

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 20

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 20

2nd Session
42nd Parliament

Thursday
18 November 2021

2^e session
42^e législature

Jeudi
18 novembre 2021

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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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
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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

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 18 November 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 18 novembre 2021

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers / Prières.

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 November 17, 2021, on the motion for second 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?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: It's a real honour to rise today to speak about our fall economic statement. I want to start, Speaker, by congratulating the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy, and his two wonderful parliamentary assistants, Will Bouma and Michael Parsa. Congratulations to the whole team at finance. They've really put together a solid plan for this year's fall economic statement.

The fall economic statement that was introduced by our government just this past month was really centred around three pillars, as we start to look to the future as we emerge out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those three pillars are protecting our progress—which means making sure that the hard work that we've done to invest in our health care system continues to happen, and that we make sure that we protect the progress we've made in our health care system and in our battle against COVID-19.

The second pillar is building Ontario back. That means we're going to continue to make some of the solid infrastructure investments that need to happen to get our economy going and to make sure that Ontarians have access to the services that they deserve.

And then the third pillar is working for workers. We want to make sure that as folks begin to return back to work, begin to re-engage in the labour market, that they feel safe to be able to do so, that they feel supported in being able to do so and that we're doing everything we can to connect Ontarians right across the province with good-paying jobs.

I'm going to speak a little bit about these three different areas and I'm going to focus my remarks today on some of the investments that are happening in each of these pillars in my hometown of Ottawa. I'm going to start by speaking a little bit about protecting our progress. Again, to reiterate, these are investments that our government is making in our health care system, specifically to continue to shore up our hospitals, our health care system and our long-term-care system.

I was really honoured this past year to be able to join the Premier in Ottawa at the Ottawa Hospital as he announced that right across the province, our government was going to be investing \$778 million for hospital surge funding. That's additional investment on top of hospitals' base funding that can help support them through this difficult time, help them deal with any staffing shortages, help them make sure that they're getting the resources they need to deliver the critical care that all of our hospitals have been doing over the past 18 months and more.

That investment of hospital surge funding—I want to speak a bit about what that specifically meant for Ottawa. If we dive down into the numbers, Speaker, that funding meant \$5.6 million more going to the Montfort Hospital in the east end of Ottawa, a critical hospital that serves our east end community, some of our francophone communities. That meant \$16.8 million more going to the Ottawa Hospital to support their critical work as a centre of care in Ottawa. That meant \$16.5 million more going to the Heart Institute in Ottawa, something that all of us in Ottawa are very proud to have in our nation's capital, the top cardiac health centre right across Canada; in fact, one of the top ones in North America. That meant \$2.2 million more to the Royal Ottawa hospital, which supports mental health patients right across our city. It meant \$3.5 million more for CHEO, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario—Speaker, you can be sure that I will definitely be speaking a little bit more about CHEO as this progresses. And then, right in my riding, that meant \$3.4 million more to the Queensway Carleton Hospital, which supports our west end Ottawa residents. That's the sort of investment that we're making as we talk about protecting our progress. And then equally, we're making investments in long-term care.

You know, Speaker, I had the chance prior to COVID to go and work for a day as a PSW at one of the long-term-care homes in my riding, and throughout that experience I could see first-hand the need for more staffing support in our long-term-care homes. So I brought that feedback back to our government and spoke to ministers and talked about the need to make sure that we have stable access to staffing support in our long-term-care facilities. I'm thrilled to say

that our government this year announced \$270 million more in staffing surge funding for our long-term-care residences. That meant in my riding \$4.2 million more to Medex, \$2.3 million more per year to New Orchard Lodge, \$3.9 million more per year to Starwood, \$3.9 million more per year to West End Villa, \$4.7 million more per year to Peter D. Clark and \$2.7 million per year to Villa Marconi.

That's dollars that are going to go straight into staffing in our long-term-care homes, and it's matched by a commitment to train more PSWs—a commitment to train 8,000 more PSWs right across the province—and I'm proud to say that many of those PSWs are being trained in my riding at Algonquin College. I've had the chance to actually go and visit those accelerated PSW programs and speak to those students. Those students are excited about the opportunity to get out into the workforce to help care for our elderly, and they're excited about some of the reforms that are under way in our long-term-care system right now. Those are some of those key investments that are happening, in terms of protecting our progress.

0910

When we talk about building Ontario, Speaker, I could go on with a lengthy, lengthy list about infrastructure projects that are happening right across our province, and, of course, I have to congratulate our Minister of Infrastructure, our Minister of Transportation and all of our ministers who are working on building this infrastructure. But, in Ottawa, what this investment is going to mean—I'm going to speak about a project I've spoken about before, but one that I'm particularly proud of—is a new facility at CHEO that is going to support children with special needs, mental health needs and rehabilitative care needs. It's going to be the CHEO 1Door4Care facility, and I'm so excited that this new, purpose-built, state-of-the-art facility will now be available to the over 40,000 children and families across eastern Ontario that need to access these services. I would be remiss if I didn't thank the Minister of Energy, who is with us in the chamber today, who, in his previous portfolio, helped to make this project a reality, as well.

That's the sort of investment in building Ontario back that we're going to be making, helping to build new infrastructure at our hospitals, and it's matched by infrastructure that is going to be built across the GTA to expand highways, to make sure that our subway system in our provincial capital is running at full tilt—all of these critical investments that make sure that Ontarians, when they're getting back to work, have access to safe, reliable infrastructure to get from point A to B and make sure that when they're accessing key pieces of infrastructure, like hospitals, that they have state-of-the-art facilities that all Ontarians can be proud of.

Finally, Speaker, in my remaining time, I'm going to speak a little bit about this third pillar, and that's working for workers. Of course, at the core of this was our government's announcement recently to boost the minimum wage up to \$15 per hour. This is in recognition of the fact that we want to make sure that our workers are getting paid

a decent wage and also to help incentivize more people to return into the workforce after the difficult past year that they have been through.

It has also been matched by investments right in the nation's capital to help support new workers in getting the training they need to enter the workforce. I was thrilled to be with the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development in my riding at the YMCA to announce funding to connect new Canadians with jobs in the manufacturing sector.

All three of these pillars working together are going to help make sure that we can emerge out of the pandemic stronger than ever before. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today, and now, Speaker, I would like to move that the question be put.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Roberts has moved that the question be now put. I am advised that there have been eight hours and 59 minutes of debate on this bill at second reading, and 24 speakers. Therefore, I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay"—

Interjection: On division.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): In my opinion, the ayes have it, on division.

Mr. Bethlenfalvy has moved second reading of Bill 43, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day?

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 10:15.

The House recessed from 0915 to 1015.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Joel Harden: It's an honour to rise this morning. I'm thinking of a Paralympian back home, Kevin Frost, who recently did an interview on the CBC Radio morning news program. Kevin has represented our country at a high level in Paralympic sport, but he's at his wits' end right now, Speaker, because he can't get access to optometric care. What he is saying, plaintively, to this government is

that for every day we don't have an agreement with optometrists in this province, we are depriving him of his ability to move in our city, to access the things he needs, to get around and move around.

We're implicitly telling him, "Go to another province, go to another country, maybe, to get your optometric needs met." I just want us to reckon with the fact that Kevin is not alone. We have people with disabilities and seniors and kids urgently needing optometric care who aren't getting it.

In the same radio program, a member of this government, MPP Martow, spoke. When she was told what the government had said, that it's trying to negotiate in faith and they're waiting for the optometrists to come back to the table, MPP Martow said, "You know what? That's not true." The fact of the matter is, when the optometrists went to the table and they opened up the Zoom screen, they saw a blue screen with nobody on it.

Speaker, as Kevin and others reckon with how to resolve this mess, can we just please get back to the table? Because people with disabilities, kids, seniors deserve optometric care and they need it now.

BULLYING AWARENESS AND PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Today I rise to speak about an issue that has impacted many of us, especially in our schools. This coming Sunday is the start of Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. Ontario has designated the week beginning on the third Sunday of November as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week to help promote safe schools and a positive learning environment.

Bullying is aggressive. It is meant to cause harm, fear and distress. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, it hurts. Over one in five Ontario students reported being bullied at school, according to a 2018 study from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, and this often leads to mental health issues.

I have heard from many constituents recently in my riding of Scarborough–Rouge Park about instances of bullying that have happened in schools. A young child may not know the word "bully," but they do know when someone is hurting them or being mean or making them feel sad or scared.

That's why Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week is so important. I encourage everyone to promote healthy relationships to prevent bullying and create a safe and accepting environment.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Paul Miller: The upcoming increase of the minimum wage to \$15 is at least three years behind the times and less than it should be. To add insult to injury, the decision still forgets about a large group of workers in this province who will not see their lives improved by this announcement: injured workers. A quick thanks to Chris

Grayway from the Injured Workers Community Legal Clinic and Karl Crevar and Paul Stacho from the Hamilton and District Injured Workers' Group for bringing this issue to my attention.

For many years, the WSIB has used a practice known in the community as "deeming." Simply put, with deeming, the WSIB dreams up a phantom job that it claims the injured worker could in theory get, takes away the wages the worker is "deemed" to be earning, and leaves the injured worker with little or no compensation benefits, regardless of whether the injured worker is actually employed or not. For example, a welder is earning \$34 an hour when he suffers a permanent back injury and cannot return to his old job. While recovering, he receives full benefits: 85% of his net average earnings. The WSIB eventually tells the injured worker that it is time to go back to work after some retraining. The WSIB deems the worker in a 40-hour-a-week, \$15 minimum wage job as a parking lot attendant, despite the fact that he is not working. The welder will lose hundreds of dollars per week as a result of the wages from his deemed job. The WSIB's practice of deeming injured workers has to stop now.

1020

MURRAY WHETUNG

Mr. Dave Smith: I rise today to honour a gentleman from my riding that I have already spoken about a few times. Murray Whetung is the First Nations Second World War veteran that I named my private member's bill after. The act would create an award for cadets in Ontario to celebrate volunteerism and citizenship, something that Murray exemplified.

The award would also give us the opportunity to educate some of our brightest young leaders on one of the injustices that Canada did to First Nation individuals. More than 7,500 Métis, Inuit and First Nation individuals voluntarily joined the armed forces to fight for Canada in the First and Second World Wars. Any one of them who spent more than four years away from their reserve—fighting for Canada's freedom—was stripped of their status.

Murray would be celebrating his 100th birthday at the end of this month. Unfortunately, Father Time tapped Murray on the shoulder last February and asked him to perform one more civic duty. Shomis Whetung passed away within minutes of the death of a young lady from Curve Lake. And like the gentleman that Shomis was, we believe he chose that time so he could escort her safely.

To celebrate a life well lived and in honour of all that he did, I will be reintroducing that act later this week.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Today I want to bring to the attention of this House the Northern Health Travel Grant. This government continues to ignore many of the ongoing issues with this grant, and people are falling

through the cracks. You cannot just ignore people in northern and rural communities across this province, who deserve equal access to medical care, just like residents in larger cities like Toronto.

I think of my constituents like Margaret Rea. She has to go to Manitoba monthly for specialized treatment. She is on her 11th year of doing this, and it has caused her grave financial problems as she is on a fixed income. The actual cost is far greater than the mileage reimbursement she receives.

Another constituent, Sandra Fillion, a former police officer from Atikokan, was referred by her specialist to a physiotherapist, but the health grant won't cover it because they do not recognize it as an OHIP facility. When she appealed, she eventually found out the travel grant wasn't hearing appeals during much of the pandemic.

Travel for autism parents and therapies are not covered, leaving those parents on the hook for that. The Beg family, who have an infant son, needed a special therapy recommended by their pediatrician as the best outcome for their son. The Northern Health Travel Grant denied it, leaving them thousands of dollars out of pocket.

This week I reintroduced my bill, Bill 46, the Northern Health Travel Grant Advisory Committee Act. When will this government act to fix the broken Northern Health Travel Grant system?

LEBANESE HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. John Fraser: November is Lebanese Heritage Month in Ontario. It recognizes the many contributions of the Lebanese community across our province. I would like to thank MPP Sattler and Minister McLeod for co-sponsoring Bill 60, the Lebanese Heritage Month Act, which I introduced and we passed into law in 2017.

Lebanese Canadians have been coming to Ontario since the 19th century. They have contributed greatly to our prosperity and to the economic, cultural and academic fabric of our province. Lebanese Heritage Month is an opportunity for Lebanese Canadians to celebrate their culture and traditions and to recognize and educate future generations about the great contributions the Lebanese community has made to our province and our country.

Every year, on November 22, the Lebanese community celebrates Lebanese Independence Day. On that day in 1943, Lebanon was declared a sovereign nation. In my riding of Ottawa South, we have a strong and deeply rooted Lebanese community. Every year, there are many celebrations of Lebanese culture in our city, especially in the summer. One of them is in Ottawa South, the Ottawa Lebanese Festival at St. Elias Cathedral. They combine the five Fs, which are faith, family, food, fun—I think I missed one—faith, family, food, fun and friends. Thank you. There we go.

It's one of my mom's must-dos every year. We went this year, and she hadn't been out to a restaurant in a long time. They treated her so well. They made her feel very special, and I want to thank them for that.

Happy Lebanese Heritage Month.

ONTARIO WINTER GAMES

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, 99, 98—the clock is ticking, and the countdown is on for the Ontario Winter Games to come to Renfrew county on the weekends of February 24 to 27 and March 3 to 6, 2022.

The air was filled with excitement Tuesday when Minister MacLeod joined local dignitaries and other invited guests to officially start the countdown to the 2022 Ontario Winter Games. Renfrew county is getting ready to welcome about 3,500 athletes, coaches and officials to what promises to be a spectacular couple of weekends. The games are for up-and-coming athletes aged 11 to 22, and will provide developmental experience to prepare them for national and international competitions.

While organizing events such as this provides a significant challenge, our folks in Renfrew county are up to it. We were also thrilled when Minister MacLeod awarded us the games. Not only will this be a tremendous sporting event, it will bring significant economic benefits to local businesses. I know that everyone is excited to showcase what we have to offer in Renfrew county, and Minister MacLeod got a taste of it a couple of weeks ago when she and her staff came to visit.

A gigantic thank you to games chair Peter Emon and games manager Cindy Burwell for their leadership, and all the numerous volunteers who have stepped forward to offer their time and commitment to make these games a truly remarkable experience for everyone involved.

HAMILTON DAY

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It was 90 years ago, during the height of the Great Depression, that the first Hamilton Day was held. It was organized to boost the spirits of local residents and to boost the local economy. By all accounts, it was a great success. Retailers of the day reported record sales. Fast-forward from 1931 to 2021, and what a great time to reintroduce Hamilton Day, as we are once again trying to rebuild from another global crisis, which is the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Saturday, November 20, is Hamilton Day, 2021, a day to celebrate all things Hamilton, just as the holiday shopping season gets into full swing. This one-day event is a fun way for all Hamiltonians to show community pride, to celebrate local, independent businesses: our small retail shops, cafés, bars, restaurants, theatres, artists, florists, fitness studios, personal services, entertainment stores and so much more. This is your opportunity to support your favourite local business or try that new restaurant or store that has just opened up.

Folks can go to the website hamiltonday.ca to get more details and share online your favourite local spots to shop, relax and eat. My riding is home to wonderful and historic BIA districts like Westdale, Ancaster and Dundas. I'm looking forward to a busy day: a croissant from Caniche bakery, browsing the books at Mixed Media and maybe the best nachos from the Collins Brewhouse.

We've all been through so much, business owners and community alike. Ninety years ago, we showed our local spots some love. It's time we do it again.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize and thank the Royal Canadian Legions in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Legions across the province of Ontario for hosting Remembrance Day ceremonies last week to honour and remember Canada's fallen veterans.

Legions are so important to our local communities. In my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, there are 15 Legions and countless volunteers who dedicate their time to supporting all who served Canada, promoting remembrance and serving our communities and country. Every year in November, Legion members distribute millions of poppies and collect donations to raise money in support of veterans and their families. Their campaign and dedication of time is so important to annual events, and it does not go unnoticed.

1030

Through the Legions, compassionate volunteers help to support seniors, raise funds for local initiatives and so much more year-round. We cannot thank you enough for all that you do. As Premier Ford said last week, our Legion members truly are salt of the earth people.

I encourage everyone to support their local Legions, take time to learn from their members and take a moment now and then to remember the brave men and women who served and sacrificed for all that we have today.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm very pleased to inform the House that today's page captain is page Felicia Pagulayan, from the riding of Brampton North, and we have with us today at Queen's Park her mother, Diane Pagulayan, and her father, Russ Pagulayan.

Also, we are joined today by the father of page Alfie Tabachnick, from the riding of Davenport, Scott Tabachnick.

Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We're delighted to have you here.

COVID-19 DEATHS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the Leader of the Opposition has a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I seek unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence for the 64 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 since we last paid tribute to the victims of the pandemic on November 5, 2021.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Horwath is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence in memory of the 64 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 since we last paid tribute

to the victims of the pandemic on November 5, 2021. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Members may take their seats.

QUESTION PERIOD

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Back in 2019, the Premier said, "I spoke to child care folks, and they can't afford to hire people because of the minimum wage." But, in fact, it's because of the Premier's low-wage policy that we can't get workers in child care, Speaker.

Without a child care deal, wages for child care workers will not increase in this province. Child care workers, like everyone else, are facing a higher-than-ever cost of living in this province, and a deal would go a long way to helping them earn the earnings that they need and deserve to build a good life in this province.

So my question to the Premier is, why does he think that child care workers should be paid the minimum as part of his low-wage policy, and is that why he's holding up the child care deal with the federal government?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond for the government, the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: On the contrary, the government is committed to getting a good deal, a fair deal for the people of this province. What we are asking members opposite to do is stand with the people of this province to extract a better, more sustainable deal, with a higher level of investment from the federal government.

We recognize that child care costs are too high for too many families in this province. It was a legacy of the former Liberal government that is unacceptable—40% above the national average.

The Premier and this government have invested every single year to build new spaces—30,000 spaces with a billion-dollar allocation—and make child care more affordable through the introduction of the Ontario Child Care Tax Credit opposed by New Democrats and Liberals in this House.

We're going to stand up for affordability. We're going to urge the federal government to invest in this province and make child care affordable for the people we serve.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier got involved and apparently that's why we can't seem to get a deal here in Ontario. He hasn't mentioned the words "child care" in this Legislature since February 18, 2020—one year and nine months ago. His low-wage policy is what is his priority. He should be negotiating a deal for all of the families who need child care in this province so that life

can be more affordable for them. We all know the cost of child care is exorbitant because of the way the Liberals handled child care when they were in office.

When child care can cost as much as a mortgage payment in this province, why won't the Premier do the right thing, get this deal in place—get a deal in place so that people will be able to afford child care and have a bit of relief from the rising cost of living in this province?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Where the member opposite and I agree is that the former Liberal government left an unacceptable and indefensible legacy of unaffordable child care that is inaccessible in virtually all regions of this province. We must do better.

It was this government and Premier who, in our first budget, introduced the Ontario Child Care Tax Credit which provides roughly \$1,500 per child in savings. Most regrettably, the Liberals and New Democrats did not think that affordable child care was important—which is regrettable that they opposed it. But Progressive Conservatives are going to continue to make the case to the federal Liberal government that the program they've offered does not get us to \$10, does not deliver a sustainable program that will ensure affordability for decades to come.

We want a good deal; we want a fair deal for the people we serve. We're asking all members to stand with Ontario, stand with families, to get a better deal from this federal Liberal government.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: BC got a child care deal on July 8, more than four months ago; Quebec, August 5; Manitoba, August 9; Saskatchewan, August 13; Alberta, this week.

There's no doubt, I think we would all agree, that fees went sky high under the Liberal government, but they've continued to go up even further under this government as we lose spaces. Meanwhile, families are left struggling, Speaker. They are waiting in anxiety as to what the future holds in terms of this very expensive program that they could get some relief on if this government did its job. Even the Conservative governments around the country in other provinces have managed to get a deal with the federal government. Why is not-for-profit, public, affordable, universal child care not a priority for this Conservative Premier?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Our priority is to get a fair share for the people of Ontario. Our priority is to stand up to the federal Liberal government, who we believe is short-changing Ontario families and parents by not providing the investment our constituents deserve.

Our message to the federal government, which contributes currently 2.5% of the child care program in this province, is that the offer on the table is insufficient. We look forward to discussing this with the feds to get a deal, to land a better deal that is fair for our families that will ensure affordability and \$10-a-day child care.

This province invests significantly in a very comprehensive child care program in addition to the all-day kindergarten program that supports early learning for four-

and five-year-olds. We want the feds to recognize our investment, work with us to get a deal that ensures affordability for all families in all regions of this province.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The people of Brampton know exactly how crowded Brampton Civic and Peel Memorial are. They're the ones that wait in pain for hours and hours on end to get the health care services they need. For years and years, this has been their experience. They're the ones that have faced years of hallway medicine with no privacy, no dignity and, in many cases, without even access to a nurse when they need one.

This Premier, just like the Liberals before him, is short-changing Brampton yet again with just 250 beds and no 24-hour emergency care services at Peel Memorial. Liberals wasted 15 years not supporting Brampton. Why is this Premier not delivering the 850 beds that city councillors have called for by upgrading Peel Memorial to a full-service hospital and building a new, third hospital that Brampton and Bramptonians desperately need?

1040

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the people of Brampton that we're standing up for them. After 15 years of being ignored under the NDP and the Liberals, they're finally getting a brand new hospital with a 24/7 emergency room.

Let me just quote the mayor of Brampton, who said recently, "Brampton got nothing for two decades—for 20 years we were ignored despite having institutionalized hallway medicine. Frankly, this should have been done 15 years ago." Under your watch and under the Liberals' watch, it was totally ignored.

"We're getting \$1 billion, the largest investment in health care in our city's history.

"This is a significant step forward, this is progress, and I don't think there is any mayor in Canada that would not be elated with a \$1-billion investment in their community."

That was quoted from Mayor Patrick Brown. Everyone in Brampton is quite happy with the new hospital, with a 24/7—

Interjections.

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

Supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, Brampton declared a health care emergency back in 2020, before COVID-19 even hit. During the pandemic, over 550 patients had to be transferred out because the hospital had become so overwhelmed. Peel Memorial's urgent care centre is already seeing far, far more patients than it was ever even built for. And as we all know, Brampton Civic, because of the Conservative government at the time, opened its doors, and the minute those doors were opened, it was overwhelmed at that point. It was over capacity because of the Conservative decisions in that initial hospital.

Look, Brampton desperately needs a new ER. They need two new ERs. They need the kinds of services that they have desperately waited for for two decades under Conservative and Liberal watches. So why is this Premier saying no? Why doesn't he change the fall economic statement and include the necessary funding for a Peel Memorial upgrade and a third Brampton hospital?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: The situation arose in Brampton because of 15 years of inactivity by the Wynne-Del Duca Liberals, propped up by the NDP. But we're not doing that. We are standing up for the people of Brampton, and we are there for them. That's why we are saying yes to a new hospital that will provide over 250 new patient beds and include a 24/7 emergency department. They've already received \$1.5 million to support planning for this emergency department, which is going to open very soon.

In addition, as part of our comprehensive keeping Ontarians safe plan, William Osler, who are operating the hospital, received more than \$17 million in funding to operate 87 net new acute medical and surgical beds to relieve surge pressures. So we are there for the people of Brampton, unlike the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals—the Del Duca-Wynne Liberals—

Interjections.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, Premier McGuinty, as well, totally ignored Brampton. We will not—

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

The final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There is no doubt that this Conservative government can't change history and can't do a redo of the failure of the last Conservative government here in Ontario. But what we can do is amend the fall economic statement and build the hospitals that Brampton needs now and that, I think, we all agree they have needed for decades. Instead of committing to untold billions and billions of dollars for highways designed to make the Premier's buddies rich, next week we could be voting on a motion—we will be voting on a motion, actually—to support the new Brampton hospitals that the good people of Brampton desperately, desperately need.

My question to the Premier is: Will he and his government support our motion, say yes to the people of Brampton and finally build the desperately needed hospitals that they need?

Hon. Doug Ford: The facts are, the opposition have said no to the largest health care investment in Brampton's history. They voted no to a historic hospital infrastructure investment in Brampton. They voted no to part with \$5.1 billion to support hospitals, creating more than 3,100 additional hospital beds, the equivalent of six large community hospitals

The opposition voted no to more than \$1 billion for Ontario's COVID vaccination campaign. They voted no to more than \$3.7 billion on Ontario's comprehensive testing strategy. And they voted no to that additional \$175 million this year for mental health and addictions services.

They're a party of no. We're a party of yes. We're moving the province forward.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. A new report from the National Bank of Canada shows that it is nearly impossible for a family in Toronto to afford a home. They must now save for an average of 28 years for a down payment and earn \$205,000 a year to make the mortgage payment. And even then, a first-time homebuyer is likely to be outbid by an investor, because investors and multiple property owners are now the highest segment of buyers in Canada's real estate market.

And what is this government's response to this housing affordability crisis? They announced in the fall economic statement that they want to study the problem. Premier, a study is not going to help people pay the rent. A study isn't going to help a family buy their first home. This government made it very clear that big speculators come first in Ontario, and homebuyers and renters go to the back of the line. Premier, what is your plan to clamp down on housing speculation and help first-time homebuyers?

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

To reply on behalf of the government, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Our government's priority is to put affordable home ownership in reach for more Ontarians. That's why, prior to the pandemic, we introduced More Homes, More Choice, our housing supply action plan—which, by the way, that member opposite did not support. What were the results of that action plan, Speaker? Well, let me tell you this. In the middle of the pandemic, even regardless of the pandemic, our housing supply action plan resulted in over 73,000 home starts in 2020 alone. That's the highest single year in the last decade. We've had a record of purpose-built rental construction starts in the province. If you go back and you use CMHC figures, we haven't seen that type of construction since 1992.

But what we do know is we're in a severe housing supply shortage. We need to continue to build upon our More Homes, More Choice plan. That's why, in the fall economic statement, we announced a housing affordability task force. We know housing affordability is out of reach for too many Ontarians and we're prepared to build upon our previous plan.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: It's good that the issue of housing supply is being raised. A new report by the OECD shows that Canada has 1.3 million homes sitting vacant right now, at a time when Canada has 235,000 people experiencing homelessness. I'll do the math for you: That is five vacant homes for every person looking for just one.

We have a housing affordability crisis. We have renters struggling to find an affordable home because rent is now \$1,800 a month for a one-bedroom apartment. If this government is so committed to improving and increasing

supply, will you do what the experts and the NDP recommend and raise revenue for affordable housing and increase housing supply by bringing in a fair vacant home tax?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, we've been very clear: The housing affordability task force will look at a wide variety of suggestions and options. In addition, the Premier and I are committed to sitting down with our municipal partners, because all three levels of government have a role in housing affordability. We've committed, with the federal government—again, I'm still waiting for that member opposite to support our call to the federal government for our fair share. We're short in the National Housing Strategy, based on our core housing needs, some \$490 million—\$490 million that our local municipal partners could use to build housing rapidly now.

Again, Speaker, we're the party to say yes. We want the federal government to give us more. Continually, the NDP keep saying no.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure, and I wish to thank the minister for coming to my riding and making important investments in our local community infrastructure and in health care infrastructure.

What we've really seen, as well, is that the pandemic has demonstrated how important it is for people and businesses to have access to reliable and high-quality Internet. What we've seen is that the Ontario Liberal government, when they were in office, did very, very little—the bare minimum—to invest in broadband capacity so that businesses could compete in the global economy efficiently and successfully.

My question to the Minister of Infrastructure, through you, Mr. Speaker, is if the minister can tell us what our government has been doing to ensure that Ontarians have access to high-speed Internet so they can get on an equal footing with the rest of the modern world.

1050

Hon. Kinga Surma: Mr. Speaker, I want the people of Ontario to know that we have a plan and funding in place to ensure that residents in every corner of the province have access to reliable, high-speed Internet. We have committed to 100% connectivity, no matter where in Ontario you live or work, by the end of 2025.

In April 2021, we passed the Building Broadband Faster Act, legislation that will help remove barriers for service providers to deploy high-speed Internet infrastructure.

Our government is investing nearly \$4 billion, which is the single largest investment in high-speed Internet made by any government in Canadian history.

Through our ICON program, our \$1.2-billion joint investment with the federal government, our reverse auction and our investment in low-earth satellite technology, no one will be left behind.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I know that the minister's investments have made a substantial difference in the lives of so many of my constituents, especially in the southern part of Niagara, throughout Pelham, Wainfleet and West Lincoln. The actions that have been taken are helping to boost productivity and ensure that life is easier for the people of Niagara West.

It seems like a no-brainer to me, but the NDP voted against the Building Broadband Faster Act. Even though they're quick to point out that we need to do more to ensure that we're investing in isolated communities, they're not willing to support the legislation that makes sure we're able to build this crucial infrastructure. They know how critical access to reliable Internet is, yet they continue to vote against legislation that aims to achieve connectivity for all.

Could the minister tell us more about what the government is doing to support communities with broadband infrastructure in the north, rural communities and across Ontario?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Mr. Speaker, can you imagine how difficult it must have been for families to go through COVID-19 without having access to high-speed Internet? Understanding that this was an existing challenge well before COVID-19, one of our first investments was in 2018, through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., which funded eight projects in northern Ontario.

In October 2019, our government announced an investment of \$30 million in the Matawa high-speed Internet project, which will benefit more than 670 homes. In January 2020, we invested \$10.9 million to support broadband infrastructure in several towns and First Nations communities across the north.

We anticipate great coverage and connections from our reverse auction which is already under way, but just to make sure that even the most remote communities are connected, we secured bandwidth capacity by investing \$109 million into Telesat's satellite project. When our government says we will connect everyone, we mean it.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is for the Premier. The residents of Kemptville, my neighbours in eastern Ontario, are furious with a rushed plan to build a 253-bed prison in their town. There was a consultation last night, Speaker, and it was quite the gong show. I understand the MPP for the area was there.

The community asked the consultation, "What are the projected costs for the waste water system, roads and other upgrades?" They heard, "Uh, we don't know yet, but we'll work with the municipality on that one."

"Were other sites considered?", the residents asked. "Could you provide us with a full list?" Crickets—no answer. "What about policing costs? What about the fact that Kemptville doesn't have an active public transit system to help families connect with incarcerated loved ones?" No answer.

Premier, are you content that the residents of Kemptville, Ontario, have been properly consulted on this plan?

And do you believe that people in Kemptville know what this prison will do to their community?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, please make your comments through the Chair.

To reply, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to reply.

I was on the Zoom call last night that the Ministry of the Solicitor General had in that community as we had the ongoing engagement on the Eastern Ontario Correctional Complex.

As the member might not know, the announcement that was made in August 2020 was for a wide variety of expansions in our correctional bundle, including a replacement of the Brockville Jail—something myself and the people of Brockville have been asking for for many, many years—and an expansion to the St. Lawrence Valley treatment centre.

The engagement in Kemptville is much, much earlier than the Solicitor General usually contends in terms of a project like this. I'm very pleased that they have started the engagement so quickly. I want to thank Mayor Nancy Peckford and their council for being so engaged as well.

As I said this week, I am committed to having another public meeting in the riding in person, as was suggested. We continue to have the engagement and we're going to—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Joel Harden: I think what we just heard was a version of what the residents of Kemptville heard last night: a lot of talking points, not a lot of answers. Not a lot of answers on how we can help people who are incarcerated remake their life, how they can be connected with their families so that they can have hope—nothing.

In fact, what this member just told us, Speaker, is that the community is excited about this project, but I would welcome any of us to go on the Internet right now and look at the red no jail signs popping up all over Kemptville, all over the community. The same folks behind that local campaign who want their MPP to actually listen to them have been unable to meet with him. He has not taken meetings with them. In fact, it got worse. This member has approached Elections Ontario to tell those local community residents that they were engaging in illegal third-party advertising. That's been his level of response to constituents raising questions about this project.

People deserve better. They deserve answers. We have to make sure that we give people rehabilitation, a hope in life, not a false sales job. That is not what a government with integrity does.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Steve Clark: Respectfully, the member noted that I was at the meeting last night. I was at the council meeting in June. I was at the first public engagement session last November. I indicated last night and also in a

letter to the minister—I wrote to the minister last week supporting Mayor Peckford's call for some of those critical questions to be answered, answers like security costs, policing costs, the funding formula and infrastructure costs.

We also feel very strongly that there is an agriculture opportunity. This was a site, as the House will remember, that the Liberal government closed to agriculture opportunities. We believe there is a significant portion of that property where the proposed correctional facility will go that could be used for agricultural opportunities, which is something the community wants.

We'll continue to work with them. We'll continue to listen to their concerns and advocate that their questions be answered.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. Under this Conservative government, climate pollution is going up, not down. Every expert, including the Auditor General, has said that the government's made-to-fail climate plan will not meet their weakened GHG reduction targets.

As we see the devastating and tragic consequences of the climate crisis in Ontario and across the country, Ontario desperately needs a real plan for real action on the climate crisis. Speaker, can the Premier explain why he failed to instruct his minister to announce anything whatsoever on what more Ontario can do to reduce climate pollution while he was attending the climate conference in Glasgow?

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

Hon. David Piccini: It is an honour to rise to answer that question. I was proud to be a part of the Canadian delegation at the COP conference where I spoke about a number of initiatives this government is taking to reduce GHG emissions, like, for example, implementing fuel additives, something the previous government could have done, but didn't. That is estimated to take over 300,000 cars off the road.

We spoke about adaptation and resiliency, a core concept in Paris. Again, we launched the climate change impact assessment, something the previous government could have done, but didn't. We also spoke about the important role transit plays in getting cars off the road and getting people to use active transportation. We're building subways. We're building GO trains, something the previous government could have done, but didn't.

Again, I was proud to contribute Ontario's voice to the international discussion on combatting climate change, and I appreciate the opportunity to answer.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaker, respectfully, if the minister had any credibility on this file, the government would cancel their plans to ramp up gas plants, which will increase climate pollution by 300%. They would cancel Highway 413, which will generate 17.4 million tonnes of

climate pollution, and the Bradford Bypass, which will pump 87 million kilograms of climate pollution into the atmosphere each and every year.

1100

These kinds of decisions will have real world consequences and will make it—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The government side will come to order. The official opposition will come to order. I apologize to the member for Guelph on behalf of the House.

Start the clock. The member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: No problem, Speaker. Sometimes the truth can be hard to hear.

These decisions have real-world consequences and will almost make it impossible for Ontario to meet our climate obligations.

Through you to the minister, I am willing to work with you to pull the Premier's head out of the concrete and cancel these plans which will significantly increase climate pollution in Ontario. Will he work with me?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to caution the member on his use of inflammatory language, and I'll recognize the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to respond.

Hon. David Piccini: Again, let's talk about the truth. Truth: Ontario is the only province in this nation on track to meet our GHG reduction targets by 2030—

Mr. John Fraser: That's because we shut down coal.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has the floor.

Hon. David Piccini: Again, I know it's hard to hear the truth that thanks to working with Algoma, thanks to the electric arc furnace, we're taking a massive step forward in our GHG reduction targets. Thanks to investing in active transportation, investing in public transit, we're taking that step forward.

And, yes, for new Canadians like my grandfather, who came over many years ago with the dream of home ownership very much a reality, for those new Canadians coming to our workforce today, we're making home ownership a reality for them—which, yes, means investing in transit. Yes, it means building highways so that we can connect people, so that they can spend less time in—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The minister will take his seat.

Interjections.

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

Please start the clock. The next question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. I frequently hear from constituents in my

riding, as I know members throughout the House hear from theirs, about their energy bills. Whether it's heating their home or powering their business, Ontarians count on affordable electricity to get by. My constituents are very happy to see that their bills have stabilized since our government was elected and that hydro rates are no longer skyrocketing as a result of the failed energy policies of the previous Liberal government.

Our Conservative government was elected by the people of Ontario because they wanted relief for their families and their businesses. To the minister: Can you tell us what you're doing to make energy more affordable here in Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member from the Ottawa Valley for the question this morning. I know that for far too long, as a critic for energy in this House—and the member was a critic for energy as well—we heard from electricity customers across the province that electricity prices were soaring, and they felt completely helpless, Mr. Speaker.

But, in 2018, we took office. We began taking steps to reduce the cost of electricity and we also started taking steps to empower customers more. We brought in the Ontario Electricity Rebate, which is reducing the price of electricity for customers out there by 17%. We provided essential support to ratepayers and business owners during the COVID-19 pandemic, up to the tune of three quarters of a billion dollars in relief, and we introduced customer choice, tiered pricing and time-of-use pricing. We've also introduced Green Button, which empowers consumers to take control of their electricity and energy bills in the palm of their hand—

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

The supplementary question?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank the minister for his answer. I am extremely pleased to hear about all the initiatives you have brought forward that will help Ontario's hard-working families and businesses.

Speaker, while the Liberals spent 15 years tearing down the energy advantage we used to enjoy in Ontario, our government has been hard at work rebuilding our energy sector to bring jobs back to this province and make life more affordable for the people.

Minister, could you share more details with the House on the Green Button standard, and tell us how it will benefit the good people of Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: Again, thanks to the member from the Ottawa Valley for a great question. Green Button is going to allow customers to save up to 18% on their bills—in the palm of their hand, on their laptop or on their home computer. They're going to take control, be able to conserve energy and save money using their smart phones. They can do it when they're on the GO train, they can do it when they're in their office, they can do it at the hockey rink with their kids—keep an eye on their electricity and natural gas bills.

Our government believes that people know what's best for their families and businesses. That's why we're requiring that local distribution companies implement Green Button. Ontarians can easily access the information they

need using apps and save 18% on their energy bills. This initiative is going to result in lower costs for people out there, when it comes to their energy bills. It's also going to create good jobs in the tech sector. It's part of Ontario's energy advantage, Mr. Speaker, and we're making sure everybody can take advantage of that energy advantage.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. Last week, seven white crosses went up in M'Chigeeng First Nation. Each cross represents a community member who has lost their life due to an overdose.

Speaker, the opioid crisis is getting worse. Communities in my riding are facing higher numbers of deaths and hospitalization due to drug overdoses. In 2018, paramedics responded to at least five calls for suspected opioid overdoses on Manitoulin. In 2019, that number grew to 20. And in 2020, it's grown by two and a half times, to 48 suspected overdoses. In 2021, the numbers are continuing to grow higher and higher.

Speaker, enough is enough. We need to act now to prevent more deaths and injuries. Community advocates have been clear on what they need, but this government has not done what is necessary. Premier, will your government recognize the severity of the opioid epidemic and declare a public emergency in this province?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that question. Mr. Speaker, our government does recognize the poly-substance overdose issues that we have in the province of Ontario. We also recognize that Indigenous communities across the province have not only been disproportionately affected by the impacts of COVID-19, but they have also experienced long-standing difficulties in accessing culturally safe mental health and addiction supports before the pandemic. And we also acknowledge that the trauma suffered by Indian residential school survivors, as well as the intergenerational trauma to their families and communities, requires a focused commitment to ensure that culturally appropriate services are there for anyone who needs them, no matter where they live in the province. That's why we recently announced \$36 million to expand access to culturally appropriate and safe mental health and addiction supports for Indigenous people in communities across the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the Premier: People in my riding are dying because we are not taking action on drug addiction and mental health. In 2020, Algoma Public Health reported 51 deaths due to overdose, 40 hospitalizations, 197 emergency department admissions. Public Health Sudbury and Districts announced 106 deaths, 61 hospitalizations and 520 emergency department admissions. These are the highest numbers ever reported in both of these districts.

Recently, Dr. Paul Hergott stepped down as president of CHAAT, Citizens Helping Addicts and Alcoholics get Treatment, in Sault Ste. Marie. In his resignation, he said, "Providers on the ground are doing the best they can with what resources they have. Agencies and providers remain grossly underfunded for what" they need in all communities.

Will the Premier commit to funding comprehensive local health initiatives to meet the needs of communities and health care providers on the ground?

1110

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Once again, thank you for the question from the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I have travelled throughout northern Ontario and visited many of those communities—especially many, many trips to Manitoulin—and had meetings with many of the Indigenous leaders to discuss the needs of those particular communities.

As part of the \$36-million investment for culturally appropriate and safe mental health and addiction supports for Indigenous communities, more than \$16 million in ongoing annual funding will be focused on cross-governmental investments in Indigenous services, supporting the implementation of our Roadmap to Wellness. This includes \$10 million in annualized funding to expand culturally safe and Indigenous-led mental health and addiction services for Indigenous people living both on- and off-reserve.

Mr. Speaker, for far too long, we know that Indigenous peoples in Ontario have been left on their own to navigate completely fragmented and disconnected mental health and addiction systems caused by years of underfunding by previous governments. It's our job, and we will improve the system and build a—

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Premier. This pandemic has been challenging for all Ontarians, but especially students.

Children aged five to 11 are just on the cusp of receiving approval from Health Canada to receive their vaccine, yet this government has no plan to vaccinate them quickly.

Daily, teachers are having to deal not only with the important job of educating our children, but also juggling COVID-19 protocols and outbreaks—like in the schools in my riding, classrooms are open one day and closed the next.

It is known that the pandemic disruption in our schools is resulting in learning gaps for our children. My riding of Scarborough–Guildwood has faced some of the worst moments in this pandemic, and our schools have suffered throughout them all.

Speaker, why did this Premier cut a half a billion dollars out of the education budget in this month's fall economic statement instead of investing in our schools? Why does

this Premier think that cuts to education are the best way for the future of—

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: That is simply not an accurate reflection of the public accounts, Speaker. The \$500-million increase that was reported in past—\$600 million, last budget; \$230 million in the fall economic statement, in fact, underscores one truth. The fall economic statement suggests we're actually on track to spend \$230 million more than we originally projected, which is already up \$600 million year over year—\$1.6 billion in COVID-19 resources, \$85 million in learning recovery and a four-time increase over the abysmal investment provided by the former Wynne Liberal government in mental health. There is no government investing more in public education.

We have a plan in place to continue to support immunization. We have one of the highest vaccine rates for youth in Canada and one of the lowest case rates for youth in this country. We're proud of our work in following the best medical advice to keep schools open and keep them safe.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, packed classrooms are the one truth. It is quite clear that this government prioritizes highways and bypasses over education, child care and the environment.

The FAO's analysis of the government's 2021 budget spending growth projections found that a 1.1% gap between the projected growth in education and what this government is planning to spend is there. What is the plan to close that gap?

Ontario's education system is strained. Parents, teachers and students are stressed and tired of the chaos.

In my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, schools are waiting for funding for the much-needed capital repairs. I recently tabled a petition asking this government to fix or replace St. Margaret's school, where students are having to receive their education in portables contaminated with mould.

Speaker, my question to this Premier is, why is his government choosing to invest in highways instead of making schools like St. Margaret's safe?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, if only the former Liberals had invested in public education when they were in office for 15 years, we wouldn't have had 600 schools close; we wouldn't have students in elementary schools not able to pass the provincial math standard; we would have had a province where we didn't inherit a \$15-billion repair backlog— indefensible. That is the legacy of the Kathleen Wynne-Del Duca Liberals.

I think the people of Ontario elected us to invest in education and to expect accountability for the investment we provide.

We are investing half a billion dollars every year to build new schools. We're investing \$1.3 billion to renew schools every single year. We're working in collaboration with the Minister of Infrastructure to improve child care access across Ontario and better schools, modern schools

with better ventilation and technology and accessibility. We're doing this every single year because we have so much work to do following the disaster of the 15 years of the former Liberal government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I'll remind members to refer to other members by their riding name or their ministerial title.

The next question?

ELECTRONIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Associate Minister of Digital Government. CBRE, a real estate group that specializes in commercial real estate and in investment, published their Tech-30 2021 report, which lists and ranks the top 30 leading tech markets in the US and Canada. Toronto led all Tech-30 markets for job growth in 2019-20. This report demonstrates that Toronto is the fastest-growing tech market in North America.

Speaker, through you, can the minister please tell the House how he is working to build a digital Ontario, making public sector services more modern, customer-focused, digital and data-driven?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill and parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I want to thank the great member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for the question. Yes, Speaker, it's true. We're building a strong foundation for a digital Ontario and working with the tech sector to make that happen. This report is a testament to our commitment to digital job growth in North America, and we will stand by Ontarians to make sure those numbers keep on rising.

Unlike the previous government, we made digital transformation a priority, starting with the creation of an Associate Ministry of Digital Government to ensure that this important work gets done.

Our government is saying yes to a digital economy and technology-enabled service delivery. For example, we unveiled the province's digital and data strategy, which has allowed us to consult with businesses, citizens and other organizations about how to set up a data authority which will be responsible for building modern data infrastructure for social and economic benefits for Ontarians.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you to the parliamentary assistant to finance for the answer and the great work he has done on this file. It's good to hear that our government is making digital transformation a priority. Leveraging the power of data to make smart decisions and deliver better services is important to this government, and that is why we all need to work together. Could the minister please explain further how our government is engaging the Ontario tech sector?

Mr. Michael Parsa: Again, thanks to my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for the question. I will gladly do so.

The ministry has started touring tech hubs across the province, the most recent in Kitchener-Waterloo. Our government remains committed to listening to industry leaders through round table discussions, and recently met with the Centre for International Governance Innovation's founder, Jim Balsillie, to learn how their global network of researchers and strategic partnerships provide policy solutions for the digital era. We're seeing first-hand how we can foster learning in the tech sector at public institutions.

The ministry also toured both the main University of Waterloo and the University of Waterloo's Stratford campuses, where we were encouraged to see digital talent being cultivated, including the Waterloo Cybersecurity and Privacy Institute. It's through collaborative efforts like these that we can continue to build a digital Ontario.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. This morning, Efficiency Canada put out its annual report on energy savings programs across the country. It reported that when it comes to saving electricity and natural gas, Ontario has fallen far behind its performance prior to the last election. Programs have been cut that would have helped homeowners cut their electricity use and cut their electricity bills. Programs to help cut their natural gas use are stuck in idle and, as you well know, the more gas people use, the higher their bills.

Why is the minister not restoring programs? Why is the minister not driving programs to help people cut their energy use, cut their energy bills and cut their carbon pollution?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks for the question. I'm really pleased for the first time since becoming the Minister of Energy to take a question from the opposition about energy issues in the House. I think it's really important to point out that back when I was the critic for energy along with my friend from the opposite side, three quarters of the questions in the House every day were about the high electricity rates or high energy costs in the province of Ontario, and you hardly get a question anymore, and it's because of the good work that we've been doing since we became the government in 2018 to start to lower costs for the people of Ontario.

1120

Mr. Speaker, as a former Minister of Economic Development, one of the things that I heard when I was first in that role was, "Why are the electricity costs so high in Ontario?" Because of the good work that we've done since 2018 to reduce electricity costs and put together a number of different programs that I'll talk about in the supplementary, including the Ontario Electricity Rebate, we are now competitive with other jurisdictions for foreign direct investment in our province, and our economy is booming.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the minister: Notwithstanding that glowing review of his own performance, people are hard pressed. You said you would cut electricity bills by 12% in the last election. You haven't done

that. You haven't taken the action necessary to deliver on your own government's climate plan.

As you're well aware, the world continues to experience catastrophic climate impacts. This week, people were literally swept to their death off roads in BC by mudslides. Yet Ontario has fallen behind on the energy-efficiency measures it needs to reduce those carbon pollution emissions, which would also reduce people's energy bills. And we all know people are hard pressed today. The minister's policies are ignoring his own government's climate plan.

Why won't the minister help people cut their energy bills, go beyond his Green Button program and help them protect all of us from the climate crisis?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thank you very much to the member opposite. I would like to thank the member for acknowledging Green Button. It's one of the programs that we just brought in last month. It's going to require all of our local distribution companies across the province to implement Green Button, which is going to allow energy consumers to take control of their own electricity and natural gas bills and save up to 18%. That's one of the great programs we brought in. The Ontario Electricity Rebate is giving most residential customers across the province a savings of 17% on their electricity bill.

I know when we were both energy critics it was real easy to stand up every day and ask a million questions of the failed energy policies of the previous Liberal government. But if we had continued on the same trajectory that Steven Del Duca and the Liberals had us on, our electricity rates would be going up 7% every year. That's completely unacceptable. We won't go down that road again—

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

The next question.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. In March 2018, the Ministry of Health mandated public health units to provide school-aged children with vision screening. This was a really important move and something I've advocated for for many years, because simply put, vision is such a huge part of our children's learning and development.

The challenge now, though, is they can get screened, but they can't go to an optometrist to get the help that they need, to get the glasses they need.

Speaker, through you, will the Premier get his government back to the table and resolve the stalemate with Ontario's optometrists?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member opposite for the question. Our government continues to be very disappointed that optometrists continue to withhold publicly funded services for youth and seniors while also declining to come back to continue negotiations. Our government has continued to fund OHIP services for seniors and youth, and there's no reason why the

optometrists can't continue to provide services while we continue to negotiate.

It was the optometrists who wrote to me as Minister of Health and asked, "That you direct the Ministry of Health to immediately commence intensive negotiations with the OAO concerning OHIP optometry fees. Further, the negotiation process must include a mediation and fact-finding process that results in a public report in the event that the parties are unable to reach an agreement." We said yes to that. We also said yes when the association asked for a mediator to be involved. We also said yes to their choice of mediator, who is a very accomplished and experienced individual.

But then, Speaker, the OAO rejected the mediator's terms and walked away from the table. It's now—

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

The supplementary question?

Mr. John Fraser: The people who are most disappointed are parents and seniors. Speaker, Ontario's vision screening program actually came out of a lot of work with Ontario's optometrists. I know this. Their Eye See ... Eye Learn program was designed to make sure that children who needed glasses would have them, despite whatever their family's income was. I know they care about their patients and I know they really care about kids.

What the government is offering optometrists is just not reasonable. Lawyers, doctors, engineers or small business owners would not accept these kinds of losses. What Ontario's children and seniors need from this government is for them to come back to the table with a fair and reasonable offer now so that they can get back to be able to live and to learn. This has gone on way too long. Speaker, will the minister commit to doing this?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The Ministry of Health and myself as minister have always been ready and willing to go back to the table with the mediator to try and resolve some of these issues that have been outstanding, with respect, since the previous agreement expired under the Liberal government in 2011.

We know that they have suffered losses. We want to negotiate with them. We want children and seniors to be able to receive the eye care that they deserve. What we are asking—and the Ontario Association of Optometrists know very well, because the mediator reaches out on a weekly basis to the Ministry of Health and to the association to invite us to come back to the table. So the association knows very well what is necessary to do in order to do that. The Ministry of Health is ready to do that. We asked the optometrists to come back to the table, because I certainly agree with you that children and seniors deserve far better.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, my question through you to the Premier: Three years ago, Joe Serianni's son Ashton was diagnosed with autism. Now at age six, Joe's family has been forced to pay out of pocket for the therapy he needs due to this government's delays, flip-flops, cuts and

lack of support for children with autism. This year alone, they have paid \$60,000 for a variety of therapies. The Seriannis have seen major improvements thanks to their intervention, but it has come at the cost of financial devastation while having to subsidize this government's inaction.

Will the Premier make good on his previous commitments, follow the recommendations of the Ontario Autism Program Advisory Panel and finally implement a needs-based funding system?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the parliamentary assistant and member for Ottawa West–Nepean.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you for raising this important question. Of course, our government is firmly committed to implementing the recommendations of the Ontario autism panel and making sure that we have a needs-based system for all of our children who have autism right across the province. That's why our government also doubled the budget for autism services in Ontario, from \$300 million to \$600 million, the largest amount spent on autism services in Ontario's history.

The new Ontario Autism Program is going to provide a range of supports beyond what was previously just offered, including applied behavioural analysis, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy and mental health supports through our new revised core clinical services program. And that is just one of the four pillars of this new Ontario Autism Program. Speaker, I'll be happy to speak further on this new plan in the—

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: What I'm hearing from my constituents who are impacted by this government's neglect of children with autism is that they simply do not trust this government. Joe said to me in an email, "The Premier is a big bully to these children. Just like a bully would take a child's lunch money, he has taken away their funding and pushed back dates."

Speaker, this government promised families like the Seriannis that the wait-list would be cleared by the end of March 2020. Instead, as we approach 2022, the wait-list has ballooned to 50,000. It's past time to stop playing politics with autism services. When will this government stop ignoring the needs of children with autism and support children like Ashton?

1130

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: The Premier's commitment to supporting children with autism has been clear. The Premier has appointed two parliamentary assistants to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services who have family members with autism, who have been involved in this fight for over 20 years. The Premier doubled the Ontario Autism Program budget from \$300 million to \$600 million. The Premier worked with the autism community, bringing together experts and those with lived experience to design a program designed by the community for the community.

Speaker, this program here in Ontario is going to be world-class. You will have core clinical services that are coming online as we speak. We will have foundational

family services already online and available—over 15,000 families already enrolled in these services—early years and entry to school and urgent response services; all of this in a new program designed by the community for the community. Our commitment is clear. We're going to continue—

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

The next question.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. In a move that is the first of its kind in our province, York regional council has voted to open up 1,400 acres of greenbelt for development. The redesignation of this protected land was opposed by York region staff, the Toronto conservation authority, environmental groups, local residents and the non-partisan Greenbelt Foundation.

The development of these parcels of land called the greenbelt fingers will have negative impacts on important water systems and reduce agricultural activity, a key driver of economic activity in York region. The minister received York region's proposal on Tuesday, so the ball is in his court now.

Speaker, through you, will the minister do the right thing and defend the greenbelt, or will the government once again cave to special interests?

Hon. Steve Clark: I don't know—I think the member, who sits right across from me, heard my answer yesterday to the same question from the official opposition. The member is right. Regional official plan 7 was just received by the ministry. As the member notes and as I indicated in the House, the ministry has 120 days to review that application. We're looking at it right now to ensure that it is a complete application and doesn't require further information from York region. We're going to take our due diligence, as we do on every regional official plan file. There is a process; we're following the process, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. John Fraser: The government has repeatedly stated its intention to protect the greenbelt. However, allowing the development would do exactly the opposite of what the government says its stated intention is. Since coming to office—the minister is saying, “We're a friend of the environment,” except they ripped up all the charging stations, they tore up a plan for climate change, they fired the Environmental Commissioner. They want to build Highway 413, spending billions of dollars, paving over thousands of hectares of agricultural land, to save people 30 seconds.

The minister knows that if he says yes to this, it is going to set a dangerous precedent. So, Speaker, through you, once again, will the minister do the right thing and say no to opening up this land, and protect our greenbelt and our environment?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of the Environment.

Hon. David Piccini: It's always an honour to get up and talk about the environment and talk about measures our government has taken. As I said to that member, Ontario is the only province in this federation on track to meet our GHG reductions.

That member mentioned coal plants. Try listening; that member mentioned it. This is the same member who last week talked about exercising humility in terms of understanding when decisions were made. In 2001, not one but two Premiers prior to when they formed the government, Lakeview committed to stop burning coal. That commitment to stop burning coal was done under a Conservative Premier in the province of Ontario. So perhaps that member could exercise the same humility he espoused just a few days ago.

This government will continue investing in transit. This government will continue expanding green space. We will take no lessons from that previous government, and we look forward to continuing the great work we're doing to protect our environment for future generations.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I rise on standing order 59. Again, thank you, colleagues, for a very good week in the House. I know colleagues are looking forward to the ceremony a little bit later on this afternoon, and I hope that all colleagues will have a good few days in their constituencies.

Next week we will begin on Monday with a ministerial statement from Minister Clark on National Housing Day in the afternoon and government notice of motion number 8.

On Tuesday the 23rd, in the morning will be government notice of motion number 8. Before question period, there will be a tribute to a former member who has passed; in the afternoon, government notice of motion number 8. In the evening, there will be two private members' bills on that day: a colleague's PMB ballot item 12 for the member of Toronto—St. Paul's and ballot item number 13 for the member from London—Fanshawe.

On Wednesday, in the morning, we will continue with the reply to the speech from the throne; in the afternoon, opposition day number 5; and in the evening, PMB ballot item 14, standing in the name of the member for University—Rosedale. And I'm told that that is to be determined at this point.

I should mention to all colleagues, on both sides of the House, that we will be discontinuing the practice, whereby if you don't have your private member's bill in time, you will lose your opportunity to debate that private member's bill. This is not to single out the member for University—Rosedale; she has done everything she was asked to do.

On the morning of November 25 will be third reading of Bill 27, Working for Workers Act, before question period. On that day, we will observe a moment of silence for Trans Day of Remembrance. In the afternoon will be third reading of Bill 27, Working for Workers Act; and in the evening, ballot item number 15, standing in the name of the member for London North Centre.

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 for second 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): The bells will now ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their vote. I will ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1208.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on the motion for second 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 48; the nays are 27.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard some noes.

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I refer it to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

PREVENTING WORKER
MISCLASSIFICATION ACT, 2021
LOI DE 2021 VISANT À EMPÊCHER
LA CLASSIFICATION ERRONÉE
DES TRAVAILLEURS

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the employer-employee relationship / Projet de loi 28, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne la relation employeur-employé.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bells will ring for 15 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I will once again ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1211 to 1226.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 28, An Act to amend the

Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the employer-employee relationship, has been held.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 26; the nays are 47.

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

Second reading negatived.

BUILD ONTARIO ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2021

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

Deferred vote on the motion for second 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): The bells will now ring for 15 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I will ask the Clerks to once again please prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1227 to 1242.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 43, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes, has taken place.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 47; the nays are 26.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard a no.

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I refer it to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1244 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROVINCIAL DAY OF SERVICE
ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA JOURNÉE
PROVINCIALE DU SERVICE

Mr. Coe moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 51, An Act to proclaim the Provincial Day of Service / Projet de loi 51, Loi proclamant la Journée provinciale du service.

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'll invite the member to briefly explain his bill if he wishes to do so.

Mr. Lorne Coe: The bill proclaims September 11 in each year as the Provincial Day of Service.

STOPPING ILLEGAL HANDGUN
SMUGGLING ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 VISANT À STOPPER
LA CONTREBANDE D'ARMES
DE POING ILLÉGALES

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to enact the Stopping Illegal Handgun Smuggling Act, 2021 / Projet de loi 52, Loi édictant la Loi de 2021 visant à stopper la contrebande d'armes de poing illégales.

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'll invite the member for Toronto–Danforth to briefly explain his bill if he chooses to do so.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The bill gives government direction to initiate a strategy of litigation against arms manufacturers in the United States based on the allegations made by the government of Mexico about the facilitation of gun smuggling by those arms manufacturers. The Ontario government would have to assess that evidence beside its ability to prevail in court and proceed with litigation.

TEDDY'S LAW
(ANTI-DECLAWING), 2021

LOI TEDDY DE 2021
CONTRE LE DÉGRIFFAGE DES CHATS

Ms. Stiles moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to amend the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019 to prohibit non-essential cat declawing / Projet de loi 53, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2019 sur les services provinciaux visant le bien-être des animaux en vue d'interdire le dégriffage non essentiel des chats.

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'll invite the member for Davenport to briefly explain her bill if she chooses to do so.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Today I am proud to reintroduce Teddy's Law, an act to prohibit non-essential cat declawing in Ontario. Declawing, known by its clinical term as partial digital amputation, removes the entire lower third

phalanx bone of a cat's paws, resulting in pain, discomfort and behavioural changes.

Both the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association and the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association have said this procedure is ethically unacceptable without comprehensive education for pet owners, and growing numbers of veterinarians refuse to perform this surgery at all. My bill would prohibit the practice in Ontario unless it's deemed medically necessary for the health of the cat by a veterinarian.

The legislation will bring Ontario in line with other provinces and jurisdictions around the world, including Saskatchewan, which just banned declawing this fall.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE
ROAD USERS ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES USAGERS DE LA ROUTE
VULNÉRABLES

Ms. Bell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of harm to vulnerable road users / Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant le Code de la route à l'égard des dommages causés aux usagers de la route vulnérables.

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'll invite the member for University–Rosedale to briefly explain her bill, if she chooses to do so.

Ms. Jessica Bell: This bill, the Protecting Vulnerable Road Users Act, 2021, amends the Highway Traffic Act and is about bringing in tougher penalties for drivers who injure or kill a pedestrian, a cyclist, a mobility device user, a roadway worker or an emergency responder when they are breaking another law that's related to the Highway Traffic Act.

PETITIONS

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm presenting a 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 have signed it, and I will give it to page Athisha for submission.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have petitions that have been signed by the folks at a recent #GreenbeltNotAsphalt rally from East Gwillimbury, Newmarket, Angus and all over Ontario, which I will read today:

“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;

“Whereas this highway was conceived in the last century, before the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act and the growth plan were enacted, and prior to global agreements to fight climate change;

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

“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.”

Of course I support this petition, will affix my signature and will send it with page Joel to the table.

1310

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I’m here to read a petition entitled “Stop the 413 GTA West Highway.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is pushing ahead with plans to build Highway 413, a redundant and wasteful 400-series highway through the greenbelt that would cost taxpayers an estimated \$10 billion or more; and

“Whereas according to a TorStar/National Observer investigation entitled ‘Friends with Benefits?’ powerful developers and land speculators with political and donor ties to the Premier and the PC Party of Ontario own thousands of acres along the proposed highway corridor and would profit from its construction, suggesting that this \$10-billion taxpayer-funded highway is about serving the private interests of the Premier’s friends and donors, and not the public interest; and

“Whereas the Ontario government’s expert panel concluded in 2017 that Highway 413 would be a waste of taxpayer money that would only save drivers 30 to 60 seconds on their commutes; and

“Whereas that expert panel identified less costly and less destructive alternatives to new highway construction, such as making better use of the underused 407, just 15 km away; and

“Whereas Highway 413 would pave over 400 acres of the greenbelt and 2,000 acres of farmland, destroy the habitats of at-risk and endangered species, and pollute rivers and streams; and

“Whereas building more highways encourages more vehicle use and increases traffic and congestion; and

“Whereas the highway would cause significant harm to historic Indigenous sites;

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

“Stop the plans for building Highway 413.”

I agree with the constituents across Ontario that have signed this, and I will add my name to theirs.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: This petition is the “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 support this petition, will add my signature and send it with page Isabella to the table.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to add another 300 names or so on a 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” on the 1st of September this year;

“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 fully agree. I'll be signing it, and it will find its way down to the desk.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to present this petition on behalf of members of my community. It reads as follows:

“Give Communities a Say on Cannabis Retail Licensing.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas cannabis is a legal, regulated product and should be available in a way that meets community needs; and

“Whereas the Ford government's licensing approach has led to communities with no retail stores at all while other neighbourhoods are seeing increasing concentrations of them at the expense of other shops and services; and

“Whereas municipalities have no authority to determine the location of cannabis retail shops in a given area or their proximity to one another; and

“Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has forced too many local businesses to be evicted or closed, further impacting the services available to local communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass” MPP Stiles's “Bill 29, the Cannabis Licence Amendment Act, to:

“—align the process for new cannabis retail licences with that used for liquor licences;

“—give municipalities and, through them, the local community, a greater say in the licensing process;

“—ensure access to legal cannabis is maintained without pushing out diverse businesses that make our local economies thrive.”

I couldn't be happier to support this petition. I'll be affixing my signature and passing it along to page Athisha to present to the Clerks.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Chris Glover: I read this petition on behalf of the Seeds of Hope Foundation, Spadina-Fort York Community Care and all of the other agencies that are helping people through this opioid epidemic. The petition is entitled “Declare the Opioid Epidemic a Public Health Emergency.

“Whereas Toronto saw an increase in deaths due to opioid overdose last year with a total of 521 fatalities in 2020;

“Whereas the situation has continued to worsen in 2021, such that the first three months of 2021 saw a 102% increase in fatal suspected ... overdose calls compared to the first three months of 2020;

“Whereas the increase in deaths due to opioid overdose has been described by the Toronto medical officer of health as ‘unprecedented’;

“Whereas we need urgent action from the provincial government to save lives;

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

“—declare the opioid overdose crisis in Ontario a public health emergency; and

“—commit funding for comprehensive, evidence-based local health and community initiatives such as harm reduction strategies, awareness programs, anti-stigma training, residential treatment, and overdose prevention services.”

I fully support this petition. I will sign it and pass it to page Isabella to take to the table.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to introduce this petition that was signed by folks at the #GreenbeltNotAsphalt rally recently. It's entitled “Stop the 413 GTA West Highway.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is pushing ahead with plans to build Highway 413, a redundant and wasteful 400-series highway through the greenbelt that would cost taxpayers an estimated \$10 billion or more; and

“Whereas according to a TorStar/National Observer investigation entitled ‘Friends with Benefits?’ powerful developers and land speculators with political and donor ties to the Premier and the PC Party of Ontario own thousands of acres along the proposed highway corridor

and would profit from its construction, suggesting that this \$10-billion taxpayer-funded highway is about serving the private interests of the Premier's friends and donors, not the public interest; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's expert panel concluded in 2017 that Highway 413 would be a waste of taxpayer money that would only save drivers 30 to 60 seconds on their commute; and

"Whereas that expert panel identified less costly and less destructive alternatives to new highway construction, such as making better use of the underused Highway 407, just 15 km away; and

"Whereas Highway 413 would pave over 400 acres of greenbelt and 2,000 acres of farmland, destroy the habitats of at-risk and endangered species, and pollute rivers and streams; and

"Whereas building more highways encourages more vehicle use and increases traffic and congestion; and

"Whereas the highway would cause significant harm to historic Indigenous sites;

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

"Stop the plans for building Highway 413."

I support this petition and will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Hayden.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition entitled "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;

"Whereas this highway was conceived in the last century, before the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act and the growth plan were enacted, and prior to global agreements to fight climate change;

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

"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 agree with this, I will affix my name to it and I will give it to page Joel to take down to the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 16, 2021, the House will now adjourn until 10:15 a.m. on Monday, November 22, 2021.

The House adjourned at 1322.

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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
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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	

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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	

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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	

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Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell