of some of the representatives from the Brampton area, on behalf of the Minister of Health. The Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction is a tireless advocate for jobs, for small businesses and for his community. The Minister of Health has been in contact with the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction often about the challenges in his community related to hospital occupancy and access to care. He has been diligent in advocating for his constituents, and I can assure you that his voice has been heard.

The member for Brampton West is another valued member of our team, and we regularly listen to his input about local health care issues in Brampton. He has worked relentlessly to ensure his constituents have access to the care that they need. Again, I can assure you that he has been heard.

Our government is making significant investments in our public health care system to end hallway health care and improve health outcomes for Ontarians. We are making a health care system which is focused on patients and their families. This includes significant investments in Brampton and the Peel region. These investments encompass a number of areas of care, including long-term care; capital for new beds and upgrades to existing beds; operational funding for new beds and nursing supports; infrastructure renewal funding; expanded mental health and addictions funding; boosted home care funding; and increased public health funding, in line with our province-wide investments.

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The greatest amount of funding we provide for Brampton, however, is for hospital capital. Hospital planning is a lengthy process. A great many options are considered. The Ministry of Health has supported William Osler Health System through approval of a phase 2 project for the Peel Memorial Hospital. The hospital is currently completing its stage 1 master plan/master program. At this stage of the planning, the hospital works to outline its growth needs over a long-term horizon. This includes projecting program location and service volume growth needs across all of its sites and planning for the appropriate size of facilities to accommodate growth. The Ministry of Health will be working with the hospital to ensure that this planning appropriately addresses the community's growth needs and is appropriately scaled so that it can be implemented efficiently.

Further to this, I am pleased to report to this House that planned spending for William Osler Health System is \$70 million. That is \$70 million being spent by this government to make sure that the growing communities in this region can continue to have the hospital capacity and the necessary beds so nobody will have to receive care in a hallway or other alternate-level-of-care space.

The Brampton Civic Hospital project will receive \$46 million in annual service payments as part of that funding. The Peel Memorial Centre for Integrated Health and Wellness redevelopment project will also be receiving \$10.4 million in annual service payments.

For Peel region more broadly, we're providing significant funding: \$5.6 million in annual service payments toward the Etobicoke General Hospital phase 1 patient tower project; \$1.6 million to the Etobicoke General Hospital patient tower infrastructure project for planned construction progress; and, finally, we're committed to providing \$6.3 million for the Etobicoke satellite dialysis centre project.

Our valued partners at William Osler Health System can expect continued investment in their services and infrastructure to help end hallway health care. We also

have provided \$1.5 million to William Osler Health System in Brampton from our Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund. This initiative funds infrastructure upgrades across the province to ensure hospitals meet safety standards so Ontarians can be confident that our health capital is being maintained.

Trillium Health Partners can also expect significant support from our government, including \$6.4 million for upgrades to mechanical and electrical infrastructure at Mississauga Hospital and Queensway Health Centre. This funding is essential for patient safety and maintaining high standards of care.

Capital for building new hospital projects is an important part of our efforts to put an end to hallway health care; however, it is not the only part of the equation. We're also—and before I leave the capital funding, I should mention the Vaughan hospital, which is also used by patients in and around that area. It is being built and we're making a significant investment there as well. That will help to alleviate some of the pressures in Brampton.

We're also increasing funding for hospital operations so that our hospitals can do more with the space that they currently have. In Brampton, for instance, we provided William Osler Health System with \$1 million to open critical care adult level 3 beds to serve their community. Our government also provided \$146,000 for critical-care new nurse training in Brampton.

Another significant part of our plan to end hallway health care is the expansion of long-term-care spaces. For too long, patients who did not need acute care but still needed support were forced to stay in hospital beds, which increases capacity pressures while also exposing patients to increased risks to their health.

As stated in the Financial Accountability Officer's report last week, the number of long-term-care spaces in Ontario increased by only 0.8% in the past seven years, while the number of seniors aged 75 and up increased by 20%. This was a serious policy failure of the previous government, and one that was supported by the members opposite. Unfortunately, this kind of serious policy failure has serious implications and consequences for the health of the people of Ontario—not just the people of Brampton, but them too.

While the list of Ontarians waiting for long-term care got worse, so did hallway health care. Our government, under the leadership of the Minister of Long-Term Care, is now putting a focus on fixing the mess the previous government left for us. We need to address these mistakes so that everyone in Ontario who needs long-term care can access long-term care quickly in their community. This includes Brampton and the Peel region.

The minister went through some of the investments we're making in Brampton in long-term care, so I will skip my recitation of some of those investments—but she mentioned them. We hear the concerns of the people in Brampton, and our government is acting to ensure that our health care and long-term-care infrastructure will have the capacity to provide high-quality care now and in the future.

Another important aspect of our plan to end hallway health care is increased investment in home care. In Peel region, our government is providing the Central West Local Health Integration Network with \$9.3 million for home care and community care services. This includes \$8.5 million for home care and \$775,000 for community care. These investments fund care coordination for residents of the Peel region, as well as personal support workers that provide tailored, appropriate care to clients in their homes. It is our intention to increase the proportion of Ontarians who are able to receive appropriate support in their homes, reducing the number of patients who have to remain in hospital for long periods when they would rather be receiving care at home.

This points to another important element of our plan to end hallway health care: preventative measures to reduce time spent in hospital. Our government is also increasing investments in public health, and this includes \$58.2 million in funding to Peel Public Health in 2019, a 7.2%, \$3.9-million increase over 2018. This will support the implementation of our government's dental care program for low-income seniors. That program, incidentally, is also expected to reduce hospital visits by providing dental care to 100,000 seniors, which will help prevent numerous unnecessary oral health issues that currently often lead to hospital visits.

Preventative care is key because our hospitals are the last line of defence for Ontarians facing health problems. This can also include mental health and addictions issues. Our government recognizes that mental health is health, and we are investing accordingly. In Brampton, we're investing \$1.5 million in the Peel Dufferin Canadian Mental Health Association to support mobile crisis teams, as well as \$700,000 for opioid addiction treatment and services, and \$30,000 for opioid addiction treatment and services. These investments can save lives and help reduce capacity pressures on area hospitals.

We're also providing funding to hospitals to support mental health and addictions care, with \$525,000 to William Osler Health System for youth residential treatment and withdrawal management services. We are also providing \$30,000 so that William Osler Health System can implement rapid response navigators to support families with urgent referrals to the child and adolescent mental health clinic. Youth can be particularly vulnerable to mental health issues, and we want to make sure that youth across this province are properly supported.

Mr. Speaker, our government has a comprehensive strategy to end hallway health care across this province, including in Brampton and the Peel region. As we debate this motion today, our government is already in the process of investing an additional \$27 billion in hospital capital. This includes \$80 million for new and upgraded hospital infrastructure in Brampton and Peel region.

We are making an investment of \$174 million in mental health and addictions services, and that includes almost \$3 million for Peel region to support people struggling with addictions and mental health issues.

We're investing \$155 million in home and community care in Ontario and, as I mentioned earlier, \$9.3 million of

that will be directly allocated for Peel region so that more people can receive support at home.

Our government has increased funding to public health units, including a 7.2% increase to Peel Public Health of almost \$3.9 million. We are building more long-term-care beds so that fewer people have to receive care in hospitals when they should be, more appropriately, in a long-term-care facility. Our Minister of Long-Term Care has also talked about the spaces. We're working on them very quickly, and we've been able to reach the milestone of 8,000 new long-term-care beds which have been allocated. We are more than halfway to our government's commitment of 15,000 new and upgraded beds, which, as I mentioned previously, includes 450 spaces in Peel region under way so far.

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Our government believes that everyone in Ontario deserves to have access to the services they need at home, in the community or at a hospital. We are making significant investments to end hallway health care in Brampton and the Peel region, as I have outlined, including \$70 million in hospital capital projects. The 587% figure cited by the opposition and in local media is based on a flawed calculation that fails to take into account pre-existing service volume activity which is fully funded.

We are listening to patients, families and front-line care providers to address wait times for acute care services, and our government is committed to creating this modern system.

In closing, this motion states that Ontario hospitals were left underfunded by the previous Liberal government and that this left them unable to meet patient demand. I certainly agree that the years of inaction by the previous government left with us a public health care system that was on life support. I would also add that for years, during the previous government, the NDP—the members opposite—joined the governing Liberals to prop up their health care system on numerous occasions.

I am pleased that the members opposite now recognize, after all the damage has been done, that these Liberal policies were not helping to build a sustainable public health care system. In fact, they just delayed the necessary transformation that our government is implementing to make sure that every Ontarian can access quality care.

The last 15 years of ineffective half-solutions to the problems of our public health care system have had real consequences for Ontarians. The inaction of the previous government has created serious problems which cannot be solved overnight. It is a lot of work. However, Ontarians can be confident that our government has been listening to their concerns and the people of Brampton can be confident in our plan to end hallway health care.

We're making smart investments in hospitals and hospital capital and we're making those investments in public health, mental health and addictions, home care and long-term care across this province, including in the Peel region.

Our government is building a public health care system that is focused on patients and families, and we're already

taking steps to make sure that all Ontarians, including the people of Brampton, can access the care they need when and where they need it.

It has been a long time that this mess has been created in Ontario health care. Our government is working very hard to fix the problems, and we're taking real steps with real solutions. We've got a multi-pronged plan to address a multi-pronged problem. It is not something that can be solved overnight.

I'm delighted that the members opposite finally realize that these problems exist and want to address them, but instead of bringing a motion like this, which is just criticizing, what they should be doing is giving us ideas on how we can fix things. We're always looking for good ideas and are willing to listen, and I'd love to hear some from them.

I should also say that Brampton is not the only community that suffered under this lack of investments. As you know, we made a new adjustment to the small and medium hospital formula and we've made lots of investments in places like Hamilton and London and Sudbury. I hope the members opposite realize that we've got a whole province to make investments in.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? Sorry, I didn't see you back there. I recognize the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Thank you, Speaker. Hospitals in Brampton are overcrowded and Brampton deserves better health care, but so does Thunder Bay and so does the rest of Ontario. People value public health care in this province and they're proud of it. They know that investment is key to improving our system.

One of the reasons we had that change of government last year was that people decided that the Liberals were not protecting our public health care system. This government is making things worse by not keeping health spending consistent with inflation. In the next two years, health spending will be \$2.7 billion lower than it needs to be just to keep the status quo.

Cuts will make hospital overcrowding worse. And I've experienced this overcrowding. I have experienced hallway medicine in Thunder Bay at a hospital that is supposed to be a regional hospital. It is so bad that you're lucky to get a stretcher. Many are tethered to their IV poles sitting in a line of chairs that faces a line of stretchers, with four feet separating them. There is no one there to get them a glass of water and no one to help with the washrooms. There are no call bells. The hallways are filled with police guarding people; security guards; patients experiencing a mental health crisis, yelling and screaming. Elderly people are tied to stretchers. There are distraught parents and crying children. Nurses are running just to keep up—they are heroes. One nurse in charge just stated out loud, "I just don't have any more room," as an air ambulance arrived. Think about this scene. I was there. It was 2 o'clock in the morning. The lights were on; it was very noisy. How is this good, quality health care?

Taking into account an aging population and inflation, the Canadian Union of Public Employees estimates that

this government's cuts will lead to 84 lost hospital beds, 497 fewer staff, and \$55 million less for hospitals in Thunder Bay over the next five years. The Conservative Harris government forced an amalgamation with not enough beds for our region. Now this government is not listening. Cuts will only make things worse and mistakes will happen. Charitable organizations and fundraising are not the answer. As our population ages, the current government's plan will continue to starve our health care system of the investment it needs.

It does not need to be this way. We can put an end to damaging health care cuts that led to hospital bed gridlock in Brampton, in Thunder Bay and across Ontario. We can properly fund hospitals. When families bring a loved one to the hospital in their time of need, they should never be stuck waiting for care on a stretcher.

I support this motion, and I call on this government to ensure that hospital funding reflects patient needs.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It is an honour to speak to today's motion to support my leader, Andrea Horwath, and my colleagues in Brampton Centre, Brampton East and Brampton North as they fight for funding for Brampton hospitals. We all need to stand up to improve hospital funding.

The fight for better health care in Brampton isn't new, Speaker. The previous Liberal government approved phase 2 of the Peel Memorial Hospital but never allocated the funding. When the NDP introduced a motion asking for a firm commitment, the Liberals once again did not follow through. And here we are, two years later, still fighting for proper investments. Delays, stalling and further cuts to our health care system produced a hallway medicine crisis in Brampton.

It's a similar situation in London, Speaker. The Ontario Hospital Association found that hospital overcrowding hit a record high last June. It was the worst June on record since 2008. All summer, I've heard from constituents that their spouse or aging parent waited on a gurney for hours in hallways, or that they were stuck waiting outside in an ambulance because there weren't enough beds available.

It was no surprise then when we learned that London Health Sciences Centre plans to cut 49 beds, impacting both Victoria and University Hospitals in London. This represents a total reduction of 5% of the beds available at these hospitals.

This reduction is directly due to the budget crunch manufactured by a lack of provincial investment that has impacted London's health care system for years. Provincial investments did not keep up with local demands or inflation during the disastrous previous Liberal government, and they're only getting worse under this Premier. The Liberals let London down, and it isn't getting any better. The government needs to see these reductions for what they are: a wake-up call that you can't fix hallway medicine with more cuts.

Speaker, London is a medical hub serving not only London West, London North Centre, London—Fanshawe

and Elgin–Middlesex–London, but also Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Oxford, Sarnia–Lambton and Chatham–Kent–Leamington. The specialized care and excellent health services available here, in addition to an aging population, mean many neighbouring ridings rely on London to provide health care. To neglect London is to neglect an entire region.

1520

Let me be clear: London requires a new hospital to serve our community as well as those nearby, though not one built with the wasteful and disastrous P3 model. University Hospital has insufficient and undersized patient rooms, and poor accessibility for patients and staff. There's also inadequate space to support patient safety and current standards for neurosciences, critical care and epilepsy units, and organ transplant critical care.

Years of Liberal neglect and underfunding have left us here. UH has heating, cooling and ventilation systems well past their life expectancies. In-patient areas have no fire safety sprinkler, while only 70% of clinical areas have them. Severe weather events have taken the building to the brink of a code orange and potential evacuation.

Speaker, it's time for this government to improve upon, not continue, the Liberal legacy of ignoring health care and infrastructure needs across this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise today in support of today's motion, and in particular to join the call for this government to ensure that the fall economic statement provides hospitals across the province with funding that reflects patient need.

In London, years of chronic Liberal underfunding led to the creation of Ontario's first official hallway transfer protocol, which sets out formal guidelines for health care professionals struggling to care for patients who are lying on stretchers along hospital corridors, without privacy and without dignity.

Liberal underfunding also resulted in regular, multiple cancellations of heart surgeries and other potentially life-saving procedures. It left people waiting months and even years in excruciating pain as they waited for hip and knee replacement surgeries.

But instead of fixing hallway medicine, this government has continued to fund hospitals at below the rate of inflation, just like the Liberals did, leaving London Health Sciences Centre grappling with a \$53-million deficit this year—\$24 million under the Liberals and another \$28 million because of the Conservatives' first budget.

In response, London Health Sciences Centre announced in June that it will be making drastic reductions to staff hours and putting a freeze on new hires—the equivalent of eliminating 165 full-time staff.

A month ago, the hospital announced that 49 beds will be closed, including 11 beds in the burns and plastics unit, effectively shutting that unit down. Nurses with specialized burn care training will be redeployed to other areas of the hospital. Then they may, or may not be, available when burn patients come in. Vulnerable burn patients will have

to be transported throughout the hospital to access the special treatment facilities in the burn unit, exposing them to serious risk of infection along the way.

Speaker, it's not as if London Health Sciences Centre can easily absorb the closure of these 49 beds, with daily occupancy rates of more than 100%, day after day after day. This motion gives the government an opportunity to do something meaningful, to ensure high-quality health care for the people of London, the people of Brampton, and people in communities across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Jamie West: I agree with the members opposite: The Liberals were a terrible government when it came to health care. I ask myself, "What's the difference?" because basically, we have the same policies and programs coming forward. It reminds me of the old phrase, "Liberal, Tory, same old story."

In my riding of Sudbury, cuts made by this government, the Conservative government, and previous Liberal governments have severely impacted health care at Health Sciences North. Health Sciences North has been underfunded for decades, with too few beds to serve the population of the region and a rapidly aging demographic in the northeast. Overcrowding has become an almost constant issue for us. Health Sciences North was too small from the day it opened its doors, and as a result, patients are often admitted to beds that are in converted linen closets, in TV rooms, in bathing rooms, or they're simply left on gurneys in the hallway.

These rooms and hallways were never designed to house patients. They lack facilities, they lack privacy and they lack dignity. It's an issue that I heard, and I'm sure all of us heard, going door to door during the campaign, and it is still a major problem for communities—all communities—across Ontario.

This government was not elected to be Liberals with standing ovations. They were elected to do something different.

Last month, 62 patients were being treated in hallways at Health Sciences North. Sammie Kelly, a Health Sciences North patient, shared her experience on Facebook. She was admitted for a severe kidney infection. She described her experience as degrading. She has been staying in a makeshift room that is actually a TV lounge. Sammie wrote about how difficult it was for her to simply get a bathroom for her room. She said, "Not only am I in this situation; I also have a very sweet lady beside me who's much more mobile than I am and she is still finding it difficult. Their solution? Commodes side by side in our TV lounge. I've never felt more low or degraded."

Claire Gravelle also took to social media after she heard her mother was moved five times before she got a real room. She took to social media after hearing her mother's personal hygiene was not attended to for 12 days. Claire wrote, "It's been a nightmare for myself, but worse for my poor mother because she's so elderly and doesn't want to make waves."

There are many stories like this, not just in Sudbury but across every single riding in this House. There are many stories like this, and people are frustrated. Under the Liberal government, funding to patient care in the north was cut again and again, and it continues under the Conservative government.

The government loves to talk about the largest investment in a dollar amount, while pretending it's not below the cost of inflation. Let me explain. The government's current funding formula is based on a 1.6% annual increase, but general inflation is 1.9% and health care inflation is 4.3%.

I support the motion. We need to fund based on needs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Joel Harden: It's an honour to rise today to support my colleagues in Brampton, who are asking for justice in their community and appropriate health care. I completely support them.

I also want to lend some Ottawa stories to support this case, Speaker, because as my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan mentioned, this isn't just a Brampton matter. People across this great province deserve appropriate health care.

I want to talk to a case that my leader, Andrea Horwath, raised last week: Maria Konopeskas. Maria is 62 years old. She has cerebral palsy. She's actually no longer receiving treatment at the Ottawa Hospital, but she's still there. She's been there for two years because she can't get released from hospital because there aren't enough personal support workers in our city to make sure she can live safely and comfortably.

A year ago, there were six people in our health region who had a situation like this—an intolerable situation, which could be resolved if this government would act. Now, a year after these folks have been in power, there are 19. There are 19 people who are languishing in a hospital.

I want to say to Maria right now: You are not a bed blocker. You should not be ashamed; it's us. It's us who should be ashamed. It's politicians who re-announce Liberal announcements and call it progress who should be ashamed. That's who should be ashamed. It's not your fault, Maria. And it is not the fault of health care workers in this province, who are struggling mightily to make this system trudge on every single hour of every day—and I give my love to all who are watching this.

I want to make clear that this is a problem of entitlement. This is a government that returned after a five-month recess—and it's amazing, Speaker. I found on my seating chart here that there are five new associate ministers. I didn't know this employment category existed—but I understand. When MPP Walker gets up, and MPP Sarkaria, who's from Brampton, gets up—I guess they got a \$22,000 pay increase; a \$22,000 pay increase when people in Brampton can't get health care, when people are stuck in hospitals in Ottawa because there aren't any personal supporter workers.

That's a culture of entitlement, Speaker. It's a culture of a government that serves themselves, not the people of

Ontario. That's what we need to stop. We need to stop this train.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join this debate. I want to thank our Brampton colleagues for bringing this very personal, very real issue to the floor of this Legislature. We're hopeful, obviously, that in the fall economic statement there will be dedicated funding to ensure that appropriate health care needs are being met in Brampton. We like to say in this House that the fall economic statement and the budget are moral documents which indicate your real priorities, your true values, your principles as individuals who represent communities across this province.

Let us be very clear: That money better be in there, because the people of Brampton have waited too long for fair and equitable resources to ensure that hospitals and their health care system is actually equivalent—equal—to other areas in the province of Ontario.

We have a real issue here, which of course the PC members across the way have not addressed: We have a government that has allocated funding to hospitals that is below the rate of inflation, which ignores the demographics of the people of this province. In doing so, you are intentionally underfunding health care in the province of Ontario.

1530

Right now, at St. Mary's hospital in Kitchener, there is a position called a hallway nurse. She is funded by the province—it is a her; I was actually there and got a chance to talk to her. Her entire job is to be a hallway nurse. We have normalized the fact that hallway medicine is real in the province of Ontario, and the government—just like the government before you, the Liberals—has not addressed the systemic underfunding of health care. At Grand River Hospital, we now have officially unfunded beds. The nurses say, “Who's going to take on the unfunded beds today? Have you got the unfunded beds, or are you going to take those unfunded beds?”

This is the reality of front-line health care professionals in our system. It is real. It's almost like the Twilight Zone sometimes talking to our colleagues, because they seem to only believe their own press releases. This is a note—and the Liberals never learned this: When you start believing everything in your own press releases, something is really wrong, because there is a staffer who has written them.

Let me say, finally, that the paramedic situation in the province of Ontario compounds the issues that we are seeing in our health care system. You have front-line paramedics who have to stay in the hospitals. They can't actually go out and rescue people and answer those 911 calls. This happened in Ottawa. It happened in Brampton. It happened in Kitchener-Waterloo.

Mr. Speaker, I'm hopeful. This new tone—there was supposed to be a new sheriff in town. The Ontario Nurses' Association, who are running their ads, have said that this Premier is a one-man wrecking ball. That's what people in Brampton are seeing, and that's what people across this province are seeing.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: I want to commend my colleagues for bringing real stories of real people to this Legislature.

Recently, in my riding, a 98-year-old World War II veteran who flew Lancaster bombers in the war, after suffering a fall and having head injuries and a suspected concussion, sat for two hours in emergency, was then declared fit to sit and sat another six hours, due to overcrowding. The family asked for a gurney, but none were available. This is just one of hundreds of stories I've heard in Niagara.

This issue reaches across the province. Staff are continually asked to do more with less, struggling to give the best care they can. Despite the severity of the problem, this government continues to exacerbate it.

When I ran in the federal election in 2005, I stood outside the Port Colborne hospital with Shirley Douglas, the daughter of Tommy Douglas, and we predicted the provincial Liberal plan to regionalize and build P3s would result in closures. We were called fearmongers. Hospitals closed and became urgent care centres. Now, urgent care centres in Port Colborne and Fort Erie are slated to close—under this government, not the last government.

From April to March of this year, the Port Colborne urgent care centre saw 22,000 visitors; Fort Erie, almost 19,000; the Welland hospital emergency department, almost 32,000; and St. Catharines, 70,000. In June, the Greater Niagara General hospital, in my friend from Niagara Falls' riding, had the longest average wait time in the province, at 37.3 hours. What do you think will happen with hallway medicine when over 40,000 people are forced to go to those already overcrowded hospitals?

In Niagara, we've seen this sad tale of austerity before. In 2011, the Niagara Health system contracted out cleaning services. It was part of larger Liberal austerity measures across the province to pay off debt. C. difficile outbreaks were declared across the region. Four different hospitals declared outbreaks, and at least 31 people died from the C. difficile outbreaks in Niagara. It was linked to poor cleaning services. The hospital board was fired and the system put under supervision due to problems like this, caused by austerity measures. The cost of tackling the outbreak was estimated to be almost \$2 million. Quite frankly, austerity in our health care system kills people. It costs more, and people lose their lives.

In 2013, my own father was a victim of hallway medicine. After suffering a stroke, he spent 36 hours in the emergency department of the wrong hospital that he was sent to. He is now paralyzed, and my mother cares for him 24/7.

Brampton is in a crisis. Hospitals across this province are in crisis. Brampton city council has launched a renewed effort to ask the province to fix this health care funding in a region that's expected to grow by 44% by 2041. It's time to tackle this crisis. People in Brampton and across Ontario are depending on us.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm really proud of the descriptions that the members of the official opposition provided to try to encourage this government to do the right thing. But I don't think we have a lot of hope. I say this because we can recall very clearly that the last time Conservatives were at the helm here in Ontario, they closed 26 hospitals and fired 6,000 nurses.

We are seeing the same thing happening with the Conservatives at the helm again. I say this because it's frustrating for me, having debated the current Premier, who was then running for office, during the election campaign and asked him to come clean with Ontarians: What is it that you're going to cut? What is it that you're going to cut in terms of our health care system? How are you going to achieve the reduction in the deficit that you talk so much about?

He refused to answer the question. He refused to put out a costed platform. He refused to be transparent and open with the people of Ontario about what his plans were. And of course, lo and behold, he is now the Premier of Ontario, and he is doing exactly what New Democrats feared he would do. He is cutting our health care system and not investing in the hospitals and health care that Ontarians need.

That is not good enough. Why do I say that? Because the Financial Accountability Officer has said very clearly—he looked at the evidence provided by the financials that this government released in the last budget, and clearly it shows a \$2.7-billion reduction in health care spending by this government—in fact, looking at just the hospital capital plan for this government, reducing what the failed Liberals had put in place, reducing that failed plan by a further \$10 billion of investment over 10 years.

Now, you don't build the hospitals that Brampton needs and you don't convert the Peel Memorial urgent care centre into a full hospital when you're cutting billions and billions of dollars out of the 10-year capital plan for hospital construction and investment. You don't fix a health care system by funding it below the rate of inflation.

Let me just pick that apart a tiny bit. Inflation was indicated by this government's own projections in their budget to be at 1.9%. They were estimating a 1.9% inflationary figure for the next couple of years in their budget. Then they only increased health care funding by 1.6%. Well, that means they are cutting funding. On top of that, the FAO—Financial Accountability Officer—says that funding in health care runs, in terms of inflation, at about 4.3%, which means they are significantly, severely, underfunding health care.

The people in Brampton deserve so much better than this, and so do the people in London and so do the people in Hamilton and in Ottawa and in Sudbury and in Timmins and in Kiiwetinoong. Everywhere across this province, people are suffering because the Liberals were horrifying when it came to their lack of investment and vision in health care, and unfortunately, the Conservatives are on the same wrong track and things are getting worse and not better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for the opposition day motion has now expired.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Therefore, we will call a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1539 to 1549.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 1. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Hassan, Faisal	Sattler, Peggy
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy	Schreiner, Mike
Arthur, Ian	Horwath, Andrea	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Kernaghan, Terence	Simard, Amanda
Berns-McGown, Rima	Mamakwa, Sol	Singh, Gurratan
Bisson, Gilles	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Sara
Bourgouin, Guy	Miller, Paul	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Burch, Jeff	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Stiles, Marit
Fife, Catherine	Morrison, Suze	Tabuns, Peter
French, Jennifer K.	Natyshak, Taras	Vanhof, John
Gates, Wayne	Rakocevic, Tom	West, Jamie
Glover, Chris	Sandhu, Amarjot	Yarde, Kevin
Harden, Joel	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baber, Roman	Hogarth, Christine	Pettapiece, Randy
Babikian, Aris	Jones, Sylvia	Phillips, Rod
Barrett, Toby	Kanapathi, Logan	Piccini, David
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Karahalios, Belinda C.	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bouma, Will	Ke, Vincent	Rickford, Greg
Calandra, Paul	Khanjin, Andrea	Roberts, Jeremy
Cho, Stan	Kramp, Daryl	Romano, Ross
Clark, Steve	Kusendova, Natalia	Sabawy, Sheref
Coe, Lorne	Lecce, Stephen	Scott, Laurie
Crawford, Stephen	Martin, Robin	Skelly, Donna
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Martow, Gila	Smith, Dave
Downey, Doug	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Jill	McKenna, Jane	Surma, Kinga
Elliott, Christine	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Norman	Thompson, Lisa M.
Ford, Doug	Mitas, Christina Maria	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Mulroney, Caroline	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Ghamari, Goldie	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Gill, Parm	Pang, Billy	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Park, Lindsey	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Mike	Parsa, Michael	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 38; the nays are 63.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER FOR PEOPLE,
SMARTER FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 POUR MIEUX SERVIR
LA POPULATION ET FACILITER
LES AFFAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 31, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking various Regulations / Projet de loi 132, Loi visant à alléger le fardeau administratif qui pèse sur la population et les entreprises en édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois et en abrogeant divers règlements.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We'll give just a moment before we start debate while those who choose not to be part of the debate may leave.

Thank you. Now, back to proceedings: Further debate? I recognize the member from Cambridge.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Here I go again.

Bill 132 is quite comprehensive in its reach, and I'm happy to stand here today and speak to it. It makes regulations effective and focused while maintaining standards to keep people safe and healthy and protect the environment.

It streamlines many sectors of the economy, and I would like to speak to a few of those today.

First, I was happy to see the provisions that affect Ontario's agriculture sector. It outlines several time- and cost-saving measures to help Ontario farmers continue to support Ontario's prosperity. To reduce red tape, Bill 132 proposes to repeal the legislation that was created to help resolve fence disputes between neighbours. Municipalities already have powers to locally regulate fencing matters through municipal bylaws and standards. Fencing disputes can be addressed through such municipal standards and through action taken in the courts and resolution between neighbours. While repealing the act, the bill also proposes to maintain provisions for fencing lands on former railway lines bordering farming businesses to protect farmers from having to share these costs.

Bill 132 would cut red tape and reduce the regulatory burden for accredited farm organizations, or AFOs. Changing the length of time an AFO is accredited would save money and time spent on preparing paperwork, allowing the AFO to dedicate more of their resources to supporting farm businesses across the province.

The bill also proposes legislative changes that will make the Farm Business Registration Program more farmer-friendly and reduce costs for accredited farm organizations. Bill 132 would make it quicker and easier for farmers to obtain or renew coverage for agricultural production insurance by reducing the amount of paperwork that already-busy farmers have to review or complete. For example, farmers will no longer have to complete the yield-confirmation form or, in many cases,

the proof-of-loss form that they currently receive. These changes would reduce repetitive paperwork by the equivalent of up to one million pages per year, which works out to be approximately 120 trees.

Interjection: Wow.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: “Wow” is right.

This bill also proposes changes to expand appeal rights for producers and ensure that farmers have adequate time to prepare and file appeals.

It also proposes changes to the Beef Cattle Marketing Act to improve government response time in making and approving regulatory amendments requested by industry. Our government will continue to consult with the industry to consider other changes to reduce costs to businesses such as updating record-keeping requirements.

This bill proposes to eliminate an outdated method for resolving disputes over environmental impacts that result in economic loss: the board of negotiation. Revoking a board that has not been convened in over 20 years reflects our strong commitment to streamlining government to be more efficient and effective. It would reduce existing duplication and overlap in investigative powers, helping provide greater clarity for dispute resolution mechanisms. Farmers will benefit from new rules that will make it quicker and easier to obtain or renew crop insurance. They will also benefit from changes that will make the Farm Business Registration Program more farmer-friendly.

Agriculture is such a fundamental part of Ontario. It feeds us—it literally feeds us—and we are so fortunate to live in this great province with fertile ground to grow grain, fruits and vegetables. Agriculture also feeds our economy. The Ontario agri-food sector contributes more than \$47.5 billion annually to the provincial economy. It creates local jobs and supports more than 837,000 jobs across our province.

Let me bring this back to Cambridge, because I love my community and I want to bring it back to this riding. In 2016, there were 1,374 farms in Waterloo region covering 214,975 acres of land. Of these, 69% raised livestock, while the remaining 31% grew crops. In 2015, farms in Waterloo region generated \$563.6 million in revenue, up \$90.7 million from 2010. I have had the pleasure of visiting several of the 42 farms in my riding of Cambridge, which includes the township of North Dumfries and North Brant. It is both urban and rural—

Applause.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Yes, thank you, member from Brantford–Brant. We do share a nice part of the province, don't we?

1600

Bosdale Farms is a great example of one of the farms which reside in my riding. Bosdale farms was started by Bastiaan and Sijma Bos in 1958. It is now run by their four sons and their families. They're a family-owned farm operating a 160-milking-cow dairy facility and an 800-sow-pig facility, with 50% finishing capacity. They work 1,700 acres of land for the production of forages, grains and bedding to sustain the needs of their livestock. Their average production per cow is 11,500 kilograms of milk in

a 305-day record. They also have 800 sows, making them a vital provider in local pork. I'm very proud of the Bosdale Farms community.

I'm also pleased to have met with the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, or the CFFO, in the past year. They have a thoughtful approach to farming, emphasizing sustainable family farm businesses and quality farm family life. They see a role for each farmer to protect Ontario foodland resources, to share in the development of appropriate technology and to protect the quality and diversity of plant and animal life.

A few months ago, I had the privilege of visiting Browndale Farm with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and my colleague the member from Brantford–Brant. Browndale focuses on specialty sires and is huge source of pride in our community.

There are over 1,300 family-run chicken farms in Ontario, like Whistlebare Poultry Farm in my riding. In 2018, 22,000 jobs were supported by chicken farming in the province. In 2018, 577 million kilograms of chicken was produced—that's a lot of chicken. Ontario's chicken industry as a whole contributed \$3.7 billion to the economy last year alone.

Many Ontario farmers make regular donations to charitable organizations to give back to their communities. This bill makes it easier for charitable organizations to do their good work—so I'm trying to make a bridge here. Groups such as food banks and faith-based charities are committed to serving others and feeding the less fortunate among us. Currently, Ontario does not distinguish between fast-food chain restaurants and the various not-for-profit soup kitchens, after-school programs, and new and innovative food rescue and delivery organizations which operate in schools, community centres, churches, mosques, temples and synagogues. This imposes an unnecessary burden if, for example, members of a church want to hand out apples or prepackaged ready-to-eat snack foods to homeless people.

Under the current rules, they are required to have a trained food handler on site, as well as facilities such as three sinks and an industrial dishwasher. Those rules make perfect sense for a restaurant, but are a little unnecessary and, to be quite frank, a little expensive for a food bank or a religious charity.

Bill 132 proposes to create a separate set of requirements that would be tailored to these organizations so that they can focus on feeding those in need rather than complying with regulations meant for other food premises. This bill would exempt some organizations serving low-risk foods from certain structural regulations and remove the requirement to have a certified food handler on their premises. This change provides increased flexibility and decreases compliance costs for some community groups, allowing them to reinvest those savings into providing front-line services.

Again, I would like to mention that Ontario farmers are an integral part of giving back to our community. The most recent Feed Ontario impact report stated that over five million pounds of food, or 4.3 million meals, were

delivered to food banks across Ontario. They helped 502,000 people across Ontario put food on their table and supported 1,200 organizations fighting hunger in their communities.

The Chicken Farmers of Ontario and Maple Lodge Farms donated 1,786,065 servings of chicken. The Egg Farmers of Ontario provided \$250,000 in annual support. This means 144,000 dozen eggs get delivered to Ontario's food banks every year. The Dairy Farmers of Ontario—there are a lot of numbers today—supply 3,650,124 servings or almost one million litres of milk annually. The Beef Farmers of Ontario gave 67,495 servings of beef. Ontario Pork gave 167,648 servings of pork. Ontario Turkey gave 25,183 servings of turkey. I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but I'm starting to get hungry.

There are generous organizations and individuals willing to give, and people who are in need. The government should be facilitating this, not standing in the way. This bill would remove unnecessary barriers for food banks, not-for-profit organizations and charities involving food donation and community feeding to make it easier to help people in need.

This government cares about the health of all Ontarians and their access to healthy food. This bill also looks at regulations around the sale of fruits and vegetables in grocery stores. Ontario has menu-labelling requirements that are designed to help people make informed decisions when they order food in a restaurant or buy it in a grocery store. This is a great thing.

However, there is an exception which Bill 132 tackles: a banana, for example, that is for sale in the produce section does not require a label showing a nutrition facts table, but it does require a label if it's sold next to ready-to-eat meals at the food counter. This bill proposes to clarify the rules to get rid of this discrepancy that will include exempting unprepared produce sold by weight or unit from the menu labelling requirement. Let's make it as easy as possible for people to eat their fruits and vegetables.

Lastly, I wanted to touch on a section of the bill which allows dogs on patios. This might be the most popular section of the bill when speaking with my constituents. This bill would enable restaurant owners and operators to decide for themselves whether to let customers bring a dog with them on a patio or to other areas of the restaurant. This will also apply to indoor eating areas at sites where beer, wine, cider or spirits are made and where only beverages and low-risk foods are served.

Ontarians love their pets; we know this, whether you are a cat owner or dog owner. But today, pet owners are not allowed to bring their dogs with them onto restaurant patios unless they are service animals. This means that business owners miss out on potential customers, especially in the summertime when people tend to be outside more often. They're also not allowed to bring their dog to a brewery where only beverages, low-risk and/or pre-packaged foods are served. Dog owners know how frustrating this can be, especially since dining rules in other parts of Canada, like New Brunswick and British Columbia, are more relaxed.

I, myself, am a dog owner. My family and I have a Cardigan Welsh Corgi named Julie who is very much part of our family. She is a senior dog, 12 and a half years old, and has arthritic knees. God bless her; she is a really great dog. When we're going out in the summertime, oftentimes we'd like to bring Julie with us but, again, according to rules, she is not welcome pretty much anywhere. It would be nice to be able to include her when we are going out instead of leaving her at home, because we do spend so much time on the road and at work and at other parts of our life, so the dog spends a lot of time at home, as I'm sure many dog owners can agree with and attest to. We would love to be able to take the family out to local festivals and events, or really just a day out without having to worry about tying Julie up or leaving her alone. I know that there are a lot of dog owners across Ontario who would definitely agree with that.

Simplifying regulations prevents headaches for business owners, which is always a great thing, but ultimately it's about jobs and the prosperity of our province. The propositions in this bill are essential because we have a serious problem in Ontario with red tape affecting the ability to do business. Our government inherited a regulatory burden that over the years had grown into the most stringent in the country. As of June 2018, for every 100 requirements affecting business from legislation and regulations in Ontario, Quebec had 77, Alberta 43, and British Columbia just 20.

Businesses have told us that far too many of Ontario's regulations were outdated, cumbersome or duplicative—or simply didn't make sense. This regulatory burden has reduced the business investments that drive job creation. The province has seen report after report from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Ontario Chamber of Commerce, University of Toronto's Ontario 360 and, most recently, from Deloitte. They all state that our regulatory burden is out of step with other provinces and with the US states that we compete with for good jobs and growing wages.

1610

In the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report for 2019, Canada was seen to have dropped two spots to 14th place. We know that economic competitiveness is the primary source of a rising standard of living for Ontarians. It all comes down to productivity. The more productive our labour force is, the higher the wages. This translates into higher incomes for hard-working families and a rising standard of living. If regulations aren't serving the public interest, if they duplicate federal or municipal rules or if they cause excessive cost to the economy, that makes it more difficult for Ontario to compete.

The Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade aims to save Ontario businesses at least \$400 million in the cost of complying with regulations by 2020. The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, along with regulatory changes, is expected to further reduce costs by \$52 million.

In January, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business gave Ontario an A- in its 2019 red tape report

card. That was Ontario's highest grade ever and a big jump from the C+ that the previous government received in 2018. The CFIB said it gave Ontario an A- because of our government's commitment to tackle red tape right across the government. This government has taken great strides by removing regulatory barriers to business success and getting out of the way of job creators. We're lowering business costs to make Ontario more competitive and encourage more investment to build our economy and create good jobs. This bill will further ease the regulatory burden in order to make Ontario work better for people and smarter for business.

This government is working to make things easier by removing regulatory overlap in developing regulations that are focused and streamlined, while maintaining standards to keep Ontario workers and families safe and healthy. This bill aims to create an environment in which people are better served by local and provincial government, businesses are unshackled, and municipalities are free to build and invest in their communities and deliver efficient and effective services to their residents.

This government is not against regulation; we're against unnecessary regulation. Ontario families expect and deserve clean air and clean water, they expect and deserve safe products and safe working conditions, and regulations are in place to ensure these things. They are essential to protecting public health and safety and to protecting the environment. But all too often, businesses are required to spend time and money complying with rules that go well beyond what's needed to achieve the goals of regulation. We're making regulations effective, targeted and focused, while maintaining standards to keep people safe and healthy and protect the environment.

This government understands the intense time pressures that business owners and managers are under—and let's include farmers under that heading as well, because they are business owners. We want to help keep things simple so that these businesses can focus on growth and creating jobs. Most employers, whether it be farmers or small business owners, want to be in compliance with regulations. They just don't want to have to jump through hoops to do so. They'd rather be filling out their order books than filling out government forms. This bill would make it cheaper, easier and faster to comply with regulations so that they can focus on doing what they love and create prosperity for Ontario.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction for the amazing work he has done—and, of course, Minister, congratulations on the new role. I'm happy to support Bill 132, his first bill—I'm sure one of many good bills—the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. I encourage others to do the same.

I would like to thank, of course, all the farmers out in Cambridge, North Dumfries and North Brant for the fantastic work that you do every single day. I know it's hard. You live where you work and you work where you live, and that cannot be easy. It's kind of similar to politics sometimes.

Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time, and thank you to the House for listening.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise on behalf of my constituents in London West to respond to the comments from the member for Cambridge.

This bill introduces 80 changes across 15 ministries. It is truly an omnibus bill in every sense of the word. But the thing to point out is that for the ministry most affected, 13 changes will be introduced to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

One of these changes is the introduction of administrative penalties for environmental violations, which can then be used to fund environmental initiatives. Will this fund, however, replace the \$1.9 billion that this Conservative government gave up when it eliminated cap-and-trade? Not a chance, Speaker, because at the same time that this government is changing the way that fines are levied, they are also dramatically, drastically reducing the fines that can be levied. These new fines will be a fraction of the penalties that businesses used to face when they violated environmental regulations in the province.

Environmental Defence states that this proposal to eliminate daily fines and put a \$200,000 cap on total fines will make it easier and cheaper for industry in Ontario to illegally dump sewage in our water, use toxic pesticides and pollute the air. The maximum fine used to be \$100,000 per day under the Ontario Water Resources Act. Under this proposal, it will be a maximum of \$200,000 per contravention. So instead of daily fines, there will be a one-time maximum fine.

This is not the way to protect climate in the province of Ontario.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to rise today on this important topic. There was a time when Ontario actually used to be a leader in red tape reduction and regulatory reform. Under the previous Mike Harris government, Ontario was actually a world leader, a jurisdiction that others looked to.

Mr. Speaker, it should be no secret to people that when you add useless red tape or regulation, it means that the ones that you want to enforce become less impactful. It becomes harder for governments and for the people we rely upon to do the inspections that the member opposite talks about.

That's why this bill is so very important. Not only does it help to get out of the way of small, medium and large job creators; it helps them focus on the things that are most important to them: building wealth for the people of the province of Ontario. It gets the useless regulations out of the way so that our inspectors, whether they be in natural resources, environment, agriculture or food inspection, can actually focus on the things that Ontarians expect them to focus on. That's why this bill is so very important.

The member opposite talks about it being an omnibus bill. Well, yes, of course it's an omnibus bill. It's an

omnibus bill because over 15 years, regulation after regulation after regulation was killing the economy of the province of Ontario. That's why it's a big bill. The minister has done a heck of a lot of work, along with a few parliamentary assistants, to help unleash the economy of the province of Ontario. That's good news for the people of Ontario.

The members opposite talk about cap-and-trade. It's amazing that they talk about cap-and-trade both as a source of revenue on the one hand, and on the other hand they say, "No, no, it's not a source of revenue. It was meant to tackle environmental issues."

Mr. Speaker, we have made progress on the environment because of the hard work that the men and women of Bruce Power and our nuclear reactors have done across this province to bring down our GHG emissions. This is a good first step and there is more to come.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. This bill, Better for People, I think, may be better for some people but not the people of Kiiwetinoong.

Every now and then, I get up in this House and I talk about water, access to clean water. I know when we're in the House, I feel ashamed sometimes when I order the pages, when I want water. There is a community up in Neskantaga that has had 24½ years of a boil-water advisory. They can't get water.

When we talk about "better for people"—I had a question last week regarding North Spirit Lake First Nation. They had a crisis, and they had a very—when we talk about changes with policy, and when we talk about jurisdiction and building wealth—the previous speaker just spoke about building wealth, talking about jurisdiction. In my face, it's always thrown to me that that's federal jurisdiction. Last winter, the North Spirit Lake First Nation had no power, no running water for the whole community for a whole month. Do you know what the school did? The staff had to literally go chop a hole in the lake, haul water to the school and pour the water into the toilets, to flush the toilets. Is that wealth? Is that better for people? No, but I think that's the reality of it.

1620

We should be able to—for all Ontarians, not just certain people. We need to look at the north and we need to stop talking about jurisdiction. We are people too. We are Kiiwetinoong people in the north, on the reserve. They are people too.

You have to stop treating them like that.

Meegwetch.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I am pleased to be able to participate. Two weeks ago, I had the pleasure of the minister coming out to the town of Whitby, at Royal Ashburn Golf Club. We had a round table, and we had a cross-section of the community there, the business community and others who had a vested interest in removing red tape and regulatory burden. They talked about what they felt we could do to

improve their lives, to make their lives better and help create jobs in the town of Whitby and the region of Durham: Make the investment. Have other businesses come into the town of Whitby and the region of Durham and make the level of investments that are necessary to improve the strength of our economy in that particular region.

But in that discussion, we also talked about the great strides that we've taken to remove regulatory burden for businesses. But more importantly to the businesses that were there, and to those people from the university and the community colleges sector, we talked about getting out of the way of job creators, those people who are really the underpinning of our community going forward.

When you step back and you look at this bill, that's why we introduced the bill. We wanted, along with regulatory changes, to further ease that burden in order to make Ontario work along the ways that our House leader described earlier, taking us back to the early days of the Harris government overall, and make the lives of local businesses in our community better overall.

I take you back to the name of the bill: the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. That's exactly what this act is, to the credit of the minister and his parliamentary assistant.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from Cambridge for her final comments.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Final thoughts and comments: I'd like to thank the member from London West, the member from Kiiwetinoong, the government House leader and, of course, the chief government whip, the member for Whitby.

I thought I knew what I was going to say, but then the member from Whitby started speaking, and you really inspired me. Your comments were very thoughtful, very to the heart. And you're 100% right: This is really about so much more. Our small businesses make up such a huge part of our economy in our province, and to support them is to support our province. You were bang-on with that comment. That's kind of what I took from what you said.

It takes so much guts—excuse the term—to start your own business, to make that investment, to put everything on the line. To then have to deal with additional regulations, some of which are duplicative, can hold people back. Some people have such great ideas and such great drive. That can hold people back. Why do we want to hold them back? We want to encourage these people. Bring your business to Ontario; open it up in Ontario; make us your home.

We have so much to offer in this province. If we make things easier for those who want to start their business here, and if we can get these people's businesses to grow and to create more jobs, to hire more people and to increase our tax base so we could pay for those services that the NDP keeps saying that we're cutting—which we're not, by the way; I'd like to add that for the record—we could have more money for these services.

It really is so cyclical, and it makes sense. Let's help our small business. Let's help our economy. Let's help

society. Let's help Ontario. It's just one regulation at a time. Let's cut them back one at a time. Of course we're being thoughtful about it. We're not just going in there blindly with scissors. We're being thoughtful, and we're being very precise about what we're doing.

I appreciate the time that everyone has taken to comment. I'm honoured, really, that you've taken the time to comment. To the minister, again: Keep up the good work. Thank you. Let's continue to support our small businesses and make Ontario strong.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to actually get up and be able to speak for a full hour on a number of schedules that are in this piece of legislation.

I do want to say, the former member, since deceased, from Welland, MPP Peter Kormos, always said, "Don't rely on the notes; don't rely on the briefing notes. Read the bill." With that intention, I've read this bill. Sometimes the details are very informative, but what's not in the bill is also sometimes very informative. I will explain to the minister who has brought this first piece of legislation forward what the points of conflict are for us as New Democrats and then the way that this piece of legislation is crafted.

I will also point out that consultation—for some reason, this PC government has not embraced this concept. It's an important concept. It's important to recognize who you consult with, who you are listening to, and then who you are ignoring. You will see that the criticism that we have, particularly on schedule 9, which has to do with the changing of the monetary penalties around pollution, is very problematic, and I believe it's going to be very problematic for this government. But at least that will be consistent, because almost every piece of legislation that this government has brought forward has been problematic because you haven't done your homework. You didn't consult with the people who have the lived experience of either being in the health care system or the education system or, in this case, those agencies and those organizations across this province who do a great service to Ontario by monitoring environmental policy.

To that end, though, I wanted to just start off with a positive thing, because there are still two years, six months and 27 days left in this session. We're down to seven hours, though, so it's pretty good. I wanted to look at a piece of legislation like this. It's already been pointed out that it's an omnibus piece of legislation, so it contains a huge amount of changes to a variety of legislation and regulation. Because it was done in such a way, I'm of the mind that because we did not sit in this Legislature for five months—Mr. Speaker, you will know that the summer session was extended to October 28, the entire time of the federal election. I feel like this is a piece of legislation that's been compressed and that has disparate angles on it, and I will get to that.

One of the things, of course, that has been consistent is this government's focus on alcohol. Of course, Bill 132 will now allow people in airports to drink 24 hours a day.

Prior to that, institutions and restaurants and bars would have to stop serving alcohol in an airport at 2 a.m. But I don't know; it seems kind of reasonable, right? But now you don't have to stop drinking at 2 a.m. You can drink at 3 a.m., 4 a.m.—all the way to 9 a.m., 24 hours a day. I wouldn't call this a major priority right now in the province of Ontario.

I think the theme of my criticism and my comments on Bill 132 have to do around trust and have to do around priorities. At no point in the seven years that I have been sitting as the member for Waterloo has anybody ever said to me, "I want to be able to drink alcohol 24 hours a day in an airport." I really can say that in all honesty—full disclosure: No one has ever asked me to drink in an airport. Has anybody asked you?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: We just want water.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We just want water. Yes, First Nations in the province of Ontario would like clean drinking water, please. That seems like a very reasonable request, actually, and something certainly worth fighting for.

The other piece on alcohol that's also in Bill 132 is that they're not going to limit the levels of alcohol—the bottles of wine, the number of beers, two-fours or what have you—that you bring in from other provinces. They've connected this sometimes with reducing trade barriers between the provinces. Once again, Mr. Speaker, not a huge priority for the majority of the people of this province; a nice-to-have, for sure. Instead of three two-fours of beer from Quebec, maybe you'll bring five. Again, though, really and truly, when I knock on doors in Waterloo and Kitchener—as do, I'm sure, my colleagues across the province—this is not the number one issue for the people of Ontario, more alcohol from other provinces.

1630

One of the good things, though, because I did say I was going to try to be positive, is with this whole concept of being able to bring a dog on a patio or to a brewery. It's not a life-changing issue. It is, however, something that needed clarification. There was definitely a disconnect, if you will, between people's understanding of what was allowed, whether or not you were serving food or if it was prepackaged food, and when dogs could be allowed, and what the responsibility of the business owner was to ensure that there wasn't any conflict with a dog and patrons. So, quite honestly, I was encouraged to see that. Again, though, it's not a priority for the majority of people.

I'll just quote, because, of course, I think this initiative came through Second Wedge brewing, which is in Uxbridge. Owners wanted clarity, so there is a component of this bill that does provide clarity. I think that is good.

"Second Wedge said the rules were not always clear. At first they were told by health inspectors to get rid of all their food so dogs could roam their premises.

"Then they say the regional food inspection agency deemed that they were still considered a food premise if they sold beer," so clarity was needed.

I will say, though, that another brewer, Steve Himel from Henderson Brewing, who is a co-founder of that

brewery, said he is happy that there is some clarity now around the news, because he is a brewery owner. He said he always felt that this should have been an issue that was dealt with by the cities. But he goes on to say:

“The provincial Conservatives have, for whatever reason, decided to make beer an important part of their platform and as a citizen in the province, I don’t really understand why there’s this emphasis.

“I could probably create a list of 100 things, probably even 10,000 things more important than dogs being allowed in breweries.”

That said, like clean drinking water for all Ontarians, less lead in the water in schools—I mean, there are tons of things. But clarity obviously is needed.

The other schedule that is very positive, I would say, is schedule 13, and that has to do with the libraries and who can sit on a library board. I think the change that was made that amends the Public Libraries Act to let permanent residents serve on library boards—great idea. Libraries should be very positive places, they should be very inclusive places, and they shouldn’t have speakers who spread hate speech. That’s just a little bit of an aside. Schedule 13 is something that normally, if it were separate, we’d have no trouble supporting.

Also, there is the whole issue of organizations, like food banks or soup kitchens, who give food versus sell food. This piece of legislation looks to make the handling of those products less onerous. The former speaker referenced the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the Egg Farmers of Ontario. They have been able to partner with food banks and soup kitchens. It is unfortunate, of course, in the province of Ontario that food bank usage is up 50%, and so not everybody is doing so well in the province of Ontario. When you look at some of those jobs that are often cited by this government, you have to look at the part-time, precarious, contract work, and the growing temporary worker situation in Ontario. Those individuals are working full-time and still living below the poverty line and still having to go to food banks and soup kitchens.

But what does Bill 132 do? It reduces some of those regulations around having a sink directly in a room or around the corner. You know what? We probably are very fine with that, because soup kitchens and food banks are essentially, in many places in this province, keeping people alive. I think that the community has said, “It’s critically important that community food organizations are inspected but with the lens that these are community programs, we’re not selling the food. Community programs are often just giving out the food,” and they’re often volunteer-driven. So having additional red tape/regulatory changes that were never seen or looked at through the lens as through a food bank, where you are giving food away, makes sense to us.

We also have no issue with Algoma and the degree program and modernizing that. It’s sort of in a messy place in the bill, but other than that, it’s fine.

This whole concept that businesses are crying out for certain regulations I find very interesting. It’s part of the narrative that this government has given. One is around

hairdressers. I know that it was referenced last Thursday by a Hamilton member. The whole concept, just for those of you who are tuning in—which is essentially just my mother and maybe my sister—

Mr. Wayne Gates: My brother.

Ms. Catherine Fife: What?

Mr. Wayne Gates: My brother.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —and Mr. Gates’s brother—the “New Ford Bill Promises to Cut Red Tape, But Some Small Businesses in Sudbury Have Questions.” This goes back to the original theme of doing some consultation prior to the bill being crafted and developed. This legislation also loosens the rules for smaller businesses like hairdressers and barbers.

On the first glance of it, that sounds great. Who doesn’t like less rules? “In a document released highlighting the changes packed into the bill, the government says hairdressers are currently saddled by ‘burdens with no benefit,’ including having to keep a record of all clients and their phone numbers.

“This comes as a surprise to some, including William Himsl, who owns The Refinery, a barber shop in downtown Sudbury. He says keeping track of your customers is just good business.”

It’s kind of ironic—you have to admit it—because the Liberals used to tell businesses what to do all the time, and now the PC government has come into the House and said, “You know what? We’re not going to tell you what to do. In fact, you don’t even have to do this.” And then the business is saying, “Actually, that’s just good business practice to keep track of this information.”

He goes on to say, “I don’t really see the issue in that. I think it depends on the individual, but from a marketing point of view I think it should be done already. I mean if you want to increase your business and be able to market it correctly,” keeping track of who comes into your business makes a lot of sense.

I just put that in there because I’m still trying to be light and funny. But you do give me a lot of material to work with, so I should be very thankful for that.

The continuation, though, around the alcohol fixation really does build a narrative around this government’s priorities, so when I’ve gone through the bill I’ve tried to look at what really does make sense and what really doesn’t make sense or is not conforming to this narrative that Ontario is really open for business.

We have seen previous pieces of legislation—the legislation which has been alcohol-related and involved alcohol-related initiatives since taking office just last year, if you go back to the Premier’s buck-a-beer challenge, to legalizing tailgate parties—Ontario’s Alcohol and Gaming Commission began accepting applications for tailgate event permits at sporting events. Meanwhile, through a separate piece of legislation, this government has obviously been trying to push beer and wine into corner stores. It does appear that they are walking that back, because the last time I checked, contract law still mattered in the province of Ontario. I am not sure, and I hope, that this government realizes that being able to buy

a Pabst Blue Ribbon in your corner store is not worth a \$100-million price tag to break the contract that was negotiated in the last government.

Following the 24-hour alcohol service in airports, it is just booze, booze, booze. In fact, one of the titles was, “Ford to End Patio Ban on Pooches?” so people can have a beer and bring their dog to a brewery. Once again, this appears to be somehow a great priority or a great directive that this government is focused on. In fact, iPolitics did a count of the word “alcohol.” It specifically appears 35 times in Ontario’s 2019 budget document, plus 12 mentions of beer, seven mentions of wine and two mentions of spirits.

My point in raising this issue, as it relates to Bill 132, is that when people look at us as legislators in this place and consider what we’re working on, what our focus is as legislators, they see us talking about beer and wine a lot—too much, I would say, Mr. Speaker. There has been some criticism, looking at that issue through a health lens, for instance. Maclean’s just put out an article about the growing access to alcohol in our society and the detrimental effects that it has on our health care budget, particularly for women.

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And so, here we are in Ontario, just promoting some kind of escapism, if you will, be it alcohol or, of course, cannabis, and now everybody is vaping. I am happy that the Minister of Health has also walked back that excessive advertising in gas stations and corner stores around vaping, because while we did warn her that the research and the evidence and science were not conclusive at the time, to expand that sort of advertising component—certainly now we have a growing body of evidence that shows that it’s indeed very harmful.

If I go through the legislation, as I have—just to remind people, this was just introduced last Monday. We had a briefing less than 24 hours later. It was extremely rushed, to be fair. Even the Liberals used to do a better job of giving us more time for a briefing. This bill is so huge that there were at least 65 people in the briefing from various ministries. I think that we tried to ask good questions. Those are good people who work in those ministries. But at one point when I said, “Why are you repealing the Bees Act?”, they said, “No, we’re not, but we are going to. Because after a certain amount of time, that piece of legislation has to be repealed and then has to be reintroduced.” I’d have to say that from a trust perspective, as you move through the legislation, there are more questions than answers, and I think that that’s a fair thing to say.

I sincerely hope that you are at least going to do some consultation post-writing of Bill 132. We have heard that this bill may be travelled, which would be very interesting, Mr. Speaker, because we certainly haven’t travelled massive changes to health care through that legislation. We’ve never travelled a bill on the changes to education, which would have, of course, had a lot of interest from the people of this province in all of our respective ridings. I know that my office has been inundated with concerns around the public education system and the proposed

changes that have come through this government. And of course environmental—Bill 66, for sure, should have been a piece of legislation that was travelled.

Bill 124 is in committee right now. There are 10 delegations—a massive change to the way that we negotiate and navigate through collective agreements, and 10 people were allowed to come to this Legislature and speak? Very limited time, very limited consultation; not so open, not so transparent, unfortunately.

So it’s interesting that this bill that deals with alcohol liberalization and pooches on patios is going to get the kind of attention that health care and education and the environment deserve. I want to get that on the record. It’s quite something, actually.

When you look back, though—and this goes to the theme of trust as it relates to Bill 132—we have seen some laws that have come through this province which have walked back some progress for workers, for the environment, for health and safety. Bill 66, of course, at one point threatened to open the greenbelt, and you had to walk that back. Bill 124, as I’ve pointed out, which significantly affects people’s livelihoods, was rushed through this Legislature and time-allocated last week, and is being rushed through committee as I speak, right now.

Bill 132 is the next in a series of red tape reduction bills. We had Bill 47, which rolled back a number of the Bill 148 labour changes, including the \$15 minimum wage, better sick day allocations, no doctors’ notes and equal pay for equal work. I mean, how could you be against equal pay for equal work in 2019? Bill 66 tried to start cutting up the greenbelt and other environmentally protected areas, all in the name of job creation. And today we are, of course, discussing Bill 132, which will significantly lower fines under the Environmental Protection Act and other pieces of environmental legislation. There are other schedules that don’t actually do that much to reduce red tape, and I’m going to touch on those, but they do repeal bills that really weren’t being used, so some of it was housekeeping.

I’m going to start with schedule 3, because schedule 3 hasn’t really gotten a lot of attention. Schedule 3 falls under the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre Repeal Act, 2019.

This is a story from the National Observer, which goes on to say that the PC government “is dismantling a service meant to help citizens and municipalities stand up to developers—a move critics are calling a blow to local democracy.”

I’m going to give you some context on that: “The Local Planning Appeal Support Centre ... was set up in April 2018 under the previous ... government to help everyday Ontarians navigate and understand the complex planning appeals process to fight development projects that were inappropriate, unreasonable, misplaced or designed without considering municipal and provincial planning and growth guidelines.

“It was created as part of a series of reforms to the Ontario Municipal Board....”

You’ll remember that the Ontario Municipal Board is meant to uphold provincial policies, including good places

to grow. Of course, this became a huge issue in Waterloo region, where the OMB overruled the provincial policy in favour of more development. That tension with the Ontario Municipal Board and municipalities, and this whole concept of NIMBYism, really came to a head, and the government had to do something. It had to do something. You had an independent municipal board that was overriding duly elected, democratically elected councillors who were adhering to provincial environmental policy.

So the Liberals developed this Local Planning Appeal Support Centre. Essentially, this centre was just meant to help local citizens who don't have lawyers, who don't have tons of money, to launch a fair and successful appeal. It was a new process which was about giving more accountability to municipalities, and to give everyone a voice in land use planning decisions. There was a lot of work to do in the centre, and it was of real value to the citizens of Ontario.

Does this government want the voices of citizens to be empowered when they're fighting developers? I would say no, because what they have done? They're closing up the centre at the end of June—June 30, 2020.

It goes on to say that our critic, the MPP for Welland, Jeff Burch, "said the Ford government's decision was yet another in a long list of decisions that favoured the Premier's friends. Burch said that by shutting the centre down, the Conservatives were 'making things even worse for folks by stacking the deck against them, giving easier wins to powerful developers."

"This is only going to make it harder for everyday Ontarians...."

This goes back to the whole concept of trust and why consultation is so important. Also, who are you listening to? Because you certainly aren't listening to citizens in the province of Ontario who have legitimate concerns around how land use decisions are being made, and not having the tools to actually advocate for those.

But then, some people, of course, are not surprised by this at all: "To many it wasn't a surprise. During his election campaign"—this is still from the National Observer article—the then Mr. Ford "promised to find a way to increase land supply, despite the fact that the provincial growth plan had allocated land for development. He has twice tried to open the province's protected greenbelt for development, and has backtracked in the face of public outrage."

My friend "Toronto city councillor Mike Layton said shutting down the LPASC is another 'bold-faced favouring of developers.'

"In an interview, Layton said the government 'has cut the legs from under the communities that try to appeal developments and disempowered them.'"

This is strong criticism. I think that any time you remove those levers around local decision-making, you really undermine local democracies.

The voices that have criticized this government are interesting" "Oakville mayor Rob Burton, an early proponent of" the centre, "said he was 'pleased' by the system

overhaul that brought it about. 'It causes me great concern knowing that Ontario's "government for the people" is shutting down the planning appeals assistance office for the people,' he said in a statement."

They closed it because they didn't believe in it, and that seems to be the sentiment.

So when I say that this piece of legislation isn't so—it's not so cut and dry, Mr. Speaker. It really does indicate a direction that this government is going in, which is quite content to undermine local communities. The centre wasn't even given a full chance to be successful. The interest in it—there were only 10 employees. I think that when you look at the overall direction that the government is going in, you can see why people do not trust this government.

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Even the Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society weighed in as well. They say that without the assistance of this year-old agency designed to help them through the planning appeals process, members of the Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society fear people may be hesitant to stand up to developers.

So you have the agricultural community, who often find out about these things at the very last minute. Obviously, if you're working the land and if you are farming the land, you don't have a lot of time to go to court or to go to the Ontario Municipal Board. I think that speaks to the priorities of this government. That's concerning for us.

That's schedule 3, the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre Repeal Act. It doesn't make any sense. It wasn't overly onerous. It was helping citizens fight developers; it was ensuring that local democracies were listened to and respected—and it's gone, just like that. I'm fairly certain that nobody was consulted on it, because we're getting emails now about that.

People are just waking up to this piece of legislation, and when they do wake up, they're going to be mad—and they have good reason to be mad, Mr. Speaker.

Schedule 7 is interesting. Schedule 7 is economic development, job creation and trade.

When I was first elected, back in 2012, I had the economic development file, and I have to say it was a big learning curve. One of my first briefings was on those innovation clusters that you guys are now rolling back. Schedule 7 is going to repeal the jobs and growth act.

This was one of the questions that I was actually able to ask at the ministry briefing, and I found out that this was never used. That's the reason that it is being repealed. The question that really remains, though, is how did it slow down businesses from naturally forming industry clusters?

These were the innovation clusters—do you remember, Mr. Speaker?—that were going to be all over Ontario, creating an ecosystem of infrastructure support, be it HR support, tech support. Of course, one of the major barriers was that there was no broadband out in some of those communities, and there still isn't. There was a public process enacted to establish a cluster but didn't lead to an approved plan. Really, this just comes down to this government having a different perspective on how to support small and medium-sized businesses.

A point of clarification: A bill that gets in no business's way is not really red tape; it's just a flawed idea, perhaps.

Nothing happened with all of those innovation clusters. Can you imagine nothing happening under the last government? It's shocking.

Schedule 8 is energy, northern development and mines. We're still trying to get some sense of who you did consult with. There is this new part under section 141 where you'll have to give public notice. There are no newspapers up there, Mr. Speaker. They've lost a lot of their local communication avenues through those local newspapers.

I think one of the big questions that still has not been answered under energy, northern development and mines is: Why did the ministry feel that it was necessary to change the language around Aboriginal consultation under section 141? It's page 35 of the bill package. Ministry officials said that the language has not been changed, but it has been changed. It has been reordered.

This leads us to schedule 9, the environment, conservation and parks. This is going to be the PC government's new headache, I think. A lot has been made, in the past, of how you ensure that companies who are reckless with their chemicals, if you will, with their business practices around health and safety and exposure to chemicals—there is a general consensus in many circles, be they business or environmental, that ensuring that those who violate those policies, that break the law, that have spills, that do not conform to the basic environmental wellness of the province, and often do so with intention—they just ignore the law altogether until they get caught—therefore penalties are needed. And those penalties have accrued.

For instance, my colleague from Sudbury had given notice that when a smelter had an accident or had a spill, they had a certain amount of time to clean it up. It would be \$100,000 one day, and it would go up. There was a definite financial penalty that was clear, that was open and that was understood that if the company that had the spill did not address the damage, their fines and penalties would go up.

What we have here now is this government that has said this schedule now makes changes to several pieces of legislation to remove and to adjust environmental penalties that used to be calculated on a daily basis, and introduces flat caps. This totally caught the environmental community off guard.

I'm just going to start by reading the Environmental Defence press release, which just came out last Thursday. This is a statement by Keith Brooks, programs director from Environmental Defence, on how changes to the administrative monetary penalties will make it cheaper for Ontario industries to pollute. He goes on to say, "Despite the claim by Jeff Yurek, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, that proposed changes to administrative monetary penalties will hold polluters accountable, the changes will have the opposite effect and make it less expensive to pollute in Ontario." Make it less expensive to pollute in Ontario: Is that good for business, Mr. Speaker? Is that open for business? Do we want that reputation?

The press release goes on to say, "The proposal in Schedule 9 of Bill 132 to eliminate daily fines and cap total fines will make it easier and cheaper for industry in Ontario to illegally dump sewage in our water, use toxic pesticides and pollute the air. Under the water resources act, for example, the maximum fine used to be \$100,000 per day. In Bill 132, the proposal is for it to be a maximum of \$200,000 per contravention."

There's no end game here. There's a cap, and then they can pollute as much as they want. There is no direct level of accountability, if you will, because those large fines on a daily basis that accrued would cause that company, that business, to actually act, and that's what we want. We want businesses who have spills to act quickly, to take responsibility, to be held to account. By having fines that increase on a daily basis, that works.

Here you have a government that is reducing the fines for polluters, which Mr. Brooks goes on to say, "will lead to severe consequences for the environment and Ontarians' health."

"It is highly deceptive of the Ontario government to claim that it is doing more to hold polluters accountable, when they are actually cutting the penalties polluters face. Ontario must cancel schedule 9 of Bill 132 and actually increase the fines for polluters if the government really wants to protect the environment."

Now, this is interesting because there was some level of joy when my former colleague read what will happen with this money that's collected. I asked this question, actually, in the briefing, because it was my understanding that it went to general revenue.

When a company does have a spill, the Ministry of the Environment traditionally would collect the penalty. But what is this government doing under schedule 9, with changing it? If implemented, the proposal would revise the account to allow the funds to be used for activities that implement the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan.

Well, that is no plan. You're actually sending money to a plan that essentially doesn't exist. We have no targets around greenhouse gas emissions. There are no standards to dictate water quality. We still have lead in our schools in the province of Ontario. This goes on to say if the changes are enacted, the funds would be made available to relaunch the community environment fund program with a broader focus to support local communities.

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What was told to me in the briefing, though, which is really quite interesting, is that when fines were levied, when penalties were determined and that funding was collected, the money was usually sent to conservation authorities where a spill had happened, which actually made a lot of sense to me. I was quite pleased to hear that. But now I see that it's going to go to activities that implement this made-in-Ontario environment plan. I think the conservation authorities were a better place for that money to go. And I know that they need the funding because they have been chronically underfunded and they do a lot for the province of Ontario, particularly around flood mitigation.

The other piece that I wanted to touch on around schedule 9 was enforcement. In the briefing note on schedule 9, it says that prosecution would continue to be used as an enforcement tool but may be limited to serious violations. We have a major issue right now in the province around environmental enforcement. This is a government that got rid of—fired—the Environmental Commissioner. You can have good words and they can sound pretty and even the intention could be there, but if the enforcement is not there, then it's really just like this made-in-Ontario environment plan. It's like zero; it's like nothing.

Our concerns around schedule 9 are legitimate. They've been confirmed by third-party organizations who, quite honestly, have a lot more knowledge than the rest of us here and signal, I think, to the rest of the province that this is not a government that is very concerned around holding polluters to account. When you combine that with the development piece and removing a centre that is meant to help citizens navigate through appeals around land use, Bill 132 doesn't seem to be just about liberalizing alcohol and letting dogs on brewery patios. It actually has a deeper concern for us at the end of the day.

This is all done in the name of saving money. Attacking red tape and then trying to quantify how much money you can save by tackling red tape—I always like that description. This government has said that this will save about \$52 million. And yet, in the briefing, that couldn't truly be quantified. You can't really quantify it unless you know how many people are going to be polluting in the province of Ontario, which I think the vast majority of people who have just started to pay attention now to Bill 132 are very concerned about.

Some environmentalists are worried about the changes in the bill that would remove provisions around environmental protection. They say that it's not very promising. This is from Environmental Defence. They go on to say that literally the example that was given is that if you have a spill out in the lake and it's a raw sewage spill, they can just continue to spill because they know that they are only going to be capped at that \$200,000. We would say, with great confidence, that that is not, in effect, a good deterrent.

We've covered the lack of enforcement rules—we've covered schedule 9. We've covered where the money is going and why it shouldn't go where they say it's supposed to go.

Right now, even combining inspections around gas emissions, they say that the Ministry of Transportation will be inspecting vehicles for compliance. Never did I think that any government would be looking at the Ministry of Transportation to uphold environmental policies, but when you fire the Environmental Commissioner and fold whatever staff is left there under the Auditor General, you really are missing an opportunity to lead on reducing pollution in the province of Ontario.

That would be schedule 9. Obviously, schedule 9 has a lot of concerns for us.

The next one is schedule 16. and that is natural resources and forestry. This has to do with changing aggregate

pits. This is a big issue. It's a growing issue in Waterloo region, quite honestly. Companies are going to have to go through a specific process if they want to go below the water table. Existing sites that apply to go deeper will be treated like new applications. It removes municipalities' ability to make zoning requirements that prohibit an aggregate mine from being established in a certain area. This is obviously a concern for us, and it could lead to weakened groundwater protections. Road impacts are not going to be able to be appealed through the Aggregate Resources Act. And fees given to municipalities to cover road maintenance are currently not enough, Mr. Speaker.

With these legislative changes come some policy statement changes as well. This is where, in our view, the region of Waterloo, for instance, and regional staff have said to this government—they have been very vocal. They have said, "Regional staff are urging the province to reconsider proposed policy changes that could loosen rules around gravel mining and other aggregate extraction..."

"One such change would prevent municipalities from setting limits on how deep operators can dig when extracting resources from underground, the regional report said."

This comes from Rod Regier, who is the region's commissioner of planning, development and legislative services in Waterloo: "He told CBC it is 'vital' for municipalities to prevent extraction below the water table." It is vital for municipalities to have this power.

"'It's a layer of protection,' said Regier. 'If you're not extracting below the water table and there's an incident ... it's much easier to remediate and clean up and before any contaminants get into the aquifers.'"

What is more important than ensuring that our water drinking source, our groundwater—in this instance, in Waterloo region, it is an aquifer—is not compromised? It doesn't really matter what our economic strategy would be like, or how much our houses are worth or how great our schools are. Nothing is worth compromising the quality of the water that we drink. Schedule 16, I think, raises legitimate concerns for us.

But also it's concerning—it's a continuing theme, really, on the whole issue of trust and priorities, and it surprises me. I'm genuinely surprised that this government is going down this road and is opening up the door, if you will, and the opportunity whereby drinking water sources, groundwater, could in fact be compromised.

This is all coming as the Ministry of the Environment is getting ready to announce the provincial government's decision on water bottling permits. It's supposed to happen this December. This announcement comes after the government's extension of the moratorium. We were supportive of that moratorium, just so that you know, when you first did it. You carried it over from the Liberals.

But groups like the Guelph-based Wellington Water Watchers want the environment minister "to require all permits to take water for bottling to undergo an environmental assessment process. According to" the Wellington Water Watchers, "the current review process for water bottling permits is inadequate."

This will be the new oil, if you will, in the province of Ontario. We're very blessed with fresh water—as I drink some of it right now, which actually doesn't come out of the pipes here in this building, as you know, Mr. Speaker.

The Wellington Water Watchers, amongst other organizations, are watching Bill 132 very carefully because even the mention of streamlining a water-taking permit raises a red flag—or, maybe in this instance, a blue flag. But because trust in this government has already been compromised, they're looking for leadership, especially around the permitting of our fresh water.

The Wellington Water Watchers also believe that “the scope of the current review process utilized by the Ministry of the Environment is too narrow and fails to recognize water as a public trust.” That's the new language that we should be using when we talk about water in the province of Ontario: It is a public trust.

The current process that this ministry actually uses “does not guarantee Indigenous consent consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); disregards the increasing threat of climate change; inadequately assesses the cumulative impact of water-taking on groundwater; ignores the environmental impact of discarded plastic bottles; and neglects the health risks of microplastics in drinking water.”

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There was a study recently that I read—just to bring it back to alcohol, which of course Bill 132 has—that they are actually finding plastic particles in beer. I mean, if you don't care about drinking water and you clearly care about beer, let's deal with this plastic issue in our water resources. There's a lot wrong with the current system of reviewing—really, they call it “water mining.” That's the new language that folks are using.

In addition, the Environmental Registry of Ontario limits public participation to a 90-day online consultation. This process permits face-to-face discussion between members of the public and political representatives. Wellington Water Watchers is calling on the Ontario government to “suspend the current process to review applications to renew permits” to allow for a full public debate on the social and environmental impacts of water bottling and to ensure the government requires environmental assessments of all applications to renew permits to take water for bottling.

They are taking their concerns on the road. They'll be coming to a community near you. I know they're coming to Waterloo on November 11, and I plan to be there. They're going to learn from other jurisdictions around that have really been burned by companies like Nestlé, for instance. This happened in France, where Vittel had to really activate their citizens to push back. Really, this is the perspective of the Wellington Water Watchers, but they say, “Nestlé's global plan involves buying land and building bottling plants in economically depressed areas. These are typically rural communities where the potential for jobs incentivizes communities to overlook the environmental consequences. In the end, many of the jobs created

are temporary as the extraction process is mechanized.” This sounds quite familiar.

The reason why the aggregate bill and the penalties are connected for us as it relates to Bill 132 is that there's this growing amount of tension between those who profit from the commodification of water in Ontario and those who are elected to serve municipalities. Guelph recently lost out on having access to a well. Nestlé was found to win the bid for that well. So you have a business, a corporation, overriding a local democracy—a local, democratically elected government in Guelph city council, which has a responsibility to ensure that the citizens in that area have access to clean drinking water. This kind of tension that we're seeing leaves us, quite honestly, in that grey area around who owns water in Ontario. Who can take water? What is the price for that water? Why are we still, in 2019, allowing companies to use single-use plastic bottles of water when we know that the environmental effect is quite detrimental to the well-being of the province?

Those are some of the big concerns I have. I think all eyes are going to be on Bill 132, schedule 9, and then also schedule 16 as it relates to some of the decisions that this government is making.

It's really interesting to sort of just step back from it, when you look at Bill 132, to look at who you did talk to. You certainly didn't talk to the folks at Environmental Defence. They were completely blindsided by this piece of legislation.

The government also purports to be in it for the people, but it's clear that the content of this bill is industry-driven. Changes to pesticides were driven by the chemical industry. Changes to drinking at the airport were an ask of Pearson airport. Changes to the Aggregate Resources Act were a hand-up to the companies who rely on aggregates to survive, at the risk of undermining locally elected municipal councils and punching down on municipalities who won't be able to appeal a minister's decision on where an aggregate pit will go. This runs counter to progressive land use policy planning in Ontario.

Over and over again, we see that deregulatory bills have put business interests above people. I've said this in this House before: I think genuinely that you're lost, that you're forgetting that when you undermine the very people who are doing the work of serving the public, be it in our education system, in our health care system or around environmental inspectors—you need to give these people the tools that they can be successful with.

When you look at Bill 47, Bill 66, Bill 132 and now Bill 124, which is in committee with only 10 citizens being able to weigh in on that really oppressive piece of legislation, which in all likelihood will get challenged under the Charter of Rights—and then, to really add insult to injury, it's rumoured that you are going to travel this bill. There have been so many pieces of legislation that have totally created chaos in our health care system with the dissolving of the LHINs; that was never taken out to travel. You could have learned and designed a better system instead of just smashing everything back and then trying to rebuild something with all the broken pieces still

in health care. We saw that today through our motion around the hospitals in Brampton.

But undermining the whole concept around monetary penalties around pollution, capping that and not making it a tool that you as a government can use or that communities can hold polluters accountable, really runs in the opposite direction of what is considered to be progressive environmental policy. I think that the communities who will fall victim to poor business practices around the handling of chemicals, sewage or water quality are going to hold you to account. We've seen this act before.

What I will finally say is that earlier today I met with the cement association. They're here on their lobby day. They're good people who are looking to create progressive business practices that reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, in some avenues they're looking to go to greenhouse gas neutrality. They asked us for a regulatory change which made perfect sense to us. It seems like a huge missed opportunity for Bill 132. In the cement industry, they're still using coal. This was interesting for us. They're using coal to create cement, to go through that whole process. They've asked for a very simple regulatory change to transition from coal to biosolids. You could do that today. We'd be supportive of you to do that. It's not in Bill 132.

There are a lot of things in Bill 132 which, as I've said at the beginning, deals with some duplication. It deals with some repetitiveness within the federal and the provincial level. But, boy, the schedules that really take us in the wrong direction from an environmental protection perspective, I think, give us true cause for concern.

As you know, the people of this province have some serious trust issues with you. They've heard a lot about beer in corner stores, and now 24-hour alcohol access in airports. Now you can take a lot of beer from another province and bring it here to Ontario. They just don't see their values, their concerns around mental health, long-term care and access to doctors reflected in your priorities as a government, and it certainly is not reflected in this bill, Bill 132. It has a really good name—I don't know who's writing your titles these days for your legislation—but I can see that you're not that concerned about the trust issue.

You've got a majority government, and I just want to say, as someone who has been in this House for a number of years now, I can see the same pattern that your PC government has adopted that the Liberals adopted. The Liberals were very—they were all there, first of all. They were that whole side; now they're all gone. But what they forgot is that it's not their job to dictate how people live their lives, but the promise to the people of this province was to ensure that there were avenues whereby people could actually reach their potential.

1720

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, but now you're falling in the same pattern as the Liberals. I only share that because, as I said, there are two years, six months, 27 days and now 6 hours—because I spoke for an hour on Bill 132—and

people are watching very carefully. When you put a bill together like this, which really has some common-sense pieces, but then really undermines the core values and principles around this climate crisis for instance, around the concern around water quality, concerns around pollution and spills, around not funding conservation authorities and not being pre-emptive around flood mitigation, for instance, that causes real concerns for people.

You used to mock pieces of legislation like this. When the PCs were on this side of the House, which was not that long ago, they would critique an omnibus piece of legislation like this. They used to call it “ominous,” and they used to say, “Be careful when a government comes forward with a piece of legislation like this, because there are good parts and shiny parts as a distraction.” But, as I said, with schedule 9 and with the capping of penalties around pollution, people are going to hear that. We're going to make sure people hear that. We want them to hear that, because we want to make sure that polluters in the province of Ontario actually are held to account.

With that, I'm going to finish by saying trust and accountability matter for the people of this province. I can see that there are some aspects of this bill that some people have given some thought to, but on the whole, obviously, when you address schedule 9, the aggregate and the undermining of local democracies, New Democrats are not in a position to support this bill. But we'll be very interested, if you actually travel it, because I suppose that there will be a lot of breweries and some dogs to visit, and who wouldn't want that?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: That was actually very difficult to listen to for the last hour, because this Better for People, Smarter for Business Act builds upon our government's commitment to make Ontario open for business and open for jobs. Over 270,000 jobs have been created because of our focus on policies that reduce the regulatory burden right here in the province of Ontario, and the world is taking notice. They're investing. Companies are investing in Ontario, and we'll continue to go on that path towards making sure that Ontario once again becomes the economic engine of Canada.

We're going to do that by upholding the highest standard for the environment, like this bill does. It introduces administrative monetary penalties for those who contravene environmental regulations. Before this piece of legislation, there was actually a massive enforcement gap. Only 140 of Ontario's 150,000 facilities were covered. Now, we are bridging that gap and ensuring that those that are polluting will pay their fair share. Then the best thing about this piece of legislation, and in terms of the environmental effects, is that those fines collected will then go back into the communities where the offence was committed. This is completely in line with what we want to do: punish those who are polluting, punish those who are contravening legislation. If you're making an economic benefit, you're going to be held accountable for that as well.

This is really groundbreaking environmental legislation that we're going to see with the implementation of this piece of legislation. It's going to continue building upon the success of our government and making Ontario open for business, making Ontario open for jobs. We're going to continue on the path of economic prosperity and build on the 270,000 jobs that we have already helped create an environment for. We look forward to continuing that great work.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to congratulate my colleague our MPP from Waterloo on what an incredible job she did with very little time to put it together, because we don't get a lot of time for these bills.

I know I'm not supposed to do this, Speaker, so you can see me. I'm just holding up the bill so people at home understand how big it is and what we have to go through.

Hon. Bill Walker: Prop. Prop.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It is a prop, you're right. But I used it anyway, so I'm fine with it.

She talked about something that I think is important. She talked about trust and priorities—the priorities we talked about today, about that member's hospital in Brampton. That would be a priority, I would think, when you know that people are sitting in our hospitals for days, not getting any service. That would make sense to me. Or in Niagara, quite frankly, in my hospital in Niagara Falls, where in June we had the longest wait times in the province of Ontario—16 hours. That's a priority.

I'm not so sure—and correct me if I'm wrong, because I've only got two minutes here, unfortunately—if having booze 24 hours a day in an airport is a priority. Does that make sense to anybody? Think about it: You can drink in an airport for 24 hours. I'm hoping—and probably even praying a little bit—that the pilots don't read this bill, because I'd hate to see if a pilot was doing that 24 hours a day.

Then I want to talk about food banks. You talk about 270,000 jobs that you created. You guys can clap if you want; I'm not sure if you're allowed to. But answer me this: Why are food banks going up? Why is homelessness going up?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Through the Speaker, please.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm looking to you. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Tell me why? If we're doing so well, why are our food banks—why are kids going to bed hungry tonight? One in five children, as we finish tonight—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Member, I have to remind you that I'm over here.

Mr. Wayne Gates:—yes, I'm sorry—will be going to bed hungry tonight..

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I want to acknowledge the member from Waterloo for her comments, but I have to obviously

state that I disagree with the points that she raised this afternoon—all 60 minutes of it.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to stand in this House over the past few weeks and talk about hundreds of jobs that have been created in my own riding. Let me just mention a couple of the companies: KF Aerospace, DHL, the Liburdi group, Stryker Canada—just a few of the companies that have created high-paying, highly skilled jobs because of the efforts that this government has undertaken. These are just a few examples of why we can stand here today and talk about an unprecedented number of jobs that have been created since we took office back in June 2018—over 272,000 new jobs. These are good jobs.

The reason that businesses are creating jobs is because we have made it a priority to identify duplicative regulatory burdens on these businesses. We are creating a business-friendly environment, attracting new businesses to Ontario. We are allowing and creating an environment for existing businesses to grow their footprint—in my riding alone, we're seeing companies that are doubling their footprint and doubling their staff complement—because we believe that it is our job as a government to create an environment for them to do what they do best. Two hundred and seventy-two thousand new jobs: I think we're doing something right.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to commend my colleague the member for Waterloo for her very fine analysis of this bill. It is a complex bill, there is no question: 80 changes across 15 ministries that will have, in some cases, a significant impact with regard to the changes to environmental enforcement; in other cases, a rather innocuous impact. She talked about the requirement for hairdressers to maintain lists of their customers. Removing that requirement I don't think is going to be game-changing in the province of Ontario.

One of the issues she touched on briefly was about the changes to regulations for food-sharing organizations. These are organizations that take fresh produce and redistribute it to people in need in the community.

1730

I have to say, Speaker, it is shocking that this is the government's response to poverty in the province of Ontario: "Let's just make it easier"—no doubt this would be a necessary change if it was accompanied by some other meaningful policy to address food insecurity in the province of Ontario, to address the needs of people living in poverty in our communities. We have one in four children in the city of London who are in poverty.

Yes, we want to make it easier for food-sharing organizations to redistribute food, but it has to be backed up by other meaningful action on the part of government. Instead, what we have seen from this government is the cancellation of the Basic Income Pilot. We have seen a cutting in half of the planned increase to social assistance. We have seen thousands of subsidized child care spaces put at risk. We have seen the prospect of changes to ODSP and OW that are going to put even more people into poverty.

Speaker, this is not the answer to food insecurity in Ontario.

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

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That's what I thought. You threw me off.

We're going to go back to the member from Waterloo for her final comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much. It's really interesting. I just want to remind the members that the Environmental Defence group has analyzed this bill. I think you're headed for a showdown with environmentalists over this new bill to cut red tape, which will rely more on fines than prosecutions to penalize polluters except in cases of serious violations.

This proposed legislation will let polluters off easier by eliminating daily fines for infractions in favour of fines—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: You don't like hearing it, but listen: We're going to make sure the people of this province bring that message to this place. It goes on to say that it's less money and removes any incentive for somebody who has been caught in contravention to stop doing whatever they're doing—Keith Brooks said. This money used to go, as I said, to the conservation authorities.

It's interesting too because in the same article, the Ministry of Transportation—because the government says, “Well, enforcement.” The Ministry of Transportation—this is from the ministry person—is also happy that they're going to have enforcement officers on the road because they have more enforcement officers than the Ministry of the Environment.

Mr. Speaker, this government is like a walking contradiction. They say that they want to support the people of this province, and yet they're actively bringing in a piece of legislation which will undermine the very principles and values around clean drinking water and clean air—which is good for business. It really is.

Then last, on this 272,000 jobs, you should look at what kind of jobs those are. They are part-time, precarious, contract work, and they are temporary workers who do not have the protection—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Speak to the Speaker, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —that workers have who are full-time.

Mr. Speaker, New Democrats will not be supporting Bill 132. This government is probably going to have to walk many parts of it back already.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, just to remind everybody who might have just tuned in or is watching this on some kind of repeat, we're discussing Bill 132, a government bill called the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. It's a fairly comprehensive bill because

what we're trying to do is modernize the way we deliver services in the province of Ontario and how we support our business community and the investment community by streamlining all the myriad—we've heard that Ontario is very cumbersome. There is a lot of burden on investment and businesses because of what we call red tape.

Basically, all “red tape” means is a lot of regulations and rules and duplication. A lot of times, it's unnecessary because it's something that is either covered by the federal government already, or it's redundant. I guess the previous Liberal government added so many rules and regulations, possibly, to appease one group without looking at the consequences. I think that's what happens so often in government. We see it every single day that we're here—the unintended consequences of our decisions.

That's why we have debates. It's because this way, we have those second, third or a hundred and how many voices voices coming in and telling us what those possible unintended consequences could be. Well, we're basically unrolling some of those rules and regulations that are so burdensome.

We had an opposition day motion earlier today asking for more funding specifically for Brampton for health care, for the hospital, and we all know that our taxpayers are tapped out. They are paying federal taxes, provincial taxes, municipal taxes. They're paying sales taxes. We just can't be asking for any more from our taxpayers in Ontario. We're trying to cut taxes to the lower-income earners. We've already made some serious gains on that, and what we need to do now is to focus on getting the economy as strong as it can be. We need to get everybody who can work and wants to work a great, good-paying job. That's the way we can fund things like hospitals and health care and subways and all the things that we do want to fund. I think on all sides of the House we can all agree that it's money that keeps us going in the province, to fund all of the necessary things.

One of the things that we can streamline is by having what we'd say is a more digital, smarter government. But what does that mean, a more digital government? Well, I'm standing here with a lot of pieces of paper, because right now the rule is that in the Legislature in Ontario, we are not allowed to read from tablets or phones or laptops. We have to print on paper.

Just yesterday—I said I was going to give him a shout-out, and he's here—the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park was in a shared office space that we use when we're between meetings or debates, and he was reading out loud a speech he had written on his phone. I knew, as he knew, that before he came in yesterday to deliver his speech, he was going to have to print it on a few pieces of paper. He couldn't come in here and read it on the phone, just like he was doing in the office.

I think people are surprised to hear that at home. I think that they hear that we want to protect the environment. We have the pages here, and I'm always aware of how much they're paying attention to what's going on; I wonder sometimes if we're having a negative effect on them, with all of our issues that we're discussing. But I think the pages

can understand that if we have a speech in our phone or our laptop or tablet, why should we go into an office across the hall to find a printer to print it out?

We all want to work on modernizing and streamlining the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We want to modernize our constituency offices. I know that my constituency office is pretty much paperless. Everything is done by email, but also, if people do bring us some paper, we actually scan it and upload it so that we have everything ready to move if we ever have to move offices.

I'm reminded of my optometry career. We put in electronic health records in the office, and that didn't just streamline things for our patients; that made it so much more accessible that we could not be in the office—it could be the weekend—and we were able to see the charts even from our house or somewhere else. But it also freed up so much space. We all know how much rent is, and if our doctors have to pay more rent to store charts, that means we have to remunerate them to cover the additional costs of renting space to store charts. We were able to put another examining room in our clinic because we took away all those paper charts. That's a significant amount of space and a significant cost.

I want to talk a little bit about some of what this bill is going to actually do in terms of—I'm not even going to highlight everything, but it's going to be fairly significant. One of the things is that we're going to revamp the integrated vehicle safety and emissions inspection program so that the big heavy diesel commercial vehicles on our highways and roads don't have to do two inspections. They can do it in a one-stop shop. They don't have to be off the road for two inspections, and it streamlines the process. It saves them time and money, and I think that's always a good thing for all of us here in Ontario. We want to achieve—we want to decrease emissions in Ontario, and we need to do that by looking at how our industry operates here in Ontario, so that we can help them reduce their costs and reduce emissions, and then it's better for all of us.

We want to change the drycleaning regulations. I'm reminded of one of my constituents: Sidney Chelsky is the executive director of the Canadian Fabricare Association, and I've met with him a couple of times. He agrees that there are many unnecessary regulations here in Ontario covering dry cleaning. The federal legislation that was established in 2003 created very strident federal inspections of Ontario dry cleaners, meaning that the provincial requirements are really not necessary anymore. It was a duplication, and it was a hardship for our dry cleaning industry.

1740

We are streamlining approvals for combined heat and power systems that use natural gas. We want to align the regulatory requirements that use natural gas turbines and other technologies with similar environmental risks. This would promote fairness and create a level playing field among the many competing industries.

Again, if we want investment in Ontario, if we want jobs in Ontario, if we want more people contributing to that tax base to fund all of our projects, then we need to

help our business leaders. I think that this bill shows that we did and that we're listening. This is why we were elected and why we have the support of so many in all of our communities.

We want to also create a more modern digital reporting registry for waste programs, so that it means that we don't have to do the reporting by paper. I'm hoping to see a lot more of that, because we're all aware in our lives that we often have to print applications for things, summer camps and things like that. I used to print so many pieces of paper, Mr. Speaker. I had four kids and sometimes I would be applying to one summer camp for two of them, and I had to print all of those pieces of paper and duplicate pretty much everything. It felt like such a waste of time and money.

We're looking at reducing the burden for the forestry industry by streamlining approvals and also with more effective use of government resources. I think that the forestry industry, if you visit northern Ontario, is a huge part of the economic potential that we want to encourage. Our forestry industry is very environmental. They replant whatever they cut down. We all see what's going on in California in terms of forest fires, and a lot of people say it's because they weren't managing the forests by clearing out the bush and the dead trees. It's very important for us to ensure that. If we don't want to have the types of forest fires that we too often see, it's very important for us to manage our forests properly.

We want to improve the management of drug shortages. This change would allow for temporary funding of alternative drug products by exempting the product from certain drug submission requirements.

We often read in the newspaper about a new treatment, a new type of medication or drug, and we think, "Well, great," and people email to us or we email to somebody who has that problem or disease, and unfortunately they can't access that medication or treatment because it has to go through so many trials and so many regulatory hoops. Sometimes, in special circumstances, either clinical, where they're doing trials or tests—but sometimes if it's really to save somebody's life in extenuating circumstances, they will allow somebody to have a certain drug.

We really need to look at what we can do in terms of the entire country—not just our province, but in terms of North America, in terms of across the globe—to ensure that the vaccines are available, the drugs are available, the treatments are available. I know that I visited Sanofi, which manufactures so many vaccines. It's actually on the edge of my riding. It's just south of Steeles, just on the edge of my riding. One of their problems is they have to throw out batches of vaccines, Mr. Speaker, because if there is a little blip, even very, very short—not a total power failure, but the power goes down just enough—they can't trust that the equipment stayed functioning. That's just heartbreaking to hear. We need to improve the infrastructure so that our businesses have the reliable electricity and power that they need to manufacture these very fragile, I guess, treatments and drugs.

We want to reduce the burdensome requirements—and we heard this before—for barbers and hairdressers.

Apparently some barbers and hairdressers were required to keep the personal information of every customer that came in as though they were a doctor or a dentist. We do that for obvious reasons. If there is a problem with a medication or a treatment somebody was given, we obviously have to be able to find that person, and not just for billing purposes. But it seems a little bit like overkill to treat our hairdressers and barbers as though they were somehow pharmacists and doctors and dentists.

Also, some premises that only perform barbering and hairdressing wouldn't require the same dedicated sink for processing equipment that others require, but they'd still require a sink for handwashing, obviously.

A big one we've been discussing in the media lately is about allowing dogs on patios in some circumstances. If food isn't being prepared, if it's just being reheated or just served, and it's nachos and cheese put in a microwave, I don't think there is a big health hazard, and I think the experts have agreed that it isn't a big health hazard to have dogs there.

I think we're hearing more and more from all of our constituents, and we certainly see it when we go door-knocking during campaigns, that dogs are really part of people's families. I'm not going to say necessarily that they are their children, although in some cases they probably are. People want to spend time with their dogs, and if they're at work all day and it's a nice summer evening—I have an almost-30-pound dog, and I would love to be able to take her to sit at a patio sometime, so I'm looking forward to that one, on a personal note.

We also want to change some of the rules that make it difficult for local soup kitchens and non-profit groups who serve food in the community. They've been having to operate as though they were a restaurant. It's too cumbersome; it's too burdensome. It means that they are not able to do what our community needs them to do, and what they want to do, as a matter of fact. They want to volunteer and serve the community and not spend their precious resources trying to deal with government regulations.

We also want to reduce the administrative burden to grocery and other retail stores related to the Healthy Menu Choices Act, so we're reducing some of the food that has to show calorie counts. We're going to keep it for restaurants with more than 20 locations. In terms of unprepared fruits and vegetables sold by weight—I didn't even know that they had to report that, Mr. Speaker. That is just beyond belief. I don't know about everybody else here, but I've never made the same recipe twice, so I'm not sure how these restaurants and food preparation people manage it.

The 407 was very interesting to me, because the 407 goes right through Thornhill. I was told a few years back that Thornhill has the highest percentage of transponders for the 407 of any jurisdiction in Ontario, which makes sense, because we're right smack in the middle of the toll road.

If people aren't paying their fees, if they're in arrears—and I know that there used to be a lot of them, because

when the 407 first started, people didn't know how the billing worked, they didn't know how the transponders worked, and they had a lot of issues with their call centre. I think it has kind of been resolved, but there are still people riding on it without a transponder, not expecting to get the bills, and the bills pile up.

There was this additional \$20 fee that they had to pay directly to the 407, which was an administrative fee, but the main fines were paid through your licensing. I believe, or maybe I have it backwards. Basically, it was two separate ways to pay these two fees, so if you owed the 407 \$500, you had to pay that \$500 through either renewing your licence fee or to the 407 directly. I'm guessing the \$20 was probably for the licensing, if I think about what makes sense to me. Now you can pay them together. People used to feel that they were done, that they had paid, and then they had this additional \$20, which they didn't want to pay, of course.

Amendments to the Agricultural Products Insurance Act: A lot of these changes are to our agriculture and farming communities. It's one thing that has been a big learning curve for me in the Legislature, that a huge part of our industry here in Ontario, a huge employer in Ontario—it's massive—is our agricultural sector. Too often in the large cities, people think that food comes in little packages. Here in the Legislature, when we go to the plowing match, the big agricultural fair, we certainly get our eyes opened, those from the big city, when we see how much is involved and just the enormous amounts of equipment for sale.

The regulatory burden that our farmers face can make it impossible for them to earn a living. They want to pass down their farms often to their children, and we're hearing so often that their children don't want to take over the business anymore because it's just too much of a hardship.

1750

We want to support our dairy farmers and our beef farmers. We want to help them by reducing that regulatory burden if it's unnecessary. We all agree here that a lot of regulations are necessary, but what we want to reduce are the unnecessary ones. There's no reason why Ontario should have so many more thousands upon thousands of regulations than other jurisdictions in North America. We already have the highest electricity costs in North America. We don't need to have the highest number of regulations. It's not a prize that we're going after. I'm just going through, and it's all—look, repeal of the Farm Products Grades and Sales Act, so a lot about agriculture.

One of the things we've been discussing is about expanding alcohol service hours at Ontario's airports. I think what's interesting to note is that people fly at all different times and flights are delayed and sometimes they're at the airport and they're on Asia time. To them, it might be 7 o'clock in the evening, but to us it might be seven hours or 10 hours off from them. It's easy for us to say, "Why would somebody want to be drinking at 9 o'clock in the morning?" But it could be that on their time, it's the evening or the supper hour. If they have a few hours between flights, there's no reason why they should

be sitting on a hard chair in an airport and not able to access alcohol. It's a legally regulated substance. A lot of times people are going on vacation, and that's where they start their vacation: at the airport.

Basically, it's to allow beverage alcohol to be sold 24 hours a day in a responsible manner, and that would create economic activity. I'm certain we all know that airports are like little cities in many parts of the world. Pearson airport certainly is no different. I've had early flights at Pearson airport where I showed up before anything opened. It's a pretty dark and desolate place. You can't even get a coffee sometimes at 5:30 in the morning if you have an early flight. I'd like to see not just alcohol beverages, but I think the airport should operate more like a little village in terms of understanding people are there at all hours of the day.

This is interesting: streamlining the process following the accession of a new sovereign. We don't know who the sovereign will be. They've changed the rules now. It could be a king or a queen, even if the elder child is a male. It used to be that if the elder child was female, the second child, if they were male, would ascend to the throne. Now they're not discriminating against females anymore, but it used to be. I never realized that there were unnecessary bureaucracies that were involved, that if the sovereign was changing, our bills and laws couldn't pass because we need royal assent. How often do we say that: "if this bill passes" and "when a bill passes" with royal assent.

I just want to mention quickly Karen Thorne-Stone. I spoke to the president and CEO of the Ontario Media Development Corp. about creative industries. I see that we want to repeal the Paperback and Periodical Distributors Act. I think Karen and all of her team are going to be very happy about that, because we know that book publishing is really struggling. It's a tough industry right now here in Ontario, anything to do with print.

We all know that there are too many rules. We need to streamline; we need to modernize. Let's get to work. I'm very pleased that I had the opportunity to add my voice to this debate.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I'm not sure where I begin here. I want to thank my colleague from Waterloo who talked about Bill 132 and talked about trust and priorities.

I'm going to start, first of all, with the member from Thornhill. She mentioned how it's going to be great now with this bill that we can have alcohol 24/7 and people can start their vacations earlier. I'm just trying to figure out: Have you spoken to pilots' associations to find out whether they're okay with this, to have all these people who have been drinking 24 hours and getting on their planes? It's just something to think about.

We're continuing to see the fixation here with alcohol with this government. Of course, we talked about buck-a-beer, legalizing tailgate events, and now, continuing to see people allowed to get their alcohol 24/7 in airports.

But do you know what? What we haven't really talked about—a little bit earlier today we talked about Brampton

Civic Hospital needing funding. We're not talking about what is really needed and what people want here in Ontario. We need better health care, better education and, of course, talking about the environment. But it looks like this government is mainly concerned about alcohol and booze.

I just want to quickly jump to the 407—I'm surprised you even mentioned the 407—and how you're making it much more efficient to pay your bills. I think what you probably should focus on is lowering the bills instead, so people aren't being gouged and paying exorbitant fees on this highway. I think that's something you should probably look at.

Also, of course, the fines for environmental disasters or spills have been lowered, so it's making it much cheaper for people to pollute, now that the cap is \$200,000.

There is a lot in this bill, Mr. Speaker, which doesn't jibe with the people of Ontario, and I think the government needs to take another look at it.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: First of all, I just want to digress for a minute. I want to talk about the member from Niagara Falls saying that the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019, isn't a priority. Well, I hate to tell you, but creating jobs is a massive priority for Ontario.

I'll tell you something that I'm proud about. I'm proud that for the next generation, for people who are the engine of Ontario, with small and medium businesses, they actually have a voice now, and they're being heard on how to thrive and how to create more jobs and how to invest back in their business. They have felt stifled for 15 years, that they didn't have anything at the table putting them in a position to thrive and be better for Ontario. It is our top priority to make sure that we do the best that we can for small and medium businesses. We have many, many businesses in all of our communities.

I want to say one thing first and foremost. To the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction: I want to thank you for all your hard work. It's one thing to bring people to the table and just have rhetoric and just say, "We're listening to people and you're not"; but it's another thing to go from round table to round table and actually listen to what the people are saying, to make their lives better so that all of Ontario thrives and becomes a better place. Thank you so much for all your hard work. It doesn't go unnoticed at all.

I want to bring up a couple of other quick points too. I know a restaurant in Burlington that has four or five employees. One person spends 40 hours a week going through duplication, and that's the owner of the business. He's cooking the food some nights; he's hosting some nights. He doesn't have 40 hours in a week to be able to do that.

We need to stop the duplication. We need to make things better. That's what we're doing on this side of the House, and hopefully you'll join us and make things better for Ontario.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Again, back to the bill, Better for People: Again, for me, where I come from—I'm not sure if people understand the picture that I keep asking about. I know some people grow up, and even at 24 years old, they never have running water in their homes. Sometimes we just snap our fingers when we want water from the pages. That's not equality. There is no equity in it.

I know that this bill talks about wealth. I hear “we are listening.” I hear “government is listening.” I've got up so many times here, talking about water, talking about housing. Water is life; water is a basic human right. We're talking about health hazards, and we're talking about dogs on patios.

We are people up north. Where is the legislation to have clean drinking water for all Ontarians?

What I get thrown is that jurisdictional Ping-Pong—the health of our people. That's not acceptable anymore. It's 2019. This is Ontario. We cannot continue to talk about modernizing the system.

I'm not sure if everyone who is in this chamber—whatever is happening up north, you would not allow that in your communities. You would not allow for your children—you would not allow for your grandparents, your parents—to grow up like that. So I just ask you: Treat us like people. We have to concentrate on other bills as well, but we need to have clean drinking water.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: As we wrap up debate today, I just wanted to say that as a government, we're doing a lot for the people. I had the minister for small business in my riding the other day with the member for Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte, and we were really excited to have people around a round table. They were excited to be listened to by the government. They were proud to know that they have a government that listens, that does what it's going to say and says what it's going to do.

When we said we were going to cut regulations and when we said we were going to be introducing a bill that cuts red tape every session—promise made, promise kept. We've delivered on that, and that's what we got elected to do.

If you look at this bill, where did these suggestions come from? They came directly from the people, from all the round tables that the minister has held. So to any person who stands up in this House and is not supportive of the bill, I would say: Have you hosted such a round table on red tape, and have your constituents brought up these matters? Because frankly, we listen on this side of the House, and we're making these suggestions in this bill.

Whether it is our hairdressers and small things like making their job a little bit easier by reducing the amount of recording they have to do, because that's their billable

hours—it's these small things that all add up to make our small businesses thrive in Ontario. Because we know that if we add more time for them, if we save them money, that money is going back into our communities, generating more jobs and generating community involvement, volunteer groups and donations.

So I rise in this House; I wanted to bring my support to Bill 132. I want to thank the member from Thornhill for all of her remarks on the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): And now I return to the member from Thornhill for her final comments.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I heard you say “final”; I thought you were going to say “five-minute comments.” No, I'll keep it to the two-minute wrap.

I just want to thank everybody who added their voice and for all of their input. I think that the part of the puzzle that's missing, when we want to have a smart, digital government and streamline and modernize, is that we need the workforce. We need the trained employees. We need our youth to get trained for the jobs of the future, the high-tech jobs that we know are out there.

My nephew Lior is working at Microsoft in Seattle. The things that they're working on—he did a work term at Tesla in California. The things that are in the future—I'm reminded of when we bought a microwave for my grandparents and my grandmother refused to use it. We got an answering machine for the first time and she said, “I'm not going to talk to a”—which meant a robot. She imagined that there was a metal robot answering the phone in the other person's house, trying to take messages.

I think that we can't even imagine what's going to be in our future. We hear about driverless cars. We see all the new technology. We say, “Hey, Google,” and now you're able to talk to your car and your car is able to do things for you. We see that there are even smart traffic lights—again, we need to get our traffic lights synchronized and computerized so that it's monitoring the flow of traffic. I heard a speaker say that we could improve the flow of traffic 30% if we just get smart traffic lights. That's enormous, Mr. Speaker. That's like adding another lane to the traffic.

We want to see our students get the training they need, so they can fulfill those jobs and have meaningful careers. I look forward to seeing that happen. I look forward to what the modern digital future brings to us here in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for debate has expired.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now slightly after 6 o'clock. This House will stand adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1804.

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