

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 30A

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 30A

2nd Session
42nd Parliament

Tuesday
7 December 2021

2^e session
42^e législature

Mardi
7 décembre 2021

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<https://www.ola.org/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

House Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 7 December 2021 / Mardi 7 décembre 2021

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Build Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2021, Bill 43, Mr. Bethlenfalvy / Loi de 2021 visant à protéger nos progrès et à bâtir l'Ontario (mesures budgétaires), projet de loi 43, M. Bethlenfalvy

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	1567
Mr. Michael Parsa	1569
Mr. Will Bouma	1572
Ms. Rima Berns-McGown	1574
Hon. David Piccini	1574
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	1574
Mr. Dave Smith	1575
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	1575
Ms. Catherine Fife	1575
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	1576

Tabling of sessional papers

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield)	1576
---	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

United Way

Mr. Ian Arthur	1577
----------------------	------

Member's anniversary

Mr. Aris Babikian	1577
-------------------------	------

Holiday messages

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	1577
-------------------------	------

COVID-19 immunization

Mr. Billy Pang	1577
----------------------	------

Student achievement

Mr. Taras Natyshak	1578
--------------------------	------

Climate change

Mr. Mike Schreiner	1578
--------------------------	------

Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu	1578
--------------------------	------

Long-term care

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	1578
--------------------------------------	------

Algonquin Radio Observatory / Holiday messages

Mr. John Yakabuski	1579
--------------------------	------

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott)	1579
-------------------------------------	------

Parliamentary counsel

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott)	1579
-------------------------------------	------

Bette Stephenson

Ms. Marit Stiles	1579
------------------------	------

Ms. Mitzie Hunter	1580
-------------------------	------

Mr. Mike Schreiner	1581
Mrs. Robin Martin	1581

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

COVID-19 immunization

Mr. John Vanthof	1582
Hon. Christine Elliott	1582

Employment standards

Ms. Doly Begum	1583
Hon. Paul Calandra	1583

Climate change

Ms. Catherine Fife	1584
Hon. David Piccini	1584

Electronic service delivery

Mr. Dave Smith	1585
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	1585

Services en français

Mme France Gélinas	1586
L'hon. Caroline Mulroney	1586

Rondeau Provincial Park

Mr. Rick Nicholls	1586
Hon. David Piccini	1586

Great Lakes protection

Mr. Bill Walker	1587
Hon. David Piccini	1587

Personal support workers

Mr. Taras Natyshak	1588
Hon. Paul Calandra	1588

Supportive housing / Logement en milieu de soutien

Mme Lucille Collard	1588
L'hon. Steve Clark	1589

Hospital funding

Mr. Deepak Anand	1589
Hon. Christine Elliott	1589

COVID-19 testing

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown	1590
Hon. Christine Elliott	1590
Hon. Stephen Lecce	1590

COVID-19 response

Mr. Stephen Blais	1591
Hon. Stephen Lecce	1591
Hon. Christine Elliott	1591

Small business

Mr. Gilles Bisson	1591
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy	1592

Garde d'enfants / Child care	
Mlle Amanda Simard	1592
Hon. Stephen Lecce	1592

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Providing More Care, Protecting Seniors, and Building More Beds Act, 2021, Bill 37, Mr. Phillips / Loi de 2021 visant à offrir davantage de soins, à protéger les personnes âgées et à ouvrir plus de lits, projet de loi 37, M. Phillips	
Third reading agreed to	1593
Estimates	
Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria	1593

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DE COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies	
The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott)	1593
Report deemed adopted.....	1594

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

St. James Town Act (Residential Tenancies Amendments), 2021, Bill 72, Ms. Morrison / Loi de 2021 sur St. James Town (modifications en ce qui concerne les locations à usage d'habitation), projet de loi 72, Mme Morrison	
First reading agreed to.....	1594
Ms. Suze Morrison.....	1594

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Employment standards	
Ms. Suze Morrison.....	1594
Gaz naturel / Natural gas	
Mlle Amanda Simard	1594
Land use planning	
Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos	1594
Automobile insurance	
Mr. Faisal Hassan.....	1594
Optometry services	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	1595
Optometry services	
Ms. Rima Berns-McGown	1595
Post-stroke treatment	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	1595

Firearms control	
Ms. Doly Begum	1595
Optometry services	
Miss Monique Taylor	1596
Road safety	
Ms. Doly Begum	1596
Affordable housing	
Mr. Faisal Hassan	1596
Land use planning	
Ms. Doly Begum	1596

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Build Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2021, Bill 43, Mr. Bethlenfalvy / Loi de 2021 visant à protéger nos progrès et à bâtir l'Ontario (mesures budgétaires), projet de loi 43, M. Bethlenfalvy	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	1597
Hon. David Piccini	1604
Ms. Rima Berns-McGown	1604
Mr. Michael Parsa	1604
Mr. Faisal Hassan	1605
Mr. Amarjot Sandhu.....	1605
Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam.....	1605
Ms. Rima Berns-McGown	1608
Ms. Natalia Kusendova	1608
Mr. Faisal Hassan	1608
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	1609
Ms. Doly Begum	1609
Mr. Gurratan Singh	1609
Mr. Amarjot Sandhu.....	1612
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	1612
Mr. Amarjot Sandhu.....	1613
Mr. Faisal Hassan	1613
Mr. Dave Smith.....	1613
Mr. Gilles Bisson	1613
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	1614
Mr. Stephen Blais.....	1615
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	1615
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	1616
Mme Lucille Collard	1616
Mr. Michael Parsa	1616
Mr. Faisal Hassan	1616
Mme Lucille Collard	1617
Ms. Laurie Scott	1617
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	1619

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 7 December 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 7 décembre 2021

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Now we will have a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILD ONTARIO ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2021
LOI DE 2021 VISANT À PROTÉGER
NOS PROGRÈS ET À BÂTIR L'ONTARIO
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Bethlenfalvy moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 43, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Before I begin, I want to note that I will be sharing my time with the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill and the member for Brantford–Brant.

I am honoured to rise and address the House about our government's plan to protect our progress against the pandemic and lay a strong foundation so that Ontario's workers, business leaders and families can build a future—a future with greater opportunities for all. Bill 43, the Build Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2021 would make the necessary legislative changes to support that plan. The measures contained in this proposed legislation would allow our government to take specific actions to protect Ontario's progress in the fight against COVID-19 and prepare our great province to emerge from the pandemic stronger, more self-reliant and ready to face the changes of a dynamically changing world.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario have shown strength, compassion and a genuine desire to support their neighbours and their community throughout the pandemic. They have shown the true Ontario spirit. Our government's plan will protect the province's progress in facing a once-in-a-lifetime public health challenge while creating the right conditions to grow a stronger and more resilient economy and a province that can take on any challenge we might face in the future.

When the pandemic reached our province, our government did not hesitate to make every resource available in this fight. We invested more than \$1 billion to support the rollout of Ontario's COVID-19 vaccination plan, a plan that has already seen Ontario achieve one of the highest vaccination rates in the world. When our government introduced Bill 43, over 83% of the population had already received a second dose. Since then, the people of Ontario have continued to roll up their sleeves as soon as they were eligible, and, as of November 23 children aged five to 11 are eligible to schedule an appointment to get the pediatric Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

Mr. Speaker, we remain vigilant in the face of the Omicron variant. We are taking the necessary steps to address this new variant by continuing our vaccination program, while rolling out testing and contact tracing.

Mr. Speaker, our government has learned the hard-fought lessons of the pandemic. Notre gouvernement a tiré de dures leçons de la pandémie. And we will continue to protect the incredible gains the people of Ontario have made.

Our government's plan recognizes our strong record of pandemic management and then builds on it. I firmly believe that positioning Ontario for future growth and prosperity is a powerful strategy for not only recovering from this pandemic, but also safeguarding Ontario from the effects of future crises. It's a vision for a province that not only leads Canada in economic growth, but North America as well.

To achieve that vision, we will have to address some of the long-standing challenges—challenges that, to be frank, previous governments did not do enough to address. When it was time to invest in our hospital and ICU capacity, they said no. When it was time to build more long-term-care beds, they said no. When it was time to get shovels in the ground on roads and highways, they said no. And when our workers needed support to develop the skills to land good, well-paying jobs, they said no. You say no long enough and there are consequences. Every decision you make today matters tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, our government is saying yes, because the economy isn't just a GDP number, it's made up of people, people who work hard to provide for their families, grow businesses and build for a better future—the same people who follow public health guidelines, who get vaccinated and who have made great sacrifices during the pandemic to keep us safe. But we recognize that over the long run, this level of spending is not sustainable, and we have a responsibility as the stewards of the province's finances to ensure Ontario's fiscal health.

Now, there are some in the House who believe that the solution is to impose painful burdens on Ontario families and businesses. They don't have a plan for growth, because they don't believe in Ontario workers or Ontario families. But we have chosen a different path. By unleashing the potential of the people of Ontario's economy and the province's fiscal position, we will continue to recover.

And we are already seeing evidence of the resilience of our economy and the strength of our fiscal position. Last week, we learned that employment in Ontario increased by 68,100 jobs in November, almost all of which were full-time jobs. Ontario has now nearly 115,000 more jobs than it did before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we continue to lead Canada in job creation. Thanks to the resiliency of our fiscal position, it has continued to improve. For 2021-22, the government is projecting a deficit of \$21.5 billion, which is \$11.6 billion lower than the outlook published in the 2021 budget.

A stronger economic growth outlook is a key factor in this improvement. Ontario's real gross domestic product, or GDP, is projected to rise by 4.3% in 2021—exceeding the 4% projection in the 2021 budget. Real GDP is projected to continue to grow over the next few years at a pace of 4.5% in 2022, 2.6% in 2023 and 2% in 2024. These projections are slightly more modest than the average you'll see from the private sector forecast, demonstrating our government's ongoing commitment to prudent fiscal planning.

Revenues in 2021-22 are projected to be \$168.6 billion—which is also an improvement over the 2021 budget forecast. In fact, it is \$14.6 billion higher than projected in the 2021 budget and \$11.7 billion higher than projected in the 2021-22 quarterly finances of the first quarter. Based on these important indicators, there are clear reasons for optimism and that the future will require a prudent, responsible plan that creates the conditions for an economic and fiscal recovery, driven by growth.

Our government recognizes that the improved economic and fiscal position laid out in the 2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review is due to the hard work and sheer ingenuity of the people of Ontario. Those projections demonstrate how strong economic growth can positively impact the province's balance sheet.

0910

However, as we know, the pandemic is not over and new challenges continue to arise even as more and more people get vaccinated. Protecting the health of the people of Ontario and safeguarding our progress continue to be job number one for our government. That is why the province continues to maintain financial flexibility, given the continued uncertainty related to the pandemic, through the Time-Limited COVID-19 Fund. With the release of the 2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, the province has allocated an additional \$500 million into the fund for this fiscal year. And after accounting for the top-ups and drawdowns from this fund since the 2021 first-quarter finances, the net position of the Time-Limited COVID-19 Fund remains at \$2.2 billion for 2021-22. This

funding will allow the government to continue to direct resources where they are needed in a dynamic and changing environment, and support additional recovery initiatives while continuing to take a prudent and cautious approach to Ontario's fiscal and financial recovery.

While recognizing the uncertainty that still exists around the pandemic, our government has developed faster-growth and slower-growth scenarios in the 2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review. This practice is consistent with previous financial updates from the government during this unprecedented time. These scenarios will help us anticipate how the economy could perform over the next several years and provide people with more transparency about how alternative economic scenarios could impact the province's finances. Mr. Speaker, that fiscal transparency has been a cornerstone of our government's approach to Ontario's finances, and that commitment has not wavered in the midst of the pandemic. Our government has continued to bring the people of this province timely and transparent updates about the state of Ontario's finances.

As we responded quickly and decisively to the growing COVID-19 threat, we were the first jurisdiction in Canada to release a fiscal update that reflected the potential impacts of the virus. Eight months later we published the Ontario 2020 budget, which expanded our response with strategic and targeted investments to protect people and to protect jobs. We followed that with the 2021 budget—Ontario's Action Plan: Protecting People's Health and Our Economy. In that document, the government enhanced its response to COVID-19, bringing our investment to help guide the people and businesses of Ontario through the pandemic to \$51 billion. Included in that number is the \$1 billion for our province-wide vaccination campaign; \$5.1 billion earmarked to support hospitals, creating more than 3,100 additional hospital beds; and nearly \$3 billion in support to over 110,000 small businesses across the province. And our government's 2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review: Build Ontario continues to make \$51 billion in supports available to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and promote economic recovery. This milestone document is the seventh financial update since the pandemic began. And highlighting the government's steadfast commitment to provide regular updates on Ontario's finances, even during this uncertain economic period, will continue.

Mr. Speaker, the plan that we laid out in the 2021 Ontario economic update and fiscal outlook is our plan for jobs, our plan for opportunity and our plan to build Ontario. It's a plan that dreams big, but then lays out a clear path to take us there. This is our plan for building a better and brighter future for the people of the province.

C'est un plan ambitieux, mais qui montre clairement la voie à suivre. C'est notre plan pour bâtir un avenir meilleur et plus radieux pour la population de l'Ontario.

During the pandemic, the heroes on the front lines of our health care system rose to the challenge. But it also has become clear that after decades of neglect we have to build our capacity across the health care system, from public

health measures to intensive care unit capacity to mental health supports—particularly for front-line workers—to reducing surgical wait times. Because if just one of the components is failing and falling behind, it impacts the system as a whole. All of them need to be working efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Speaker, our economy is no different; everything is interconnected. And when one part of the economy isn't performing to its potential, it impacts everyone. A strong and resilient economy needs focused and strategic government investment and prudent economic management to boost production, support technological innovation and create more well-paying jobs. An innovative economy with hard workers and technological know-how can help return Ontario to its position as a global leader in sectors such as manufacturing, such as natural resource extraction. This includes turning Ontario into a global leader in steel, electric-vehicle and battery development.

Mr. Speaker, these global and competitive industries will be vital for building Ontario's economy of the future. And for Ontario to capitalize on the growth, we will need to unlock the vast and game-changing resource potential of Ontario's north. Those industries will need Ontario workers to help them thrive. This means making investments in skills training and encouraging more young people to pursue rewarding, challenging and lucrative jobs in the trades.

To attract and keep these skilled workers in Ontario, we need to make investments in the communities where those workers live, to grow their roots and ensure they have every resource they need to pursue successful careers. That means investing in a strong and integrated health care system, modern infrastructure and efficient and reliable supply chains to keep food, PPE and other essential goods moving. And strong communities require good roads, they require good transit systems and highways so people can get to work, get home and get to where they're going quickly and easily.

Our economy is an interconnected machine. Every component needs to be working smoothly and at its full capacity. A dynamic economy creates a virtuous circle that will help our province strengthen its position as the economic engine of Confederation.

Mr. Speaker, this is our plan to emerge from the pandemic stronger and more resilient than before and ready to take on the world. Since I released the 2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review in early November, I've had the opportunity to travel the province and speak to the people in different communities about their priorities and their hopes for the future, about how our plan can help them achieve the very best for themselves and for their family.

My conversations with the hard-working people of Ontario have shown me that our government's prudent, responsible plan is sending Ontario on the right path. It's a plan to protect the progress we've made, it's a plan to build for the future and it's a plan for the workers who will all make it happen. C'est un plan pour protéger les progrès que nous avons accomplis, bâtir pour l'avenir et soutenir les travailleuses et travailleurs qui sont derrière tout cela.

Mr. Speaker, the pandemic is a challenge that has touched the lives of everyone in the province, directly or indirectly. We will all come out of it seeing the world differently, but through it all, the Ontario spirit has shined. The people of Ontario have stood together and have helped each other persevere. They said yes to following the public health guidelines. They said yes to getting vaccinated. They said yes to changing the way they do business to keep their customers safe. And they said yes to so many other ways of supporting each other through these difficult times. Our government is profoundly grateful to them for doing so. In that spirit, our government is also saying yes: yes to building, yes to investing and yes to growing. Let's say yes to a better and brighter future that the people of Ontario deserve.

I'd now like to call on my parliamentary assistants to speak in further detail about our fall economic statement, which will support our government's efforts to move forward to protect the people of this province and build an Ontario that we can all be proud to call home. Michael Parsa, MPP for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, will discuss how the 2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review and the components of this legislation protect our hard-earned progress in the fight against COVID-19 and how it will support the workers of Ontario. And Will Bouma, MPP for Brantford–Brant, will provide more details about our plan to build Ontario.

I'll now turn it over to MPP Parsa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The minister did say he'd be sharing his time, so first we turn to the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I thank the Minister of Finance as well.

0920

Bill 43, the Build Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2021, contains legislative measures that support our government's efforts to protect the progress Ontario has made against COVID-19 and support the workers who have sacrificed so much throughout the pandemic. We will continue to ensure that they have every opportunity to succeed and prosper.

Speaker, the plan laid out in the 2021 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal update is built around three core pillars. The first is protecting our progress in the fight against COVID-19. The second is building Ontario's infrastructure and economic capacity. And the third is working for workers, who will play such an essential role in our recovery.

Our plan starts with protecting our progress. While we have made great strides in pushing back against the threat of COVID-19, we know there's still much to do. It's more important than ever to ensure that we continue to take steps forward in our fight and not a step backward. Our plan will safeguard the gains we have made against COVID-19. We owe it to the selfless, steadfast and resilient people of Ontario.

The majority of people across Ontario have been fully vaccinated—more than 90% of those over 12 have at least one dose—and our government continues to encourage

everyone who is eligible to roll up their sleeve. Under Ontario's COVID-19 vaccination plan, more than 22 million doses have been administered, resulting in one of the highest vaccination rates in the world. And now that Health Canada has approved a pediatric COVID-19 vaccine, we urge people to get the young ones in their lives protected against the virus as well. Offering the vaccine to children aged five to 11 is a significant milestone for Ontario's fight against COVID-19 in advance of the holiday season. Not only does this help shield them from the virus, but it also protects their family members, helps further minimize disruption and keeps students learning in a normal in-class experience.

Speaker, we know that the pandemic has revealed years of neglect in our health care system. Our government is taking decisive action by providing hospitals with over \$1.8 billion in 2021-22 to support 3,100 new and additional beds, reduce surgical and diagnostic imaging backlogs and help hospitals keep pace with patient needs and increase access to high-quality care.

The government is also safeguarding Ontario's seniors, who have made such profound contributions to this province. Speaker, our government wants to help seniors in particular stay in their homes safely. That's why Bill 43 proposes to extend the Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit. Our government introduced this refundable tax credit for the 2021 taxation year to help seniors or those living with senior relatives make renovations to their homes to make them safer and more accessible. The credit is worth 25% of up to \$10,000 in eligible expenses. The 2022 credit extension would provide an estimated \$35 million in support to about 32,000 people, or \$1,100, on average, up to a maximum benefit of \$2,500. This credit helps seniors in communities across our province afford the renovations they need to get around safely and easily in their own homes. Should this legislation pass, the credit would be extended, making it also available for the 2022 taxation year.

Our plan will build more spaces for our seniors in long-term care. That includes 30,000 net new long-term-care beds and redeveloping older beds across the province to meet modern design standards. But our plan is not just about building more beds, Speaker. It's about building better beds. That's why we're going to raise the bar for what constitutes acceptable care in our long-term-care homes. Our government has already committed \$4.9 billion to increase the direct care provided to residents by nurses and personal support workers to an average of four hours per resident per day by March 31, 2025.

To put that in context, in 2018 residents received an average of two hours and 45 minutes of direct care from registered nurses, registered practical nurses and personal support workers. This investment also supports a 20% increase in the care provided by allied health care providers, such as physiotherapists and social workers, by March 2023. This investment will create more than 27,000 new positions for nurses and personal support workers in long-term care.

We're building on that funding by implementing a plan to bring higher standards and more accountability to

seniors' care. To ensure the safety of long-term-care residents, the government is providing an additional \$72.3 million over three years to increase enforcement capacity. This funding will double the number of inspectors across the province by 2022-23, making Ontario's inspectors-to-long-term-care-homes ratio the highest in Canada.

We are investing \$57.6 million, beginning in 2022-23, to hire up to 225 new nurse practitioners in the long-term-care sector. We're also recruiting more than 5,000 registered nurses and registered practical nurses throughout the health care system, and funding to train an additional 8,000 personal support workers.

We're also making new investments and improving home care that keeps patients out of the hospital by investing an additional \$548.5 million over three years to expand home and community care. This funding would support up to 28,000 post-acute surgical patients and up to an estimated 21,000 patients with complex health conditions every year, because we know that the best care is the kind that you can receive in the comfort of your own home.

Speaker, just as we are supporting seniors, we're also ensuring that our young students are protected. To ensure students have a safe and successful 2021-22 school year, the government is providing more than \$1.6 billion in resources to protect schools against COVID-19. Over \$600 million has been allocated to improve ventilation and filtration in schools, including over 70,000 stand-alone high-efficiency particulate air—or HEPA—filters and other ventilation devices to help improve air quality and keep children safe.

Ontario is also investing \$8.9 million to continue keeping staff and residents safe in congregate care settings. This includes residences for adults with development disabilities, residences for children in care or with special needs, youth justice facilities and emergency shelters for women and families fleeing domestic violence. This funding addresses immediate needs by providing essential resources, such as personal protective equipment, rapid antigen testing and enhanced infection prevention and control measures.

Speaker, during the pandemic, workers had our backs; Premier Ford and our government will always have theirs. Our government is profoundly grateful for all those workers who were willing to go that extra mile in a time of such great need. We want Ontario workers in a race to the top—not a race to the bottom—because we know that Ontario's economic growth will be built and sustained by the hard work of our province's workforce. That's why, Speaker, our government is working for workers.

It's clear that Ontario workers and families are struggling. Take-home pay has not kept pace with the rising cost of essentials that families rely on, like groceries. That's why Bill 43 proposes to increase the general minimum wage to \$15 an hour, effective January 1, 2022. This represents a 4.5% increase over the current minimum wage of \$14.35 per hour. If passed, it would also eliminate the lower special minimum wage rate for liquor service, so that they would earn the general minimum wage as well.

The minimum wage rate for students, home workers, hunting and fishing guides and wilderness guides would

be increased proportionately to the increase in the general minimum wage, and consumer price indexation would resume on October 1, 2022. Speaker, should the legislation pass, this measure would help many employees boost their take-home pay. Full-time general minimum wage workers would see an extra \$1,350 in 2022, and full-time liquor servers would earn an extra \$5,100 more.

Proposing to raise the minimum wage is only one part of our plan to work for workers. Speaker, people who are willing to work hard and do their job well should not have to live in fear of exploitation or labour trafficking. We're investing \$1.1 million in 2021-22 to support a dedicated team of officers to undertake focused inspection of temporary help agencies and recruiters of temporary workers in industries and work circumstances where there is a high risk of exploitation to occur. This pilot will help protect some of Ontario's most vulnerable and marginalized workers, including Indigenous workers, newcomers, young workers, migrant workers and women. This initiative will ensure all workers, no matter their status, will have the full protection of Ontario's labour laws.

0930

Speaker, if Ontario's skilled workforce is to fully participate in our province's future success, it must have access to the training that the jobs of the future will require. To provide more training opportunities for workers, Bill 43 proposes to extend the Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit to 2022. This credit currently provides up to \$2,000 in relief per recipient for 50% of a person's eligible training expenses for 2021. The credit is estimated to provide \$260 million in support to about 230,000 people this year alone. The 2022 tax credit extension will provide an estimated \$275 million in support to about 240,000 people. On average, that's about \$1,150 per person.

Ontario is also moving forward with our skilled trades strategy, a measure introduced in the 2021 budget, to help workers secure good jobs. Through the 2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, we're investing an additional \$90.3 million over three years, starting in 2021-22, in the strategy to encourage more young people to pursue rewarding careers in the trades.

Key new initiatives in the strategy include creating a skilled trades career fair and enhancing the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program and Pre-apprenticeship Training Program.

In addition, to support workers who need training to get a job, Ontario is investing an additional \$5 million in 2021-22 to expand the Second Career program and the program's eligibility.

Speaker, in order to prepare Ontario workers for the well-paying jobs of the future, we must also make sure that the province's economy is growing and creating the demand for those workers as well. Our government is continuing to provide significant supports and investment to help Ontario's economy recover from the pandemic. Through strong and prudent management, our plan seeks to attract increased investment and position Ontario's key manufacturing industries for success. That includes fuelling an automotive manufacturing renaissance in the province, with key supports outlined in Build Ontario.

For example, we have secured investment commitments of \$5.6 billion from major auto manufacturers for electric-vehicle supply chain capacity, because a key goal of our plan is to develop a battery supply chain ecosystem and a new generation of electric vehicles in Ontario. Electric-vehicle manufacturing presents a major opportunity to help the province strengthen its production position, secure long-term economic growth in the sector and provide job opportunities for workers, as well as meet emission-reduction targets.

In addition, Ontario is taking action to address growing competition for investment and challenges to our supply chain as the global economy continues to reopen. The government is creating a new province-wide, two-year \$40-million advanced manufacturing and innovation competitiveness stream under the Regional Development Program. Speaker, this new stream will help Ontario businesses invest in the equipment, advanced technologies and skilled workers that they need to become more competitive, support growth and create and retain jobs in every region of the province. And to support businesses and the workers they employ, Ontario has enabled an estimated \$10.1 billion in cost savings and support in 2021. More than 60%, or \$6.3 billion, is going to small businesses in the province that have carried us throughout the pandemic and who will be vital contributors to our economic recovery.

Speaker, our government recognizes that the tourism, hospitality and culture sectors have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic, and we have been there for those industries, investing more than \$800 million in the sectors since the start of the pandemic. We will continue to stand with them in these difficult times.

To help the tourism and hospitality sectors recover, and to encourage Ontario families to explore the province they call home, Bill 43 proposes a new temporary Ontario Staycation Tax Credit for 2022. This new personal income tax credit will provide Ontario residents with a return of 20% on eligible 2022 accommodation expenses in Ontario, up to \$1,000 for an individual and \$2,000 for a family. The credit will result in a maximum reimbursement of \$200 or \$400 respectively, which could help individuals and families extend their stay a bit longer or further explore the many wonders of our province in 2022. The credit would provide an estimated \$207 million for over 1.5 million families.

The agri-food sector has also been significantly impacted by the pandemic, particularly through vital supply chain disruptions—which is why, to strengthen Ontario's agri-food supply chain, Ontario is investing up to \$25 million over three years, starting in 2021-22, in a new Strategic Agri-Food Processing Fund to support projects that will enhance processing capacity and food security.

Our government has a strong and comprehensive plan to protect our hard-earned gains against COVID-19 and to position Ontario's talented and diligent workers for future success. I encourage the members of this House to support Bill 43. This legislation is a key component of our broader plan to help navigate Ontario through the pandemic and into a brighter future.

Now, I would like to call on my fellow parliamentary assistant representing the good people from Brantford–Brant to share more about our plan to get shovels in the ground on our foundation for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We now look over to the member from Brantford–Brant, who has the floor.

Mr. Will Bouma: Mr. Speaker, thank you. It's good to see you in the chair today.

It's such a pleasure to rise in the House and talk about our fall economic statement. I'd just like to acknowledge my colleague the parliamentary assistant to finance from the great riding of Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, who has spoken about two of the three pillars of the plan showcased in the 2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review and in the measures contained in Bill 43, the Build Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2021.

I am honoured to speak about the third pillar, building Ontario. This component of our plan is aimed at getting shovels in the ground on projects across the province—projects that include highways, hospitals, housing and high-speed Internet, which will boost Ontario's economic growth and standard of living.

These investments will result in improved health care capacity so that our valuable public health care system is ready when the people of Ontario need it most; they will help provide access to the critical mineral resources that the industries of tomorrow desperately need by unlocking the incredible economic potential of Ontario's north, including the Ring of Fire; and they will upgrade our province's transit and transportation infrastructure so that commuters spend less time in gridlock and more time doing what matters most with the people who matter most.

The Minister of Finance and my colleague and fellow parliamentary assistant to finance have spoken about the importance of safeguarding our progress against COVID-19 and strengthening our health care system. An essential part of our plan involves building and expanding hospitals so that they can support the people of Ontario not just during the pandemic today, but keep pace with growing demands and be ready to face any of the challenges that we might be facing tomorrow.

Ontario is investing \$30.2 billion over the next decade to build, expand and enhance our hospitals. This is a truly historic commitment, and is absolutely necessary to ensure that the people of Ontario can get the care that they need.

These projects include: a new hospital and a lodge in Moosonee as well as a new ambulatory care centre on Moose Factory Island; a new in-patient care tower in Etobicoke; a complete rebuild of the Mississauga Hospital, in partnership with Trillium Health Partners; funding to support the planning for the new Windsor-Essex acute care regional hospital; redeveloping the Oak Valley Health Uxbridge Hospital; expansion of in-patient beds and ambulatory care at London Health Sciences Centre, and expansion of the capacity of its stem cell transplant unit; and transformation of the existing site and urgent care centre into a new in-patient care hospital at the William Osler Health System. These are just a few examples of the

critical health care infrastructure projects under way in all four corners of our incredible province.

0940

Ontario's economic recovery will be centred around returning our province to its rightful place as Canada's manufacturing leader, and unlocking the potential of northern Ontario is essential to achieving that objective. That is why our government is working in partnership with northern and First Nation communities to create jobs, develop all-season road access to remote communities and advance the development of critical minerals to bring economic prosperity to Ontario's north. The people in the north have known for a very long time what we are just realizing in the rest of Ontario: that that part of our province is critical to the future of not just Ontario, but indeed our entire country.

Ontario is strengthening its position as a leading North American jurisdiction for responsibly sourced critical minerals by committing to develop the province's first-ever Critical Minerals Strategy. Minerals such as nickel, lithium, cobalt, manganese and graphite are crucial components of low-emission vehicle batteries. Zinc, rare earth elements and titanium are used in medical equipment and technology such as cardiac implants, MRI machines and prosthetics. These resources hold the power to fuel an advanced manufacturing renaissance in our province that supports the green economy; build a resilient and strong supply chain for electric vehicles and battery manufacturing right here at home; help secure investments in the cutting-edge technologies of today and tomorrow; and open up new avenues of opportunity for Ontario's skilled workforce.

Ontario has a natural abundance of these critical mineral resources, but to make this happen, we must make it easier to access the minerals across northern Ontario. That's why Ontario is committed to working with Far North communities, including First Nation communities, and supporting them in their goals, including all-season road access to their communities and the Ring of Fire. In our plan, we have committed close to \$1 billion to support the planning and construction of an all-season road network and other projects. Together, these projects will contribute to a corridor to prosperity that will unlock economic opportunities and benefits to the entire region.

Bill 43 would, if passed, make changes to the Far North Act to create the certainty desired to support economic development in the Far North, including the Ring of Fire. These changes would also enhance and encourage collaboration between the province and Far North First Nations on land use planning. I would like to acknowledge and thank Nishnawbe Aski Nation, or NAN, for its close collaboration with our government to review the act and recommend changes. Ontario has also engaged directly with Far North First Nations throughout the review.

Speaker, Ontario is doing its part, but First Nations are also doing their part. We are working closely with the Marten Falls and Webequie First Nations as they lead proposed road projects in the region. We need the federal government to do its part too and match Ontario's

commitment to this crucial and critical project, because unleashing the mineral wealth found in northern Ontario means not only economic vitality for the north, including Indigenous communities, but for all of Ontario and, as I've said, indeed for all of Canada.

Speaker, we are not just investing in roads in the north. To build, expand and repair Ontario's highways and bridges, create jobs and spur economic growth, the government has invested approximately \$2.6 billion in funding for 2021-22 in support of the Ontario highways program. This program features more than 580 expansion and rehabilitation projects across Ontario, including investing to build and advance the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413.

The Bradford Bypass would be a new four-lane freeway that will connect Highway 400 and Highway 404 in Simcoe county and York region. Both regions are expected to experience rapid growth over the next 10 to 20 years, and investing in this new corridor is necessary to ease congestion on Highway 400 and existing local roads. This project is expected to support more than 700 jobs per year, on average, during construction and generate more than \$70 million in annual real gross domestic product. Motorists and trucks are expected to save more than 60% of their travel time and reduce their commute time by up to 35 minutes.

Highway 413 will be a new 400-series highway and transit corridor across Halton, Peel and York regions. The highway will bring relief to the most congested corridor in North America and play a vital role in the province's plan for economic recovery, growth and job creation. During construction, Highway 413 is expected to support up to 3,500 jobs per year and generate up to \$350 million in annual real gross domestic product. This highway will save drivers up to 30 minutes each way on their commute. That's one hour per day and five hours per week freed up in people's schedules for what's most important to them.

These two projects will significantly enable our economy to grow and will help make life easier and create more opportunity for people across the greater Golden Horseshoe. But the Liberals and the NDP are in a race to see who can say no the loudest and the fastest. Speaker, it doesn't really matter to me who wins that race, but I do know who stands to lose: the Ontario worker who can't afford to live close to their job, local businesses who cannot get their products to market or even hire because available workers are too far away, parents who never see their kids because they are stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic every single day.

Speaker, we recognize that investing in highways alone is not enough. That's why our government is also making significant investments in transit and transportation networks. We are delivering the largest subway expansion in Canadian history with a transformative \$28.5-billion plan. This includes the all-new Ontario Line, the Scarborough subway extension that will add three stops, the Yonge North subway extension connecting York region to downtown Toronto and the Eglinton Crosstown West extension that will bring the convenience and reliability of subways closer to more people.

In addition, we are investing \$1.7 billion towards a total of \$3.4 billion to advance the Hamilton light rail transit project. This shovel-ready project will create thousands of jobs and will offer service from McMaster University through downtown Hamilton to Eastgate Square. We are also delivering on our commitment to build two-way, all-day GO Transit, building the Kitchener GO rail expansion and expanding GO train service to London.

0950

Our government is bringing infrastructure investments to communities across Ontario. The province is increasing the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund by an additional \$1 billion over five years. That means an additional \$200 million per year, starting in 2022. This will help 424 small, rural and northern communities build and repair roads, bridges, water and waste water infrastructure. This, Speaker, makes such a difference in communities like yours and mine that are away from the big cities, but rely on their transportation networks in order to get people, goods and services moving where they need to go. From road repairs in Sarnia, Georgina and Haldimand county, to water treatment plant upgrades in Tay township, Blind River and West Nipissing, these projects will help provide reliable and sustainable services in communities across our great province and will directly support public safety, job creation and economic growth, helping the main streets of Ontario recover from COVID-19.

Building Ontario also means building schools and adding additional child care spaces. To help today's kids become tomorrow's leaders and innovators, the government is investing about \$14 billion in capital grants over 10 years to build more schools. The funding is also being used to improve existing facilities and support education-related projects. This includes providing \$1.4 billion for the 2021-22 school year to support and repair the renewal of schools. The government is also investing up to \$1 billion over five years to create up to 30,000 licensed child care spaces for families and communities across the province. That's like Central Public School, which I saw go from the shovel in the ground to the spaces—that's in my community of Brantford. That's like at Our Lady of Providence school, where a couple of weeks ago I got to go to the blessing, from shovel-ready in the ground. It's like the two new announcements at Cobblestone school in my riding and also at Banbury Heights School in my riding. These are the spaces that our families need so that our schools can become the hubs for child care and learning, so that children can go to school where they live and they can enjoy all the things that our communities have to offer. We have been working closely with our federal partners to support working families with their child care. We look forward to building on the progress we've made with our federal partners to meet the needs of working families.

Speaker, moving on, the pandemic has taught us that high-speed Internet access is not a luxury in our modern world; it's a necessity. I can remember in the early days of the pandemic having five students in my home learning—

no, sorry, four; one was out. Our Internet was just not capable. Fortunately, I had options. I found an Internet service provider that could provide us the data speed and everything else so that our two university students, high school student and grade school student could all successfully learn from home while I was doing Zoom meetings every single day. It is a critical tool for accessing vital services like health care, education and employment, seeking out economic opportunity and promoting entrepreneurial opportunities and just helping people stay connected when we couldn't do it in any other way.

Did you know, Speaker, that over 700,000 households and businesses in Ontario have no access to high-speed Internet or they have no Internet connection at all? If Ontario is to compete in the modern-day economy, we need to get those families and businesses online.

In the 2021 budget, the province committed a historic \$2.8 billion to make high-speed Internet accessible in all regions of the province by the end of 2025. This commitment increases Ontario's overall investment in broadband to nearly \$4 billion over six years, beginning in 2019-20.

This is the largest single investment in high-speed Internet in any province by any government in Canadian history. It will help Ontario be more competitive, it will help Ontario workers and businesses compete for decades to come and it will support our economy's transformation into a digital economy that moves at the speed of modern business.

Speaker, getting shovels in the ground creates jobs. It generates opportunity and builds the foundation for a modern, competitive and resilient Ontario. These infrastructure projects will help bolster Ontario's health care capacity to meet not just the demands of today, but whatever might be coming our way in the future. They will help businesses, they will help students, they will help families and they will help our communities connect with loved ones, sharpen their skills, capitalize on economic opportunities and build a better future.

In closing, we need to protect our progress, we need to build Ontario and we need to work for workers. That's why I call on all members of this House to support our plan to build Ontario and to vote in favour of Bill 43.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We now have an opportunity for questions.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I would like to say that honestly, contrary to what the minister claims, anybody who has been paying attention hears the government saying yes to developers and buddies of the Premier and no to everyone else—no to families and health care workers and PSWs in long-term care when it comes to making the changes that are desperately needed, like good working conditions and a commitment to not-for-profit care; no to everyone who cares about climate change and the environment; no to parents; no to people trying to stay housed; no to seniors.

Speaker, it is seniors who are the first to be evicted when financialized landlords take advantage of unscrupulous renovictions and above-guideline rent increases, but the government said no to our rent stabilization bill. Why is the government saying no to seniors?

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank the honourable member for the question. When the previous government was in the habit of saying no to the people of Ontario and often had the support of the opposition, it took this government to say yes to the people of Ontario. Speaker, we will not take any lessons from any member of the previous government and anyone in the opposition who often had the opportunity to stand and oppose them, and they supported them every step of the way.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to say yes to our seniors, who have done everything for us in this province, who have paved the way for us. We are going to say yes to our health care system that was left on life support by the previous government. We're going to say yes to our students. We're going to make sure that the businesses of this province that have sacrificed so much during the pandemic receive support.

When we say we're going to say yes to workers, we're going to do that by ensuring that the workers are receiving more support. Some 760,000-plus will receive a bigger paycheque as a result of this government come January 1—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

The next question goes to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. David Piccini: I appreciate the comments from all members today and the excellent remarks that they made. When the opposition maligns development in this province, they're maligning new Canadians who want the opportunity for affordable housing. They're maligning new Canadians who want to access expanding and supporting our municipalities with their official planning process.

1000

My question is, why is it so important that, after years of neglect, we make these investments into hospitals, into long-term care and, most importantly, into affordable home ownership?

Mr. Will Bouma: I so appreciate the question from the Minister of the Environment. I am a new Canadian. I think we have 20 members in our caucus who are new Canadians who have decided to make this country their home. On behalf of all new Canadians, we know what the people who dream of coming to this country and to this province to build the future of this province have to bring to the table. That's why we are making these investments today, so that they can find jobs, they can come here, they can thrive and have the opportunity in the trades and in other job skills that we have available. I welcome that question, because it's so true that we need to invest today in the Ontario of the future so that so many new people can call this incredible province their home.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: From the beginning of the pandemic, which hit Ontario in March 2020, small businesses across our province have been suffering. It took the government nine months to come up with a program to

support local businesses. After months, small business owners, chambers of commerce, advocacy groups and, of course, the New Democratic Party were calling on the government to offer financial support to small businesses.

Last week, we learned from the Auditor General that they failed to properly protect taxpayers. A quarter of workers in St. Catharines work in the hospitality and tourism sector, which has been hit the hardest throughout the pandemic. This loss, over \$200 million, to ineligible grants could have gone directly to supporting more the hardest-hit sectors in Ontario. It could have directly gone to help support businesses that are struggling. Speaker, some 14,000 ineligible businesses received over \$210 million from taxpayers. This Conservative government has given up on getting the money back. Why does the government feel that these businesses deserve this \$200 million from taxpayers? Why are they giving up on the money?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member opposite for the important question. Sometimes I wonder if there's a little bit of amnesia, because in March 2020, this government acted very swiftly to provide supports for businesses, including a \$17-billion package within weeks of the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, of course I'm referring to measures such as rent relief—billions in rent relief, billions for WSIB premiums, rebates for electricity, rebates for property tax. In fact, it goes further. We provided supports for Digital Main Street so that they could set up their e-commerce platforms. Mr. Speaker, it goes further, because we set up a fund for PPE to help businesses. That was all at the beginning of the pandemic, during the first year of the pandemic. This government was there for businesses and will continue to be there for businesses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: As the parliamentary assistant to northern development, mines, natural resources and forestry, and Indigenous affairs, there is something in this bill that is near and dear to my heart, and that is critical minerals. We know that the electric-vehicle market is something that is emerging. It's green technology. It is good for all of the world, not just Ontario. But the key thing, too, is that they are battery-operated, and Ontario has one of the largest reserves of all of those critical minerals. Could one of the members who spoke please talk about how great it is that Ontario can be the world leader in critical minerals and reduce greenhouse gases across the entire world by what we're doing here in Ontario?

Mr. Will Bouma: I want to begin by saying this fall economic statement is a piece that brings together aspects from many different ministries, and so I wanted to thank the parliamentary assistant and the member from Peterborough–Kawartha, God's country, for the incredible work that he's done on this Critical Minerals Strategy.

As I mentioned during my remarks, the people of the north have known this for a long time, but they are the key to the future prosperity of not just our province and building a green economy, but indeed for the future of this

entire country. That's why we need the support from all parties in order to make this bill a reality, so that we can build that future green economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The government side claims we're the party of no, they're the party of yes, but I'd like to point out that the government side had said no to 10 permanent paid sick days; no to nurses and repealing Bill 124; no to a legislated minimum of four hours of hands-on care in long-term care; no to providing Ontarians rapid antigen tests, of which the federal government has gifted them millions; and no to people with disabilities in ensuring they have an income that allows decent, stable housing, food security and basic human dignity. They said no to smaller, safer class sizes in our publicly funded schools. They've said no to \$10-a-day child care.

Yet, Speaker, to contrast, they said yes to wealthy, for-profit long-term-care owners and shareholders who made millions off of this pandemic. They've said yes to legislation that protects not only themselves, but those for-profit long-term-care operators from liability as thousand of seniors have died during this pandemic, and they've continually said yes to donors and PC insiders for infrastructure projects—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I know there is a question in there somewhere, and the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill is going to respond.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank the colleague for the question. This is not a secret. We've said this from day one, that we will work with anyone who will help us improve the lives here and help us be able to produce more and do more for the people of Ontario. That includes the federal government and any government. But, yes, we did say yes to making sure that there are more supports in our health care system. We did say yes to more support in education to make sure that students and staff and parents—everyone—is kept safe. We did say yes to our business owners, the job creators, and we'll always say yes.

Any initiative that helps the people of Ontario—we will work with anyone because we have, and we've said it from the beginning, the best and the brightest living in this province. We'll always say yes to improving their lives in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is a pleasure to join the debate until question period starts this morning. It's a really interesting time in the province of Ontario. The contrast, I think, between the priorities that this government has indicated that they care about in this fall economic statement, the budget Bill 43 and where we have been trying to amplify the voices of Ontarians, is quite different.

One of the number one issues that has been facing Ontarians before the pandemic, during the pandemic and now it's even more heightened because of some of the decisions that this government had made, is on housing.

What was interesting for us, in committee, is that—we tried. We came to the table with some trust, with some earnest effort to try to make this a better piece of legislation, particularly on the housing front. We brought forward a number of amendments, particularly around affordability, which is not a word this government seems to understand.

If they are listening to the people in their ridings, this is the number one issue: affordability on gas; affordability on hydro; affordability on rent, on housing; affordability on child care. I don't know where you have been, I don't know if you've gone into hiding, but this is the number one issue that faces Ontarians right now.

So we brought forward two amendments to Bill 43 specifically around affordability. One of these issues was on housing. We have two of our members—MPP Karpoche and MPP Bell have brought forward some recommendations specifically around the predatory nature of investment in the housing market, which is driving up costs. This is something that you could have done something about, and yet chose not to.

Particularly on schedule 2, which is the Business Corporations Act, we brought forward amendments that called on the government to, in a timeline for one year, implement a public registry with a system for exemptions, such as homes for people fleeing domestic violence—particularly timely, I would say—expanding the definition of which entities must register to include all companies, trusts and partnerships that own land in Ontario.

1010

What's interesting on this front is that during the delegations, we heard from an organization called Transparency International Canada. They have been tracking how predatory investments and, really, the hoarding of real estate is impacting Ontarians. Now, we've seen this play itself out in BC, around Vancouver. This is what one of the members who came to speak to committee said, that the government is essentially allowing—so you are permissive in this—“empty safety deposit boxes in the sky which are harbouring dirty money.” That's their language. And this dirty money is actually—the government knows this full well. This is one of the few things that we have some data on, that they are facilitating, essentially, the stealing from their own citizens in other countries and harbouring that money here in Ontario. You are part of the problem when you don't actually address the issue.

Now, not only are you helping nefarious money laundering in other jurisdictions, but that money now is actually being held in trust in real estate, which is actually preventing people from having access to affordable housing. It's a full cycle of real estate transactions, which we tried to make better in schedule 2. Our members in Toronto and in the north and actually across the entire province have really been trying to drive home to this government that that point of tension for housing is paramount.

I will also say, there is of course a seniors' tax credit in this bill for some renovations and to make some accessibility—fine—but I just got word, Mr. Speaker, that in my

riding, 100 seniors are set to be renovicted out of their building. The point of pressure and where you put your energy and where you put your priorities is quite telling.

The other affordability issue that we tried to get this government to listen to was on the front of minimum wage.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm listening.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Are you listening? Are you listening? Yes, keep on walking.

This had to do with schedule 9 of the bill. We understand, of course, that while you froze the minimum wage, one of your first actions, and actually rolled it back and cut those two really crucial sick days, we have proposed a minimum wage which is predictable, which is consistent and which is reflective of what we've actually heard from businesses, which is what they want. They want you to take the politics out of the minimum wage.

We actually now have a strong body of evidence that when workers in Ontario and across other jurisdictions earn a fair living wage, that this could be an economic escalator. It can drive the local economies, Mr. Speaker. And so we brought forward a proposal—and this is essentially based on the Nobel Prize winners, one of them is Canadian David Card—where they did real live research, documented it, explored the value and the economic impact of having a fair and living wage, and they found that this demonstrated empirically that the idea touted by conservative economists that higher minimum wages mean fewer jobs is not based on fact. In fact, it actually contributes to local economies, it builds local resilience in our economies and it ensures that people actually can live with some dignity and is a key factor in driving poverty.

I would say that we were very disappointed that the government did not participate even remotely in this discussion of the value of a strong minimum wage. We have put forward a plan that gets to \$20 an hour by 2026. Some folks are really quite excited about moving away from wage suppression—thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll continue in the afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I apologize for interrupting, but the clock is such that we have to leave the debate and move into members' statements.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I beg to inform the House that the following documents were tabled:

—the 2020-21 annual report of the French Language Services Commissioner, from the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario; and

—a report entitled Costing Climate Change Impacts to Public Infrastructure, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

UNITED WAY

Mr. Ian Arthur: I'd like to stand and take a moment today to congratulate the Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington United Way. I'm delighted to stand and tell the House that the United Way of KFL&A blew past its \$3.6-million goal, raising \$3.8 million in the 2021 campaign. This incredible milestone is a testament to the critical work that the KFL&A United Way does under the steadfast leadership of president and CEO Bhavana Varma.

In 2020, when things shut down, the community needs didn't disappear, and for many they actually increased. The United Way moved nimbly to support agencies and meet emerging needs. They made sure that kids who relied on school lunch programs got those same lunches at home. They supported low-income seniors facing an increased cost of living during the pandemic. They increased support because of demand for counselling and supports for sexual assault and domestic violence.

As the months passed, the KFL&A United Way has spearheaded collaboration amongst agencies, experts and all levels of government, helping the community navigate the concurrent crises of the pandemic and an opioid epidemic facing Kingston's most vulnerable populations. They have been instrumental in Kingston's situational response team, and spearheaded the homelessness collective impact committee at a time when front-line staff were working flat out to make sure Kingstonians were okay during the pandemic.

To Bhavana and the United Way team, thank you for everything that you do.

MEMBER'S ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Aris Babikian: It is my great honour to stand up here today in this august House to pay tribute to an outstanding resident of Scarborough, a gentleman who is a statesman, mentor, community leader, beloved father, grandfather and devoted husband. Mr. Speaker, I am speaking about none other than the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, who celebrated his 30 years of public service on December 1. He was first elected to Metro Toronto council in 1991. Since then, he continues to serve his constituency diligently, with passion and vigour.

People love the Scarborough North member because they know they can trust him and they can count on him to defend their interests. His devotion to his community and the people of Scarborough is legendary. He will not leave a stone unturned to help the most vulnerable in our society.

It is a distinct privilege for me to know Minister Cho and work with him as a campaign volunteer and as a colleague in this Legislature. I have learned so much from his humble soul. His dedication and commitment to the betterment of our province and country is inspiring and trend-setting.

Congratulations to the minister on this milestone. I wish him health, happiness and many more years of service to the people of Scarborough and Ontario.

HOLIDAY MESSAGES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I rise today to wish my constituents in Windsor West as well as all Ontarians a happy holiday season.

As many of us will gather with family and friends over the next few weeks, I want to remind everyone to celebrate safely. We must ensure that we continue to social distance and keep our gatherings small this year as we all get through this pandemic together. All of us must follow the public health directives to ensure a great holiday season.

I want to recognize the many individuals in this province who will be unable to have a joyous holiday celebration, as they face financial hardship. With this government's refusal to provide livable social assistance rates or wages, many people are struggling to afford housing or food, let alone holiday gifts and celebrations.

I want to thank the folks at the Windsor Youth Centre, the Downtown Mission, the Salvation Army of Windsor, the Hiatus House, the Welcome Centre Shelter, the Unemployed Help Centre and many other local community organizations that have stepped up to help the residents in Windsor during the holidays and beyond this year. Food banks, shelters and outreach groups will see a rise in need as more families seek assistance this year. If you have the availability and means, I ask that you consider donating to local organizations and sharing your holiday cheer with those who need it the most this year.

1020

I had the pleasure of participating in the annual Windsor Santa Claus parade this past Saturday. It was wonderful to connect with the residents of Windsor-Essex and celebrate alongside my community.

I wish everyone a safe and healthy holiday season and a prosperous new year.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Billy Pang: In October, our government launched the official COVID-19 QR code and a made-in-Ontario verification app, Verify Ontario. These tools are an easier, more secure and convenient way for individuals to provide proof of vaccination and for businesses and organizations to verify vaccine certificates where required to do so.

On October 27 and 28, my office organized a help desk at Markville Mall to help Markham-Unionville constituents download their QR codes directly to their phones. My team and I had a great time assisting our constituents and responding to their inquiries regarding the QR code. As of December 3, the QR code has reached over 1.53 million downloads.

Mr. Speaker, our province is making steady progress with the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, with over 87% of Ontarians aged 12-plus fully vaccinated, and the eligibility for the booster shot expanded for individuals aged 50 and over and for additional high-risk individuals.

With confirmed cases of the Omicron variant in Ontario, I urge all Ontarians to remain vigilant. Let's continue

to follow public health and workplace safety measures. Together, we will get through the pandemic.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I rise to congratulate a group of students from St. Clair College and also the University of Windsor, who recently competed in a business development competition that was the brainchild of local resident Richard Peddie.

Richard, as many know, is the former president of Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment and is now a cherished resident of Amherstburg who has done so much in economic development, growth and revitalization of our community. Richard put up a \$5,000 prize, also working with the Barry and Stephanie Zekelman Foundation to create a \$10,000 prize for business students at St. Clair College and the University of Windsor, to come up with real-world solutions to support the Downtown Espresso Café and their revitalization. That is owned by Remo and Renee D'Amore.

A group of students from St. Clair College won the \$10,000. I want to give them a shout-out: Trevor Ramieri, Bethany D'Alimonte, Samantha Hollinsky, Cen Shen and Noor Al-Qaraghuli. They are the grand-prize winners, but we all win when we harness the power of local students' talent, innovation and initiative, and incentivize them to be problem solvers in our community—all this to say that we have great local economic development in our small communities. I urge everyone to visit and support these businesses over the holidays, shop local and get to downtown Amherstburg and all the wonderful hamlets in Essex county.

To each and everyone in the House and all across Ontario, merry Christmas and Happy New Year. We wish you well.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: This morning, in response to a request I made, the Financial Accountability Officer released an alarming report on the financial risks and costs that the climate crisis will have on public infrastructure: the cost of increased rainfall and heat on our schools, our recreation centres and other public buildings.

I called for this report because we need to be honest with the people of Ontario about the cost of the climate crisis. We need to be honest with people about the cost to adapt and we need to be clear about the importance of crushing climate pollution to reduce these costs.

The report was very clear: The costs of inaction far exceed the cost of climate action. The impact of extreme rainfall and heat will cost public buildings alone an additional \$6 billion this decade, and, on top of that, an additional \$116 billion this century if we don't crush climate pollution. This was only for public buildings and only for a limited number of risks, which didn't include things like flooding.

Speaker, we have a moral and fiscal responsibility to act on the climate crisis now. We simply cannot waste billions on infrastructure that will supercharge sprawl, pollution, climate risks and climate costs. We need to act now.

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: December 6 marks the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. It has been over 30 years since the truly heart-breaking École Polytechnique massacre has taken place. The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women is about remembering those who have experienced gender-based violence and those we have lost to it.

On December 6, 1989, a shooter entered an engineering class at Polytechnique Montréal and opened fire, killing 14 young women. This attack was led by vicious, sexist and misogynistic intent, and no woman should ever feel threatened or be in fear for their safety at any public institution such as schools or the workplace because they are women.

As we mourn the lives of those lost, we must reaffirm our commitment to fight the misogynist and sexist-fuelled hatred that led to this tragic event. In Canada and around the world, women are still victims of unacceptable gender-based violence. It is our duty to address this gender-based violence as it absolutely has no place in our society.

I encourage everyone to educate themselves and their loved ones on violence against women and to speak up and take action against potentially harmful behaviour. We must do everything in our capabilities to empower women and end the negative social constructs that belittle our sisters, mothers and daughters.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Protecting our loved ones and ensuring our seniors receive the care they deserve is at the centre of everything that I have been motivated by these past few years. You see, each Christmas holiday, I travel to about 35 senior centres and long-term-care homes across St. Catharines, bringing a poinsettia to mark the holidays, but also to just check in.

This month I am pleased to have attended so many homes already: Tabor Manor, Garden City Manor, Heidehof and many, many more. It is a pleasure to make these visits and talk to the PSWs, the RPNs, the RNs and all of the health care staff who have stood strong through this pandemic.

We too often hear words from this Conservative government about getting shovels in the ground, and yet report after report, like the one last week, shows that the government is not doing what it can to fix long-term care fast enough—money unspent, promises that show little commitment today outside of press conferences and news releases.

After decades of inaction by previous governments, it is not enough to fix long-term care and ensure our seniors get the quality of care they need for 2025 or 2028. They need it now, and we can do that.

So I am reporting back from my visits to these homes, from our seniors that built our province, from the staff who are still working so hard to make the system work today. They deserve action with equal urgency, not promises that may never deliver real action.

ALGONQUIN RADIO OBSERVATORY HOLIDAY MESSAGES

Mr. John Yakabuski: Last Friday, I had a fascinating visit to the Algonquin Radio Observatory. My hosts, Caroline Roberts and Brendan Quine of Thoth Technology, gave me an absolutely amazing tour of the facility, as well as explaining in layman's terms some of the unique and specialized services they are providing to clients.

While most people probably aren't aware of its existence, the ARO continues to perform critical scientific work, and it's happening right here in our backyard on Lake Travers in Algonquin Park.

In addition to being informed of its scientific capabilities, I also had the really special experience of examining the guest book from May 1970 and finding in it the signatures of Maurice Hamilton, MPP for Renfrew North, and my father, Paul Yakabuski, who was then the MPP for Renfrew South. It certainly would have been the latest cutting-edge technology at that time. What's significant is that it remains vital today, over 50 years later.

On another note, my wife and I attended the Santa Claus parade in Petawawa, where there were literally thousands of people lining the streets. The parade was great, the floats were amazing, but what was most exciting for Vicky and I was the number of young children waiting anxiously for St. Nicholas himself. Petawawa being home to the largest army base in the country brings with it the wonder of all those young families.

1030

In keeping with that spirit, I want to wish everyone here in the chamber and all across this great country a blessed and merry Christmas and the very best in 2022.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm very pleased to inform the House that page Isabella Surman from the riding of Beaches–East York is one of today's page captains, and we have with us today at Queen's Park her mother, Sarah Cahill. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We're delighted to have you here.

PARLIAMENTARY COUNSEL

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would like to ask for the attention of the House at this time. One of our table Clerks and parliamentary counsel is going to be retiring at the end of this month.

Peter Sibenik has worked at the Legislative Assembly for over 32 years. Peter began his career as a procedural Clerk in 1989 and went on to the position of a procedural research Clerk. After a brief secondment at the Office of the Integrity Commissioner as a research consultant, Peter returned to the Legislative Assembly and resumed his post as procedural research Clerk and then as table research Clerk. He has been in the role of parliamentary counsel since 2014 and was appointed to the table in 2020.

On a personal note, I have always valued and appreciated Peter's professionalism and his knowledge of parliamentary practice and procedure, relying often on his sage advice and understanding of Parliament as I attempt to preside over this assembly.

His family is here with us today in the Speaker's gallery: his wife, Gillian Lynne-Davies, and his sons, Jasper and Josh.

Peter, thank you for your exemplary service to Ontario's Parliament and enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

Applause.

BETTE STEPHENSON

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the government House leader has a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to allow members to make statements in remembrance of the late Dr. Bette M. Stephenson, with five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's loyal opposition, five minutes allotted to the independent members as a group and five minutes allotted to Her Majesty's government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member for Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: First of all, I want to say how truly honoured I am to have the opportunity and the privilege of speaking here in the Legislature as we mark the passing of Dr. Bette Stephenson. There are certainly few others who have blazed more trails than Dr. Stephenson. She opened so many doors for women in politics, in medicine. Her story is extraordinary, and her achievements are many:

—first female Minister of Labour in Ontario history;

—first female Minister of Education in Ontario history;

—first female Minister of Colleges and Universities in Ontario history;

—first female Minister of Finance in Ontario history;

—first female president of the Ontario Medical Association;

—first female president of the Canadian Medical Association—and on top of that, she delivered about 5,000 babies.

As Steve Paikin has written, she was a force of nature. That forceful personality dated back to her childhood. When she was five, she wanted to start school, but school didn't start until six, so she hectored her parents until they caved in and gave up. It was also at five that Dr. Bette decided that she was going to be a doctor. At that time, people were telling her that women don't become doctors,

they become nurses, because there were no women doctors. But she wasn't going to put up with that. "Yes, there are," she would respond. "I don't know any, but I think they're there."

By 1941, Dr. Bette became the only girl in her high school graduating class at Earl Haig Secondary School to go on to university. She wanted to go straight into school for her chosen profession—again, she'd decided already on medicine—but the rules at the University of Toronto were that you had to be 18 to enrol in med school, and she didn't have the \$680 tuition. So what did she do? She camped outside the dean's office at the University of Toronto medical school, insisting on being admitted one year early at 17. She impressed the dean so much that not only did he let her in, he helped arrange coverage of her tuition.

It's pretty clear that nobody was going to succeed in opposing Dr. Bette from even those earliest days. When she married another med student, Allan, she told him she intended to have six children, and indeed they did: four boys, two girls.

In 1962, Dr. Bette was now also the first female board member of the OMA, and by 1970 its first female president. She famously crossed swords with Pierre Trudeau as part of a Canadian Medical Association special committee when she tried to have abortion removed from the Criminal Code. Trudeau confirmed he would do so, but then at some point changed his mind. When new legislation was introduced, abortion remained illegal. Dr. Stephenson was furious. She later talked about how she confronted Trudeau at an event about his broken promises. She said he would just deny that he'd ever made the commitment. But from her story of those interactions, it made it pretty clear that she wasn't backing down. Sadly, it wasn't until 1988 when the Supreme Court ruled abortion law unconstitutional that she got her way.

When she was elected as a Conservative to the Ontario Legislature in 1975, Bill Davis didn't waste much time making her the Minister of Labour. He thought her background as a doctor would help in some of the health and safety law reforms that were under way.

Later, juggling the education and colleges and universities roles, her workload increased and so did the opposition to some of her positions. One day, at a speech at the University of Waterloo defending tuition increases, a student protester shoved a lemon meringue pie in her face. She cleaned herself up and carried on. But when she went to York University for her next address, she came prepared: "You'll see that this time, I have come armed with my own pie," she said, placing it on the lectern. "And I'm a pretty good aim."

Bette's cutting-edge leadership as minister influenced many educators' work hugely. Dave Cooke, former Minister of Education, reminds me that as Minister of Education and Minister of Colleges and Universities from 1978 to 1985, she established the secondary education review project and introduced a new blueprint for Ontario's secondary schools. She was also responsible for establishing the Bovey commission on post-secondary

funding in Ontario and introduced legislation establishing a program for funding for special education to serve vulnerable students better.

Dave also shared how she used to love sitting in the Legislative dining room talking with the interns, inspiring so many of them. Dave even appointed her to the board that oversaw the set-up and design of EQAO when he was minister. He talks with great admiration about her control of the files as minister, her great interjections in the Legislature and her contribution to public education.

She made it clear to Dave that she wouldn't be messing around if she joined that board. Indeed, her only question to him when he asked her to sit on the board was, "Is this a political manoeuvre or is this about real public policy?" And only when Dave assured her it was the latter did she agree to serve. He says to me, "Bette was a warm and caring person. Tough as nails in question period, but a real caring person who loved kids and public education."

Richard Johnston, an MPP with Bette and the first chair of EQAO, has said his first and favourite memory of many was when she was so ticked off with a line of questioning from Dave Cooke in a social development committee discussion of the education budget that she actually poured water from a water jug on him. Needless to say, the three of them remained fast friends.

I'm going to wrap up by sharing something that Joan Green—who, for many in this province, is really a titan in education. She gave the eulogy at Bette's funeral and was kind enough to share some memories with me as well. She told me that once she left office, Bette continued to forge new paths in public service and focus on education in one form or another, whether in the service of the province's children or in support of medical research and the continuous learning of those in health care.

1040

Joan also shared that Dr. Bette's father's advice was as follows: "Always leave the place you are in better than you found it." How many, many places and how many, many people have benefited because Bette took that advice to heart. Thank you to Dr. Stephenson, to her family and friends, and may she rest in peace.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Well, my friend Joan Green would tell many stories about Dr. Bette Stephenson, and she even wrote about her in a chapter in her book, *Northern Lights: Outstanding Canadian Women*. So I'm absolutely thrilled to rise in this House and speak about Dr. Bette Stephenson—trailblazer, founder and leader in medicine and politics.

Born on July 31, 1924, she was the daughter of Carl and Mildred, wife of Dr. G. Allan Pengelly, mother of six, grandmother and great-grandmother to numerous children. Her story is one that reminds us that we as women can do anything that we want to, and we do have the power to make fundamental change and make our province better than we found it. She is known for breaking doors and shattering ceilings throughout her life and her career.

Dr. Stephenson fought to get to where she was at a very early age. Her pathway to education began with badgering her father to go to school until he enrolled her at an early age of five. She began kindergarten one year ahead of the

recommended age at the time. In her words, “It was clear to me that persistence paid off when the cause was worthy.”

After she finished high school, she went on to pursue her childhood dream of becoming a doctor at the University of Toronto, once again breaking those doors that were challenging her. She did not know any women who were doctors, but she believed that “they were out there.”

She went on to be a pioneer in medicine, including as a founding member of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, holding various roles there, including president of the medical staff. She also served as president of the Ontario Medical Association and president of the Canadian Medical Association. She held Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau to his word as a staunch advocate for removing abortion from the Criminal Code.

Dr. Stephenson never planned to run for office. Her predecessor called her three times to seek the nomination in her riding, and each time she refused. When Premier Bill Davis asked her to run, it was her family who finally persuaded her to seek the nomination for the person that she was: someone loyal to their word, full of integrity and generosity and someone they knew would make a remarkable difference in public office. And, indeed, she did, as the first female Minister of Labour, Education, Colleges and Universities, Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Deputy Premier.

She also facilitated the passage of Bill 82, the special education act, to assist the needs of vulnerable children, and she chaired the Ontario Innovation Trust and the Ontario Cancer Institute. Dr. Stephenson was also a member of the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario, and in 2013, she was inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame.

In 2002, I got to meet Dr. Bette Stephenson at a luncheon for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, at Sheridan College in Oakville. It was there that I sat beside Dr. Stephenson, enraptured by her many stories and the passion that she had for education.

Thank you, Dr. Stephenson, for inspiring so many as you broke and shattered those glass ceilings. You were a woman who was always ahead of her time. Our province is indeed a better place than you found it, in innumerable ways, because you chose to serve the public here in Ontario.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I’m honoured today to rise and pay tribute to Dr. Bette Stephenson, a true trailblazer and by all accounts a force of nature. I’m not going to repeat the many accomplishments that my colleagues have outlined, but I will have to say that Premier Davis, when he appointed Dr. Stephenson as Minister of Labour, the first woman to hold that position, gave her many reasons why, but one of them was, “My staff recommended against it.” And how right the Premier was and how wrong his staff was, because Dr. Stephenson was an extraordinary cabinet minister, known for her sharp wit and ability to answer questions quickly.

In response to one question about a pulp and paper strike in northern Ontario, she said, “The answers to your

question are yes, no, and perhaps—in that order.” That was it—not the kind of response you oftentimes hear today in question period.

Dr. Stephenson was a trail-blazing doctor, a model MPP, and Ontario is a better province because of her service. I want to thank Dr. Stephenson’s family for sharing her with us.

Mrs. Robin Martin: It is a great pleasure and an honour to pay tribute on behalf of the government to Dr. Bette Stephenson, who lived from 1924 to August 2019 and was, among other things, the member of provincial Parliament for York Mills.

For many, being elected as a member of Parliament is the highlight of their career. For Bette Stephenson, her 1975 election under Premier Bill Davis was merely another step in an amazing journey of accomplishments and firsts. Her accomplishments did not begin nor end through elected office and through her contributions to Ontario.

As we have heard, at the age of five—yes, five—Bette Stephenson knew that she wanted to be a doctor, but was disappointed when she was told she could only start school at six. It took me, frankly, until I was eight to decide I wanted to be a lawyer, and I thought that was pretty precocious, but she was there at five, so an amazing lady. People told her that women at this time become nurses, not doctors. But since her parents had told her that she could do anything that she wanted, a doctor it was.

Starting in grade 9, she won awards for elocution. In 1939, when she was in grade 12, when Hitler invaded Poland and started World War II, having read Mein Kampf, she won her school’s public speaking award warning against the evils of Adolf Hitler.

She was the only female graduate of her high school to go on to university. She wanted to go to U of T medical school but was only 17, not 18 as required, and she did not have the tuition, so she waited outside of the dean’s office for hours. Not only did she get to go to medical school at 17, but she got the tuition waived. Clearly no obstacle was going to stop Dr. Bette Stephenson.

This is the thing that I most admire about her and what I most want to say about her: She was feisty. She had an indomitable, invincible spirit, and her many accomplishments simply attest to that spirit.

She graduated from medical school and was one of only 10 women in her class of 142. She became a doctor in 1946 and excelled as a leader in that field during her 40-year medical career. We’ve heard some of those accomplishments: founding the College of Family Physicians of Canada; first chief of the family medicine department at Women’s College Hospital; first woman to be elected to the board of the Ontario Medical Association; she served as the first president to the OMA; the first female president to the Canadian Medical Association, where she was also the first to go on a medical delegation to the People’s Republic of China. Bette Stephenson’s accomplishments in medicine alone make her life remarkable.

However, she was not just a doctor. As I said, she became an MPP in 1975. And, as in medicine, she broke

barriers in politics, continuing to add to a long list of firsts in our province's history.

In the government of Bill Davis, Dr. Stephenson served as the first female Minister of Labour, where she brought her skills in medicine to bear, helping to establish the division of health and safety. Later, as the first female Minister of Education, Colleges and Universities, she took on some challenges.

At one university, speaking about a tuition increase—as we have heard—a student protester put a pie in her face. The audience was aghast, but, undaunted, Dr. Stephenson finished, and at the next university she spoke at—as we have heard—she went to the podium carrying her own pie and indicated to the audience that she was quite prepared to deploy it, if needed, which thankfully it was not.

1050

In education, she established the first funding program for special education in the province of Ontario—way ahead of her time. Before ending her long and accomplished career in government, Bette Stephenson would serve as the first female Treasurer of Ontario, as well as the first female Deputy Premier of Ontario under Premier Frank Miller.

With such a long and illustrious career in two highly demanding fields, it's no surprise that she received many honours in her lifetime, and these included the highest honours a Canadian and an Ontarian can receive with the Order of Canada and Order of Ontario. She was also honoured as woman of the year by B'nai B'rith.

In addition to all of this, she had six children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren—too many to name today. When asked if she was a feminist, she replied, “I am a humanist, and if that happens to leave a few men behind, well, so be it.”

Dr. Bette Stephenson was a force to be reckoned with, and Ontario was blessed to have her. As the only other Ontario female finance minister Janet Ecker said, “She could be tough without being nasty, firm without being stubborn, direct but always professional” and “you always knew where you stood with her.”

It was clear hers was a life well-lived and well worth remembering. It was a life of duty, accomplishment and service to her community and her family. Her life is an inspiration to all Ontarians. Thanks to her family and to Dr. Bette Stephenson for serving us all so well.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the members for those tributes. All of us give thanks for the life and public service of Dr. Bette Stephenson.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question to the Premier. In the face of rising COVID cases and a new variant, which we

know very little about, yesterday the Premier and the Minister of Health both refused to acknowledge or announce whether or not they would extend vaccine certificates. Vaccine certificates are a very important tool, especially for small businesses and for restaurants. No one's been hit harder by COVID than small businesses and restaurants. No one has been hit harder by the uncertainty of what the rules are going to be and the changing rules day by day. So we don't understand, why the reluctance to just say, with the new information we're going to extend the vaccine certificate program—regardless of what the Premier said a few weeks ago.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We did introduce a plan to reopen Ontario a month or so ago, and we indicated definite timelines for the reopening; timelines where we would be able to relax certain features to allow for people to be able to return to, more or less, the life they used to live. However, it was very firm and very clear from the beginning that Dr. Moore indicated that if there is a change in circumstances, if there is a variant that is going to cause a significant rise in cases, then we will have to reassess the situation. That is the situation we are in right now because we don't know enough yet about Omicron to be able to make those determinations.

What we do know we have to do is to continue on the path of vaccination. We have lowered the age guidelines for people to receive the third dose. We are now giving shots to children aged five to 11. We've now got 22.1% of that age category covered.

That is what we need to continue to do, to make sure that everyone possible who can have the vaccination receives the vaccination, and continue following the public health measures as we have since the beginning of this pandemic.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the Minister of Health for that answer. It seems we have the inside answer and the outside answer, because when the Premier announced that the vaccine certificates were coming off January 17, we didn't hear any caveats. It was, “That's happening. Be happy.” That's what we heard.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You know that's not true.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane has the floor.

Mr. John Vanthof: The mixed messaging is part of the problem. When people who are vaccine-hesitant hear on the radio that you won't need a certificate after the 17th, the impetus to get vaccinated lessens—exactly the opposite message of what you're trying to convey here, Minister. Why don't you just say, “In light of the new information, we are going to extend the certificates,” and give small business some certainty?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, there has been no mixed messaging. The message has been clear from the beginning with the plan that was released to reopen Ontario in stages with guidelines and with timelines. It was always made clear by our government, by Dr. Moore, by everyone involved based on the science, based on the clinical evidence that obviously if there was a change in circumstances, if there was another variant that came in that was going to cause an increase in hospitalizations, that it was going to be extremely transmissible, virulent and cause people to perhaps not be vaccine-useful, that we would have to change course. Right now, we are awaiting further information on all of those issues to be able to understand what guidance we can then offer the people of Ontario. But it's only reasonable to expect that we need to wait to obtain that information from South Africa and from scientists around the world, that we then make a determination based on that evidence when we have it.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I would say that having the Premier say he doesn't believe in a split society is very much mixed messaging. What happened to the precautionary principle where you say, "Okay, things are changing and we've got a system that works. Be prepared that it's going to be extended," as opposed to, "Here's the hard date where we're thinking about getting rid of it"?

This isn't months. This is weeks. It's the short-term decision-making that has hurt the restaurant sector and the service sector throughout this pandemic. Open the patios, close the patios. Why don't you give them the advanced notice that they need, use the precautionary principle and say today, "We're going to extend the vaccine certificate program"?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government has always made every effort to give as much advanced notice as possible to businesses as to whether they need to remain closed, when they can start reopening and under what circumstances. But, right now, we don't have the information that we need. We want to be fair to the people of Ontario. We want to be clear and transparent with the people of Ontario. We've said already that we do not have the information yet. No one in the world does. Ontario is no different. We are waiting to find out about the transmissibility, the virulence and the effect of this variant vis-à-vis our vaccines. We need to have this information. That is being fair and reasonable. I anticipate that the people of Ontario will understand that, knowing that no one in the world knows how this is going to turn out. But once we do know, we will be giving people sufficient information in order to understand what we need to be able to do.

It's not, "Trust us," as I heard from the other side. It's, "Let's rely on the clinical evidence to be able to make those decisions." That's what we've always done and that's what we will continue to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.

I need to address the member for Cambridge. The member for Cambridge is obviously in the precinct and in the chamber—at the present time, in contravention of the

current COVID-19 screening protocols that have been adopted by the Legislature. I must now ask the member to withdraw from the chamber and leave the precinct. Member for Cambridge?

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Speaker, in the rules that you've set out, it's proof of double vaccination or proof of a negative rapid antigen test, which I was able to provide this morning. I'm cognizant of the rules.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): As the member knows full well, being unvaccinated and having tested positive for COVID-19, the current advice from the public officer of health is that she must be out of the chamber for the next 90 days, starting from the date on which she tested positive. I'll ask the member once again to leave the chamber and leave the precinct.

1100

I must now warn the member for Cambridge.

The member for Cambridge leaves me no choice but to name her. Mrs. Karahalios, you must leave the chamber and leave the precinct.

Mrs. Karahalios was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Please start the clock.

The next question.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Speaker, three weeks from now, workers across Ontario will be left without any paid sick days. We are still in a pandemic.

Ontario has now seen multiple consecutive days with over 1,000 cases, including the novel Omicron variant, yet this government is ripping away even the little support it put in place in the middle of the pandemic.

Workers deserve the right to be able to stay home when they are sick, Speaker. They deserve the right to protect themselves, their families and their workplaces.

Will the Premier stand up for workers in my riding of Scarborough Southwest and people across Ontario and stop his cancellation of paid sick days now?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, as I've said on a number of occasions, obviously we stepped up right away to ensure that workers across the province of Ontario were safe in the COVID environment. We brought in job protections. In fact, we were the first government across the country to bring in job protections, which are still in place. And of course we worked very closely with our federal partners to bring in paid sick days and to in fact augment those sick days.

We will, of course, continue to be there for the workers of the province of Ontario, not only during COVID, but as we have always been, the party that leads when it comes to protecting workers and to promoting job creation and safety in the workplace.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: Speaker, I want to remind the House leader and all the members opposite that they dragged their feet on paid sick days, gave us the lines about federal paid sick days—which wasn't true—and now we're talking about the little they offered which, after they admitted they were wrong, they introduced—and they are taking those away.

Throughout this pandemic, workers across this province, including front-line essential workers, had to make the impossible choice between their lives and livelihoods. Taking away paid sick days as we are on the brink of another wave right before this hectic holiday season is beyond cruel. Doctors and experts recommended 14 days for a self-isolation period for COVID-19, not three, and now this government is taking that away.

Speaker, we have legislation ready to be passed that will mandate 10 paid sick days for all Ontario workers. We have proposed it dozens of times in this House. Will the Premier do the right thing and legislate 10 paid sick days for all workers before the House adjourns for the holidays?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, Mr. Speaker, there are protections in place for workers. As I just said, we were the first government to bring in protections for our workers.

It is very true that the Premier negotiated an extensive, over \$1-billion program to ensure that there were paid sick days. We thought we needed to go a little bit further than that—than the federal program—because there were loopholes that we had thought would be addressed in the federal budget that were not, so we filled in those loopholes.

You will recall, though, Speaker, we voted against proposals by the Liberals and the NDP members because they wanted to place the burden on our small businesses. We didn't think that appropriate at a time when they were giving so much and there was so much challenge for them. So the program that we brought in shifted that burden to the government.

We will continue to be there, not only for essential workers, but for all of the people of the province of Ontario, to ensure that they can work in an environment that is safe not only during COVID, but after.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: It is rich hearing this government talk about small business support. They mismanaged millions—over \$200 million—that didn't even go to the businesses that needed it the most, that had to close their doors.

Front-line service workers such as servers, waiters and retail workers often do not have paid sick days in their contracts. These workers, who will be working throughout the holiday rush to help Ontarians, will not have the protection of paid sick days. They will once again be putting their lives at risk simply to make sure that they can get a paycheck. The Premier and his government took away the two provincially mandated paid sick days workers used to have, and now they are ripping away the three days that they offered.

There is a new variant right now; I cannot emphasize this enough—there is a new variant, and we need to do everything to protect everyone. Will the Premier do the right thing and mandate paid sick days? Why is the Premier continuing to leave workers and everyone behind in this province?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Nothing could be further from the truth. As I've said, and I'll say it again and again, this was the first government to bring in job protection for people impacted by COVID. We ensured that first and other jurisdictions followed us.

We negotiated with the federal government a program of 20 paid sick days. There were holes in that legislation that we had thought would be filled, so we brought in additional protections to ensure that there were no gaps in that care. Our paid sick days allow workers to take their kids to get vaccinated. That is what we have to continue to do. We will always be there for the workers of the province of Ontario.

But the difference between what we did and what they were proposing was that they wanted to shift the burden to our small, medium and large job creators at a time when they were being impacted the hardest. We knew that that was impossible, and that is why we assumed that burden.

It's the right program and it has made a big difference in the lives of our essential workers across this province.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. The Financial Accountability Officer released a report this morning on the financial impacts of climate change on public infrastructure. The report confirms that the costs of doing nothing are much higher than the costs of climate action—in fact, billions higher.

But the Premier has not only failed to prepare for climate change, he has actually made things worse in Ontario. He ripped out electric-vehicle charging stations. He wasted hundreds of millions of dollars on not building renewable energy. He forced gas stations to put up propaganda stickers and wasted \$30 million on a failed court challenge against federal climate change action.

How many more public dollars, how many more millions and billions of dollars, must be wasted because of the Premier's climate change denial? We deserve better. Ontario deserves so much better.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

Premier Ford, upon assuming office, acted immediately to launch Ontario's first-ever climate change impact assessment. This is a first in Ontario and will inform our province as we fight climate change and make important investments to build adaptation and resiliency.

I would also add that when it comes to investing in infrastructure, this government leads the way in the province of Ontario. We have made continued investments and improvements to infrastructure. In fact, the Minister

of Infrastructure has made historic commitments in the fall economic statement to support urban and rural municipalities.

Further, we launched the climate change advisory panel. I met with Chair Paul Kovacs, and he has been doing important work, working not only to inform our government, but in close coordination with the federal government, with the national adaptation strategy and the national infrastructure assessment. I recently met with my federal counterpart, and we'll continue to lead the way and make these right investments to build adaptation—

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

The supplementary question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's an alternate universe here sometimes, Mr. Speaker.

The disturbing images of washed-out highways in British Columbia show the risks of climate change to public infrastructure. This is something that we can plan for, but the Premier has not only ignored these risks, he has fought an ideological war against any action to address these risks.

The current annual budget, for instance, for the government's climate change and mitigation program is only \$15 million. The Premier spent twice that much in court fighting federal climate change action and losing. The Auditor General says that Ontario will not even achieve one fifth of the Premier's own weakened climate change reduction targets.

Will the Premier apologize to everyone in this province for his relentless and wasteful attacks on climate change action? When will we see leadership on climate change, particularly around investment in our infrastructure?

1110

Hon. David Piccini: I gave an answer that included tangible action that this government's taken. The member talked about an alternate universe. I enjoyed Mirror, Mirror from Star Trek, and if we were to relive that, that's their party; the party that says no to investing in adaptation and resiliency; the party that said no to clean fuel standards equivalent to taking over 300,000 cars off the road and a megatonne of GHG reductions; the party that said no to the largest clean water investment in Ontario's history working in close coordination with Pollution Probe. We've continued that with a recent announcement I made last week, with the Canada-Ontario agreement, on important investments, and I will be speaking this question period on that as well. That party has said no to \$7 billion in green bonds, working in close coordination—you know, we can't reach net zero, we can't take meaningful action to combat climate change without leveraging the private sector. While I'm on that, we worked with Algoma on the electrification of their arc furnace.

This party has nothing but negativity, no solutions, no answers—

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

The next question?

ELECTRONIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is to the Associate Minister of Digital Government. Now, more than ever, it's important to protect, support, connect and equip the province's people and businesses to succeed in a digital world.

Mr. Speaker, through you, could the minister please tell us, how is the ministry working with the province's world-class technology sector to help our government build a digital Ontario, and what is the government doing to unlock the expertise of the private sector to accelerate Ontario's digital future?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I would like to thank the member for that question. Our government is saying yes to simpler, faster and better digital services for the people of Ontario.

Earlier this year, we published Ontario's first digital and data strategy to help protect, support and equip Ontarians and businesses to thrive in a digital world. Included in the strategy was a commitment to creating a fellowship program to utilize private sector expertise and resources. On November 25, our Associate Minister of Digital Government, Kaled Rasheed, introduced the Digital and Data Innovation Fellowship Program, the first of its kind in Canada. Minister Rasheed and this government are building a digital Ontario that puts people first. This project and this pilot will bring the best of Ontario's digital and data talent into the government to help design Ontario's digital future.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you to the minister for that answer. It's good to hear that this government is transforming Ontario into a province that puts people first and delivers simpler, faster and better government for Ontarians, businesses and communities.

While I appreciate the answer, I'm sure that my constituents, as well as everyone else in Ontario, would like to know more. Speaker, through you, can the minister please explain how inviting the province's top technologists, designers and data experts to work on transformational digital projects will directly benefit the people of Ontario?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you again to my colleague from Peterborough-Kawartha. The Digital And Data Innovation Fellowship Program is about unlocking private sector expertise and resources to accelerate digital projects that the public service is working on across several ministries, including the Ministry of the Attorney General, to deliver digital access to courts; the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry, to create new digital services for permits and licences; and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, to enhance inspection and compliance programs.

Mr. Speaker, we are saying yes to building a digital Ontario that puts people first. We are saying yes to

working with the private sector to make things happen and we are saying yes to making Ontario a world-leading digital jurisdiction.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Aujourd'hui, l'unité des services en français au sein du Bureau de l'ombudsman a déposé son deuxième rapport annuel. La commissaire aux services en français rappelle l'importance de planifier la prestation de services en français de qualité équivalents à ceux offerts en anglais, et ce, sans délai.

Le postsecondaire est un des secteurs les plus visés par les plaintes en raison des coupures à la programmation francophone à l'Université Laurentienne. Plus précisément, des 351 cas reçus, 60 cas, soit 27 %, étaient de personnes affectées par les coupures des programmes en français à l'Université Laurentienne.

Monsieur le Président, la population francophone essaie d'être entendue par M. Ford et son gouvernement. Quand peut-on s'attendre à ce que le premier ministre Ford et son gouvernement s'engagent en faveur d'une université francophone pour les gens de Sudbury et du Nord-Est gouvernée par, pour et avec les francophones?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Francophone Affairs.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie la membre pour sa question. Notre gouvernement remercie la commissaire aux services en français pour son travail et ses recommandations, qui visent à améliorer les services en français dans la province. L'engagement de la commissaire et son efficacité à communiquer avec le gouvernement dans le but de souligner des dossiers et des enjeux importants pour la communauté francophone démontrent que les Franco-Ontariennes et les Franco-Ontariens sont très bien desservis par son bureau.

Tel que souligné par la commissaire Burke dans son premier rapport annuel de l'année dernière et réitéré dans son second rapport dévoilé aujourd'hui, notre gouvernement a réagi à un bon nombre de recommandations qui ont été soulevées par son bureau menant à des résolutions rapides.

On va continuer à travailler en étroite collaboration avec tous les ministères pour nous assurer que les francophones de l'Ontario aient accès à des services de qualité dans la langue de leur choix.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: La commissaire dit clairement que l'expérience des francophones qui utilisent les services du gouvernement et qui la contactent est négative, voire très négative, et souvent humiliante. Les plaintes les plus élevées viennent du ministère des Transports, dirigé par la ministre des Affaires francophones.

Le gouvernement doit corriger l'effet dévastateur des limites de la Loi sur les services en français sur l'expérience vécue par les francophones. L'exemple le plus frappant est celui des bureaux de santé publique, qui ne rencontrent pas la définition d'organisme gouvernemental et sont donc exempts de la Loi sur les services en français.

La commissaire nous dit clairement que son incapacité de traiter directement les plaintes liées aux bureaux de services de santé publique limite son action et la qualité des résolutions qu'elle peut obtenir. Pourquoi le gouvernement refuse-t-il de corriger les limites de la loi et de clarifier les organismes couverts par la Loi sur les services en français pour inclure les bureaux de santé?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je souligne pour la membre de l'opposition que c'est depuis plusieurs années que la communauté francophone réclame une modernisation de la Loi sur les services en français. La Loi sur les services en français a été introduite en 1986, et les libéraux avaient 15 ans pour moderniser la loi. Mais c'est notre gouvernement, monsieur le Président, qui finalement a mené ce travail et a finalement proposé une modernisation de la loi, parce que nous savons que c'est important pour les francophones de l'Ontario d'avoir une loi qui reflète la diversité et la communauté francophone d'aujourd'hui.

Monsieur le Président, dans son rapport aujourd'hui, la commissaire souligne que notre gouvernement a répondu immédiatement par rapport à ses recommandations de l'année dernière et que nous travaillons en étroite collaboration avec elle. Je remercie la commissaire pour ses recommandations. Nous allons continuer à travailler avec elle pour les mettre en oeuvre.

RONDEAU PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

When I was first elected back in 2011, one of the burning topics was the selling of land in Rondeau Park to cottagers who had been leasing the property from the Ontario government for decades. Over my 10-year span advocating for these cottagers, I've worked with many ministers. With each one, the hope of the sale of the property to the cottagers was anticipated. But here we are today, and nothing has been finalized.

Many varying proposals have been brought forward. I remember during my first term sitting down with former Minister Gravelle, along with a member from my city council, to discuss the issue. One of my fond memories of the former minister was him saying to me, "Many come with problems and expect my ministry to fix them. You, on the other hand, have come to me with a problem but you have offered very reasonable solutions for my ministry to consider." To this day, I strive to present solutions to the province to aid and assist ministers, regardless of political stripe.

My question to the minister is, what challenges lie in the way of finalizing the sale of the property to cottagers?

1120

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member for that question. I know this indeed is an issue that is close to his heart. The member will know, while I can't speak for work he has done with previous governments, what I can speak to is work we've done. More specifically, since becoming minister, I met closely with Mayor Canniff and know that the municipalities brought forward a proposal pursuant to

our obligations as a ministry to the Environmental Bill of Rights. This was posted on the ERO, where we received thousands of comments from Ontarians. In fact, this is one of the most commented on ERO postings in Ontario's history.

We obviously want to ensure as a government that we're expanding Ontario's protected green spaces. It wasn't far from that member's riding that I made one of my first announcements as minister to expand Turkey Point Provincial Park and add Normandale beach. So I appreciate Mayor Canniff's leadership. I appreciate the work that that member opposite has put into this, and we will continue to work on the file.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Minister. Over the decades, a lot of water has actually gone under the bridge to find a reasonable win-win solution for the cottagers and the Ontario government. I, along with the help of many, have been successful over the years in getting the file to a point where the municipality of Chatham-Kent, the province and cottagers are close to finalizing.

For many years, the cottagers have lived in fear of losing their cottages upon the expiration of their leases with the province. Because of that, many only do repairs to their cottage as needed. Their cottages have been the site of years of cherished family memories, where the former government had stated that when the leases were up, the cottagers had to leave and tear down their cottages at their own expense.

You and I both know that Rondeau park was originally established as a park where cottages could be built upon. Fortunately, the cottagers and I were able to get extensions on the leases as more formidable plans were being worked on.

So, Minister, could you please provide us with even further details with regard to the park, perhaps a swap of other land to replace the land in the park, and add that to the comments for this particular Legislature?

Hon. David Piccini: Again, I appreciate the work that that member has done in the community. I know in today's day and age, the public are often looking for quick, black-and-white solutions to things. This is a complex issue, and I appreciate, again, the leadership of Mayor Canniff, locally. I've met with Mayor Canniff. I sat down with him, actually. He educated me on the incredible history of Rondeau, and I'm greatly appreciative for that. I know the Rondeau Cottagers Association is an important community within the community that that member opposite represents.

When it comes to extending land leases and the important work that Ontario Parks does, again, as minister, I've reviewed carefully the Auditor General's reports and the Auditor General's comments on the leases. I would encourage that member opposite to read through that as well. The Auditor General has opined at great length over land leases.

We're going to continue working with Ontario Parks. I think, broadly speaking, what the COVID-19 pandemic

has shown is that Ontarians want to get outdoors. They want green spaces. Our incredible team at Ontario Parks does a remarkable job protecting and expanding our natural areas and protected—

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

The next question.

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. The Great Lakes are a treasured resource that are integral to the health and well-being of millions of Canadians. In May of last year, the government of Ontario and the federal government signed the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health. Can the minister responsible for the environment, conservation and parks share with the House what his ministry is doing to keep the Great Lakes healthy and thriving for future generations?

Hon. David Piccini: I'm getting a bit of a leg workout today. I appreciate the question from that member and appreciate his work. He has a beautiful riding and knows very well that Ontario's Great Lakes represent 20% of the world's surface freshwater. This is the largest body of freshwater on planet Earth.

To protect, conserve and restore the Great Lakes is an obligation not just of our government but every member of this Legislative Assembly. That's why I'm pleased to say that this government has worked closely on the ninth agreement celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Canada-Ontario Great Lakes agreement that dates back to 1971. In this latest round of funding, our government has invested over \$2.8 million in funding to protect and restore this largest body of freshwater on planet Earth, our Great Lakes. We've made investments that do things like improving fish and wildlife habitats, rehabilitating degraded areas, protecting wetlands and aquatic habitats, and I will expand more on this exciting recent investment in my supplementary.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks for all of his efforts. Ontarians in the communities who call the Great Lakes home should be encouraged by the leadership of this government for their continued action in protecting our Great Lakes and waterways. We must protect them, and where we find they are in decline, we must work to restore them to good health so they remain drinkable, swimmable and fishable for future generations.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What programs has the government put forward as part of the Canada-Ontario agreement?

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. As we continue to combat climate change and look at what we can meaningfully do as a government, protecting and restoring our Great Lakes

is an important step for maintaining biodiversity in our waterways and protecting our watersheds. I am pleased to say that nothing is more important than the health of our Great Lakes.

Some of the initiatives announced in this latest round of funding include:

- over \$400,000 for the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, the great team there, to continue collaborative work to improve water quality and the health of aquatic organisms that live in Lake Ontario;

- over \$110,000 for the University of Guelph to study effluent and protect fish health in their habitat;

- \$45,000 for the Mohawk council to gather data on fish contaminants; and

- over \$75,000 for the Niagara Parks Commission to continue their incredible work to conduct coastal wetland restoration projects.

Speaker, when it comes to protecting our Great Lakes, when it comes to investing in adaptation and resiliency and protecting the biodiversity in our Great Lakes, Premier Ford and this government will always lead the way.

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Today the Ottawa Citizen reports that several students at Willis College in Ottawa say they were misled about the financial support that they would receive while taking the provincially funded PSW training program. The students say that this government led them to believe that they were signing up for a funded program, which would include a paid work placement. Now, they are facing mounting debt, having to struggle to find extra work, or even leaving the PSW program altogether because it is impossible for them to afford the 310 hours of unpaid work required to complete it.

Speaker, the government's failure in delivering this critical support is obviously driving students out of the PSW training program. What are they going to do to fix it?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm glad the member asked the question; it's an important question. As the member may or may not know, this is a very small cohort of students. I know the Minister of Long-Term Care is working directly with them. These students were not part of the program that the government had set up. At the same time, we know how important it is that we graduate more PSWs and we do it quickly. That is why the minister will be working directly with them.

But it is really a very important program that has been put in place. It's a significant investment to support students so that they can have their tuition paid for, and supports are there for computers or other things that they may need to get their education support while they get their on-the-job training. It is all part of our plan to not only build out 30,000 new long-term-care beds but to ensure that we have 27,000 additional PSWs to support this massive build-out that we're doing.

As I said, the minister is working directly with the college and directly with this very small cohort of students who predated the program that we brought in.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm glad to hear that the House leader has acknowledged that the government's delivery of this program is problematic.

I wonder if he would acknowledge also that none of this would be happening if the government would value and prioritize the hard work that PSWs do in the first place. That means ensuring that their wages are permanently increased, that training programs are affordable and staffing up long-term care.

Speaker, these students wanted to join up and learn all that they could to start a rewarding career providing life-saving care as PSWs, but the government has already shown them that they don't value their hard work.

Will the government apologize to these students, immediately address the gaps in their botched training program, and finally give PSWs the wages and job security that they deserve?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate that he probably wrote that question before he heard the answer and wasn't quick enough to modify the answer after he heard it.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we obviously are working with this very small cohort of student from this college, whose participation predated the program.

Now, the program itself shows just how important we think PSWs are. Not only does it cover tuition, it covers textbooks, it covers child care, it covers the cost of transportation, Mr. Speaker. It covers up to \$5,000 for other incidentals that they might need while they're going through this training. It ensures that they have a placement. It ensures that their costs are covered during that placement.

1130

We're providing massive amounts of support because we know that as we build out 30,000 new state-of-the-art long-term-care beds across the province of Ontario, we are going to need additional PSWs, especially since we are ensuring that a North-American-level of care—four hours a day requires thousands of additional PSWs. We're getting the job done for those students and—

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

The next question.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

LOGEMENT EN MILIEU DE SOUTIEN

M^{me} Lucille Collard: “The days of the old shelter system have come and gone.” This is what the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said earlier this year. I was happy to hear it and so were my colleagues, my municipal colleagues in Ottawa. Supportive housing with wrap-around services is what is needed to help people off the street and to give them the security of a home. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has said that he supports this model, but too many homeless Ontarians are still relying on shelters, which perpetuates the pattern

of seeking temporary relief instead of allowing for rehabilitation.

Finland has found success in reducing homelessness through increasing its supply of affordable housing and adopting a housing-first approach. That was back in 2007.

My question is, will the government commit to stop funding mega-shelters, such as the proposed Salvation Army project on Montréal Road in Vanier, and direct funding towards supportive housing?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And to reply, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

L'hon. Steve Clark: Merci beaucoup pour la question. Notre gouvernement continue de prendre des mesures énergiques pour s'assurer que chaque Ontarien et Ontarienne puisse trouver le logement qui lui convient.

Since day one of our mandate, Speaker, we've been committed, as a government, to making life more affordable for hard-working Ontarians and addressing the housing crisis that we inherited after years of inaction by the previous government. I agree with the member opposite from Ottawa–Vanier that supportive housing is widely considered to be a key element in preventing and addressing homelessness. That's why, in our 2019 budget, our government committed to reviewing Ontario's supportive housing program to identify operations to streamline and to better coordinate the ministries.

We continue to work together with our partner ministries. This is something that we feel is very important for our government's success in fighting homelessness, and we will continue to stand up with our municipal partners. I appreciate the fantastic question from—

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

The supplementary question.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Merci au ministre pour le début de réponse.

Mr. Speaker, Ottawa Community Housing is recognized nationally for its strong governance and management framework. The housing crisis in Ottawa remains a great challenge, with 13,000 people waiting for affordable housing. We're paying enormous sums of money to house 2,500 of those people in motels and shelters. Ottawa Community Housing has a plan to build 10,000 new units; 608 units can be built just right next year, in 2022, with an investment of \$27 million from the province.

The minister said that the government would use \$510 million of its social services relief funding to help cities create new supportive housing to give people a safe place to call home with the support they need—that's a quote from the minister. So my supplementary question to the minister is, will you help OCH advance its new-build objective with the required investment?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. Ottawa Community Housing is a great partner for our government, and I'm glad that the member also mentioned the social services relief fund. This was a fund that our government decided very early on in the pandemic—we announced at the time, Minister Smith and I, that we wanted to make this money flexible for our service managers.

Last year, in 2020-21, we assisted the city of Ottawa with over \$65 million worth of support in three phases of the social services relief fund. It's very important that the member talks about the ambitious plan that Ottawa Community Housing has, because our government committed in the fourth tranche of the social services relief fund for the 2021-22 year a planning allocation of over \$24 million for the city, so that it would help them put a plan in place.

The other thing, Speaker, that I would love to be able to get the member opposite and her party on board with is our fair share campaign with the federal government. We're renegotiating our National Housing Strategy with the federal government. We're being short-changed based on our core housing need, which includes the city of Ottawa, some—

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

The next question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Deepak Anand: My question is to the Minister of Health. The last 20 months have been tough, and we have learned from the pandemic the importance of building and maintaining our health care system for the future.

Mr. Speaker, many people in my riding are concerned how their government is planning to ensure hospital capacity for the future so that the growing communities can access excellent care close to home. Trillium Health Partners is one of the largest community hospital systems in Canada, serving over 1.7 million patients annually in Mississauga, west Toronto and surrounding communities. These communities have been long waiting on previous governments to deliver on hospital infrastructure to meet the health care needs patients and families in Peel region, Etobicoke and the surrounding areas deserve.

So, Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health: What does the recent announcement on the Mississauga Hospital and expanding the Queensway Health Centre mean for the residents of Peel region and so many other Ontarians?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member from Mississauga–Malton for the question and for your tremendous advocacy on behalf of your constituents. I am very pleased to speak about our government's recent investment, which I would like to point out, Speaker, is the largest single hospital infrastructure investment in Ontario's history.

Our government is investing \$30.2 billion over the next 10 years in infrastructure to address long-standing challenges around hospital bed shortages in the hospital sector. This multi-billion dollar investment will build a new state-of-the-art Mississauga Hospital and expand Queensway Health Centre, both of which are part of Trillium Health Partners. These important hospital infrastructure projects will help meet the health care needs of patients and families in Peel region, Etobicoke and the surrounding area by reducing wait times and providing a

safe and comfortable environment for patients to receive excellent, quality health care.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Minister, for sharing long-awaited exciting news for THP.

I would like to recognize and thank the president of THP, Karli Farrow, for taking swift action and helping a youth from Mississauga–Malton experiencing severe distress and needing urgent medical attention. Thank you, THP, for providing high-quality care to our residents.

Mr. Speaker, Peel and Etobicoke are some of Ontario's fastest-growing communities, and over the next 20 years the demand for local health care is expected to increase by seven times more than the Ontario average. This pandemic has also reminded us of the importance of having ready access to hospital beds. So, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Can the minister share with this House how this new investment will help expand access to hospital services in the future?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you again to the member for the question. This investment will add 600 more hospital beds, expand services to improve access to care and reduce wait times for patients in Peel region, Etobicoke and surrounding communities. The new, fully developed Mississauga Hospital is anticipated to include one of the largest emergency departments in Ontario, increasing the number of operating rooms and adding over 350 additional new beds. In addition, the redevelopment plans also include a new in-patient tower at the Queensway Health Centre to centralize complex continuing care and rehabilitation services for patients, while also adding over 150 new beds.

Together, we are ensuring that patients and families in Peel region and Etobicoke will continue to have access to high-quality care, close to home, for generations to come.

COVID-19 TESTING

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is for the Premier. COVID cases are once again rising and so are hospitalizations and ICU numbers. The power of the Omicron variant is still a frightening unknown, and kids aged five to 11 won't be fully vaccinated until at least February.

1140

Speaker, experts agree that rapid tests are a powerful tool in the ongoing fight against the pandemic. The government already has millions of these tests, but the Premier is keeping them locked up in storage, where they are not preventing a single case of COVID. It is not enough to give them to kids to take home for the holidays. Will the Premier promise to give rapid tests to Ontario families and to get them into all schools once school resumes in January?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for the question. While vaccination remains the best way to protect against COVID-19, timely COVID-19

testing continues to be a critical component of our provincial pandemic response. That's why our government is enhancing COVID-19 testing by expanding the number of testing locations and making it more convenient to access publicly funded testing for those who need it. This free testing is available to anyone who needs it and is widely available.

These new testing options are being deployed as more people head indoors because of the weather. I will speak in my supplementary to the additional places and ways in which people can access those tests free of charge.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: We need more than that. I am grateful to parents at Earl Beatty public school in Beaches–East York who have been pushing hard to get rapid tests into all schools. They were fortunate enough to find a donor in September—until the Premier put a stop to that donation. Earl Beatty parents believe that outbreaks were prevented by the tests they did have and that they gave families enormous peace of mind.

Every parent and every person in Ontario, for that matter, should have access to rapid tests. We should be giving them out like candy, like other jurisdictions do. As my granny always said, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Instead, the Premier is keeping the prevention locked up in storage.

Again, will the Premier commit to giving rapid tests to all Ontario families and schools once schools resume in the new year?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member opposite for the question.

As the Minister of Health has confirmed, the government of Ontario is expanding testing options—free, publicly funded testing options—right across Ontario at pharmacies and other points of access. This is going to make a big difference as we try to encourage more testing for families who need it, particularly those with symptoms of COVID-19.

When it comes to what we're doing to keep schools safe, when it comes to expanding of testing, we're the only province in Canada to have launched take-home PCR tests for all publicly funded schools—in fact, for all schools; independent as well—and rapid tests. We are the only province to be sending children home with a rapid antigen test kit of five tests to be completed over the holidays to ensure a safe return in January.

Every public health unit in Ontario has access to rapid tests. In some places in the north, for example, as we speak, they're being used to ensure that children remain safe, given the very high rates of positivity in the community.

We have invested an additional \$300 million in term 2. We have increased spending for ventilation, for 70,000 HEPA units. We're going to continue to do whatever it takes and take nothing for granted to keep schools safe in Ontario.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for the Premier. Medical experts are becoming increasingly concerned, with one going so far as saying that the lagging indicators are now flashing brightly. In Ottawa, there are 17 active school outbreaks and three outbreaks in child care centres. That's over 120 active cases in our schools. That's one quarter of all active cases in Ottawa, and the trend is only going in the wrong direction. Instead of simply using our schools as a vaccination staging ground, the government is forcing parents to register their children one at a time. It's very inconvenient and often inequitable.

At every turn, the government takes the slower, more inconvenient process to protect our families and our kids. They are failing to take proactive measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, and it's starting to show once again.

We need to accelerate third dose eligibility; we need pervasive, free rapid testing; and we need to invest in better ventilation in our classrooms for our kids who are going back to school.

Why, after almost two years of dealing with this pandemic, is the government always choosing the slowest, most reactive, most inconvenient and often most inequitable approach to managing the pandemic in our communities?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I think one of the great strengths in Ontario is that we have one of the highest vaccination rates for youth in the country. For high school students aged 12 to 17, we have over 80% double-vaccinated. We are literally one of the highest-vaccinated provinces in the country. That is because we have launched over 600 school-based clinics for children aged five to 11.

There are well over 400 school-based vaccination clinics, as we speak. Roughly one in five children have already received the first dose. That is incredible progress. I appreciate there's more to do, which is precisely why the government is expanding access to vaccinations. That's why we've improved ventilation in every publicly funded school: 70,000 HEPA units, mechanical ventilation improved across the board.

It is precisely why we continue to invest with an expansion of testing, as I noted earlier: the take-home PCR test to make life a bit easier for those parents, as well as providing on a proactive, preventative basis rapid tests for all families so that our kids can get back to class in January as safely as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Stephen Blais: One quarter of all active cases in Ottawa are in our schools—one quarter of all active cases are in our schools. If we remember last December, cases were on the rise and the government was also waffling on implementing public health measures ahead of Christmas. They weren't sure what to do then; it doesn't seem to be that they're sure what to do now. We know they forced small businesses closed while keeping big box stores open

with very poor distancing. We don't know what they're going to do as we approach the holidays this year.

Fast-forward to this year and cases are on the rise. ICUs are moving patients between hospitals, and things are going in the wrong direction. We have a variant of concern that's spreading across the province, and the government is once again waffling on public health measures. Are we taking them out? Are we not taking them out? Are we setting artificial deadlines to provide false hope?

What exactly are we doing? The government doesn't seem to know. This is the constant refrain from this government: poor communications, mixed messaging, sending false signals to the public. When is the government finally going to be clear with people?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, we have been very clear with the people of Ontario since the beginning of this pandemic, most recently with our fall preparedness plan. And with our plan to reopen Ontario we indicated when we would be moving to certain stations, the anticipated time, but always with the caveat that if there was a change in circumstances, such as a new variant which was highly transmissible, very virulent and resistant to vaccines, then we would have to reconsider that.

Right now, we're in the position where we're continuing to vaccinate as many people as possible, with a very high success rate, but we need to have that additional information in order to be able to make the final determination about what happens in January. We're just at the beginning of December now, so we are expecting to receive that information very shortly.

But I can also advise that we have 162 people in intensive care right now. The numbers are still quite low. Any transfers that are happening are not in the same state as what happened before. There are always patient transfers from one hospital to another. There's nothing new in that. That always has been and always will be. But Dr. Moore—

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

The next question?

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you will know that businesses across this province have been heavily hit as a result of COVID. You will also know that the auditor reported back that your government didn't spend some of the money that was put aside in order to help these businesses through the pandemic and that about \$200 million of that ended up going to businesses that didn't need it.

One group of businesses that have really been affected are the independent travel agents. These are about half of the travel agents here in Ontario. They don't work in a brick-and-mortar-type setting. They work at home as

brokers, and they didn't even qualify for the most part for these programs.

So will your government finally do the right thing and allow that sector to be able to be part of possibly getting some of that money that was entitled to help small businesses in this situation?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond, the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the member opposite for that important question. He's absolutely right: The travel and tourism and accommodation sector has been particularly hard-hit, and that's why our government did move to provide supports to a broad range of people and businesses in that sector, not the least of which was through the tourism and travel business support grant that we put forward. We also have the Ontario Tourism Recovery Program—applications just closed a couple of weeks ago—so we will be announcing more support for businesses in the travel and tourism sector.

This government has worked from day one, March 2020, to provide unprecedented supports for businesses—over \$10 billion of supports for businesses. Through getting vaccination rates up and the Verify app, we've been able to open up capacity so businesses that are in the travel and tourism and accommodation area can welcome back customers safely.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, back to the Premier: The problem is, most of those programs they don't qualify for. They apply; they get denied. They're told they don't fit within the criteria of the program that is established.

1150

We're now going into a situation where a lot of independent travel agents and others are starting to lose bookings because of what's happening with this new variant that's now coming upon us. What's worse, their association has been asking to meet with your minister in order to discuss how to approach a solution to this problem, and the minister will not get back to them, will not even acknowledge the request for the meeting.

Will this government do the right thing, make sure that the programs qualify for these businesses, and at least meet with their association so they can get a direct answer?

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

Minister of Finance to reply.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member opposite, my "rookie" colleague over there: Listen, it's a very important question. Of course, one of the important things is to listen to all Ontarians. I would just remind the member opposite that we have worked very hard throughout the pandemic. We'll definitely follow up, through you, following this answer in the session, with my colleague opposite.

I will say this, though: As the Minister of Health gets up every single day, her number one goal is to protect the lives of all Ontarians, to encourage people to get vaccinated, to use all the tools in our tool kit to reopen

safely, which includes the travel agents, which includes reopening the ability of Ontarians to travel freely in this province. Mr. Speaker, the staycation tax credit is just another step in the right direction to supporting small businesses in this province.

GARDE D'ENFANTS

CHILD CARE

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Monsieur le Président, j'écoutais le gouvernement et le ministre de l'Éducation, les réponses et les déclarations qu'ils donnaient hier, dans les dernières semaines, dans les derniers mois, au sujet de la fameuse entente pour les services de garde d'enfants à 10 \$ avec le gouvernement fédéral. Le ministre de l'Éducation et le gouvernement disaient qu'ils étaient en négociation avec le fédéral dans les dernières semaines, dans les derniers mois et même avant la dernière élection fédérale.

Mais il y a quelque chose de louche dans cette histoire-là. Il y a quelque chose qui ne fonctionne pas, parce qu'on a appris que le gouvernement n'avait même pas soumis leur plan financier au fédéral, ce qui est officiellement la première étape des négociations. Donc, je ne sais pas ce que le ministre négociait dans ses demandes, mais il n'avait même pas commencé les négociations.

Alors, la question est : à quelle date exacte le ministre a-t-il soumis son plan financier au gouvernement fédéral et fait la première étape des négociations?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: For the last 15 years, the former Liberal government neglected child care affordability in the province. As a consequence of their inaction, child care rose by 400% under the leadership of the Del Duca Liberals. No one could defend that, and I would hope the member opposite, in her supplemental, would accept the premise that the 400% increase, the 40% increase over the national average, is an unacceptable track record which the people of Ontario continue to pay the price for.

Now, our government under our Premier's leadership is working with the federal government to get a good, fair deal for Ontario families. Yes, we want a deal. We've met with them multiple times, presented the numbers and made it clear: With 40% of the children of this country in this province, we need to sign a deal in order to achieve the national mandate of affordability. We've asked for a more affordable program, we've asked for a larger investment and we've urged the feds to step up their investment of 2.5%—totally unacceptable—so that we can get child care affordable for all parents in this province.

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

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: J'aimerais pouvoir dire que le ministre a même tenté de répondre à la question, mais ce n'est pas le cas.

Le ministre disait qu'il était en négociation avec le gouvernement fédéral, mais il ne l'était pas. Alors, tellement de familles sont privées d'avoir des frais de service de garde d'enfants abordables, et on voit que le

ministre de l'Éducation et le gouvernement n'étaient même pas en négociation.

Pourquoi étirent-ils les étapes tellement longtemps—la première, même, étape? Est-ce que c'est pour, intentionnellement, attendre une conclusion d'une entente juste avant l'élection provinciale de l'an prochain?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We want to get a deal that is fair for Ontario families, and I think what is abundantly clear is that if Steven Del Duca was the Premier of this province, he would have caved to the first deal available, leaving potentially hundreds of millions of dollars on the table, meaning we wouldn't have got to \$10 a day. We would have remained inaccessible and unaffordable for families. I just think that's an abdication of leadership, which is consistent with the leadership of Steven Del Duca.

But for our government and our Premier, we're saying to Justin Trudeau, to the federal government, that we deserve a higher investment over a longer period of time that delivers affordability for all families in this province. That's what standing up for the provincial interest is about. We respectfully disagree with the federal government. We're sitting with them in good faith. We want to get a deal, and I assure the member and her constituents that we want a fair deal. We want child care to be affordable. After the reckless legacy of a 400% increase—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes our question period for this morning.

DEFERRED VOTES

PROVIDING MORE CARE, PROTECTING SENIORS, AND BUILDING MORE BEDS ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 VISANT À OFFRIR D'AVANTAGE DE SOINS, À PROTÉGER LES PERSONNES ÂGÉES ET À OUVRIR PLUS DE LITS

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to enact the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 and amend or repeal various Acts / Projet de loi 37, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 2021 sur le redressement des soins de longue durée et à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the motion for third reading of Bill 37, An Act to enact the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 and amend or repeal various Acts.

On December 2, 2021, Mr. Phillips moved third reading of Bill 37, and on December 6, 2021, Mr. Oosterhoff moved that the question be now put.

The bells will now ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes on Mr. Oosterhoff's motion that the question be now put. I will ask the Clerks to please prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1157 to 1227.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on the motion for closure for third reading of Bill 37, An Act to enact the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 and amend or repeal various Acts, has taken place.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 46; the nays are 24.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Phillips has moved third reading of Bill 37, An Act to enact the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 and amend or repeal various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The bells will now ring for 15 minutes, during which time—

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 46; the nays are 24.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1229 to 1500.

ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I have messages from the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by her own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please rise.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates and supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2022, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

Members may take their seats.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated December 7, 2021, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to

standing order 111(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ST. JAMES TOWN ACT (RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENTS), 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR ST. JAMES TOWN (MODIFICATIONS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES LOCATIONS À USAGE D'HABITATION)

Ms. Morrison moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 72, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 72, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation.

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): I would like to invite the member to briefly explain her bill.

Ms. Suze Morrison: This is the St. James Town Act. The bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, to require landlords of residential complexes with 10 or more residential units to maintain an account at a financial institution into which a prescribed percentage of the rents of a residential complex must be deposited. The money into the account can only be used for repairs of that complex.

It will also provide that any hearing of the Landlord and Tenant Board with respect to tenant applications can be done as written hearings. It also provides that the board must order rent abatements in certain rent situations where a landlord fails to comply with the obligations under this act.

I really hope that my members will support me in passing this in honour of the fire at 650 Parliament Street in St. James Town.

PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Suze Morrison: I have a petition here entitled "Sick Days for Every Elf and Everyone."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Santa's elves have been asked to stay home when sick but many do not have the financial means to do so;

"Whereas allowing elves to stay home when ill will prevent the spread of COVID-19" over the holidays;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide every elf and" every "worker" in Ontario "with 10 permanent sick days (seven

of which are paid) without the requirement for doctors' notes, and an additional 14 paid sick days during an infectious disease emergency, so they can follow public health advice and keep our workplaces and our communities" and Santa's workshop safe.

I fully endorse this petition. I will affix my signature to it and provide it to page Serena to deliver to the table.

GAZ NATUREL

NATURAL GAS

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: J'aimerais présenter la pétition suivante :

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que l'Ontario désire s'assurer que les collectivités aient accès au gaz naturel de façon à profiter de l'évolution du marché nord-américain et du bas niveau des prix;

« Attendu que l'accès au service de distribution du gaz naturel est plus difficile en région rurale;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

"That the Legislative Assembly support the steps taken by the municipality of Casselman to make natural gas service available at the intersection of Aurèle/Principale/Route 700 and St-Albert streets. The following signatories are interested in obtaining this service."

I fully support this petition and I affix my name to it.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I have a petition from over 2,000 constituents in Oakville North-Burlington, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"Whereas the Millcroft golf course represents more than 60% of the community's overall green space, is home to many species of wildlife (some endangered), and acts as a flood management system; and

"Whereas there is currently a proposal to re-zone the golf course for residential development;

"We call on the city of Burlington, the region of Halton and the province of Ontario to work together to preserve the Millcroft golf course lands as green space for the people of the community and beyond."

I fully endorse this petition. I affix my signature and pass the petition on to Ella.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition entitled "Stop Auto Insurance Gouging."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas some neighbourhoods across the GTA have been unfairly targeted by discriminatory practices in the insurance industry;

“Whereas people in these neighbourhoods are penalized with crushing auto insurance rates because of their postal code;

“Whereas the failure to improve government oversight of the auto insurance industry has left everyday families feeling the squeeze and yearning for relief;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ban the practice of postal code discrimination in the GTA when it comes to auto insurance premiums.”

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

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'll be presenting this petition to save eye care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government's continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature, and I will be giving it to page Nathaniel to deliver to the Clerks' table.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My petition—and I want to thank residents of Beaches–East York for giving it to me—is entitled “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and
1510

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government's continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I agree with this petition. I will be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Rishi to take to the table.

POST-STROKE TREATMENT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario...

“Whereas young adult stroke survivors in Ontario continue to be denied provincial government-funded physiotherapy on the basis of age, after completion of their initial rehab programs; and

“Whereas, as a consequence, these young adults are prevented from recovering to their best potential and possibly returning to work or continuing their post-secondary studies; and

“Whereas, to date, both Liberal and PC governments have failed to permit such funding, although both parties have previously taken steps to publicly support its implementation;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand Ontario's government-funded community physiotherapy clinic program to include stroke survivors between the ages of 20 and 64 with a doctor's referral, and after completion of initial rehab programs.”

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature, and I give it to page Athisha to submit to the Clerk.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition here titled, “Protect our Communities from Gun Violence,” and I want to thank residents from Scarborough Southwest for this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas gun violence is a complex issue, and while the government currently spends millions in an attempt to find illegal handguns already in the country, there needs to be decisive action taken to look at the root cause of this issue;

“Whereas entry of illegal guns to our province, disenfranchisement of our communities and systemic neglect towards areas like Scarborough contribute greatly to ongoing gun violence; and

“Whereas we need a multi-layered strategy on gun violence that includes community consultation, learning from individuals with lived experiences and investing in the well-being of our people;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the bill titled stopping illegal handguns at the source act, 2021, which will address the

issue at the root. The stopping illegal handguns at the source act will require the Ontario Attorney General to consult with experts and affected communities to develop a plan to stop the entry of illegal handguns in Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Isabella.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition from optometrists across my riding of Hamilton Mountain—and thank them greatly for doing so.

“Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I know they are in negotiations right now. I wish them the best and hope that they do come out on top of this.

I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Alfie to bring to the Clerk.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the residents of Scarborough Southwest for this petition. This is entitled “Protecting Vulnerable Road Users.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas vulnerable road users are not specifically protected by law; and

“Whereas Ontario’s Highway Traffic Act allows drivers who seriously injure or kill a vulnerable road user to avoid meaningful consequences, facing only minimal fines; and

“Whereas the friends and families of victims are unsatisfied with the lack of consequences and the government’s responses to traffic accidents that result in death or injury to a vulnerable road user;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to commit to reducing the number of traffic fatalities and injuries to vulnerable road users; create meaningful consequences that ensure responsibility and accountability for drivers who share the road with pedestrians, cyclists, road

construction workers, emergency responders and other vulnerable road users; allow friends and family of vulnerable road users whose death or serious injury was caused by an offending driver to have their victim impact statement heard in person, in court, by the driver responsible....”

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker. I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Joel.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition entitled “Affordable Housing.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for families throughout much of Ontario, owning a home they can afford remains a dream, while renting is painfully expensive;

“Whereas consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have sat idle, while housing costs spiralled out of control, speculators made fortunes, and too many families had to put their hopes on hold;

“Whereas every Ontarian should have access to safe, affordable housing. Whether a family wants to rent or own, live in a house, an apartment, a condominium or a co-op, they should have affordable options;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately prioritize the repair of Ontario’s social housing stock, commit to building new affordable homes, crack down on housing speculators, and make rentals more affordable through rent controls and updated legislation.”

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

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Doly Begum: I have a petition here to stop the Bradford Bypass.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the proposed Bradford Bypass is a \$2.2-billion, taxpayer-funded, 16.2-km, four-to-six-lane highway through the greenbelt between Highways 400 and the 404;

“Whereas according to a Toronto Star/National Observer investigation, the main beneficiaries of this project are land speculators with political and donor ties to the Premier and the PC Party of Ontario, and together own nearly 3,000 acres of land along the proposed highway corridor;

“Whereas the highway would threaten the Holland Marsh and the Lake Simcoe watershed, cutting through 27 waterways, damaging prime farmland, wetlands, woodlands, and significant wildlife habitat;

“Whereas the most recent EA for the project is nearly 25 years old, and this PC government has exempted it from the Environmental Assessment Act;

“Whereas due to this exemption, the government is now free to ignore impacts on agriculture, fish and fish habitat,

property, human health, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and other impacts that would have otherwise required an updated assessment under the act;

“Whereas the highway will also destroy one of Canada’s most significant archaeological/historical sites, the Lower Landing; ...

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ...

“To cancel the politically driven, wasteful and destructive plan for the Bradford Bypass, and redirect all funding for the Bradford Bypass into investments that better serve the regional transportation and mobility needs, including evidence-based plans for transit and regional road improvements, and other investments in the public interest.”

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker. I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Ella.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILD ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2021

LOI DE 2021 VISANT À PROTÉGER NOS PROGRÈS ET À BÂTIR L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 7, 2021, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 43, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): When this House last debated Bill 43, the member for Waterloo had the floor. There’s still time on the clock.

I recognize the member for Waterloo to continue her presentation.

Ms. Catherine Fife: This morning, I very quickly outlined the affordability issues that we take issue with, with regard to Bill 43.

Before I continue on for the next 53 minutes, I want to thank my colleagues who served on the finance committee with me: MPP Mamakwa, MPP Arthur—also, a special thank you to MPP Bourgouin, who was such a strong advocate for French language rights in this committee. Quite honestly, the fact that the government refused to move on the French-language amendments that both myself and the independent member brought forward was quite astounding, at the end of the day. French language rights are obviously connected to the health and well-being of Franco-Ontarians. MPP Bourgouin made very compelling cases—to be shut down consistently by this government was really quite astounding to see.

I have four major themes with regard to Bill 43, and the affordability one is the most prevalent one.

As I mentioned this morning, we did try to make the legislation stronger, particularly around the minimum wage. Folks will remember that this government callously rolled back the minimum wage increases that were set to happen for Ontario citizens in 2018—also removing the two paid sick days, which were hard-fought, I can tell you.

We heard from several delegations who actually quantified what that cost Ontario citizens. When you made that reduction in minimum wage and froze it for three and a half years—if you were a full-time worker in the province of Ontario, you lost between \$6,000 and \$7,000, for minimum wage workers; for part-time workers, anywhere between \$2,000 and \$3,000. You literally went into the pockets of Ontarians and you removed that money.

I want to say why we feel so strongly about the minimum wage. It’s because there has been a lot of politics around front-line workers, minimum wage workers in Ontario. We saw it with the previous Liberal government, when they increased the minimum wage drastically just prior to the election. You’ll remember this. When we were consulting with businesses, with advocacy groups across the province, they said, “Take the politics out of the minimum wage. Give us some predictability. Don’t just change it overnight.”

And to be fair, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce was not too impressed with your seeing the light of day on the minimum wage and increasing it on January 1 to \$15.

What we have proposed is to increase the minimum wage, after the next election, to \$16—on May 1. This is actually where the minimum wage should be, had you not interfered. On May 1, 2023, we will move the wage to \$17 an hour—on May 1, 2024, \$18 an hour; on May 1, 2025, \$19 an hour; on May 1, 2026, \$20 an hour, with a suite of supports for businesses to see them through this transition time.

What you’re going to hear from this government—we didn’t hear anything. The finance committee members chose not to even engage in a conversation about this. We tried to amend schedule 9 of this bill, and for very good reasons.

You’ll know, Mr. Speaker, that, recently, David Card, a Canadian, received the Nobel Prize for economics for debunking the myth that a higher living wage compromises the economy. In fact, David Card, Joshua Angrist, Guido Imbens received this award for real-world research dating back from the 1990s. This is 30 years of research, 30 years of evidence, which should inform public policy. They demonstrated empirically that the idea touted by conservative economists that a higher minimum wage means fewer jobs is not based in fact.

They went on to say, as did the general secretary, Sharan Burrow—she said, “These Nobel Prize winners have demolished the unproven, yet influential, theory that ensuring that workers have a decent minimum wage somehow means job losses.”

She went on to say, “Those who have peddled that mythical theory for decades, and the governments and institutions that have imposed the same theory, without

proper evidence or against evidence to the contrary, are responsible for millions upon millions of people living in poverty.”

Again, a quote from the same secretary: “This prize is a serious indictment of many economists in that it has taken some 30 years for the facts to be given prominence over a damaging and groundless idea. At a time when the world needs evidence-based and scientific research to tackle a global pandemic, economics too needs to be based on factual analysis rather than ill-informed and ideological speculation dressed up as legitimate policy advice.

“Ensuring minimum living wages through statutory processes or collective bargaining is crucial to ending poverty; reversing the long-term trend of declining labour income shares; increasing demand; and building the basis for recovery—with jobs, decent work and resilience—in an increasingly unequal world.”

We took this job of actually operationalizing this research and this evidence—we took it to stakeholders from across the province. We brought that recommendation to the finance committee for the province of Ontario, and we heard silence, Mr. Speaker—silence. Quite honestly, what a missed opportunity to right a wrong that this government did prior to the pandemic, removing up to \$6,000 or \$7,000 from the pockets of Ontarians, the people who work the hardest in this province, who face higher cost of living expenses, higher rent costs, and who still went to work during the pandemic—sometimes, unfortunately, when they were still sick, because this government removed those two paid sick days.

This was quite disappointing for us at committee, but obviously not surprising at this stage in the process, because this government does not seem to understand that the affordability issue is a very real issue for the people we serve.

We also tried to amend schedule 2 of Bill 43. We did so because primarily—we know the Auditor General’s report, and homelessness is an issue that everyone in this Legislature faces day in and day out.

Just today, I got a call about 100 seniors being renovicted from their building. So now we have to fight each and every day for those seniors.

The Auditor General said, very clearly, on homelessness and housing, “Ontario does not have an overarching and coordinated” homelessness strategy. The data the province collects is insufficient to monitor and audit effectiveness of supports given by municipalities, including front-line services to homeless populations. The ministry funding is outdated, based on old modelling and Statistics Canada data about housing need.

We’ve been paying attention. We’ve been listening to our communities. We’ve been taking the evidence that the independent officers of this Legislature have brought to us as lawmakers, and we have applied that in real-world terms, and in policy and platform ideas that we will take to the people of Ontario. And the people of Ontario are going to be receptive to it because it reflects what they are experiencing in their ridings.

The recommendation that we brought forward to schedule 2 calls for an amendment to schedule 2, and it

says, “Within six months after the day the section comes into force, the minister shall develop and implement a landowner transparency plan to establish a public registry of beneficial property owners in Ontario, which will require corporations, trusts and partnerships that own real property to disclose individual owners.”

This amendment actually came forward by two of our members, MPP Bell and MPP Karpoche, who are trying to address money laundering in the real estate sector, which is a real issue in Ontario, particularly in the city of Toronto. When we had delegations come before us, we heard very clearly from one particular group called Transparency International Canada. They identified that, in Toronto alone, \$9.8 billion is bypassing an anti-laundering lens. So the government knows that laundering through the real estate sector is happening, they know the number—\$9.8 billion. This also comes through the process of unregulated lenders who have no statutory responsibility around anti-laundering.

1530

This loophole is wide open in the province of Ontario. Schedule 2 of Bill 43 was the perfect place to address it, and the fact that the government refused to engage in even a debate, or even give a rationale as to why you think that this is not worthy of your attention and your energy when it impacts so many Ontario families, was really a lost opportunity.

At the end of the day, James Cohen, who was in the delegation, said that essentially there are empty safety deposit boxes in the sky. These are people who come to Ontario, who buy condos, who park their money in those condos, who leave them empty and who are harbouring dirty money. The government is well aware that this is happening.

We came to that committee with the best of intentions, with research and with evidence. You are actually facilitating the laundering of money from other jurisdictions. These are wealthy corporations, numbered companies that are essentially stealing from other jurisdictions. They are not paying their taxes. They are not up front with what their real financial holdings are. They come to Ontario to park their money here, and you let them. You let them do this. You do not hold them to account in any way, shape or form, and you prevent people from actually finding a home, finding that condo. That empty safety deposit box in the sky is actually somebody’s home—and you are permissive in this.

So, really, Mr. Speaker, it was a lost opportunity for the government to demonstrate that they actually understand why housing is such a crisis in Ontario.

And I have to say that they have created a committee—because they’re three and a half years into their mandate, and why not, at this point in time, create a committee? Why not create an affordable housing committee—a task force, if you will—and then why not put in a multi-million dollar banking executive to chair that committee? That makes perfect sense, don’t you think, Mr. Speaker?

This morning, our critic on housing said, “Investors and speculators have driven up housing prices to record

heights”—this is true—“rent control on new buildings has been eliminated”—causing chaos across the province; this is true—“funding to housing programs has been cut, and the Landlord and Tenant Board is so backlogged the tribunal is under investigation by the Ombudsman.” What a mess you have created. And yet you had an opportunity, with a bill that you brought to the floor of this Legislature, to address it. This is why the theme for me on many occasions is that this government continues to miss opportunities to positively impact the lives of Ontarians. Our critic called this the oldest trick in the book to avoid action—strike a task force.

You have before you some very real, good solutions, and they come by way of our housing plan, which is comprehensive and bold, and it will address the urgency on housing. It includes having billionaire speculators pay speculation and vacancy taxes—rich people should pay their taxes; this is not a novel idea; government investment to build new, affordable homes; and zoning reform to spur the construction of thousands of new, private-market homes, including the missing-middle homes in existing neighbourhoods. This has been proven to be successful in other jurisdictions. You don’t need a task force chaired by a multi-million dollar multi-millionaire to get to these answers. And all of these are designed to give first-time homebuyers the opportunity to secure the dream of owning a home.

Why did 85,000 people leave Ontario last year? We are looking directly at the cost of real estate in Ontario, rent and affordability. We hear from seniors. We hear from young up-and-comers who are working; they’ve got a good job, but they just can’t afford to live anywhere close to where they work.

This includes students. For Waterloo, we have Wilfrid Laurier University, the University of Waterloo and Conestoga College, and I’m hearing more and more from those students, because now the online classes have ceased for the most part and students are trying to come back into this town, the city of Waterloo. They can’t find affordable units to rent, because most of the new builds in Waterloo are after 2018, and you took away the rent control on those. One student, Takin, came into my office. His rent has gone up by 46%. Many students are outbidding each other, so it has almost become a black market for student housing in Waterloo.

This is not unique to my riding. It’s happening in London. It’s happening in Kingston. It’s happening in Toronto. The government had an opportunity to address this by putting forward a comprehensive housing strategy, and they did not.

The final issue on affordability that I want to bring to the floor of the Legislature is child care. We are dead last now in negotiating with the federal government for a \$10-a-day child care program. The minister was slow to give the numbers to the federal minister. He is citing that we have full-day kindergarten.

This is how full-day kindergarten works in the province of Ontario: There are ECEs who start in the morning, from 8 until 1—and then 1 until 5 or 6 o’clock. So there are two

ECEs and one full-time kindergarten teacher. If there’s enough need in the community and if the school board has bought into this concept, then parents contribute for the before and the after, which on average is about \$15 a day. The more parents who enter into that program, the lower the price goes. This is a smart strategy which uses the built infrastructure that we have in the province of Ontario, and it came in back in 2010-11. I was chair of the school board. It was very difficult to bring in, because people were resistant to the idea of child care being affiliated with education.

And yet, this minister says that he has to fight for those fees. It truly makes no sense. Parents will tell you right now that they are paying child care fees higher than their mortgages, higher than the post-secondary education for their adult children. It is cost-prohibitive. With every dollar that you do invest in child care, there is a \$7 return to the economy on productivity, on women entering the workforce, on upscaling for women, so you are missing a massive opportunity here by playing political games. I’m sure that we’ll get a deal sometime close to the election. Meanwhile, parents have paid extra fees for five, six, seven or eight months—because it’s going to take that long to make it operational.

So that’s what I have to say about affordability. Clearly, I’m not impressed, nor are the members on this side of the House.

The second part of the equation for us in Bill 43 is the missed opportunity of investing in people. You can announce and re-announce—cut another ribbon, and then roll that ribbon up and unroll it again and cut it again—on long-term-care beds or hospital beds or capital infrastructure, but none of it is real without people. Missing the opportunity to invest in people is really astounding.

Last week, I met with the registered nurses’ association Waterloo chapter. I met with Michelle Heyer, Veronique Boscart, Linda Sheiban, and Carly, who’s a training specialist at the Canadian Institute for Seniors Care at Conestoga College. This was an incredibly emotional meeting, I have to tell you. Nurses in this province have had it with you and Bill 124. Bill 124 must go.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Somebody groaned over there.

There are other things that can be said, but I have to tell you: Ontario right now is 22,000 nurses short, and you and your government are part of the problem. Repealing Bill 124 would be the first step to rebuild some trust with front-line health care workers.

Michelle, in particular, said that she has a colleague who’s in public health and says that nurses, after 15 years, are leaving the field. This nurse actually left. She left a pension, she left her friends, she left her community for another job because it’s not worth it for her anymore.

1540

Veronique said that nurses are often sitting in stairwells crying for five minutes, avoiding anybody who protests. Because this government refuses to bring in a safe zone for hospitals, avoiding engagement with anti-vaxxers has become part of the job. Is this fair for the very people we rely on most in the health care system?

If you go into the hospital, you find the nurse, and you should know by now—we've learned on this side of the House—you shouldn't mess with nurses because they're the ones who are going to get you through an illness and through a hospital stay.

This is what Veronique said about Bill 124: "The most insulting thing is" to be "told by government, 'Sorry, we're not giving you a raise while firefighters'" and police officers "'are getting one.'"

I have to say, nurses are triple-shifting. They're not even double-shifting anymore; they are triple-shifting because people will not show up. This is one of the issues that I was—when you take these meetings, you learn.

I didn't realize that MCU caps the numbers of new nursing students. Conestoga, for instance, has to say no to 800 practical nursing students who want to start in January. We have a shortage of 22,000 nurses, and MCU is capping the numbers that we can bring into the system. It makes no sense at all.

Also of note, Mr. Speaker, is, right now, every RN who goes across the border at Windsor is receiving a \$40,000 signing bonus. The competition for nurses whom we have trained, who have trained here in Ontario, one of the best education systems in the world—we are losing that because we're not investing in their working conditions and we're disrespecting them because we refuse to pay them what they're worth. That's what a cap does. A cap right now of 1% on nurses is a cut in their salary. So not only are we training nurses up, but then we're losing them and we get no return on the investment at all.

I could go on about this, but I have to tell you, the general gist of the meeting is that this is not sustainable. Nurses are barely holding on.

One nurse, Kathy, at the very end of the meeting, said, "It's cheaper to let people die than take care of them properly" is the government's mindset. That's a pretty strong statement from a nurse, and that's how they feel.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I can't believe that.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You can shake your head at it. These are real emotions that people express. You don't want to hear it because you don't want to hear the truth about what's actually happening in our hospitals right now.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Member for Sarnia–Lambton, come to order, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Bailey is getting rowdy.

I want to say that they did come to the table with some solutions, which I'm quite interested in sharing with you. The first solution is to repeal Bill 124. For those of you who are just tuning in, Bill 124 caps compensation increases for a broad range of public sector workers, including nurses, at just 1%. Despite their tireless efforts to care for Ontarians over the course of the pandemic, nurses' incomes are not keeping up with the cost of living. This is a fact. This is true. The lack of respect implicit in Bill 124 is triggering many RNs to leave their profession or to practise outside of Ontario. Bill 124 must be repealed as an immediate first step for RN retention in Ontario.

I don't know how else we can communicate how important this is. Your capital infrastructure that you keep cutting ribbons on will not be able to be open if you don't have the people in the hospital, if the health care workers are not there.

They have several solutions around increasing the RN supply. Increase the enrolment—yes, this should be happening—and corresponding funding in a four-year BA program.

Second-entry/compressed programs and RPN-to-RN bridging programs—I have a family member who's going through this RPN-to-an-RN program through the McMaster Conestoga program. If you could put up more barriers, I don't know what they would be. We should be making the pathway to be a nurse in Ontario as clear and as positive an experience as it possibly can be, and then, at the end of that road, we should be saying to them, "Not only will we help you become a nurse, but we're going to respect you when you get in that hospital, when you get in that long-term-care centre, when you get in that congregate setting and you're doing the important work you were trained to do." You can't do that by really cutting their salaries. You just can't do it.

The third suggestion that they had was immediately developing and funding a Return to Nursing Now Program to attract RNs back into Ontario's nursing workforce. This is not happening. It needs to happen.

Fourth: "supporting nurses through their careers by expanding the Nursing Graduate Guarantee program and reinstating the Late Career Nurse Initiative."

Mr. Speaker, there's a level of specialty in nursing that we require in our ICU units. And because that experience and that maturity has had it and because they're just saying, "I can't take it anymore," this is leaving a crucial gap in the system.

We've been told, including in this meeting, that a new RN, a brand new student in a northern community, was offered the job of a charge nurse, and she turned it down three times. She turned it down three times because she actually hasn't had enough experience to do that job in its full capacity.

If you want to build a strong health care system, especially having gone through this pandemic, then you invest in the people who are doing this work, and you invest in their education, and you invest in their training.

Finally, RNAO really does need a nursing task force. Don't put a millionaire in charge of it. Put a real nurse who actually understands what's going on in the system.

"Increasing full-time employment opportunities; competitive salary and benefits...; reducing workloads..."

Finally, I just want to add this last comment on nursing. This is from RNAO's briefing document: "Ontario will not be able to sustainably retain and recruit an RN workforce in the absence of substantially improved working conditions. RNAO insists that an urgent task force of government officials, nursing associations, unions, health-system employers and employer associations must be struck" and be called to address these harmful delays that are happening right now in our health care system.

By bringing forward a piece of legislation like Bill 43, not addressing this crucial issue in our health care system, one has to wonder, is this just simply wilful negligence? You know what the problem is. If you've been paying attention, you know what the solutions are. There's evidence and there's research to confirm what we actually need to be doing right now—accelerating these actions. It's like the government doesn't want to hear what's actually happening in our system. I do know that in order to address a problem, you have to acknowledge that the problem exists.

Finally, just on the health care file: We did get some pretty alarming news last week from the Ontario Health Coalition: “The Ford government has been awarding tens of thousands of long-term-care beds to for-profit operators” with “30-year licences paid by Ontario taxpayers.” The health coalition “has warned” that the province of Ontario “is on the cusp of privatizing an entire new generation of long-term-care beds, unless public outrage stops them.”

We were counting on a daily basis when we were here in this House during the height of the pandemic: Almost 4,000 seniors died in long-term care from a whole host of issues. But the Canadian Armed Forces report, I thought, was going to be a turning point for the government that currently is in power here in Ontario, and clearly that has not happened.

I urge you to remember, please, some of the stories that we brought here from folks who had parents or loved ones in long-term-care homes, who saw them be neglected to the point that they died. One of those people is Doris Wai, whose grandmother died at Tendercare. She said, “Tendercare really failed at their job and they failed their residents and the families miserably. They failed to provide the necessities for life and the craziest thing is that they are being rewarded for it.” And they're going to get a 30-year licence. How is that accountability? How is that holding a neglectful and negligent for-profit long-term-care home to account? It isn't. You are actually rewarding the bad actors, which undermines confidence in the entire sector.

1550

One other voice I want to bring to your attention is from Sienna Woodbridge Vista. Nick Puopolo said, “They told us there are no issues, we have everything under control. Two days later, 12 ambulances showed up at Woodbridge Vista.” His mother is in Sienna Woodbridge. Ten out of the 12 residents taken to the hospital died. Not only did they neglect these family members, but they avoided accountability. And then what do they get? They get rewarded with another 30-year licence. These licences are going to be really hard to undo.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Bill 43 also touts Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass, and it holds them up as these golden nuggets, even in the face of opposition from municipalities all along Highway 413.

“Ontario's Peel Region pulled its support for the ... government's plan to build a highway through the green-belt” a few weeks ago, “joining a flurry of councils turning their backs on the project.” This is an article from Emma McIntosh from the Narwhal. She acknowledges that this “government is proposing to fast-track an environmental assessment for the proposed GTA West corridor.... But with public opposition to the project heating up, nearly every municipality along its route has either yanked support or joined calls for the ... government to step in.”

The 59-kilometre proposed highway is an old idea, Mr. Speaker. This is how desperate governments try to win elections, I guess. The proposal is said to save commuters less than a minute while increasing carbon emissions. The government has revived this project. However, research suggests building new roads tends to attract more drivers and doesn't improve congestion.

I remember the member from Oakville asking me, “What are you going to say to all these people in their cars who are trapped in traffic?” And I said to him, “I'm going to tell them the truth. The truth is that building 413 is not going to end congestion in Ontario.” That is a pipe dream, to say the least, Mr. Speaker.

And the cost of this highway is incredible: It will disrupt 85 waterways, 220 wetlands, 10 different species-at-risk, hundreds of acres of vulnerable wildlife habitat. That's also bad for the economy, I might point out.

We've seen a number of voices take issue with Highway 413, and some of these voices are actually your friends. Just to recap: Mississauga has pulled out, Vaughan, Halton Hills, Halton region and Orangeville—and then two other municipalities, Brampton and Caledon, are backing away from supporting the streamlined environmental assessment. So everybody wants you to do a full assessment, because they know that if you did do a full and comprehensive environmental assessment on 413, it would not pass.

That's where we are. That's what Bill 43 has. It has a highway that nobody wants, and—well, no municipality has been able to say—it has known detrimental effects. It's so bad that the Liberals didn't do it. It was so expensive that the Liberals didn't do it. It needs to stay in the cabinet.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We would urge you to—well, listen to research and evidence, but that obviously doesn't happen on a regular basis around here. But we would urge you to go back to Highway 407.

This was another story that broke about a week and a half ago: “The Ford government opted against pursuing approximately \$1 billion in penalties from the owner of the 407 Express Toll Route when traffic levels fell below a contractual target.”

What happened here is that this government is proposing a highway, Highway 413, to run parallel to Highway 407. Then you had the opportunity to negotiate lower tolls for the people of this province; maybe even just truckers. Truckers would be good. They're stuck in traffic on a regular basis, and it's an economic imperative. But what did you do? You forgave \$1 billion worth of penalties that you could have collected from the 407.

The documents obtained through a provincial freedom of information request show that the government didn't pursue "potential congestion penalty payments in the order of \$1 billion" for 2020, and it could decide to not do it again. Now, are we really in the position as a province that we don't need to collect \$1 billion worth of fees? Do you know that \$1 billion would build a lot of waste water management treatment centres? It could be invested, as the Financial Accountability Officer suggested today, to actually rebuild our current public infrastructure to withstand climate change.

Instead, what do we have in Ontario? We have a \$15-million task force to address climate change. As I said this morning in my question to the Premier, that's half as much as he spent on fighting climate change and the federal government's carbon and climate change strategy, and he lost in court, even after the stickers were on the gas pumps. It's about being strategic about where you're investing. It's about being strategic about what issues you're trying to pursue.

Right now, Highway 413 is the wrong highway, just as it was when the Liberals refused to do it. It will not address the congestion issue that we have seen on our roads. It will not address the fact that the government also has not disclosed how much it's going to cost, which is a big issue. I did ask this question of the finance minister in committee a couple of weeks ago. Now they're arguing commercial sensitivity. Well, the commercial sensitivity piece is pretty interesting, because you actually have to plan for capital infrastructure. You have to indicate what the cost approximately is so that you're not actually bumping other infrastructure projects off the list. I know that this is a concern for some of our federal members—particularly Highway 69.

Failing to hold the conglomerate corporation of the 407 to account, failing to negotiate lower tolls in the face of a \$1-billion penalty is another missed opportunity for this government.

Listen, we believe very strongly that highways should be built for safety and commute times, not politics and making your friends rich, and I will say that there are a high number of developers along the 413 highway who, in fact, will benefit financially to the tune of billions of dollars. That rampway for those development fees and for that new sprawl—the sprawl that the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer have said will cost us more money down the line. The dilemma, the ethical dilemma for this government should be real. In summary, these roads are not expected to shorten commutes. They will benefit some of this government's highest donors. The land along the 413 and the Bradford Bypass routes are owned by developers who will be well positioned to make huge amounts of money.

The Bradford Bypass, as I've mentioned in this House, is problematic for a number of reasons, Mr. Speaker, especially given the fact that the route was changed very soon after the Minister of Transportation toured the Associate Minister of Transportation's father's golf course—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Willowdale will come to order, please. The member for Willowdale, third time. The member for Willowdale, come to order, please.

1600

Hon. Stan Cho: You have no idea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Fourth time. The member for Willowdale will come to order, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, then I'll just continue along.

This bypass was slated to go through the associate minister's dad's golf and country club, but the route was changed. This change happened, coincidentally, very soon after the Minister of Transportation toured the golf course where the Bradford Bypass was going to go through. Now, if this had happened on this side of the House, you would be questioning it as well—for good reason, I would add.

In total, though, the Bradford Bypass and the 413 are estimated to cost \$10 billion. None of this money is accounted for. None of it has been costed out. None of it has been indicated in the 25- or 10-year long-term transportation strategy for Ontario, so something else is going to go. Something else has to go, unless this is actually never going to get built, and I would just say that it's a lot of money to get to the cottage in a shorter amount of time—straight up.

This also leads to the discussion which is well known right now around induced demand. The more highways you build, the faster they fill up, so why not explore other issues that would actually save folks a lot of time?

I will say, just to go back to the 407 for a short time, that in this article that was written by Mr. Regg Cohn on November 24, "The promise of new highways, byways and bypasses is a political" non-stop "perennial" issue that we face here. "The problem is when they are purpose-built for swing ridings while taking everyone else for a ride." That is how people along the 413 are starting to think.

And then we all pay the price. He goes on to say, "We all pay the price for political expediency." In fact, we're still paying for it today, because it was the PC government under Premier Harris that sold the 407 for a bargain-basement rate, and then those tolls have consistently gone up—in fact, it was a 99-year lease; I should correct my record.

"But there's no glory in owning up to the mistakes of the past when the Premier would rather condemn himself to repeating them." That is how we feel about Highway 413: that Highway 413 is another 407 boondoggle. We are trying to get you to back off of that idea, because it does not make a lot of sense.

Finally, the issue—I was going to address a little bit more about highways, but I'll get to that in a second. But on climate change and the integrity of the numbers that we're seeing: The Financial Accountability Officer came out—we've been tracking how money has been moving through this Legislature, particularly during a pandemic. The Auditor General, as well, has weighed in on this issue. She said that they found that "the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (environment ministry), for

the third year in a row, did not provide leadership in implementing the EBR Act.”

They found that “16 prescribed ministries varied significantly in how they ensure they comply with the EBR Act, with some having no formal processes at all.... We also found that even if ministries have established formal processes, they did not always follow them, or monitor to ensure their staff complied with them.” If the Ministry of the Environment is not following their own act, Mr. Speaker, without accountability, without oversight, without any sort of measure of meeting the targets, then how can anybody have any confidence in this government’s so-called “action on climate change?”

The auditor also found that the environment ministry’s “proposal for a new Statement of Environmental Values is unlikely to improve decision-making about the environment.” I find this pretty interesting, given how everybody loves the auditor when they’re in opposition. There are members on that side who, when they were in the opposition, were equally impressed with their work. However, there has been no accountability, year after year after year for the last three years, on measurable indications of progress being made. So this continues to be an ongoing concern for us, as it should be for everyone.

This morning, when I questioned the minister about this, he indicated that we’re going to spend this \$15 million annually and we’re going to design a plan, but the auditor said that three ministries that were not adequately reporting to the public on the overall state of the environment and natural resources were the environment ministry, natural resources ministry and the agricultural ministry. There’s so much work to be done, and, of course, none of that is addressed in a tangible way in Bill 43.

The final thing, though, that I wanted to address is that the government has talked about improving digital government, if you will. And given the Auditor General’s latest report, which found that \$210 million went to businesses that would never have qualified for the small business grant during the pandemic but was money that was supposed to assist businesses pivot—that was the word of 2021, and I think we’re all pretty sick of it. But there’s a huge issue actually going on right now with the Ontario Business Registry.

I was talking to a lawyer on Saturday, someone who’s from Fergus, whose main job is really to help businesses navigate through this new Ontario Business Registry, the portal—the minister will know it well. This is the state of affairs with that, Mr. Speaker: If you’re going to roll out the Ontario Business Registry, it should actually be ready to be rolled out; I will say this about that. But some of the province’s biggest businesses and law firms are warning that Ontario’s new online business registry system is so broken that they’re now advising their clients not to incorporate or register their businesses here in Ontario anymore. For a bill that’s entitled Supporting People and Businesses, this is not a good state of affairs to be in right now.

In a scathing 12-page letter to the minister, they wrote that the Conservatives’ new plan is so broken, it “is negatively impacting our firms, clients and service providers.”

It’s “having a chilling effect on doing business in Ontario in general.”

I asked, is the Premier ready to address this issue? And I asked the minister as well. But it is ironic that here we are: The small businesses and not-for-profits are negatively being affected by a lack of due diligence, a lack of investment when the Ontario Business Registry was rolled out before it was ready to do it.

He actually described something that happened. When you’re navigating through this registry and you’re entering your client’s data so that they can register as a business in Ontario, it comes out as one long line—no punctuation. In one instance, one of the businesses came out, and it was three pages long. This is more than a glitch. This is a serious problem, because time is money and money is time and businesses are—as the government says, you’re modernizing the Ontario Business Registry. What you’re really doing is modernizing businesses right out of the province of Ontario. So this needs to be fixed very quickly.

They go on to say that there are system shutdowns, technical glitches and substantive problems associated with the new OBR and they are causing significant disruption, delaying transactions and adding significant costs to businesses. They have no confidence—and this is a direct quote from every major law firm who has to navigate with the Ontario Business Registry. They say they “have no confidence or assurances that year-end registrations and filings—the busiest time of the year for our law firms—can be completed without putting entire transactions at risk.”

Aside from the obvious political embarrassment for this PC government, getting this right actually is important, Mr. Speaker. Bill 43 potentially could have been a place for that to happen. Unfortunately, that did not happen.

There are obviously some themes here that we take great issue with. At the end of the day, Bill 43 had a base funding cut to public education of \$467 million. I think that this would seem fairly egregious to most people.

1610

I would ask, who at the cabinet table would think that this would be a good idea? That’s a conversation that I genuinely would have liked to have listened in on. Why would people think, post-pandemic, or now, entering the fourth wave of the pandemic, with cases rising in schools despite vaccination efforts—although when you do try to register your child with the Ontario portal, you can only register one child at a time. That would be problematic for a lot of people, because most people in Ontario, if they have families—actually, 68% of families in Ontario have more than one child.

These are themes that cause us great concern, as does the financial transparency of where the COVID funding is actually going. We have seen this government use the contingency funds more and more. Contingency funds are different than your basic reserve. Contingency funds are places where you park money and it’s not allocated. It’s not allocated. It’s not designed to help in health care, which, of course, we need. It’s not designed to help with education, which, of course, we need. It’s not meant to

help in congregate settings or long-term-care centres, which, of course, we need. It's just parked there.

What we have witnessed first-hand, aside from some very terrible promises around highways and the Bradford Bypass, is the poor decision-making of not using the evidence and the research to invest to benefit the people of this province.

I go back to the housing discussion that we tried to bring to Bill 43 during finance committee as well as the minimum wage discussion, which needs to happen in an open and honest manner, based on evidence and research, and now we have that. This government has the opportunity before it to design legislation that will greatly improve the lives of Ontarians, and yet you've chosen not to.

The Auditor General's report from last week—I mean, I would know that members who I've served with on this side of the House for six, seven years—if the Liberals had had a general lack of scrutiny and oversight on the small business support programs, including the \$210 million being paid to ineligible recipients of the Ontario Small Business Support Grant program, giving money to companies that would never have qualified for the support, you literally would have had a field day. You would.

Pandemic or no pandemic, at the end of the day, there has to be some integrity and trust around where the funding is going and where we're investing. Unfortunately, for us, Bill 43 misses the mark entirely.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Before we go to questions, the deputy House leader, the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, has informed me that he has a point of order.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you very much, Speaker. I just want to inform my colleagues in the House that there will be no night sitting tonight.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): It's always good to recognize a valid point of order.

We have questions.

Hon. David Piccini: I listened intently to the member's speech, and I was just wondering—I think we all agree in this place that planning is best done at the local level. When you have Bradford council, the Bradford mayor, local planning and everybody in agreement on the proposed Bradford Bypass, in agreement that you can't pick and choose what areas of the Greenbelt Act you will and won't follow, and local MP support as well—I would say the entire region supports this. Why is the member opposite against local planning, and what would she propose as an alternative? I'm just curious: Why are you so against the local planning process?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, here in the provincial Legislature, we have a responsibility to make sure that the money that is invested in infrastructure projects, in capital expenditures, in human resource projects actually will make a huge difference to the entire province as well, Mr. Speaker.

And there is definitely a lack of transparency. I tried to raise it with the member opposite. Clearly, he said, "You wait, Catherine, something is going to happen." I don't know what that means exactly. But Ontario's taxpayers are

in the dark on the costs. There used to be a time in this House when Conservatives cared about transparency around costs. We should be doing our basic due diligence—that every dollar that's invested in a highway, in a hospital, in the Bradford Bypass actually will greatly improve the lives of people in Ontario. This is a basic tenet of financial accountability, and that's where we stand on this side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Beaches–East York has a question.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I want to thank my colleague from Waterloo for her speech, which I listened to intently and really enjoyed.

As somebody whose career began as an economist in the department of finance, it's always lovely to hear somebody talk about evidence-based policy-making, such as with the minimum wage and how it does not take away jobs, as the government was claiming. It does, in fact, add to jobs, as people have money to spend and stimulate the economy.

I'm wondering, from your committee deliberations, did you hear the committee members on the government side understanding you when you connected the dots between being able to give people a living wage—whether it's a minimum wage for front-line workers or nurses—and their ability to remain housed, and then not having to deal with the fallout of them actually ending up on the street, with the homelessness strategy? Did you hear them—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The member from Waterloo to respond, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much for the question from Beaches–East York.

In fact, the quote that I read in committee was, "Ensuring minimum living wages through statutory processes or collective bargaining is crucial to ending poverty; reversing the long-term trend of declining labour income shares; increasing demand; and building the basis for recovery—with jobs, decent work and resilience—in an increasingly unequal world." What I heard back from the committee was complete silence. There was no engagement whatsoever on the minimum wage discussion, and not acknowledgement—I know that the Premier can't even say David Card's name. This is a Canadian whose research has proven—that the conservative theory that a higher minimum wage will kill jobs was completely debunked. It was debunked. And this conversation needs to happen—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Conclude your response, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is a progressive policy that needs to be put in place in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Speaker, for years, we saw that there was absolutely nothing but neglect by the previous government when it came to our long-term-care sector. Now we have a government that's proposing new investments when it comes to our long-term-care sector. We know the huge contrast between us and the previous

government—and that was 611 beds created by the previous government. In most cases, when the Minister of Long-Term Care got up and made the announcements, there were more of those beds allocated in various ridings and regions across this province—when the previous government only was able to do that for many, many years, up to 10 years, 611 beds.

So I'm wondering if my colleague can explain, with all these measures that are being proposed through the fall economic statement and previous announcements, why the member across is not supporting this bill.

Ms. Catherine Fife: At the beginning of my comments, I said very clearly, you can invest in capital infrastructure—we've had multiple announcements, and then the ribbon gets pulled out again and cut again—but without investing in people, you won't be able to open the hospital, you won't be able to open the long-term-care bed, you won't be able to open the child care centre.

So where your government has gone wrong and why we cannot support this legislation is that you have not invested in people. You can't build up Ontario without people. You must be respectful of the people we serve. And by not repealing Bill 124—nurses regard this as a slap in the face.

We're standing with the workers in the province of Ontario. We're standing with the front-line health care workers and the educators who actually make this province a great place to live.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I want to thank my colleague from Waterloo for her eloquent presentation this afternoon.

1620

Parents in Ontario are still waiting for an agreement between the federal government and the provincial government regarding child care costs in the province. The promise of affordable child care continues to intrigue parents, in our community of York South–Weston in particular, but to this point, Ontario continues to be home to the highest child care costs in the country. For decades, the Liberal and Conservative governments have allowed the cost of child care to climb, placing a stranglehold on families' budgets and causing a real economic impact. It has forced families now to make difficult sacrifices to ensure their little ones are cared for.

My question, Mr. Speaker, to my colleague from Waterloo is, why is this government not investing in people, especially in child care and young people?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I thank the member for the question.

Increasingly, female-dominated sectors feel that this government is being disrespectful to them. This includes early childhood educators, personal support workers and nurses.

Mr. Speaker, there is no good rationale for why the Minister of Education would not be expediting a \$10-a-day child care strategy—no rationale whatsoever. The fact that we are last to even have a draft deal with the federal government, when billions of dollars are on the table and

we need this for a strong, inclusive economic recovery—there is no excuse for it.

I can tell you that those female-dominated sectors are increasingly becoming more and more disillusioned and demoralized by this government's priorities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Over the next five years, the greater Golden Horseshoe is expected to attract over one million people. That's nearly the entire population of the city of Ottawa. These people need such critical infrastructure because they will be driving to work and they will be driving their families around.

I would encourage the honourable member to come to Brampton and ask the people of Brampton how much they appreciate that Brampton is getting Highway 413. That will not only reduce traffic congestion; it will attract more jobs.

We know that Ontario is going to continue to grow, and it would be irresponsible to let gridlock and congestion continue to hold up Ontarians, which is why we're looking ahead to the future and building for it with projects like the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413.

Can the member opposite explain why they won't support building these highways and investing in the future of Ontario?

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's an excellent question, and I'm going to cite the Auditor General as an answer. She said—and this is on land use planning in the greater Golden Horseshoe—that the sustainable growth goals of the provincial growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe are not being met, and the provincial government lacks effective processes to measure and ensure these goals are being met. As a result, too much sprawl-oriented development is occurring, resulting in farmland loss and higher infrastructure costs.

The people in Brampton are not going to negotiate a \$10-billion price tag to save 10 seconds. That's what I would say to the member across the way.

The minister's zoning orders are disrupting municipal planning processes and undermining growth plan goals, including by enabling sprawl-oriented development in areas lacking municipal services.

When you plan irresponsibly and are not respectful of the environment, the infrastructure costs go up. We end up paying more for irresponsible planning.

Highway 413 is actually cited by the Auditor General.

I would urge the government: Please, put the brakes on Highway 413.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: It is a great pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon on behalf of my constituents in Scarborough–Rouge Park and speak to Bill 43, the Build Ontario Act, during third reading.

The challenges of the past year and a half have tested our province and my constituents of Scarborough–Rouge Park like never before. But in the face of these challenges, the people of my riding, alongside all Ontarians, have

shown true resolve and have demonstrated the Ontario spirit—leaders in my riding like Coach John, who, despite the challenges of COVID-19, continued his youth mentorship programs; neighbourhood groups like Highland Creek Community Association, who stepped up and collected donations for the Daily Bread Food Bank; and community groups like Muslim Welfare Canada, who adopted the Malvern Eats program to help keep feeding the most vulnerable in the area. To these groups and the countless others from my riding, thank you for all the good things you have done for our community and for demonstrating the Ontario spirit even in the most challenging times.

Speaker, it is an honour to speak to the plan presented by my colleague the Minister of Finance on November 4 and the measures found in Bill 43, the Build Ontario Act, 2021. This is a plan that looks to the future, a plan for the next generation of jobs, a plan for opportunity, and a plan to build Ontario. It is a plan that does so by making \$51 billion of support available to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and to promote economic recovery, resulting in a growing, strong and resilient economy that will work for everyone. It is our plan that lays out investments in our communities to create better health care and stronger local infrastructure to help our supply chains move food, to move PPE equipment and other essential goods.

It is our plan that says yes to roads. It is our plan that says yes to transit and highways that will make it easier and faster to get from home to work, no matter where they are, because it's all linked. The economy is a machine. If one part of it is not working to its fullest potential, it holds all of it back. But if Ontario is firing on all cylinders, well, there's no place you would rather live than right here in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, this is our plan to bounce back from this pandemic, ready to grow and ready to build bigger, faster and better than before—and here's how. Building the province we want to see begins with protecting our progress. While we have pushed back against the threat of COVID-19, we know there are more steps we can take to ensure that our progress continues to move forward and not step backwards.

Build Ontario will protect the progress we have made in the fight against COVID-19, because we owe it to the countless front-line heroes of our health care system who rose to the challenge.

The pandemic has revealed the years of neglect by the previous government. In order to protect people's access to high-quality health care, our government is investing over \$1.8 billion in 2021-22 to support 3,100 new and additional beds and reduce wait times for surgical and diagnostic imaging procedures. Additionally, our plan makes \$30.2 billion available over the next 10 years to support hospital infrastructure, such as the Scarborough Health Network's hospital infrastructure that is frequented by the people of my riding.

Hospital capacity is just one part of protecting our progress. We must also build up each component of the health care system so the system continues to function

efficiently and effectively, and this starts with long-term care. Our plan will build more spaces for our seniors, including 30,000 new long-term-care beds and another 28,000 that will be refurbished. That includes the 11,820 net new and 8,118 upgraded long-term beds that are under way in central Ontario.

But this plan is also about building better beds. That is why our government is raising the bar for what constitutes acceptable care in our long-term-care homes. In order to increase the direct care provided to residents by nurses and by personal support workers to an average of four hours per resident, per day, by March 31, 2025, our government has committed \$4.9 billion.

To ensure long-term-care safety, our government is providing an additional \$72.3 million over three years to increase enforcement capacity. This funding will double the number of inspectors across the province by 2022-23, making Ontario's inspectors-to-long-term-care-homes ratio the highest in Canada.

1630

We are investing \$57.6 million, beginning in 2022-23, to hire up to 225 new nurse practitioners in the long-term-care sector.

Speaker, when taken together, the investments in Build Ontario will result in improved health capacity so that our vulnerable public health system is ready to keep up with the growing demands and be there when the people of Ontario need it the most.

All members of this House know that Ontario is one of the best places to live, work and raise a family. Because of that, more and more people, each day, are choosing to call Ontario home. It is expected that the population of the greater Golden Horseshoe will rise to nearly 15 million by 2051.

To unleash the economic growth and prosperity that comes with such an increase in population, it is vital that we have the projects in place to keep people out of gridlock and keep them moving. Since day one, our government has not wavered on our promise to build the seamless, reliable and rapid transit that the people have asked for and waited for.

This government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, is making swift and concrete progress on a historic \$28.5-billion subway expansion plan to bring new subway projects to the greater Toronto area. Whether it's the all-new Ontario Line, the Yonge North subway extension, the Eglinton Crosstown West extension or the Scarborough subway extension, we are delivering shovel-ready projects that will create thousands of jobs and help people like my constituents in Scarborough get where they need to go.

Speaker, let's be clear. This is the government that has gotten shovels in the ground after decades of talk and inaction. Back in June, I was thrilled to attend a Scarborough subway groundbreaking at the tunnel launch site with Premier Ford, the Minister of Transportation, the Associate Minister of Transportation and my colleagues from Scarborough. That moment represented a historic and significant milestone in our expansion plan, but also

for the people of Scarborough, who have asked and waited decades for this project to become a reality.

Speaker, this government is also delivering on our promise to build more all-day, two-way GO Transit services. Recently, the Minister of Transportation was in London to announce the start of GO train service to London, St. Marys and Stratford. And our government is building the Kitchener GO rail expansion to connect two regions with reliable GO service.

Also, our government has made significant progress on our plan to bring passenger rail services to northeastern Ontario: On November 22, Ontario Northland ran a test train from North Bay to Toronto's Union Station in order to gather data to further develop our plan to return service.

Additionally, our plan to build Ontario contains important investments for both transit riders and transit workers alike. For instance, in partnership with federal and municipal partners, Ontario is investing \$180 million to support the purchase of new streetcars for the Toronto Transit Commission, which will be produced in Thunder Bay.

Also, just last week, the Minister of Transportation announced, at the Thunder Bay Alstom plant, a \$171-million investment into the refurbishment of 94 GO Transit bi-level rail coaches, which will support another 200 manufacturing jobs in the north. As the minister said, these GO rail coaches were manufactured in Ontario, so it is right that we refurbish them in the same facilities that made them.

These are just some of the many examples of how our government investments into transit priorities can simultaneously support good-paying jobs right here in the province.

Our government will have the backs of commuters in my riding of Scarborough–Rouge Park, all of Toronto and the greater Golden Horseshoe by bringing forward shovel-ready projects that will deliver jobs and keep people moving.

Speaker, in order to get ahead of growth, we know that transit alone is not the only solution. We must also be able to rely on a robust highway network. For far too long, gridlock has been costing the greater Toronto area almost \$11 billion per year in lost productivity and hours wasted, spent in traffic and gridlock—time that should be spent more with your friends and with your families. For example, I'm pleased to see that, as part of this year's \$2.6-billion commitment to over 580 provincial highway projects, our government is investing in the rehabilitation of Highway 401 in eastern Toronto, which ensures that my constituents who take the 401 will have a reliable commute in the coming years.

Also, as part of our government's highway programs, our government made a commitment to fund, build and advance critically needed highway projects like the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413. These two projects are important, future-facing projects that will create opportunity and make life easier for people living across the greater Golden Horseshoe.

The Bradford Bypass is a new four-lane project that will connect Highway 404 in York region with Highway

400 in Simcoe county. The investment into this corridor will ease congestion on Highway 400, support more than 700 jobs in each year of construction, and generate more than \$70 million in annual real GDP. Local residents, motorists and commercial trucks are anticipated to see time savings of up to 35 minutes, which represents a 60% reduction in their commute times. Mr. Speaker, I really want to highlight this: The local residents and commuters and truck drivers are anticipating up to 35 minutes, which represents a 60% reduction in their commute times.

Highway 413 is a new 400-series highway that will bring a transit corridor to Halton, Peel and York regions. The highway will save drivers up to 30 minutes each way on their commute, which translates to an extra hour per day and five extra hours per week back into people's schedules for the things that matter to them most. As we lift our province up, Highway 413 will play a critical role, as it will support up to 3,500 jobs in each year of construction and generate up to \$350 million in annual real GDP.

Speaker, many groups across the province are endorsing our plan to build the highway infrastructure Ontarians expect to see built. The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario said, "The GTA west corridor is a transformative infrastructure project that will address anticipated population growth, facilitate much-needed housing, and ensure Ontario's long-term economic prosperity. The project will ensure a viable corridor for commuters and industries that rely on highways for movement of goods and people across the region."

The 413 and Bradford Bypass are important projects that are good for workers, and I thank the Premier and the Minister of Transportation for their leadership in advancing them forward.

The opposition doesn't want us to take population growth seriously, but, on this side of the House, our government does. While the opposition wants to roadblock these projects, our government has the backs of hard-working Ontarians who rely on cars to get to work, and the businesses in the greater Golden Horseshoe that need a strong, robust and efficient highway network to get their products moving and to market. This government will always have the backs of workers and their businesses, and will take the necessary steps to build a future-ready transportation system.

Speaker, Ontario's economic recovery contains measures to unlock the economic potential of each region, and unlocking the potential of northern Ontario is essential to realizing our true economic potential. That is why our government is working in partnership with northern and First Nation communities to create jobs, develop all-season road access to remote communities and advance development of critical minerals to bring economic prosperity to Ontario's north.

1640

One way that Build Ontario strengthens the economic position of the north is by committing to develop a critical minerals strategy, a provincial first. By developing this strategy, Ontario can strengthen its position as a leading

jurisdiction with responsibly sourced critical minerals. Minerals such as nickel, lithium, cobalt, manganese and graphite are crucial components to low-emission vehicle batteries. Zinc, rare earth elements and titanium are used in medical equipment and technologies such as cardiac implants, MRI machines and prosthetics. Taken together, they all have potential to secure new investments into the manufacturing of electric vehicles and electric batteries. Most importantly, they hold the potential of unleashing the next generation of economic prosperity. An investment in the Ring of Fire, therefore, is an investment in northern prosperity for the people of Ontario and for all Canadians, so it's time to get the road to the Ring of Fire built.

Our government is doing its part. In fact, we are prepared to invest \$1 billion to get the job done. First Nations are doing their part, and we are working closely with the Marten Falls and Webequie First Nations to get this done. We hope the federal government comes to the table to support this vital project, and we hope the federal government comes not just to support but get the work done as well, and to create opportunities for communities in the Far North to have the brighter future they deserve.

By unlocking these critical minerals in a responsible way, our government will provide access to the minerals that the industries of tomorrow desperately need while bringing the economic prosperity that comes with it.

Our government has brought forward a strong, comprehensive plan to protect progress we have made fighting the pandemic so that we can build a better future for everyone, because whether it's protecting hospital capacity or building new highways or re-training for that new skill, this is a plan that will get shovels in the ground, build the future-proof infrastructure we need and lay the foundation of a modern, competitive and resilient Ontario.

The investments found in Build Ontario and the legislative measures contained in Bill 43 will help Ontario's workers. They help Ontario's businesses. They will help Ontario's students and all their communities to build the better future that they want to see. That is why protecting hospital capacity is vital, building new highways is important and re-training for new skills is very, very key for economic recovery.

I encourage all members of this House to support Bill 43 and our plan to build Ontario for the betterment of all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Beaches–East York has a question.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I have so many questions, actually, but let's just start with this one: Why is the government focusing on the minerals in the Ring of Fire without first doing all the things that my colleague from Kiiwetinoong has been begging the government to do in terms of real reconciliation with First Nations people, like making sure that everybody has clean water, cleaning up the mercury, making sure that everybody has housing and electricity? That's the way to build meaningful reconciliation, before you go in to talk about minerals.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thanks to the member opposite for that question. Speaker, we are the first government to launch a working group with our Indigenous

partners, working with Indigenous leaders to make sure we work with them and consult with them to have—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, you're not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Timmins, come to order, please.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: —in a responsible way.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, we are the first government to do so. As I mentioned in my remarks, these resources will help the future manufacturing of electric vehicles and electric—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. Sorry for the interruption. The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and the member for Timmins: I'll have no more across-the-aisle conversation, especially while there's a member up and speaking. It shows no respect for the member who is trying to answer a question from this side of the floor.

The next question.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I know that health care has been so top of mind for so many Ontarians. That's why I was so pleased to join the Premier, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Infrastructure and all my Mississauga colleagues, as well as the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, in announcing a historic investment, to the tune of billions of dollars, to restructure and rebuild our Mississauga Trillium Health Partners.

I know that we have a major surgical backlog in the province of Ontario as a result of this pandemic, and that's why it's so important that the government does invest into this. Can the member tell us what the province has done to reduce this surgical backlog during the pandemic?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thanks to the member from Mississauga Centre for that question. I want to commend her advocacy for better health care and for her work during COVID and beyond. Congratulations to all the Mississauga members for the new hospital.

Mr. Speaker, with a goal of better positioning Ontario to respond to any further health crises, our government is building up the province's health care capacity and introducing new investments to the sector. As announced in the 2021 budget, Ontario is investing \$300 million in 2021-22 to support the surgical recovery in hospitals from delayed or deferred surgeries and procedures due to the COVID pandemic. This brings the total investment in surgical recovery in hospitals to more than \$500 million since the start of the pandemic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I was listening very intently to the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park. People working on the front lines kept us going during the early days of the pandemic. They worked hard and risked their safety and that of their families to keep our communities going. Their contributions are incredibly valuable to the functioning of society; however, they are rarely paid what they deserve for their work.

The minimum wage should be a livable wage, one that helps people afford the essentials. We can and should do

better for low-wage earners by showing them how much we value their labour. I'm asking the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park: Would you support our minimum wage plan to increase the minimum wage in Ontario to \$20 through steady, stable increases?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thanks to the member opposite for that question. Mr. Speaker, as a government, we are protecting and we are filling the gaps that have been in the federal program. We want to make sure, especially during the pandemic, to all the front-line care workers and to all the truck drivers and all the essential workers who have worked hard—we want to make sure that we give back to them and we provide all the necessary tools for them to succeed, so that we can improve the economy, so that we can improve our real GDP.

Starting next year, in January, over 750,000 workers in Ontario will get more wages. What that means is that 750,000 families will have more money in their pockets. We want to make sure we make Ontario's people's lives more affordable so that we can recover faster from COVID.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Whitby has a question.

Mr. Lorne Coe: We know that for the past 15 years with the previous Liberal government, there was neglect of the long-term-care sector. During that period, the official opposition from 2011-14 were party to it as well—yes, they were. What I'd like the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park to speak to is, how does the government's commitment to building long-term care compare to the previous Liberal government's inaction and neglect on this file?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thanks to the member from Whitby for his strong advocacy for his constituents and for all Ontarians.

After decades of neglect, our government is taking the steps to fix long-term care in Ontario. To fix the long-term-care sector, we are improving staffing, we are improving care, improving the protection of our residents through better accountability, enforcement, transparency and building modern, safe and comfortable homes. I want to make sure that I keep it clear: We are having 28,000 existing beds to modern standard designs through the additional plan of \$3.7 billion, beginning in 2024-25. We're ensuing long-term care will have the adequate staffing and enforcement to keep our seniors safe and ensure they are receiving proper care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Scarborough Southwest has a question.

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park for his presentation.

Speaker, we are facing a crisis in health care across the province right now. But more specifically, we're facing a crisis in Scarborough. When we talk about the amount of resources we need in Scarborough hospitals, that's been going on for years and years. The amount of neglect that we have faced in Scarborough in our hospitals and in our

health care system, that's been going on for many, many years, and the Liberals have a big part in that as well.

I want to ask the member whether this government will invest in Scarborough hospitals—and I want to see a timeline and an amount. The amount that's promised, right now, to modernize the infrastructure—when will the government be giving that money to Scarborough hospitals so they can finally get on with the construction that they need to do to make sure they provide care to the people of Scarborough?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thanks to the member opposite for that question. Mr. Speaker, let me be crystal clear: Under the leadership of Premier Ford, Scarborough is no longer the forgotten part of the city. After 15 years of Liberal neglect, finally the Scarborough Health Network and the Scarborough hospitals are getting their fair share, even during the pandemic, Mr. Speaker. We have provided additional funding to make sure people in Scarborough get the quality care that they deserve and that they need. That's why we continue to make sure we're working with the Scarborough Health Network, long-term care and the community members, especially seniors, to make sure that we provide more money. We have done that, and we will continue to make sure Scarborough will be on the map. Also, we'll make sure we build all the infrastructure in Scarborough. For example, it could be the Scarborough subway or investing in community centres in Scarborough. For the first time after 15 years, Scarborough is growing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I'm going to outline right now the issues with Bill 43 and what's missing. When I look at what's missing, the main issue that we see that's missing right now—and I want to talk about the issues that Brampton faces—is the issue of auto insurance. I've said it before and I'll say it again: Brampton faces some of the highest auto insurance rates in this entire country. It's done because of discriminatory practices like postal code discrimination. Discriminatory practices like postal code discrimination result in people having to pay higher rates just because of where they live.

This issue of auto insurance was started because of the Liberals. Fifteen years of Liberals resulted in—year after year, we kept on seeing rates going higher and higher in Brampton. People communicated and talked to me about how terrible it was in Brampton—the fact that people are paying more for car insurance in Brampton, often more than the mortgage on their own home. That is completely unfair. It is completely unacceptable that people are struggling so badly with their car insurance.

Under the Conservative government, we've been seeing things go from bad to worse. We are seeing once again, for the past three and a half years, the Conservative government time and time again siding with billion-dollar insurance companies over drivers in Ontario, and the result is that we see communities like Brampton facing some of the highest car insurance rates across Canada. People are struggling in Brampton to pay car insurance rates that are

often more than the mortgage of their very home. That is unacceptable. But instead of acting when people needed it the most, the Conservative government actually voted against ending postal code discrimination. I put forward a bill to end postal code discrimination, and instead of doing the right thing, the Conservative government voted no to it, because the Conservative government is clearly siding with auto insurance companies instead of Ontario drivers.

During the pandemic, we saw record-low traffic levels. Do you know what that means, when there are record-low traffic levels? It means that billion-dollar car insurance companies are making record profits because they don't have to pay out claims, they don't have to pay out benefits to people who are injured. Instead of actually dropping rates, when we know there's a direct correlation between the profits that car insurance companies are making and a reduction in accidents and a reduction in traffic, the Conservative government actually allowed and approved increases to car insurance rates. At a time when we know that there was a reduction in traffic across the province and we know there's a direct correlation between a reduction in traffic and profits for car insurance companies, the Conservative government approved increases to car insurance rates.

Just to clarify, rates to car insurance only go up when the Conservative government allows them to go up. That means when your car was parked at home, in the depths of this pandemic, or in the driveway or on the street, the Conservative government continued to allow billion-dollar car insurance companies to increase your rates. That's wrong. That's unacceptable.

We in the NDP were standing up for Ontarian drivers. We stood up and demanded a 50% reduction to car insurance rates during the pandemic. What happened instead? The Conservative government once again voted no to reducing your car insurance rates. That's unacceptable. That's wrong. But that's the track record we're seeing from this Conservative government. We saw it for 15 years previously with the Liberal government, and this tradition has been continued by the Conservative government. They often say, "Liberal, Tory, same old story." Well, when it comes to car insurance rates, it is so true.

Do you know what else has happened? We have seen benefits to Ontario drivers become gutted by this Conservative government. This is the reality.

Often, nowadays, when people get car insurance, or they struggle to get car insurance, they think in their mind, "This is my ticket to drive. I am obligated to get car insurance so I can drive." That's not the full picture. You get car insurance because you want to be protected. God forbid, if an accident occurs, you want to ensure that you have the protection and you have the insurance to take care of your health, take care of your family, take care of the things that need to be taken care of, and also to ensure that the burden of your care doesn't fall on our health care system but instead is taken up by insurance. Sadly, because of 15 years of car insurance benefits being gutted by the Liberals and continuing to be gutted by the Conservative government, we're seeing that these benefits are being wiped away.

Let's look at the benefits that are being wiped away. Catastrophically injured individuals used to have \$2 million that they could access. That was the limit for these kinds of claims: \$2 million. It has been slashed to \$1 million.

I was just talking to an individual who's representing someone who was catastrophically injured, a young man in his thirties who suffered a brain injury as a result of a car accident. The cost for him to be taken care of in an in-patient facility is something around \$1,600 a day. Think of what \$1 million gets you when you're charged \$1,600 a day. Think of what \$1 million can afford someone who is being charged \$1,600 a day, and think of how much more support they can get when they have access to \$2 million, which was the previous amount that people could get access to when they were catastrophically injured.

1700

The reality is that the burden of this young man's care is going to fall upon his family, and his family is not in an economic position to care for him in the way that he needs to be cared for. Their family home cannot be modified in a way to accommodate this poor young man who has to live his life with this really, really tragic condition, after having suffering a terrible brain injury as a result of this car accident. His family's home cannot be accommodated properly. His family can't take this burden on.

The result is that, because benefits to car insurance have been gutted, he's not able to get the amount of care that he deserves. The result is that that burden is ultimately going to fall upon our health care system. That's wrong. That's unjust. But that's happened because 15 years of Liberals have resulted in car insurance benefits being gutted, and it has continued to be gutted by this Conservative government. We've seen catastrophically injured individuals initially being able to access \$2 million. That has been slashed to \$1 million. That's wrong. That's unjust. People can't get the care they need with those kinds of limits.

We've seen non-catastrophically injured individuals—the amount of money that they can access for support has also been cut. That's why we need to reform the system. We need to stand up for Ontarian drivers. We need to stand up for people who are injured in car accidents and make sure that they get the support they need. That means increasing the limit for people who are catastrophically injured. That means increasing the limits and the benefits in general for people who are injured in car accidents—because that's what insurance is supposed to mean. But sadly, because of 15 years of Liberals and three and a half years of Conservatives, we're seeing these benefits being gutted across the board.

A huge other issue that exists is in torts. When people are trying to hold insurance companies accountable and get the support that they need, there's a \$40,000 deductible. People can't even get access to any kinds of funds outside of that deductible. That's so unjust. It's so tragic. When I'm talking to lawyers who represent people who are injured and in desperate need of help, they're saying that these insurance companies are saying, "Take us to trial," instead of doing the right thing, settling and working

for a deal to ensure that people who are injured get the support that they need. Instead, these insurance companies are taking these really aggressive approaches with people who are injured, with people who are in really tragic and really desperate situations. Ultimately, the people who are in these desperate situations are not getting the support they need. This \$40,000 deductible is something that is preventing people who are injured, who are in desperate situations, from getting access to the funds they need to get better.

The most tragic thing about this, I think, when you summarize it as a whole, is that when these matters go to trial, the court is not even allowed to instruct juries about this deductible. So a jury could actually award someone who is in a desperate situation money, thinking that that money is going to go to that person's health and support and help them out in this desperate time, but because of this \$40,000 deductible, the amount that the jury thinks is being awarded—that full amount is not even reaching that person because of this deductible.

What we're seeing as a whole is that auto insurance is broken in Ontario. When it comes to the premiums that people pay, they're being overcharged. People are being discriminated against based on their postal code. They are paying some of the highest rates in Canada. Brampton is paying some of the highest rates in Canada.

What we're saying loud and clear is this: People should pay car insurance based on their record, not where they live. It is so discriminatory that people have been overcharged for car insurance simply because of the place that they choose to call home. That is wrong. We in the NDP are going to stand up for Ontario drivers. We're going to fight this unfairness in auto insurance. We're going to fight this discrimination that's happening to communities like Brampton. And we're going to say loud and clear: Let's end postal code discrimination, and let's make sure that people are paying rates based on their record, not where they live.

In addition to that, we're going to say that Ontario drivers deserve benefits. They deserve to know that when they get insurance, they're getting the support they need so that, God forbid, if they get into an accident, they can access this support, they can get the support they need. That means making sure that people who are catastrophically injured have access to more than just a million dollars—that that cut, that slash, from \$2 million should be reversed, and that people who are injured should get the support that they need. That also means removing this \$40,000 deductible that's ultimately withholding money from people who need it the most.

I want to switch now and talk about truckers. In this House, in this assembly, time and again, we talk about our essential workers. We talk about truckers, who actually risk their lives every single day, moving goods throughout our province, making sure that others have the resources that they need to work from home. That was because an essential worker, someone in trucking, risked their life prior to the vaccinations, prior to the support systems we have now. They still went to work every single day

because they had to, and because they went to work, others could work from home. Despite the fact that we'll praise these truckers, when it comes to the supports they need, the Conservative government has failed them time and again.

What is one of the number one issues that truckers talk about? Truck insurance. Truck insurance is putting truckers in some of the most precarious and desperate situations; specifically, fleet insurance, which unfairly charges higher rates to small and medium-size trucking companies, who are working so hard to put food on our tables—because they're shipping the goods across our province. Instead of standing up for these truckers, the Conservative government is allowing them to be ripped off once again by truck insurance, to be charged unfair rates to fleet insurance.

I find it completely reprehensible that the Conservative government, on one side, is going to praise these truckers but, on the other side, not stand with truckers and instead once again stand up for billion-dollar insurance companies and allow them to charge them some of the highest rates in Canada. That's wrong.

Truckers have explained to me the variety of issues they face. One of the issues that truckers in Ontario are struggling with is around air brakes. When truckers first get their licence, they have to write a test around air brakes. Truckers don't have an issue with that. But the fact is that every so often, year after year, whenever their renewal process time comes up, they have to rewrite these tests. The burden that this places upon truckers is really putting them in a tough position. It's putting them in a position where they have to take time off to study for these tests. They have to take the cost of classes for these tests—and ultimately, it's taking them away from doing their job and being able to work and put food on their family's table.

They've brought this issue up to me time and again. The issues around the air brake test are putting truckers in Ontario in some of the most precarious situations. The burden of the air brake test in Ontario is putting truckers in a really tough position, where they have to take weeks off to study and prepare for these tests—the cost of preparing for these tests, and the cost of being away from doing their job. That's why we're saying, let's find an alternative. Let's work with truckers and ensure that they don't have to face this burden of year after year having to face this renewal of these tests that put truckers in a really tough position. They've expressed this to me, and I'm saying, let's stand up for truckers. Let's stand with truckers, and let's find an alternative so truckers don't have to face the burden of this recurring air brake test, and let's make sure that truckers are not having to face the burden of having to take the time off—the costs associated with that time off, even having to line up. They've explained to me the process of just taking that day off and lining up to take that test. All of this is an extra burden upon truckers, who are working so hard to keep our economy moving. Let's stand up for justice for truckers.

I am committed to standing up for truckers, to making sure that they have the supports they need and making sure

that we find an alternative, a solution, to the burden they're facing with these recurring air brake tests. But there's more than that.

1710

Truckers are facing issues across the board and an issue that both truckers and truck company owners have together expressed concern about is actually Driver Inc. Driver Inc. is something which is very unique to Ontario in which an individual who drives a truck but does not own his or her own truck is still able to incorporate. Instead of being able to work as an employee for a truck company, they're acting as a contractor. The result is they don't get the benefits they need, they're not on payroll and they don't get the security they need.

It's a system, quite frankly, that—both truckers and truck company owners have expressed to me their dissatisfaction, how they think this concept of Driver Inc. is a bad concept, that an individual who doesn't own a truck is still being forced to incorporate and not able to go on payroll, is not given the same kinds of benefits and support, the job security they need to ensure that they can provide for themselves and their families. We need to re-evaluate the system of Driver Inc., which is a system that is unique here to Ontario, where people who don't own their own truck can actually incorporate and get employed as a contractor in this way. It's a bad system. It's something that truckers and truck company owners have expressed their dissatisfaction to me about. Let's find a solution, let's stand up for truckers and for truck company owners, and let's make sure that we do something that puts these workers and these companies first.

This just reminded me that when we talk about this air brake test—the air brake test is also something which is unique to Ontario. Truckers have described to me the fact that other provinces don't have this requirement of air brake tests, but just here in Ontario they're forced to face this burden of every now and then having to rewrite these tests. The burden of having to take time off and the cost of classes for these tests put truckers, who are working so hard for our province to move goods around, in a tough position. We should stand up for truckers. I'm committed to standing alongside truckers, to making sure that they can work with the dignity and the respect they need.

There are a lot of other issues I want to talk about that truckers are facing. We have discussed a bunch, but I just want to end in the dying minutes of my 20 minutes by talking about two main issues—child care. Child care is something that has become a crisis for many families in Ontario. The fact that there are families in Ontario for whom the cost of child care is more than a mortgage, is more than the post-secondary cost of education for their older children—this is unacceptable.

Families in Ontario deserve to have affordable child care. It is disgraceful to me that, right now, Ontario is the only province in Canada that hasn't signed on to a child care deal.

We in the NDP are committed to standing up for families who need access to affordable child care. The NDP, if we were in government, would fight immediately

to implement a \$10-a-day child care system in Ontario, because that's what families deserve.

As a new father, the cost of child care is something that increasingly is weighing on me. I can't imagine how other families must feel across Ontario. As a new father, the cost of child care is something that has been weighing on my mind, and I can't imagine how other families must feel in Ontario, knowing that our costs of child care are some of the highest in the entire country. It's wrong. The Conservative government needs to stand up for families, needs to fight to bring in \$10-a-day child care. Sadly, we're the only province that doesn't have a deal.

We in the NDP would fight for families, and we would make sure that we have \$10-a-day child care in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We have time for questions.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I appreciate the remarks from the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker, the member highlighted 15 years of Liberal neglect in auto insurance—and also, three years of the PC government are to blame for the current auto insurance landscape. But who created this system of fault and not at fault? It was the NDP government under the leadership of Bob Rae. The only one time they were in government, they created this mess.

How can the member opposite square this, and how can the member opposite take no responsibility for the mess that their government made?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: What we're seeing right now from the Conservative government once again is that they're not taking responsibility for the fact that in three and a half years, they have done nothing to decrease auto insurance rates for Ontario drivers. In three and a half years, they did not take one step to decrease rates. Instead, they have sided with billion-dollar car insurance companies. They're letting billion-dollar car insurance companies charge Ontarians some of the highest rates in Canada instead of doing the right thing and lowering rates. At a time of pandemic, when cars were parked at home, they allowed rates to increase for Ontario drivers. That's wrong.

We in the NDP have the courage. We'll stand up to car insurance companies, and we'll make sure that there's fairness in car insurance rates.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Waterloo has a question.

Ms. Catherine Fife: PC MP Michael Chong wrote an op-ed about Highway 413. He says, "The highway, also known as Hwy. 413, would not reduce congestion. An expert panel estimated it would reduce commute times by 30 seconds. That's right: \$6 billion in taxpayer money to save 30 seconds in the daily commute."

He goes on to also say, "The highway also flies in the face of Canada's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030—only nine years from now."

My question to the member, having watched him bring the issues of Brampton residents to this House, is, what do you think is really motivating this PC government to move forward with such an ill-fated and ill-advised Highway 413?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: What we have seen from the Conservative government is a very clear track record. They're not acting to support Ontarians. They're not acting and making decisions that help people who are struggling. They act time and again for their insider buddies, for their developers, and time and again, what do we see? These kind of projects come and they benefit one person and one person only: their insider and developer friends. That's what we see time and again from the Conservative government. This is another case of that.

Instead of acting on the issues that truly matter in Ontario—tackling our health care crisis, tackling affordability, tackling the fact that people can't afford homes in Ontario—what we're seeing is these kinds of election promises, these kinds of actions that don't help people but instead just help their developer buddies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Again, the member for Brampton West has a question.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to highlight some of the things our government has done in three years. Our government has done a lot to help drivers. We have allowed for regulatory changes to reward good drivers, make use of technology like user-based insurance and created the conditions to allow for more competition, which leads to lower rates.

No matter what we have done to bring down rates, on the other side of the House, all the members opposite have not supported anything. How can the member justify the fact that the NDP created this mess we are in, yet cannot support the government measures to help?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Let's look at the track record of this Conservative government. They voted no to ending postal code discrimination. They voted no to a 50% reduction in car insurance rates during a pandemic. What have they voted yes to? Increases to your car insurance rates.

I find it ridiculous that a member of the Conservative government can stand up with a straight face and critique our position on car insurance when they have allowed billion-dollar car insurance companies to overcharge Ontarians throughout their entire mandate. It is disgraceful. It is wrong. They are siding with billionaires. We're siding with you, with the drivers of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for York South–Weston has a question.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: My colleague from Brampton East talked about an issue very important to my community of York South–Weston. Auto insurance and postal code discrimination is just that, Mr. Speaker. It discriminates against people because of where they live, and that's not fair.

This average—in the community of York South–Weston, on auto insurance alone, people pay about \$3,000 or more. And it's not us alone; it's across the province. I know that now, also, during the pandemic, people are not driving. Cars are parked in people's houses, and still every year—2020 and 2021—the rates go up again and again.

1720

My question to the member from Brampton East is, when are we getting relief?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: The reality is this: We will only get relief for auto insurance in Ontario when the people of Ontario give us the honour of representing this province, because we have seen 15 years of Liberals, who created this mess in car insurance, and we've seen three and a half years by the Conservative government.

Quite frankly, the proof is in the pudding. Look at your car insurance rates. Ask Ontarians: Have they gone up or have they gone down? They have gone up, time and again, throughout the three and a half years that the Conservative government has been in power. And that clearly shows one thing: The Conservative government is allowing the rates to go up, because that's how our system of auto insurance is set up in Ontario. They are siding with billion-dollar car insurance companies and not with the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha has a question.

Mr. Dave Smith: Let's bring it back to Bill 43 for a minute, if we could, because that's really what we're supposed to be discussing here. In Bill 43, we are doing a lot on the Critical Minerals Strategy. We know that lithium is required to build electric vehicles. Does the member opposite agree that we should be enhancing the Critical Minerals Strategy here in Ontario, so that we can be the world leader in electric vehicle production and reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by doing so?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Once again, let's look at the track record of this Conservative government. They came into power, and what's the first thing they did? They cancelled any sort of rebate or support for electric vehicles. That's the track record of this government. They came in, they actually came forward and put—they were challenged on this decision. They faced an entire court case around it. This is the track record.

This government has time and again taken actions that hurt our environment. Be it MZO that pave over essential wetlands, be it cancellations to rebates for electric vehicles, be it ripping out charging stations, this government has a clear anti-environment policy. We see it time and again, and we in the NDP are going to stand up. We're going to fight to protect the environment. We're going to fight to ensure that we're protecting the one planet that we have, and we need to make sure we do that not just for our lives today, but for future generations as well. We in the NDP are committed to the environment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question to the honourable member is a really simple one: What motivates the government not to get a deal on the daycare thing? Is it because they have a predilection to doing more of a private deal, where rather than having not-for-profit daycare in Ontario, they'd rather have something that's private?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I really just want to start by saying that it is so tragic when we look at the state that families are facing right now with child care in Ontario. We pay some of the highest rates in Canada, and families are struggling. They've expressed how some families are paying more for their child care than for the mortgage of

their own home, than for the cost of their older children who are in post-secondary education. This is unjust; this is wrong. And instead of acting, the Conservative government is once again putting the fate, the struggles of parents who need child care on the back end, on the back burner. They're dragging their feet, and the result is that families are struggling.

We've seen time and time again that the Conservative government would rather put for-profit, privatized processes before public, good, high-quality child care. It's clear that the motivations from this government are before us time and time again: It's over the dollar as opposed to standing up for people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Before we go to further debate: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the member for Sarnia–Lambton, the member for Timmins and the member for Hamilton Mountain, please, let's stop and desist the cross-aisle chatter. This is not where we want to go this afternoon. We owe it to our other colleagues to show respect when they're speaking. I'd like to hear what they say.

I'm going to turn, for further debate, to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Orléans, as well as the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Bill 43 was an opportunity for the Premier to show the people of this province that this government is serious about delivering the relief that so many people need in this province. The most important take-away here is not how many lines are in this bill, but what is missing altogether. The unfortunate truth about the fall economic statement and this bill is the story of who was left out, and how the help for people who are most in need was not included. It was just missing altogether.

In October, the Financial Accountability Officer noted that the federal government has footed 85% of the bill for Ontario's pandemic-related support measures. A school in my riding, in Ontario, is in outbreak due to Omicron. We are not through this pandemic yet, so the government should not be taking a premature victory lap before addressing this and stopping this virus from spreading.

We see in our education system that there are 8,000 cases of COVID-19 in our schools. We learn of these outbreaks every day. Throughout this pandemic, the Premier and his ministers have insisted that it's safe to put students in packed classrooms with their teachers. We have many classrooms, including in my riding, with over 30 unvaccinated children.

They also told us that they are okay with school staff being unvaccinated, even amid the challenges of maintaining social distancing, refusing to make vaccination mandatory for workers, as was done in long-term care. There is no indication whether this vaccine will be mandatory for students, just like the nine other vaccines that are mandatory for students to be in school.

Bill 43 was an opportunity for this government to address the historic learning gaps children are facing due to the chaos of how this government has managed schools

during the pandemic. We've heard from experts that the health crisis, the mental health crisis for students and for young people could be the next pandemic.

What we saw, in fact, in education was a \$500-million cut that this government has done to the education budget. Over 10 years, this will amount to a \$12.3-billion cut to our education funding. Per the FAO, in the past quarter, the government did not spend \$688 million that was purposed for education. Instead, they are asking our public school boards to dip into their reserve funds to cover COVID responses. This is shameful. They are further weakening the ability of school boards to set their own priorities.

Speaker, this government would rather invest billions of taxpayers' dollars, instead of in public education, in building highways, like the 413, paving over farmland and sensitive environmental areas. Ontario Liberals would instead cancel Highway 413 and invest \$8 billion back into the education system.

I've talked in this House time and time again about the effects of the economic recession and the pandemic on women, and in fact, that this is a she-cession that requires a she-covey. One of the ways that the government could really take a huge step forward is by accepting the federal government's offer for \$10-a-day child care and bringing that into this province. Why is the government running last among all other provinces when it comes to accepting the offer for \$10-a-day child care? I have heard no good response in this Legislature as to why the delay, other than what we know: that perhaps, you're waiting to utilize it for your own electoral gains. But this is costing Ontario families. This is hurting our families.

The cost of living is up, and the Premier knows this, as he has finally accepted the fact that we need to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour—this, after a three-year delay to the set increase. Had he not done that in 2018, we would have been at \$15.75 an hour today. In fact, this PC government is actually shortchanging Ontario's workers by denying them the minimum wage that they are due.

While we must increase the minimum wage due to the higher cost of living, we must also not forget the most vulnerable in this province, and those are the people with disabilities who really need the assistance and support. They, too, have seen the rising costs, and we know that there have not been any changes to OW and ODSP to reflect this. It is heartbreaking that instead of supporting people with disabilities, this government aims to balance its books on the backs of the most vulnerable.

1730

We know the cost of living is up. We know that food bank use is on the rise. In my riding alone, there has been a 43% increase in food bank usage, in Scarborough, and this government has underspent the budget for OW and ODSP. According to the FAO second quarter expenditure monitoring, this government did not spend \$838 million purposed for children and social services this past quarter.

Let's also not forget that the government pledged to end the autism wait-list, but under this government, it has doubled. That's right: The wait-list for autism services to

children has doubled. This is an absolute disgrace and needs to be addressed immediately.

Speaker, finally, I just want to touch on what this government has left as a void in its fall economic statement and in the subsequent Bill 43, and that is climate change. There's sparsely a section on climate change—the most important issue when it comes to our global survival, and there's just nothing there. There is no plan. The Auditor General last week released five scathing reports on the state of the environment, and this government is falling well short of a plan.

I just want to give one alarming statistic that should really be cautionary: The projected harm to species at risk has increased by 6,000% under this government, and there is so much more that we need to do.

Bill 43 falls way short. This government needs to step up and do more for those in our province who depend on this right now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Orléans has risen to continue the debate.

Mr. Stephen Blais: We've seen a remarkable attempt by this government to pivot from the disaster that characterized their first two years in office, but Ontarians won't quickly forget. They won't forget a government that cancelled paid sick days for the most vulnerable workers—often, workers who are on the front lines, who we've come to rely on during the COVID-19 emergency. They won't forget a government that eliminated the increase to the minimum wage, effectively cutting the pay of these front-line workers, costing them \$6,700 in lost wages. These are lost wages that are also lost opportunities. The bills have piled up. Parents have missed out on child care, and students have worked overtime just to pay their tuition.

This is the Premier and the government that eliminated equal pay for equal work. Now, who could be against that? We do the same job; we should get the same pay. Apparently, this Premier and this government are against equal pay for equal work.

Let's not forget that the Premier's greatest hits don't end there. Shortly before the pandemic, this is the government that decided to cut \$200 million from public health. Surely, this hurt our response to COVID-19. They cut OHIP+ for families so that families with sick kids will have to pay out of pocket for their prescriptions and hope that they might get reimbursed from their insurance companies.

They cut \$330 million from planned mental health spending, and they capped the pay for front-line nurses, effectively cutting their pay after you account for inflation. And we've heard prominent Conservatives talk and talk about inflation, that it's under control. Now, imagine your pay being slashed or your pay being frozen in the face of what the Conservatives are calling out-of-control inflation.

The pandemic has offered Ford government 2.0, and with the fall economic statement, there was hope that maybe things would change, but that hope was quickly dashed. Nobody can argue that affordability in Ontario is

out of control. The cost of heating your home is up. The cost of electricity is up. The cost of food is up. The cost of gas is up. The cost of housing is up and up and up. The one thing that this government tried to control, the one cost this government tried to control, the cost of beer—even the cost of beer is up. Affordability in Ontario is out of control and this government has absolutely no plans to address affordability.

With Bill 43, the government had the opportunity to help families, but they didn't do that. Instead of releasing a plan for Ontario families that we are all looking for—Ontario families are looking for this plan, and Bill 43 failed to deliver. The government has offered average families almost nothing to get through the challenges they are facing, the challenges they were facing before COVID, challenges that COVID has only made worse.

Ontario Liberals are offering a different approach, Mr. Speaker. We want to offer average families, middle-class families, opportunities to move forward. We want to offer them \$8,000 in incentives to buy or lease green electric vehicles, to get them into the EV market. We want to help them drive safely in the wintertime by providing incentives to buy winter tires and, most importantly, we want to help them with the cost of child care by bringing in \$10-a-day child care that's not only good for families, it's good for the economy. It will bring hundreds of thousands of Ontarians back into the workforce, mostly women back into the workforce, bringing billions of dollars in economic activity.

That's what Ontario Liberals stand for. Unfortunately, we don't have a government that believes in helping middle-class families.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): It's time for questions.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to talk about investments in municipalities: \$1.6 billion in additional funding; \$345 million to support municipal transit systems, including the city of Toronto and the city of Ottawa; \$200 million in annual funding to increase support for municipal infrastructure.

Could the members from Scarborough-Guildwood and Orléans say yes to that level of investment in building up their communities, say yes to supporting their constituents in their ridings and building them up overall, rather than no?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Orléans to respond.

Mr. Stephen Blais: For a government that claims to like to say yes, they certainly say no to average middle-class families a whole heck of a lot. They say no to helping nurses make more money by freezing their pay. They say no to helping middle-class families afford child care by failing to come to an agreement with the federal government. They say no to middle-class families by cancelling EV incentives and making it more expensive for middle-class families in Ottawa and Scarborough to buy or lease electric vehicles.

That's not the approach the Ontario Liberals want to take. We want to help middle-class families, especially during these difficult times.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Waterloo has a question.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is interesting that the independent members pointed out where the funding is actually not going. We do know the FAO's analysis of Q1 spending showed that \$149 million was not spent—"below plan in supports to individuals and families ... which administers a variety of programs such as autism, residential services, and child and youth community supports." We all hear about these trials and tribulations that families are experiencing.

The current wait-list for children waiting for autism services is 50,000. What does the member opposite have to say about where the money is being vested and where it is not?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Back to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite who is the finance critic for the official opposition for that question. I know that she's been in the briefings for the Financial Accountability Office that really take a deep-dive look into program spending line by line. It actually is shocking that \$838 million from a budget ministry of the most vulnerable people in this province remains underspent at a time when we are in a global pandemic and a health crisis and people are at risk, when families are calling out for services and for supports, and none more in need than those with autism. It's just shocking that the government has allowed these young children to languish on these wait-lists. It's a disgrace.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you to my colleagues for great insight on what's missing from this bill. I want to ask the member for Orléans: When the government took power back in 2018, they cancelled the minimum wage of \$15 that the Liberal government had announced. Three years later, they're coming around and they're announcing that same minimum wage. Can you tell us, what is the impact that this policy will have on our families and our communities?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you for that question. The member from Vanier is absolutely right. The government cancelled important increases to minimum wage—increases that would help front-line workers be able to afford groceries, help front-line workers pay the rent, help students pay tuition to better their futures. That cost those workers \$6,700. Now the government wants to try to make themselves feel good by changing course six months before the election and they want people to give them a lot of credit for that. But it's easy to pretend to lift people up, Mr. Speaker, when you've been holding them down for three years, and the people of Ontario will see right through that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank both my colleagues for their presentation. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to planning, I've got to tell you, I don't think we'll be following

the advice of the previous government. I want to remind both my colleagues, and in fact everyone in the House, that when it comes to planning, the previous government missed eight of their last 14 financial reporting periods.

I want to tell you about our planning, colleagues, and then I have a question for my colleague across. Our plan is to continue to support our progress when it comes to our health care sector; continue to support our infrastructure initiatives—we talked about building highways, these critical highways that our businesses, individuals and families are going to rely on so that they are not stuck in gridlock and traffic every single day—and continue to support our workers.

I'm wondering why, through all these great initiatives, when the previous government completely failed the people of Ontario for 15 years—our plan is to fix that mess. Why is my colleague and their colleagues not supporting—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The member for Scarborough–Guildwood to respond.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Oh, Speaker, I have two examples: One, the Auditor General just said that you could not even implement a system for small businesses to sign up for a program that actually detects that the business is registered in Ontario—a complete demonstration of the incompetency of this government and the lack of oversight and the lack of planning. Not only did you not register Ontario businesses and you couldn't detect that they weren't registered in Ontario, you gave businesses that didn't even need that amount—\$700 million. Further to that, you doubled down on the program by doing a round two and doubling up. So don't talk to me about planning. You've got to get it right.

I also want to say, very importantly, for nurses, our nurses are being burnt out and they are asking for the repeal of Bill 124. A lack of planning is showing that we've lost 3,000—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The member for York South–Weston has a question.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I was listening intently to the independent members' remarks. I know that life is unaffordable in Ontario, and it is because of the previous Liberals, who had 15 years, and the current government. I know that many promises have been made in our own community with regard to the UP Express, when they said that they're going to be electrifying it; still today, it is diesel. So many promises have been broken between the Liberals and the Conservatives right here.

Small businesses are struggling and continue to struggle. We know that also, currently with the project creep, that the project on the Eglinton Crosstown never ends. It was started by the now independent Liberals and the Conservative government. My question is: When will this mess end?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Let's go back to the member from Orléans to respond.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I have to agree that the current government is in a big mess. We heard earlier that they

don't think that the previous government did much planning, except that they like to take credit for Ontario's status when it comes to emissions, a direct result of Ontario's planning for the future by getting rid of coal-generated electricity in Ontario. They're trying to use Ontario's full-day kindergarten program as a whip against the federal government's child care program. That is, of course, a full-day kindergarten program initiated, envisioned and brought forward by the previous Liberal government. So yes, I agree the current government is in a mess, and in about six months from now, Ontario Liberals plan to change that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for a quick one.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: A very quick question to my colleague from Scarborough–Guildwood: She has been a great advocate about the she-covetry and the reality that's settling in because of COVID. We've talked about affordable child care. What else should the government do to help women participate in the economy?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Definitely making sure that we have women-friendly policies, so if we are announcing projects in terms of economic recovery, target those in jobs and employment categories that are hiring women—like supporting nurses, for instance, who are asking for the cancellation of Bill 124 and so that they can negotiate a fair wage to keep more nurses in that profession. That would be direct support for the she-covetry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Excellent, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much—home of the best ice cream, Kawartha Dairy.

Anyway, I'm honoured to rise and speak about our government's fall economic statement, Bill 43, the Build Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2021.

There is no doubt the past few years have been difficult and have tested our province like never before. But through these challenging times, Ontarians have demonstrated true Ontario spirit.

On November 4, our government released the 2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review: Build Ontario that outlines key investments that will build Ontario's future. The plan includes making \$51 billion in supports available to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and promote economic recovery, ensuring that every necessary resource is allocated to continue protecting Ontarians. It's an ambitious but attainable plan for growing a stronger economy that works for everybody. It's a plan that includes strong pandemic management while looking beyond at the kind of Ontario we all want to build.

This is our plan for jobs, our plan for opportunities, and this is our plan for building a better and brighter future for the people of Ontario. This means having shovels in the ground sooner for highways, for hospitals, housing and for high-speed Internet projects—something the people in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock know is so important for staying connected to family and friends as

well as expanding economic opportunities in rural communities and improving the delivery of health care.

Mr. Speaker, I have probably close to 40,000 people in my riding who do not have or don't have adequate high-speed Internet. That is crucial going forward. Our government made the historic investment of nearly \$4 billion over six years to provide all regions of Ontario with access to affordable, reliable and high-speed Internet by the end of 2025. That is a huge economic stimulus in my area.

But we're also making investments to improve our health care capacity, to ensure the system we rely on can be ready for whatever challenges emerge in the future, because, as we know and as Minister Bethlenfalvy, the Minister of Finance, stated when speaking to the fall economic statement, one of the important lessons we learned from this pandemic is that our health care system is linked. From local public health units to mental health to surgical wait times, we must continue to build capacity in each of these areas so people can access services when and where they need them.

We also need to continue growing our economy so we can attract new investments and restore leadership in our manufacturing sector and other industries. With significant investments in these industries, we need to train and keep more skilled workers by expanding training and encouraging more young people to pursue rewarding, well-paying jobs in the skilled trades.

1750

I recently met with a group of students at a local high school in my riding who were learning about different jobs in the skilled trades. Many of them were unaware of the variety of work and different opportunities the skilled trades provide.

Mr. Speaker, I have championed women to get into the skilled trades for so long. The Minister of Colleges and Universities and I have championed, as all members of our caucus have, to get more women into the trades. There are lots of associations that promote that.

It's incredible that, by 2025, as many as one in five jobs in the province will be in the skilled trades, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're investing in these important programs to help people strengthen their skills.

We're building Ontario's workforce, connecting people to well-paying and in-demand jobs, now and in the future. Our government is committed to assisting employers recruit and keep the skilled workers they need. By investing in our local communities with good-paying jobs, we're building the infrastructure for road transit, highway improvements. We're also making it easier and faster for people to get to home and work. These investments will support our health care sector, help drive local economic investments, create new opportunities and protect jobs. It's all connected. It's an ambitious plan.

We're focusing on three pillars: protecting Ontario's progress, building Ontario, and supporting workers. These pillars outline our plan to bounce back from this pandemic, ready to grow and ready to build bigger, faster and better than before.

Our plan starts with Ontario's seniors. We will build more spaces for our seniors. This includes 30,000 new long-term-care beds and another 28,000 to be refurbished. It's a historic investment impacting every region of the province, including my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. We all know that there's an aging population and the investment is long overdue.

That's why I was thrilled to be at the city of Kawartha Lakes Extencicare—that they are going to be allocated 96 new spaces and 64 upgraded spaces. This project will result in a 160-bed home in Lindsay, and it will allow more seniors to be able to continue living in their own communities.

In addition to modernizing the long-term care sector, these projects will help reduce wait-lists and end hallway health care.

But, Mr. Speaker, our plan is not just about building more beds; it's about building better beds. We are keeping our promise to Ontario seniors and working to ensure they can live in comfort, dignity and safety. That's why we are going to raise the bar for what constitutes acceptable care in our long-term-care homes. We have a plan to put in place higher standards and more accountability. The days of shortcuts and cutting corners on seniors' care are over.

We are working hard to double the number of long-term-care-home inspection staff across the province. We are hiring 225 new nurse practitioners in the long-term-care sector, recruiting more than 5,000 registered nurses and registered practical nurses throughout the health care system, and hiring 8,000 more personal support workers. Some of these personal support workers are learning and being trained in my riding, at Fleming College—with over 200 students enrolled in the new accelerated PSW program. A few months ago, I had a chance to speak virtually with students enrolled in the program, alongside the Minister of Long-Term Care. You could just tell how passionate these men and women were to help people and make a difference in their communities.

We know a lack of human resources in the health care sector is not a new problem, but we are working to recruit, and retain, more people into the health care sector as fast as we can.

We're also making new investments to improve home care that will help keep patients out of the hospital and bring services to them, where and when they need them.

And our plan will help more of Ontario's seniors live safely and with dignity in their own homes by extending the Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit.

This investment is in addition to the \$82.5 million over three years announced this fall to expand the province's Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care Program to 22 additional communities. This includes Kawartha Lakes and is fully funded by the provincial government and operational across 33 Ontario communities, including in Haliburton county. I can tell you, there are many seniors who are very happy to see those paramedics come into their home to make sure they're okay, to check on them, and just for the company at times.

We are supporting our seniors, and we're also getting shovels in the ground for building, expanding and

improving hospitals. In fact, just a few short months ago, our government announced a \$182.6-million investment to ensure patients can continue to access the care they need in safe, comfortable environments. Through the Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund and the Community Infrastructure Renewal Fund, we're ensuring local health care systems are prepared to respond to any scenario in the COVID-19 pandemic if it continues to evolve. In my riding, I've heard just how important this funding is to our small and medium-sized hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, you and I have had many discussions about our small-town hospitals and the need to give them supports. That's why I was happy to announce over \$1 million in funding to support two hospitals in my riding through the Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund and the Community Infrastructure Renewal Fund. This funding allows critical infrastructure projects to be completed when they are needed most. From new front doors and boilers to upgraded lighting to IT systems, this funding helps hospitals get behind-the-scenes projects moving so they can continue to deliver quality care to patients—and a big shout-out to my two hospitals, Haliburton Highlands Health Services and Ross Memorial Hospital in Lindsay, to all of the great people who work there and who keep those hospitals going.

It is time to get to work building Ontario, making the long-overdue investments that we know the people of Ontario want to see. For too long, our roads, highways and transit systems have not kept pace with our growing population—too many precious hours wasted stuck in traffic, away from family and friends. Without real leadership, it will only get worse: more gridlock, more traffic, more emissions, more time wasted, more opportunities missed.

The Ontario worker who cannot afford to live close to their job, the local businesses that cannot get their products to market or even hire a team of workers because available workers are just too far away, parents who miss out on time with their children because they're wedged in bumper-to-bumper traffic for hours and hours every single day—that's why we are building highways. That's why we are expanding and repairing more than 580 existing provincial highways and bridges. That's why we are continuing our progress on the largest subway expansion in Ontario's history. And that's why we are delivering on our commitment of two-way, all-day GO Transit, so that people can get where they need to go and faster.

We're also helping municipalities build their communities, which is why our government is doubling the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund over five years to help 424 small, rural and northern municipalities fund important local projects, projects that will improve critical infrastructure—roads, bridges, water, waste water—and build up our small, rural and northern communities. Investing in local infrastructure projects that help strengthen our community and support Ontario's long-term economic recovery is important to help get the shovels in the ground—one of my favourite sayings—and get those projects done sooner.

Not only will these projects create 1,500 jobs over the next five years, but they will help keep our communities safe and support the recovery of main streets across the province, including in my riding of small and rural municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, I often hear from local municipalities just how important this funding is, and I know that they're waiting to get that final number coming from the Minister of Infrastructure and the Premier shortly of what they can budget for in next year's budget to help build those important infrastructure projects.

I don't have as much time as I'd like to, but I want to highlight the fantastic work that's being done in the Ring

of Fire, the vital source of economic development for communities across the north and especially our First Nations—the critical minerals that are essential to the batteries, electric vehicles, clean energy, electronics manufacturing and economic health that is going to prosper.

Mr. Speaker, so much to say, so little time. Thank you very much.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. There will be time for you to conclude your portion of debate some other time, but right now it is time to move into private members' public business.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Valerie Quioc Lim, Peter Sibenik, William Wong,

Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (IND)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation (Transit-Oriented Communities) / Ministre associé des Transports (Aménagement axé sur les transports en commun)
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiles et du Multiculturalisme
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteuse générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (NBP)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Hon. / L'hon. Jane (PC)	Burlington	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (IND)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (IND)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Associate Minister of Digital Government / Ministre associé délégué de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines, des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Randy Pettapiece
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Goldie Ghamari, Randy Hillier
Christina Maria Mitas, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ian Arthur
Ian Arthur, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
Ernie Hardeman, Mitzie Hunter
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
Jeremy Roberts, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Michael Bushara

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey
Will Bouma, Guy Bourgouin
Chris Glover, Mike Harris
Logan Kanapathi, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Gilles Bisson, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Billy Pang
Amanda Simard, Marit Stiles
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
Lucille Collard, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Natalia Kusendova
Jim McDonell, Suze Morrison
Randy Pettapiece, Gurratan Singh
Donna Skelly, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Laurie Scott
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Rima Berns-McGown, France Gélinas
Goldie Ghamari, Faisal Hassan
Jim McDonell, Sam Oosterhoff
Laurie Scott, Vijay Thanigasalam
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Hogarth
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
Christine Hogarth, Michael Mantha
Taras Natyshak, Michael Parsa
Amarjot Sandhu
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Aris Babikian
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Aris Babikian, Lorne Coe
John Fraser, Vincent Ke
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Bhutila Karpoche, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight / Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations d'urgence

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Tom Rakocevic
Donna Skelly, Sara Singh
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell