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of Ontario



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Lundi
9 décembre 2024

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Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 9 December 2024

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 9 décembre 2024

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

MPP Zee Hamid: Last month, I received a very special courier: handwritten letters by various different youths in Milton. They were members of the true crime current events podcast at the Milton Public Library. I also want to recognize Anna Cansick, the customer service coordinator of the Milton Public Library who coordinated these 39 letters. I am delivering the handwritten response tomorrow.

Speaker, the youth of Milton recognized and highlighted a lot of issues facing not just the riding of Milton, but across the province and our communities. These issues involve crime rate, neighbourhood watch, policing and reconciliation with Indigenous people. They took time to weigh in on important matters, and I'm so proud of these young community members. I read every single letter, and I'm looking forward to meeting the youth that wrote the letters.

As a parent, I know that youth can sometime feel that their political voices are lost. So it is imperative to me that we let these young people know that our government knows their concern and we hear them. Our government recognizes the importance of hearing the voices of today's youth and involving them in vital conversations. It is inspiring to connect with so many young people across my riding and across the province.

I also want to especially commend the youth of the current events podcast club. I stand here today to say, your thoughts are recognized and celebrated and your work and dedication have been honoured today at Queen's Park.

It is stepping stones such as these that lead to the way we seek and incorporate youth perspective into policy. I am grateful and proud to represent each and every single one of them.

SMALL BUSINESS

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm proud to speak about something that truly defines Ontario: small businesses. With over 444,000 Ontario small businesses, producing 22% of our provincial GDP, they are truly the backbone of

our economy, the heart of our communities and the key to the province's resilience and growth. Together, they provide jobs for over 2.9 million Ontarians. From small business family shops in towns to innovative start-ups in big cities, they drive our economy forward while creating opportunities for local families and young entrepreneurs.

But the contributions of small businesses go far beyond numbers. Every time you choose to shop locally, you're making a meaningful investment—not just in a product, Speaker, but in people.

On Saturday, I was in Cabbagetown for their Holiday in the Patch festival launch. There, I made purchases at Bill Renieris's hardware store, Patty Junior's Epicure Shop and ordered catering from Tender Trap and Sam's Food. Tomorrow, I will be having drinks and cocktails with friends and neighbours at the Hair of the Dog pub in the Church and Wellesley Village.

With the holiday season upon us, we must get ready to reconnect with family and friends during Hanukkah and Christmas. We will need groceries to prepare meals, decorations and candles for our homes, gifts and sweet offerings to children and community members.

1020

This holiday season, let's skip the big online retailers and visit a shop in our local community. Together, we will be able to support small businesses in Ontario, which are the cornerstone of every single neighbourhood.

SANTA CLAUS PARADES IN OXFORD

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It's that time of year again: When you see families coming together and all the smiles on children's faces, you know the festive season is here.

Every year, Oxford really steps it up to show off our holiday spirit. I got to see it when I had the pleasure of attending the Christmas parade in Ingersoll and the Santa Claus parades in Woodstock and Norwich. As I made my way down the parade routes, seeing all those families dressed up in red and white waiting for Santa reminded me of what makes this time of year so special—what a great way to kick off the season. I'm looking forward to seeing more of that cheer at the Innerkip parade on Saturday.

Supporting our neighbours is part of the holiday spirit. It always warms my heart to see all the people of Oxford helping those who are less fortunate every year. Whether it's volunteering at the food bank, toy drive or just being there for someone in need, those small gestures go a long way.

This past Saturday, I held my annual Cider and Cookie Social at the Woodstock Farmers' Market as well. It was

great to chat with everyone who came out as we enjoyed those delicious cookies and cider from local vendors.

I want to wish everyone in Oxford and Ontario a very merry Christmas and happy holidays. Here's to a bright, safe year ahead.

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: As this session comes to an end, I am dismayed to be spending our time looking back with such disappointment on this government and the legacy they are building here in Ontario.

Last week, the Premier announced plans to legislate against homelessness encampments, even suggesting the use of the “notwithstanding” clause. This approach raises serious concerns for anyone committed to addressing the root causes of homelessness. The Premier's past decisions have left municipalities struggling with limited resources and individuals trapped in poverty and homelessness.

Removing encampments may clear parks, but it does not solve the underlying issues. Communities across Ontario deserve real solutions, not actions that treat homelessness as a nuisance. We need immediate investment in shelter spaces, public health services and pathways to affordable, supportive housing. Addressing homelessness requires a compassionate, systemic approach, not punishment and displacement. This government must prioritize keeping people safe, housed and healthy. Leadership means addressing homelessness with urgency and dignity—focusing on solutions that create long-term stability and support.

As we move into the new year, I urge the government to take meaningful action. I look forward to seeing the details of their plan. Together, we can build an Ontario where no one is left behind—a province that values health, housing and hope over punitive measures. Let's work for a future that truly supports every member in our community.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Today, I have more great news from the riding of Essex. Lakeshore is a growing municipality in Essex county, and growing municipalities need new schools. That's why I'm pleased to inform the House that the Ministry of Education has announced that the municipality of Lakeshore will be receiving a brand new \$23-million elementary school. This new school will house 582 elementary school students and it will be built near Girard Street and Rourke Line Road.

Lakeshore joins LaSalle, Amherstburg and Kingsville to be the fourth community in the riding of Essex to receive a brand new school from the Ford government. This new school in Lakeshore is part of a \$16-billion school renewal program. Since 2018, the government has supported the development of over 300 school-related projects and child care centres, with over 100 currently under construction.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Premier and the Minister of Education for their continued support of building new schools in the riding of Essex, especially the new elementary school in Lakeshore, Ontario.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: It has been another week of mayhem on Highway 144. Highway 144 is a 300-kilometre highway that goes from Sudbury to Timmins. It is a two-lane highway with no shoulder, very few passing lanes, no cell service for most of it, one gas station at the watershed and a ton of transport trucks. Whether it be summer or winter, this highway kills and maims way too many northerners.

This government refuses to do anything about the training of commercial truck drivers or winter road maintenance in the north of this province even though weekly pictures of jackknifed trucks laying across all lanes circulate constantly on social media as well as on the news. This issue cannot be ignored anymore. Not only do people have to use this highway to get home, but some of the biggest wealth-producers in this province—nickel producers Vale, Glencore and the new gold mine with Iamgold—all need that highway to stay open.

If this is a world-class place for investment, why are families and workers in my riding putting their life at risk every time they use Highway 144? My constituents want a round table with representatives from the Ministry of Transportation, police, ambulance, tow truck operators, shipping companies and mining companies, school bus drivers and other road users. Let's put our heads together to make this highway safe. The province is responsible for this highway and needs to take action to stop the weekly deaths. This has to stop. Highway 144 kills way too many people. We want it to be safe.

HOLIDAY MESSAGES

Mr. Adil Shamji: As we approach the holidays, I want to reflect on the many first responders and health care workers who will work tirelessly through the winter break. Whether you're a porter, paramedic, nurse, physician or lab technologist, it wouldn't be possible for us to stay happy and healthy throughout the holiday season without your hard work, sacrifice and expertise. Thank you for being there for Ontario's patients, no matter the time of year.

On December 13, Ismailis in Don Valley East and around the world will celebrate Salgirah Khushiali, which this year marks the 88th birthday of His Highness the Aga Kahn. His Highness is a spiritual leader for the Ismaili Muslim community and is a beacon of hope through his work, advancing important causes like poverty eradication, disaster relief, peace and pluralism. May this important day bring health, happiness, biryani and Dandiya Raas. Salgirah Khushiali Mubarak.

As we approach the holiday break, I would like to say season's greetings and extend my heartfelt wishes for a

restful, joyous and uplifting merry Christmas in the warm company of your closest friends and family. May your days be merry and bright and your celebrations full of laughter and love.

Finally, here's to a year filled with health, happiness and success. May your journey ahead be as fulfilling as it is inspiring, and may you find purpose and peace in all that you do. Happy new year.

Happy Hanukkah. May the Festival of Lights fill your home with peace, happiness and the love of those you hold dear.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I'm excited to share news about a significant investment our government is making in public transit in my riding of Burlington. We know that affordable, reliable and accessible transportation is the backbone of strong communities.

Last month, on behalf of the Minister of Transportation, I was honoured to announce the city of Burlington will benefit from a provincial investment of more than \$5.6 million from our government. The combined investment from provincial, federal and municipal governments is nearly \$17 million and will enable the purchase of 15 new conventional, hybrid and electric buses replacing aging infrastructure and expanding Burlington's public transit capacity.

Ontarians deserve reliable public transportation to get to work, go to school, visit loved ones and maintain healthy, independent lifestyles, and this investment is a step towards that goal. Our government is ensuring that residents of Burlington can take public transit where they need to go, when they need to get there.

This announcement is part of our government's \$70-billion investment over the next decade, including \$7.3 billion through ICIP's public transit infrastructure stream to help build, improve and expand public transit in communities across the province. By supporting the expansion of local public transit systems, we are building stronger, safer, healthier and more affordable communities.

1030

HESPELER SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Ms. Jess Dixon: Saturday marked the final Santa Claus parade for my region, the Hespeler Santa Claus Parade. I'm not sure where I first came up with the idea, but I dress up as an ice queen for it, sort of a knock-off Elsa, which the kids seem to really enjoy.

The Santa Claus parade in my office, in my riding, seems to have become not so much just an office affair as a real family affair, as it's now my mother and my aunt Maureen and her friend Jeff that do most of the float-building, which bears out what I've said numerous times before, which is that I'm actually more work now to my mother than when I was an actual child. I don't know that she still thought that she would be helping me come up with costumes and floats, but here you are.

Anyway, it was very chilly—ice princess costumes aren't the best for warmth, but they look good. A really, really, really good turnout for the Hespeler parade—we gave out a thousand packages of hot chocolate to kids along the route.

But as I said, I have to give so much thanks to my mother for all her hard work, my aunt Maureen, her friend Jeff, Bonita, Caitlin, Gabe, Anna, all of the great kids that came out and volunteered—I can't remember if I said my dad.

A very merry Christmas to everybody.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Brian Riddell: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring attention to an important, concerning development in our community. Recently, the Waterloo regional police, one of the best police forces in Canada, conducted an operation that resulted in the arrest of three men and the discovery of a large illegal chop shop operation—and I'm not talking steaks here—in North Dumfries. This operation involved dismantling and trafficking of stolen vehicles and vehicle parts.

This is a stark reminder of the work that our police officers do every day to protect our communities and keep Ontario safe. The men arrested were involved in organized criminal activity, and their operation put our local residents and businesses at risk. The discovery of this chop shop also highlights the growing problem we have of vehicle theft, which affects families and businesses across our region.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Will Bouma: Just a couple of introductions here: Very quickly, I would like to introduce to the House friends of my office, Jane and Valois Ambrosino, Heather Meagher and Alyssa Yeo. Thank you for being here, and welcome to the people's House.

Also, most of us have met Charlie Lyons over the last few years, and while not the official chaplain of the legislature, Charlie has done commendable work with almost all members in this House. But Charlie is moving on, as many of us know, and I would like to introduce to the House who is going to be filling in for Charlie from now on: O'Brian Doyle.

Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: Today, I have with me my better half, my rock in life. Welcome to the House, Jodie Hogg.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I wanted to welcome to the House this morning members from the Ontario Paramedic Association, particularly the paramedics from Hamilton. I want to thank you for all you do to keep us safe. We wish you all a healthy and happy holiday season. I know you're going to be busy, but we wish you well over the holiday season.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'd like to welcome the Ontario paramedics as well, but especially my friend Roberta Scott, who is up in the gallery.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's a real honour today to introduce Mark Gould and Carol Ingleton-Gould, who are the proud parents of my fantastic legislative intern. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Vijay Thanigasalam: It's my pleasure to welcome Bill Yarn, vice-president of the Highland Creek Community Association, located in the wonderful riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park. Thank you, Bill, for all the tons and tons of donations to those who are in need and thank you for coming to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakubuski: No introduction, but as is my custom, yesterday our grandson Leopold Gianni Michele Colucci was nine years old and today our son Zachary is 46.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: I'd like to introduce Emma Bockner and Robyn Graham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: On behalf of the entire PC caucus, I'd like to welcome the Ontario Paramedic Association to Queen's Park. Joining us today are president Darryl Wilton, vice-president Katherine Hambleton and secretary-treasurer Robert Kennedy. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to join the member who just spoke to thank the Ontario Paramedic Association for being here today and for a fantastic meeting, and particularly, Darryl Wilton, who hails from the great city of Ottawa. Thanks to all of you, who will be working 24/7 shifts through the holiday period when many of us are getting a break. We appreciate you. Thank you for being here today.

Mr. Billy Pang: Good morning, Speaker. I'm delighted to welcome teachers and students from Unionville College, from my riding, for a day of learning exploration. A big thanks to Mrs. Sarah Cracknell, the grade 5 teacher who organized this visit. I hope you have a great experience. Thank you.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome Sara Restani, Dr. Lisa Kikulis, as well as Sara-Emilie Clark from KidSport Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our introduction of visitors for this morning, and it's a new record.

DENIS GRATTON

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before question period, there is a point of order. The member for Ottawa—Vanier.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: J'aimerais demander le consentement unanime pour que la Chambre observe un moment de silence afin d'honorer la mémoire de Denis Gratton, qui est décédé ce samedi. Denis était un célèbre chroniqueur et journaliste francophone pour le journal *Le Droit* pendant 32 ans. Il était également le neveu de Gisèle Lalonde.

I'll say it in English, so everybody understands. I'm seeking unanimous consent for the House to observe a

moment of silence to honour the memory of Denis Gratton, who passed away on Saturday. Denis was a famous francophone columnist and journalist for 32 years with "*le journal, Le Droit*." He was also the nephew of Gisèle Lalonde.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): M^{me} Collard is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence to honour the memory of Denis Gratton, who passed away on Saturday. 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.

1040

QUESTION PERIOD

ONTARIO PLACE

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Premier.

The more we learn about the government's Ontario Place scheme, the worse it gets—preferential treatment, no oversight, skyrocketing costs, and a minister who has shown zero accountability to the people she is supposed to serve. This scheme is set to cost the equivalent of \$400 for every household in Ontario.

Why should families from Thunder Bay to Windsor be forced to subsidize this Premier's vanity project in downtown Toronto?

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: Mr. Speaker, I've said this in the House before: Legislators have been contemplating what to do with Ontario Place since before I was born. It is this Premier and this government that are finally taking action and bringing Ontario Place back to life.

Ontario Place is under construction today. The investment and construction that is undergoing—and these are Michael Lindsay's words: "These categories of investment have always been the sorts of things that the government of Ontario would need to invest in in order to rehabilitate and bring Ontario Place back to life, regardless of what proposals ultimately prospered through the call for development process."

Mr. Speaker, even if we wanted to make Ontario Place a public park, these construction costs incurred today would have to happen. Again, these are not my words; these are the words of Michael Lindsay, CEO of Infrastructure Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Talk about out of touch, right?

The Premier's Ontario Place scheme is going to cost every household in this province \$400. That's tax money. That's not your money. That is money that Ontarians have invested to go to health care, to go to housing, to go to schools. And where is it going to go? To Austria, to build some millionaire's mansion, no doubt. And what is the

return on investment? The return on investment, by the government's own assessment, shows that we're only going to collect \$1.63 million in rent from the 100-year lease with Therme.

Enough is enough. When will the Premier start to show some true accountability for this mess and start by firing his infrastructure minister?

Hon. Kinga Surma: It's very clear, the position that the NDP is taking on this matter. In fact, what they are saying is that they would do nothing, because they have admitted that they do not understand the fact that even if you were to make Ontario Place a public park, site servicing, gas, water access, telecommunications access, shoreline repairs—all of that is necessary in order to make sure that people can go to Ontario Place.

So it's good—to the Leader of the Opposition; you will do nothing, as you will do nothing on schools and health care and subway expansion. That is your legacy. That is your message to Ontarians.

Interjections.

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

Quiet.

Once again, I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

Start the clock. The final supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Speaker, working people in Ontario are just trying to find a home, to find a doctor, to make ends meet.

The Premier has been singularly obsessed with this personal vanity project, a luxury spa that no one asked for on Toronto's waterfront. He's not thinking about the families with the fewer gifts under their trees or the parents who are working extra hours over the holidays. He's thinking of himself and Conservative insiders who are more than okay, apparently, to make an extra buck through backroom deals and preferential treatment. That is the story of this spa project. He's patting himself on the back for giving people \$200 just to take \$400 back from them for a broke Austrian spa company.

My question to the Premier is, don't Ontarians deserve better than this? My goodness.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Well, it's very clear what the members of the NDP aren't doing, and they're not reading the Auditor General's report. I have been in the House for six and a half years, and throughout this time frame, the NDP have been preaching, "Don't redevelop Ontario Place; make it a public park," and 50 acres of public ground space is included in our redevelopment plan.

Let me read contents from the AG report on page 21 in case you have the time to take a look. "The majority of the increase is related to the additional costs of adding the public realm" park space. She references this as "parks, paths, beaches, piers ... facilities, landscaping, etc."

So it's very nice that the NDP are finally clear about their position for Ontario Place: "Do nothing and certainly don't build public realm space."

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

The next question.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'll tell you what we wouldn't be doing, Speaker. We wouldn't be spending \$2.2 billion subsidizing a luxury spa in downtown Toronto.

The concerns with building infrastructure in the province do not stop with the Ontario Place mess. The Auditor General revealed that Infrastructure Ontario's P3—that's public-private partnerships—contracts are just not working. The government isn't even getting multiple bids on most projects. In fact, many times, they're only getting one bid.

As we know, with the Therme project, they had to seek out that one favourite bidder, that preferred bidder, and costs are skyrocketing as a result. The estimated costs of the new Mississauga hospital P3 contract are now \$4 billion higher than what was budgeted.

How can the Premier still have confidence in his Minister of Infrastructure with her reckless spending?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government side, come to order.

The Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: It's very clear that the NDP didn't read anything included in the AG report, but I'm happy to reference her words. "I would say Ontario is the most mature in P3 modelling compared to other provinces. I give Infrastructure Ontario and the Ontario government credit for the fact that they are evolving it." I do know that, globally, this is an issue, getting construction companies through to bid on big, huge infrastructure projects.

Let me repeat it again: The AG said, "I would say Ontario is the most mature in P3 modelling compared to other provinces."

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's because they lose the most money on those projects.

Look, the Vaughan hospital opened just three years ago, and it had a contract valued at \$1.3 billion at the time. Here, we have the estimated cost of the new Mississauga Hospital P3 contract, now estimated at over \$16 billion. That is unheard of. On a square-foot basis, the estimated cost of the Mississauga Hospital P3 contract is now more than five times what it was for the Vaughan hospital.

Does the Premier think that it is acceptable that hospital construction costs under Infrastructure Ontario and under his watch have gone up fivefold in just three years?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Again, that is not what the AG said in her report, and I would encourage the members of the NDP to sit down and read the report page for page.

We are building the Mississauga Trillium hospital. We are building a hospital in Ottawa, Ottawa Civic. We are building WAHA. We are expanding the hospital on the Queensway. Why? Because we made a commitment to the hard-working people of this province to build that infrastructure they need and that they rely on every single day.

But it's okay, Mr. Speaker. The NDP have made it very clear where they stand: "Do nothing and build nothing."

That is not acceptable for the hard-working people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Here's the thing: With this government, ballooning costs are not the exception; they are the rule.

The University of Toronto reported just last week that the cost of building subways under this government—and by the way, all of those lines that never open—is now 10 times what other jurisdictions are paying—10 times. What's really galling is that that money isn't going to the people that build the transit or build the hospitals; it's going to the private consultants that are layering on the cost. And it is Ontarians that are footing the bill. This government is out of control with reckless spending and disrespect for the taxpayer dollar.

1050

My question to the Premier is, why is this Premier leaving Ontarians waiting for critical projects while this minister's friends and insiders and consultants get to profit?

Hon. Kinga Surma: I'm very happy that she mentioned what we're doing in terms of expanding transit in the province of Ontario.

Eglinton Crosstown West tunnelling: completed. The launch shaft for the Ontario Line is under construction; that's where the tunnel-boring machines will enter the ground to construct the 15-kilometre line. Tunnelling is under way out in Scarborough—the people of Scarborough will finally have a subway line—and the Yonge North line is in procurement today.

But it's okay. The leader of the official opposition can keep talking, because what she's saying today to the people of Ontario is that she would build nothing.

ONTARIO PLACE

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

Not long before Therme signed the lease for Ontario Place, Infrastructure Ontario flagged that Therme recently had only €1 million in the bank, and they had more going out than they had coming in. This is from Infrastructure Ontario. This raises serious concerns that Therme won't be able to afford to finish the spa, much less operate it for 95 years.

Will the government stop this deal now, save every household in this province \$400, or do we need to wait for Therme to go bankrupt with a half-built spa on our hands?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: Again, I am referencing a page from the Auditor General's report, page 77: "The lease between the province of Ontario and Therme includes a financial test. The lease required Therme Group to have a net worth of \$100 million. An examination by IO of

Therme Group's 2020 audited financial statement shows that Therme had met this financial test per the lease requirements."

On October 3, IO made the lease public.

Mr. Speaker, we're very proud to be in partnership with Therme. We're very proud to be in partnership with Live Nation and we're very proud to bring a brand new science centre to Ontario Place. Why? Because now, once the construction is completed, families will finally have an Ontario Place that they can enjoy every single day, 365 days of the year.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: The Auditor General also said that the Ontario Place deal was mismanaged and driven by an opaque process with preferential treatment. Those are the Auditor General's words.

And this government keeps repeating this bizarre claim that Ontario Place was derelict, but in June 2023, their own financials showed it was very popular and it was very profitable. There is no sound business case for demolishing a valuable public asset at a cost of \$2.2 billion just to increase the profits of a foreign European spa company.

Speaker, Ontario Place was public. It was profitable. It was working. Why should Ontarians spend \$400 per household for the Premier to bulldoze it and to privatize it? Shame on you. You should resign.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I say to the member for Waterloo: I have no intentions of resigning and would ask her to make her comments through the Chair.

Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Kinga Surma: I will reference page 12 of the AG's report: "Throughout the 1970s" Ontario Place "attracted approximately three million annual visitors. By 1989, that number had fallen to 2.1 million, and then down to one million in 2005." And we know that attendance has dropped since then.

Mr. Speaker, I'm using the words of Michael Lindsay. Through the AG's own submission, the call for development was not meant to be a structured procurement. It was meant to be a real estate solicitation "to take in ideas from across the globe." We did so, creating a process that was competitive, that had non-partisan evaluation.

Ontario Place is finally under construction. Our subway transit plan from 2019—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Opposition, come to order. Minister, respond.

Hon. Kinga Surma: —is under construction. Hospitals are under construction across the province of Ontario. Why? Because it is this government that will build the services and the infrastructure that the people need and depend on—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Stop the clock. Members will please take their seats.

Start the clock. The next question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

MPP Zee Hamid: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Families across Ontario depend on safe and efficient highway networks to get home, to work and to school. Businesses across Ontario depend on their reliable transportation network to get their goods moving and to keep our economy strong.

For too long, people experienced delays, red tape and inaction under the previous Liberal government that have left the community stuck in gridlock, including my riding of Milton. Ontarians have rejected the do-nothing approach, but under our government's leadership, Ontario is building for the future again. We're making the necessary investments to help our province move, supporting economic growth and improving the quality of life for everyone.

Can the minister please explain how our government is delivering the highways and transportation infrastructure that Ontario's families and businesses need?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant and member for Hastings-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ric Bresee: My thanks to the member from Milton for the question. I certainly appreciate your continued advocacy for the new infrastructure all across Ontario.

Our government is taking action to build highways. We need to move people and goods across this province. Unlike the previous Liberal government who said no to building, we're moving forward with the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413. Through the Building Highways Faster Act, we've streamlined the processes and eliminated unnecessary red tape. These measures mean shovels in the ground faster and highways completed sooner. Our government understands that investing in infrastructure is about supporting families, businesses and all of our economic growth. We are building Ontario's future.

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

MPP Zee Hamid: Building highways and improving infrastructure is more than just asphalt and concrete. It's about leadership and action. It's about making decisions that put families first. It's about making decisions that put workers first and businesses first. For years, under the previous Liberal government, people in my community saw projects delayed and promises broken. That is why it is encouraging to see strong leadership shown by the Premier and our government. Our government is delivering for the people of Ontario by building new highways like the 413 and the Bradford Bypass. Ontario's future depends on the bold actions we're taking today to build infrastructure we need for tomorrow.

Can the minister please share how our government is showing leadership and delivering real results for the people of Ontario through our highway projects?

Mr. Ric Bresee: Thank you again to the member from Milton. Honestly, the Building Highways Faster Act is a game-changer. We've introduced 24-hour construction and are working closely with all of our municipalities to

accelerate project timelines. This approach is already being applied to the Gardiner Expressway, which is four months ahead of schedule. It's rather simple: By reducing red tape, we're cutting years off project timelines.

These measures mean more time at home for families, lower costs for businesses and improved movement of goods all across the province. Ontarians know that they can count on us to deliver real results for critical transit infrastructure projects all across the province.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question for the Premier: This government spent over \$100 million of taxpayers' money on advertising to try to convince us that things have never been better in Ontario. Meanwhile, 2024 was the worst year on record for ER closures and 2.5 million Ontarians do not have a family physician. More than half of the presenters to the finance committee have been from health care, because they cannot recruit and retain—not even in downtown Toronto. Ask Taddle Creek Family Health Team from Toronto. They were in the media studio earlier this morning.

1100

Can the Premier explain how \$100 million of partisan advertising was a better investment than the same amount in health care?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, we have to always remember that the Liberals starved the health care budget.

In contrast to the Liberal record, this government is investing a record amount of money in the public health care system. In 2018, the health care budget was \$60 billion; today it stands at \$85 billion, for a \$25-billion increase.

In addition to that, this summer 99% of all hospital emergency departments were absolutely uninterrupted.

Mr. Speaker, this government continues investing in the public health care system, including \$44 million to reduce emergency room wait times and a \$10-million fund to assist nurses in upskilling their skills in emergency department procedures so that our emergency departments can continue delivering excellent care.

Let's praise our nurses in the province of Ontario, and especially our ED nurses, for their remarkable abilities.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Last week, Addictions and Mental Health Ontario, Alliance For Healthier Communities, Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario, Indigenous primary health care teams, nurse practitioner-led clinics and seven more organizations came to Queen's Park to tell the government that our health care system is in crisis. What we heard from them stands in stark contrast to what the government ads want us to believe.

But the government can't fool the public about health care. People know that they can't access an emergency room when it is closed. They know that they can't find a

family doctor. They know that they can't get mental health services for their child when he or she needs them. They are waiting months and sometimes years for surgery, and even for diagnostic imaging, MRIs.

Does the government think that \$100 million is better spent on advertising or on getting people the health care they desperately need?

Interjections.

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

The member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, the government remains focused on delivering patient-centred and team-based care in the province of Ontario.

As we all know, according to CIHI, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, Ontario leads the country in connecting people to primary care, with approximately 90% of all residents connected to primary care.

One of the ways we are doing this is by getting internationally trained doctors into the system. I'm happy to report that an additional four internationally trained family doctors set up practice, or will be setting up practice, in Sudbury. That means that an additional 4,800 people will now have access to primary care—a family care position right in the city of Sudbury. We're talking about the Practice Ready Ontario program, which assists international doctors in getting their accreditation in the province of Ontario.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mrs. Robin Martin: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Firefighters, including the MPP from Brantford–Brant, are some of the bravest people in our communities. They face danger head-on when people are in harm's way. They protect our families, our homes and our businesses, often at great personal risk. But for years, many firefighters felt unsupported and unheard. They faced barriers to accessing the benefits and protections that they deserve. Ontarians know that this is not right.

Speaker, our government has committed to standing with those front-line heroes. We're taking action to ensure firefighters have the support they need to stay healthy and safe.

Can the minister please share how the government is showing leadership in protecting and supporting Ontario's firefighters?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development and the member for Ajax.

Ms. Patrice Barnes: Thank you to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for that question and for the amazing work you do for your community.

Firefighters are our front-line heroes. I have enjoyed working closely with Chief Burrige and Deputy Chiefs Kimbell and Pankhurst in Ajax, and I thank them and their team for the amazing work they do every day keeping us safe.

Our government continues to improve their health protections and access to benefits. First, we're reducing the duration of employment required for presumptive WSIB coverage for primary-site kidney cancer from 20 years to just 10 years—the lowest threshold in Canada. This ensures faster access to compensation and support for those who need it.

Second, we're removing the age restriction on WSIB coverage for primary-site colorectal cancer, ensuring that firefighters and fire investigators diagnosed after the age of 61 are also eligible for support. These changes include wildland firefighters and investigators, reflecting the unique risks they face on the job.

Through these potential reforms, we're improving access to WSIB benefits for all firefighters and fire investigators so we can—

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

Supplementary question?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Speaker, every worker in Ontario deserves to feel safe and protected on the job. Families count on knowing that their loved ones will come home at the end of the day. But for too long, gaps in workplace protections have left workers vulnerable. Many sectors have faced challenges like inadequate safety equipment, limited job-protected leave and weak enforcement of safety standards.

Our government is taking action to change that. We're showing leadership by advancing worker health and safety measures that prioritize fairness, accountability and protection for everyone on the job. Speaker, can the minister please share how the government is improving worker health and safety and setting new standards to protect Ontario's workforce?

Ms. Patrice Barnes: Thank you to the member for your follow-up question. Our government is working hard to ensure all workers in Ontario have the protections they deserve, with new initiatives designed to strengthen health, safety and fairness in workplaces across Ontario.

We're especially proud of introducing a 16-week, job-protected leave for adoptive and surrogate parents, ensuring they have the time to bond with their children while aligning with federal EI adoption benefit changes. We're also creating a 27-week long-term illness leave for workers facing serious medical conditions, which matches also again with federal EI sickness benefits.

We're prioritizing proper-fitting PPE. We're also cracking down on corporate negligence by implementing a minimum fine for repeat offenders under the Occupational Health and Safety Act when their violations result in death or serious injury.

Finally, we're expanding the "slow down and move over" law to apply to all work-related vehicles with flashing lights, not just emergency vehicles, to protect workers at work on the roadside.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: To the Premier: The Auditor General's report shows that under this government, the

Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program simply isn't working. This program should be matching highly skilled newcomers to Ontario employers who desperately need them. These workers could fill gaps in sectors such as health care and housing construction, but the AG found that the ministry doesn't track outcomes and the applicants face huge delays.

I heard from Tarek, a skilled trades worker, a welder, who could be building homes today, but he's stuck waiting months to hear back from the government. Premier, how proud are you of the fact that Tarek and his employers, who want to hire him, are now waiting months when he could be growing our economy today?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development and the member for Ajax.

Ms. Patrice Barnes: I want to thank the member for your question because that is a very valid question. That is why we have been advocating with our federal government, who has broken an immigration system that has been in place and revered across the world for many years. They have mismanaged and been negligent in how they deliver this amazing service that we've had.

We're now taking action to combat immigration scams and bad actors through the OINP. Our Working for Workers bill proposes legislation to crack down on fraudulent immigration representatives who exploit our newcomers. We're proposing to introduce tougher penalties to increase fines, multi-year bans and lifetime bans for violations under the act for those who misrepresent and counsel others to deceive the Ontario immigration nominee program. We believe that we have one of the best programs and we agree that we need workers to work in Ontario.

1110

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

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: The truth of the matter is that this isn't a federal problem; it's an Ontario problem. This government isn't ensuring occupations with the largest vacancies are getting applicants. I see this government is ignoring the AG's report which found that this program simply isn't working.

My constituent Mohammed is a skilled trades worker who has waited over 260 days to hear back from the nominee program. He's stuck behind other people who are also without job offers, because this government simply isn't prioritizing the people they should be.

Will the Premier fix this problem and ensure people who can work in critical industries are prioritized first?

Ms. Patrice Barnes: We know that welcoming skilled trade workers to Ontario is essential to solving our province's ongoing labour shortage. Despite more than 200,000 jobs going unfilled every day in Ontario, only one in four immigrants are working in the field that they're trained in, and that is an injustice.

We are leading the country by recognizing foreign credentials, banning Canadian work experience requirements, streamlining language testing and mandating pro-

cessing times. We need to continue to focus on our immigration system and addressing labour shortages.

Immigration is a federal issue. We have streamlined the skilled trades and health care that is needed in Ontario, and we will continue to do so.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Adil Shamji: Mr. Speaker, for the Premier: Last week, the Auditor General revealed that this government spent \$103.5 million on ads, most of which were designed to promote the governing party. That's the most expensive pat on the back our province has ever seen. I'd like to remind the Premier, Mr. Speaker, that the next time he gets the bright idea to spend \$103.5 million on self-promotional ads, he can come to me instead, because I'll do it for free.

Here's a sample of my work: Imagine a place where tens of thousands of people don't have a family doctor. Imagine a place where five local emergency departments closed just this weekend. Now, stop imagining. If you live in Huron-Bruce, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound or Perth-Wellington, you already live there.

This weekend, tens of thousands of people in rural Ontario had no family doctor and no emergency department. Mr. Speaker, why does this Premier refuse to acknowledge that his mismanagement has caused entire regions of our province to become health care dead zones?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government side, come to order.

The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Mr. Speaker, we must always remember the Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne stated that they were holding health care costs down. In contrast, this government is investing in the public health care system. For example, right in the riding of Don Valley East, 1,650 individuals can benefit from this government's investments in the expansion of the primary health care system through the Flemington Health Centre community health clinic.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals reduced the number of doctors being trained in Ontario, we increased the number of doctors being trained in Ontario. In fact, an additional number of doctors will be trained at the new medical training facilities in Vaughan, in Scarborough and across the province of Ontario. Where the Liberals failed, we will succeed.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Don Valley East will come to order, then he can place his supplementary question.

Mr. Adil Shamji: This government loves to talk about the investments it has made, but regular people don't see any results. It has become clear that this government has a value-for-money problem. The only people getting value for money are the Premier's friends.

The Ontario Place redevelopment: The Premier said it would cost \$400 million; now the cost is up to \$2.2 billion. Recklessly moving the science centre, which I disagree with, was supposed to cost \$1 billion, and now the cost is up to \$1.5 billion. A struggling Austrian spa company managed to get hundreds of millions of dollars out of this Premier to build a parking garage, and all a ministerial zoning order will cost you is a stroke of the Premier's ego.

Meanwhile, Ontarians live in a state of health care anxiety. According to the ministry's own data, not CIHI, here are the facts: Millions of people don't have a family doctor. Millions more are at risk of losing theirs. So why does the Premier spend billions of dollars for his friends when the people of Ontario would love nothing more than to see that money spent on health care?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore will come to order.

The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, let's imagine an Ontario where 300,000 jobs left the province. Imagine an Ontario where taxes went up and fees went up. Imagine an Ontario where the credit ratings were downgraded repeatedly, time after time.

Wait a sec., Mr. Speaker. You don't have to imagine it. That was the reality under the previous Liberal government. You don't have to use any imagination.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The member for Ottawa South, come to order. The member for Orléans, come to order. The member for Perth–Wellington, come to order. The member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas will come to order.

Start the clock. The Minister of Finance, I think, has a few more seconds.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the truth hurts.

But imagine an Ontario where 850,000 jobs were created since we took power in 2018. Imagine an Ontario where taxes went down and fees went down. Imagine an Ontario with two credit-rating upgrades, reducing borrowing costs. You don't have to imagine. That's the Ontario that exists today.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the Minister of Mines.

Ontario's mining sector is a cornerstone of our economy. It supports thousands of jobs, drives innovation and provides essential materials for industries across the globe. Critical minerals metals like nickel, copper and gold are in high demand for use in everything from electronics to electric vehicles. These resources are key to building a cleaner, more sustainable future.

Ontario has an opportunity to lead the way by using innovative technologies to access resources that were once thought to be out of reach. Our government's leadership will ensure we remain a global player while protecting our environment and creating jobs here at home.

Speaker, can the minister please share with this House how our government is driving innovation in Ontario's mining industry?

Hon. George Pirie: Thank you to the member from Whitby for this question.

Last year, we passed the Building More Mines Act. Earlier this year, we passed regulations associated with it. And now, through the recovery of minerals regulation, our government is introducing the first-in-Canada regulatory change that will create jobs, foster innovations and promote sustainable mining practices while maintaining the highest health, safety and environmental standards.

As you know, rare earths were discovered just west of Otter Rapids. But the possibility of recovering these rare earths is probably going to happen first by reprocessing the slag dumps in Sudbury. That's why this regulation is so important. With potentially hundreds of sites that contain copper, nickel, gold and more, we are enabling and encouraging industry to use new, innovative technologies to access previously non-viable sources of minerals and metals.

Speaker, we can meet the global demand for Ontario resources and do it through sustainable—

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Ontario has a proud history of being a leader in mining and resource development. Our province is blessed with vast natural resources, skilled workers and innovative businesses that have positioned us as a global player in the critical minerals sector.

Today, the demand for critical minerals like lithium, nickel and graphite is skyrocketing. These minerals are essential for producing batteries, electric vehicles and other technologies that support and strengthen Ontario and US manufacturing. At the same time, securing a stable and sustainable supply of these resources has become a top priority for global security. The US and other allies are looking to Ontario as a trusted partner to help meet this challenge.

1120

Speaker, can the minister please explain how Ontario is showing leadership in advancing critical mineral development to support US manufacturing and shared security needs?

Hon. George Pirie: Again, thank you to the member from Whitby for this question.

Speaker, Ontario is already a global leader in the mining and refining of gold, nickel, copper and cobalt. Our province is also home to several promising lithium and graphite development projects, among other critical mineral initiatives.

If we have the ability to expand our production by looking at alternative, responsibly sourced resources, we need to be enabling our innovative mining industry to do so. By providing this new regulatory framework for the recovery of minerals from mine wastes, we can increase our output and support more of our allies when it comes to the minerals we all depend on.

Speaker, Ontario is already a major metals and critical mineral trading partner with the US. Last year alone, total two-way trade in mined, milled, smelted and/or refined critical minerals between Ontario and the US was an astonishing \$4.4 billion.

We have what the world needs right here at home, and by identifying new sources of minerals, we can continue to be a reliable supplier to all our trading partners, including and especially the US.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Premier: Port Colborne's urgent care centre has been operating with reduced hours since July 5, 2023. Niagara Health has now announced it will be closed permanently and wants to sell the Port Colborne hospital property, which was paid for by local workers and dedicated to the Port Colborne veterans of World War II.

At the same time, this Premier's focus is on a vanity project at Ontario Place that will cost each household in the province \$400.

Why is a family in Port Colborne, who could be losing their urgent care centre, expected to pay \$400 to build a luxury spa in downtown Toronto?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the member for Essex.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Speaker, this government continues to invest and expand in approximately 50 hospital projects across the province of Ontario.

Let me give you a little bit of information about the Niagara Health expansion. This is the South Niagara site. It started in July of this year, and this is its first year of construction. This hospital is expected to be 1.3 million square feet. Its planned opening is for the year 2028, and it will be at the corner of Montrose Road and Biggar Road.

Of course, that's only one example of the many, many hospital projects that are new projects and redevelopment projects that are occurring across the province of Ontario. This government is investing in hospitals and in the hospital system, not only in the north, but in the south. We are expanding our hospital care across the province of Ontario through a multi-billion dollar, multi-year expansion because we believe in public health care.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: That's the wrong city, wrong hospital.

The Welland Hospital has been without after-hours emergency surgical services since February 27, 2023. The people of Welland need a full-service hospital to replace their aging facility, but Niagara Health requires a planning grant to get that process under way. This minister has refused to respond to our request for a planning grant or to calls from the community to restore their emergency surgical services.

Speaker, through you to the Premier: Why should a family in Welland pay \$400 for a luxury spa in downtown Toronto while emergency services are being removed from their aging local hospital?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest in emergency care across the province of Ontario. We have a \$44-million fund that is helping reduce emergency wait times across the province of Ontario—in addition to that, a \$10-million fund that's paying for a thousand nurses to upskill their emergency department skills.

Across the province of Ontario, we support emergency care—and that includes the emergency care that we provide to various ambulance services. The province of Ontario provides 50% of the funding for emergency ambulance services across Ontario. On top of that, we provide additional funding for special services, including mobile units, which are designed to assist communities in keeping people out of the emergency department.

Mr. Speaker, we're committed to continuing these services, which include services and financial support to ambulance services and emergency departments, because we believe in the public health care system.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Good morning. My question is for the Premier. Ninety-three per cent of the deeply affordable homes built in the province of Ontario were built before 1995. There is no city or town in Ontario where a full-time minimum-wage worker can afford average monthly rent. In Toronto alone, 92,965 people are on a wait-list for housing. The wait time? Fourteen years. Your government's failure to build affordable homes has resulted in nearly a quarter of a million people in this province experiencing homelessness. The number has doubled in Waterloo region just in the last three years. But instead of fixing the problem, the Premier wants to take away people's charter rights.

If the Premier outlaws encampments, can he tell us where people are supposed to go if there are no affordable homes for them to go to?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'll tell you what, the Progressive Conservatives—you know what we believe in? We believe that parks are for kids. We believe that parks are where people go to have fun, where parents bring their children, where grandparents bring their grandchildren. We believe our downtowns are centres where our small businesses can prosper. Our downtowns are where people get together, they celebrate, and on occasion sometimes we commemorate. That's what we believe our parks and our downtowns are for. We're going to double down to ensure that we can give our parks and our downtowns back to the people of the province of Ontario. We will not stop in order to get that done.

But at the same time, we're going to continue to provide the resources that are needed so that we can get more affordable homes built across the province of Ontario. We invested over \$1.2 billion—over \$1.2 billion—in the Homelessness Prevention Program and with that, I am expecting results. If our service managers can't deliver the

results that the people of the province of Ontario expect, we will take further actions to make sure that we deliver results.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Let me be clear: I understand and I hear people's frustrations about encampments. I, too, am angry that the Premier has failed to address the housing affordability crisis over the last six long years. Under this Premier's watch, rent is at an all-time high. Under this Premier's watch, the average cost of a house is up 50% in just six years, with no end in sight. And yet housing starts are down. Affordable and supportive housing? Not being built. The Premier says no to legalizing multiplexes and missing-middle housing. The Premier says no to Scotiabank's recommendations that the government build 250,000 government-assisted non-profit and co-op housing.

So, Speaker, through you to the minister: Why does the Premier say no to building homes when he holds the key to unlocking affordable homes in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's clear to me that the leader of the Green Party has literally no idea what is happening in the province of Ontario. Let me be very clear: The opposition Liberal and NDP, and obviously the Green, believe that parks are places where people with mental health and addictions should be.

You know what I think? Parks are where kids should be having fun, where parents should bring their kids to have fun. That's what a park is for. People with mental health and addictions need help. That is why we're bringing in HART hubs. That is why the minister of mental health and addictions has opened up more beds than at any other time in the province's history.

Now, on Thursday, I will be presenting a bill in cooperation with the Attorney General and the Solicitor General. We will have additional resources for our police forces and communities to deal with encampments. But let me be clear: In advance of passing that bill, we will provide, again, additional resources to provide assistance and help for people suffering from mental health and addictions in encampments, in parks and in communities across the province. And if the service managers of this province are unable to deliver the results that I expect, that we expect, then we will take different actions to ensure that we give parks and downtowns back to the hard-working people of the province of Ontario.

1130

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: My question is to the Solicitor General. Keeping children safe is one of our most important responsibilities. Every parent, every family and every community deserve to know that their loved ones are protected from harm.

The tragic story of Christopher Stephenson reminds us of what is at stake when it comes to public safety. Christopher's Law has been vital to monitoring offenders,

preventing crime and protecting vulnerable people. Why does public safety matter so much more now?

Can the Solicitor General please explain how your government enhancement of Christopher's Law will lead to better protection of our communities in Ontario?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank my friend the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Public safety is a question about leadership. Ontarians trust Premier Ford to make sure that their inherent rights to live safely in their communities are fulfilled every day. The Premier will do what it takes with legislation, with regulations, with the tone and with the reassurance to a community that nothing is more important than our public safety, and that's why we came forward with strengthening Christopher's Law just last week, to make sure that what happened to the Stephenson family will never happen to another family. Protecting the most vulnerable is our unwavering priority.

When it comes to public safety, Premier Ford and our government will prioritize it when others won't and when others can't.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: When it comes to protecting our children, we must always stay ahead of those who would do them harm. Technology is changing quickly, and criminals are finding new ways to commit offences, including online.

Christopher's Law has always been about accountability and safety. The changes made by our government demonstrate real leadership in tackling these modern challenges. By requiring offenders to report things like online identifiers, social media accounts and international travel plans, our government is sending a clear message: Ontario will not tolerate any gap in public safety when it comes to children.

Can the Solicitor General tell me why there is a video out there that the Liberal leader Bonnie Crombie says that she fears our great men and women of the Peel police who protect our children and vulnerable Ontarians?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Leadership means you have to lead. When we saw, most recently on social media, that the Ontario Liberal leader is afraid of the police—and she said it when she was mayor of Mississauga. We can't trust her to lead Ontario and to keep us safe.

Mr. Speaker, what I can tell you is public safety matters to Premier Ford and our government every day. It matters especially in the conversation at the borders now. The first trip I took was with the member for Sarnia–Lambton to see for myself our porous borders at the St. Clair River.

Premier Ford is speaking up when others won't. We will leave no stone unturned in our message, and reassuring President Trump that the border safety matters. We will continue to make the investments. We will continue to stand with our municipal police services, especially in the border communities. We will continue to keep—

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

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Last week, we learned that Ontarians will be paying \$2.2 billion for this government's luxury spa scheme at Ontario Place. That's a cost of \$400 for every single household in this province.

Families in my community want to know why they are on the hook to help a private Austrian spa company when 128,000 Londoners can't find a family doctor; when St. Joe's urgent care has to stop accepting patients at noon because the waiting room is full; and when, as of this morning, there is a seven-hours-plus wait at the LHSC emergency department.

Why are London households being forced to pay \$400 each to subsidize a private luxury spa in downtown Toronto?

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

Hon. Kinga Surma: To the hard-working people who live in London, what I would like to say is, we are spending \$50 billion to expand and build new hospitals across the province of Ontario so that wherever you live, you can access that care. Whether it's Hamilton, whether it's Niagara, whether it's Toronto, whether it's Ottawa, rest assured Ontarians will have access to health care under the Premier's leadership.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question? The member for London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier.

Last week, we learned that every family in Ontario is on the hook for \$400 to subsidize a foreign luxury spa. Instead of spending that money on health care, housing, schools, homelessness and roads in London, he's spending it on 155 acres of prime land in Toronto to give away to an Austrian spa company. Sending \$2.2 billion of our money to a struggling overseas company is ludicrous.

The Premier's neglect of what are provincial responsibilities is why London's property taxes are going up a crushing 30%. Why does every household in London have to pay \$400 to a broke Austrian spa for the Premier's elites in downtown Toronto?

Hon. Kinga Surma: What we are doing is spending \$190 billion to build this province. We are spending a record amount for transit expansion. We are building highways. We are spending \$50 billion expanding, building new hospitals across the province of Ontario. We're connecting people to broadband, particularly those that live in northern Ontario. We're spending \$170 million for water infrastructure in order to build more homes in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem speaking about our track record in the House for investing in infrastructure, but I cannot say the same—the leader of the official opposition was very clear today that if she were ever in government, she would build nothing.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

Ontarians rely on important government services every day, and ServiceOntario plays a key role in supporting families, businesses and individuals. From getting a health card or driver's licence to registering life's key events, ServiceOntario is there to help. These services are vital for accessing benefits, getting documents and settling estates.

Sadly, under the previous Liberal government, ServiceOntario was ignored, and people paid the price.

Under our government, ServiceOntario has made real progress by becoming more efficient and accessible. We've expanded online services and reduced wait times. Our government is delivering modern, responsive services that work for all Ontarians.

Can the minister please share how our government's improvements to ServiceOntario are making life easier for people all across the province?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the excellent member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for that important and timely question about the essential work that ServiceOntario does as the front face of our Ontario government.

It is true that ServiceOntario does issue, among other things, driver's licences and health cards, but as our great Minister of Finance would say, there's more. In fact, vital event registrations of all types are foundational to so many aspects of our lives, from obtaining official identification documents to accessing government benefits and programs and, indeed, as the member noted, to settling estates.

That's why I'm proud that our government has been working to modernize and expand access to ServiceOntario's services and products, making it easier than ever for people across the province to register vital events and obtain documentation that they need. We've increased online service options, reduced wait times and made it more convenient for people to connect with ServiceOntario and their communities in many different ways.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

We all know the joy and excitement that comes with welcoming a new baby into the world. It's a special time for families, but it can also bring a lot of paperwork. From registering a birth to applying for benefits, the process can sometimes feel overwhelming for new parents. That's why it is so important to make these steps as easy as possible.

Our government, through ServiceOntario, has made great progress in helping parents with these vital tasks. By cutting red tape and introducing new programs, we're making it simpler for families to focus on what matters most: their new child.

Speaker, can the minister please share more about how ServiceOntario's new birth registration programs are helping families all across Ontario?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for that supplementary question.

We all know that the birth of a child is one of life's most joyous and profound moments.

In fact, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and her husband welcomed their second child, baby Anastasia, earlier this year. And we look forward to the Minister of Long-Term Care and her husband welcoming their new baby in 2025—and in doing so, I believe that the Minister of Long-Term Care will be able to access the 5-in-1 bundle, as did the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, she informed me.

This new 5-in-1 newborn bundle that ServiceOntario has introduced is a shining example of how we are delivering on our commitment to accessibility and reducing red tape. It allows new parents to access five different administrative services and products in one streamlined online process: registering the child's birth; applying for a birth certificate; obtaining a social insurance number; accessing benefits, including the child health benefit; and education—

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have with us, in the Speaker's gallery, a former member who served the riding of Cochrane South in the 35th and 36th Parliaments, was the member for Timmins–James Bay in the 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Parliaments and the member for Timmins in the 42nd Parliament, Gilles Bisson.

Welcome back again today. It's always good to see you.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton West has a point of order.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome a friend and the founder and CEO of EOK Consults, a leading digital marketing agency in Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park, Harneet Singh.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Cambridge may have a point of order.

Mr. Brian Riddell: I just would like to announce that today is Minister McCarthy's birthday.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener Centre may have a point of order.

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I want to welcome the African Women's Alliance of Waterloo Region and the wonderful young people who are visiting us here at Queen's Park from my riding. Welcome to your House.

DEFERRED VOTES

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LA GESTION DES RESSOURCES ET LA SÉCURITÉ

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

Bill 228, An Act to enact the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2024 and to amend various Acts with respect to wildfires, resource safety and surveyors / Projet de loi 228, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 sur le stockage géologique de carbone et modifiant diverses lois concernant les incendies de végétation, la sécurité des ressources et les arpenteurs-géomètres.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

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

On November 27, 2024, Mr. Smith, Parry Sound–Muskoka, moved second reading of Bill 228, An Act to enact the Geologic Carbon Storage Act, 2024 and to amend various Acts with respect to wildfires, resource safety and surveyors.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Allsopp, Tyler	Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew
Andrew, Jill	Hamid, Zee	Rakocvic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Riddell, Brian
Babikian, Aris	Harden, Joel	Romano, Ross
Bailey, Robert	Hazell, Andrea	Sabawy, Sheref
Barnes, Patrice	Hogarth, Christine	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bell, Jessica	Hsu, Ted	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jama, Sarah	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Blais, Stephen	Jones, Trevor	Sattler, Peggy
Bouma, Will	Jordan, John	Saunderson, Brian
Bourgouin, Guy	Kanapathi, Logan	Shamji, Adil
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Karpoche, Bhutika	Shaw, Sandy
Bresee, Ric	Ke, Vincent	Skelly, Donna
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Smith, Dave
Byers, Rick	Kerzner, Michael S.	Smith, David
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Smith, Graydon
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Laura
Clark, Steve	Lumsden, Neil	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Coe, Lorne	Mamakwa, Sol	Stiles, Marit
Collard, Lucille	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Crawford, Stephen	McCarthy, Todd J.	Tabuns, Peter
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Tangri, Nina
Dixon, Jess	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dowie, Andrew	Oosterhoff, Sam	Thompson, Lisa M.
Downey, Doug	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dunlop, Jill	Parsa, Michael	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Pasma, Chandra	Wai, Daisy
Flack, Rob	Pierre, Natalie	Williams, Charmaine A.
Fraser, John	Pinsonneault, Steve	Wong-Tam, Kristyn
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Pirie, George	Yakubski, John
Gélinas, France	Quinn, Nolan	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Clancy, Aislinn Schreiner, Mike

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 92; the nays are 2.

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. I look to the minister for a committee referral.

Hon. Graydon Smith: Refer to the Standing Committee on the Interior.

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

AFFORDABLE HOME HEATING ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LE CHAUFFAGE DOMESTIQUE ABORDABLE

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

Bill 213, An Act to enact the Affordable Home Heating Act, 2024 and amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 213, Loi édictant la Loi de 2024 sur le chauffage domestique abordable et modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1153 to 1154.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On December 5, 2024, Mr. Rakocevic moved second reading of Bill 213, An Act to enact the Affordable Home Heating Act, 2024 and amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Gélinas, France	Rakocevic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harden, Joel	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Hazell, Andrea	Schreiner, Mike
Blais, Stephen	Hsu, Ted	Shamji, Adil
Bourgoquin, Guy	Jama, Sarah	Shaw, Sandy
Brady, Bobbi Ann	Karpoche, Bhutla	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Stiles, Marit
Collard, Lucille	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	McMahon, Mary-Margaret	Vanthof, John
Fraser, John	Pasma, Chandra	Wong-Tam, Kristyn

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Allsopp, Tyler	Hamid, Zee	Riddell, Brian
Babikian, Aris	Hardeman, Ernie	Romano, Ross
Bailey, Robert	Hogarth, Christine	Sabawy, Sheref
Barnes, Patrice	Jones, Trevor	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Jordan, John	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bouma, Will	Kanapathi, Logan	Sarrazin, Stéphane
Bresee, Ric	Kerzner, Michael S.	Saunderson, Brian
Byers, Rick	Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Calandra, Paul	Leardi, Anthony	Smith, Dave
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Lumsden, Neil	Smith, David
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, Graydon
Coe, Lorne	McCarthy, Todd J.	Smith, Laura
Crawford, Stephen	Mulroney, Caroline	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tangri, Nina
Dixon, Jess	Pang, Billy	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dowie, Andrew	Parsa, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Downey, Doug	Pierre, Natalie	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Dunlop, Jill	Pinsonneault, Steve	Wai, Daisy
Flack, Rob	Pirie, George	Williams, Charmaine A.
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn	Quinn, Nolan	Yakabuski, John
Grewal, Hardeep Singh	Rae, Matthew	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 30; the nays are 62.

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

Second reading negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1:00 p.m.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Trevor Jones: I'd like to welcome a team from the amazing staff at Emergency Management Ontario, including Todd, Alisha, Alyssa, Madison, Arminda, Monica, Philip, Michelle, Eric, Vino and our own deputy minister, Bernie Derible. Welcome.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'm delighted to introduce a person who loves his community of London, Ontario, somebody I've known for 40 years: Mr. Peter Ross. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT MODERNIZATION ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LA MODERNISATION DE LA GESTION DES SITUATIONS D'URGENCE

Mr. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 238, An Act to make statutory amendments respecting emergency management and authorizing enforceable directives to specified entities providing publicly-funded community and social services / Projet de loi 238, Loi visant à apporter des modifications législatives con-

cernant la gestion des situations d'urgence et autorisant la formulation de directives exécutoires aux entités publiques désignées qui fournissent des services communautaires et sociaux financés par les fonds publics.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Would the minister like to briefly explain the bill?

Hon. Trevor Jones: I would, Speaker. Thank you.

The Emergency Management Modernization Act, if passed, would enable the province, communities and key partners to work better together to keep Ontario safe, practised and prepared for any emergency by strengthening provincial emergency management coordination and giving municipalities more tools to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GREEN LIGHTS FOR COAST GUARD AUXILIARY ACT, 2024

LOI DE 2024 SUR LES FEUX VERTS POUR LA GARDE CÔTIÈRE AUXILIAIRE

Mr. Kernaghan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 239, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to green lights for coast guard auxiliary / Projet de loi 239, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les feux verts pour la Garde côtière auxiliaire.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Would the member like to briefly explain the bill?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: This bill amends subsection 62(16) of the Highway Traffic Act to provide that a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary, responding to an emergency call to a boat, may carry on or in his or her vehicle and operate a lamp that produces intermittent flashes of green light. Many Coast Guard Auxiliary members are worried about getting to the boat to respond to an emergency in time. This bill would provide them with a green light to allow them to get to the emergency as quickly as possible and rescue people who are in distress.

It's my honour to table this bill along with the MPP for St. Catharines.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ted Hsu: I have a petition from constituents in Kingston and the Islands, many of whom experienced the mass vaccination clinics during the COVID pandemic

organized by Dr. Elaine Ma. She was audited by OHIP, and a demand for repayment from OHIP was upheld by a recent Health Services Appeal and Review Board ruling.

The undersigned constituents call on the Premier and the health minister to demonstrate their commitment to Ontario's health care workers by ordering OHIP to set aside the HSARB decision and cease demanding repayment of earned billings.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my honour to read a petition entitled "Call on the Legislative Assembly to Implement Real Rent Control."

This petition is talking about the rent control legislation that Premier Ford withdrew on all new builds first occupied after November 2018. Since that time, we've seen a cost-of-living crisis escalate out of control. Average rent has increased over 50% in the last 10 years. People are finding it hard to make ends meet, to put food on the table and to look after the necessities.

This petition calls upon the Legislative Assembly to pass the Rent Stabilization Act that I was honoured to co-sponsor, and this would make sure that there is rent control that operates in between tenancies. It plugs the loophole that Liberals opened with vacancy decontrol, but it also creates a public rent registry so that tenants can find out what a former tenant paid in rent and also provides access to legal aid supports for tenants, because we're seeing right now a homelessness crisis that is not getting any better under this Conservative government.

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and deliver it with page Maadhav to the Clerks.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I have a petition asking this government to lobby the federal government to introduce comprehensive bail reforms that prioritize public safety and deter auto theft by holding offenders accountable.

We have discussed many times in this House the need for bail reform. We know that auto theft is on the rise across Ontario. It creates financial losses for the families, increased insurance premiums and a sense of insecurity for our residents in their communities.

We know and have talked many times in this House about the failure of the current bail system, which allows offenders charged with auto theft to re-offend while out on bail awaiting trial for their first offence. We need to break this cycle, and this petition is asking this government to call on the federal government to make the necessary changes to implement that.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition here that is requesting WSIB for PSWs, DSWs and youth workers. Some 25% of health care workers and workers in this category in Ontario don't have WSIB. It all depends on

your employer. If the province is your employer, you have it; if the province isn't your employer, you don't have it, but you're doing the same work. It is unjust and unfair that people don't have the same coverage. These are vulnerable workers, mostly women, and they should have WSIB coverage.

I agree with this petition, and I'm affixing my name and giving it to page Elyse.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: This petition is to call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement rent control. As we all know, rent has increased by over 50% in the past 10 years. All Ontarians definitely have the right to a safe and affordable place they can call home.

We're calling for Ontario to pass our Rent Stabilization Act to establish rent control that operates during and between tenancies. Residents will be able to see a public rent registry that leads tenants so that they can find out what former tenants actually paid in the same building and within the same unit. They'll have access to legal aid for all tenants that want to contest an illegal rent hike, and stronger enforcements and tougher penalties for landlords who do not properly maintain renters' homes.

1310

I want to say, there are many residents in St. Catharines that are already being price-gouged, not only with no rent control but also being asked for their visitors to pay parking.

We have to make this affordable across all Ontario, Madam Speaker. I am going to affix my name and agree with Jessica Jester from London, Ontario. I'm affixing my name to this petition and sending it down with page Laura.

CAREGIVERS

Mr. Ted Hsu: I have a petition entitled "Support 24/7 Caregivers." It comes from our mosque in Kingston. It recognizes the fact that even though we're debating a bill later on this afternoon about long-term care, improving long-term care, and retirement homes, there are many family caregivers who take care of their loved ones at home and really support the system, and whose work just cannot be replaced by any sort of public system.

The petition asks for support for those family caregivers through financial compensation, for example, or any other kinds of relief from the stress that they experience by caring for their loved ones.

EDUCATION FUNDING

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm proud to rise in this House and read this petition into the record. The petition is from the Elementary Teachers of Toronto, and it is delivered to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

They are calling on the government to stop the cuts and to invest in our schools so that students can get what they deserve, which is that high-quality education that every-

one expects. The government has been cutting funding for students by \$800 each. This happened during the pandemic period. Additionally, \$6 billion was cut from our schools over the next six years.

These massive cuts have resulted in larger classroom sizes and a reduction in physical and special education. We are seeing a reduction in mental health supports and less resources for students, and, of course, the languishing buildings become much more unsafe.

They've also noted that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should be reversing these cuts to our schools; fixing the inadequate education formula; ensuring that schools have the funding they need to support the students; making all the investments to provide smaller classrooms; and increasing the level of staffing to ensure that students have access to high-quality education.

I'm very proud to sign this petition and to send it to the centre table with page Donnique.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm here to speak up for folks who are on OW and ODSP. I want to thank Sally Palmer and the African Women's Alliance of Waterloo Region for their support of this petition to raise the rates of Ontario Works and ODSP.

We know more and more people are struggling to find a place to live that they can afford, and with doubling of food bank use in our region, we think it's important that people have enough money for a roof and food. CERB said a basic income was \$2,000 a month, and we're urging the government to increase these funds to ensure that we have a basic income for folks in legislated poverty.

I support this petition and I'll give it to page Macarius.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Deepak Anand: This is a petition which is actually talking about how we need more investments for the people of Ontario, but not just that we need investments. We don't want to borrow the money; we actually want to increase the revenue. So this is a petition which is talking about how critical our manufacturing sector is for economic growth, providing thousands of jobs and creating industries across the province.

The residents are saying to implement and invest in the policies that will help and increase Ontario's manufacturing sector. The reason for that is, when the manufacturing sector increases, it will increase the revenue for the province of Ontario. It will give economic financial strength to the residents of Ontario. And when the whole manufacturing sector increases, the whole province will have better progress also.

So I want to say thank you to the resident who has sent this petition, which is asking for Ontario to remain competitive in the rapidly changing global economy, fostering innovation and promoting the local supply chain. I want to say thank you to the resident for thinking of Ontario, how

we can increase the revenue of Ontario and how we can build a better stronger Ontario.

I absolutely support this petition, Madam Speaker, and would like to give it to Jonah to pass it on to the centre table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition here to support access to spine care in Ontario. Essentially, what it is—the petitioners are asking for the government to take complex spinal surgeries into consideration. Often with painful conditions like scoliosis, patients go a long time before they get a surgeon who's able to do that—if they can, because it's very complex surgeries that the government doesn't fund properly, so it's hard to get a surgeon. And then to find the operating room time to do that is very hard for these petitioners, and they'd like to see that changed.

I agree with this petition. I'm going to sign it and give it to page Kamila.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The petition I have is to address London's urgent homelessness crisis. In my city of London, shelters are over 100% capacity, while vacancy rates are around 1%. There are 2,000 people, at the time of this petition's drafting, on the city's homeless registry, and more than 300 Londoners are experiencing chronic homelessness, while 7,000 people are waiting on the affordable housing wait-list.

This petition calls upon the government to invest emergency funds to London's homelessness prevention system, including shelters, mental health care and harm reduction providers—for the wonderful work that they provide, they aren't paid nearly enough—but also to fund and build affordable and supportive housing, so that people who have lived in crisis remain housed with the supports that they require, if this government sees fit.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and deliver it with page Autumn to the Clerks.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I have a petition here. It's about the Ring of Fire. To summarize the petition, it talks about the Ring of Fire being a crucial resource for the province of Ontario. It makes reference to essential minerals such as nickel, copper and chromite, and it also makes reference to how these minerals are important to our future technologies and our future economy. It makes reference to job creation, especially in the north, and economic growth, especially in the north. And then, finally, it calls upon the Legislature of the province of Ontario to commit to making a timely and responsible development of the Ring of Fire, so that this can be benefiting to all people in Ontario.

I certainly support this petition. I will sign it and give it to this excellent page, Charlotte, and ask her to bring it to the Clerks' table.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Ted Hsu: I have a petition from my constituents in Kingston, and it is to ask the government to take action to improve accessibility for individuals in wheelchairs and other disabilities, in both new and existing buildings.

I will just note that we are far behind where we should be in terms of access for Ontarians with disabilities, given that the target year is 2025.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Aislinn Clancy: I'm bringing forward these signatures from my riding of Kitchener Centre. The people of Kitchener believe that we need not only rehab services, but also harm reduction. Safe consumption sites have saved 32,632 lives from 2016 to 2022. We know, and data shows, that these sites prevent toxic drug deaths, they prevent the spread of infectious disease and they prevent public drug use. So the people of Kitchener Centre are asking to continue this low-barrier mental health and addiction service.

I believe in this petition, as does the African Women's Alliance of Waterloo Region. I will put my signature on it and pass it to the wonderful page Jonah.

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SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm very proud to present this petition into the House. It has been submitted by Dr. Sally Palmer. The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it is to raise the social assistance rates.

We recognize that, in Ontario, individuals living on ODSP as well as OW are living in poverty. We recognize that those citizens have been left far behind. They have been frozen in time. We recognize that even during the COVID pandemic, the federal government put forward a basic income of \$2,000 per month and that that was seen as at least the minimum to support individuals during the pandemic.

Therefore, these petitioners are calling on the Legislative Assembly to double the social assistance rates for OW and ODSP.

I'm proud to send this petition back to the centre table with page Dawson.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I move that, pursuant to standing order 50 and notwithstanding any other standing order or

special order of the House relating to Bill 229, An Act to enact the Skilled Trades Week Act, 2024 and to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters;

That when Bill 229 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, upon receiving second reading, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called the same day; and

That when the order for third reading of Bill 229 is called, one hour shall be allotted to debate, with 25 minutes for members of His Majesty's government, 25 minutes for members of His Majesty's loyal opposition and 10 minutes for the independent members as a group; and

That, at the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of Bill 229 without further debate or amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Mr. Leardi has moved government notice of motion number 29.

I return to the member to start the debate.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: Before us we had Working for Workers Six, which was, obviously, the sixth in a series. The government made it quite clear from the very beginning that we would continue to introduce such legislation often. I even previously stood in this chamber and I spoke about Working for Workers Five and I said there would be a number 6 and a number 7 and a number 8 and so on and so on and so on, because this government is committed to working for workers. Through our Minister of Labour, we have been making progress every step of the way.

It's my intention for the next period, while we debate the motion, to refer to the act itself and, in addition to that, to refer to various other implementations and strategies which the government has introduced throughout the course of its government since 2018 in order to strengthen the position of workers in the province of Ontario.

I think that all 124 of the members of this chamber would agree that we have a fantastic workforce in the province of Ontario. It is a trained workforce. It is an educated workforce. It is a workforce that is skillful in all sorts of endeavours.

I can make reference to my own specific riding, which is the riding of Essex, where we are very, very fortunate to have a very diversified economy and, in addition to that, where we are very, very fortunate to have a diversified workforce that knows how to participate in that economy.

Let me provide a few examples of what I'm talking about. For example, my riding, Essex, is part of the county of Essex. The county of Essex is very much a rural riding, and it has a workforce that is designed to support industries and economic activities that are commonly developed in rural areas. Of course, when we think of that, we always think of agriculture. We have some spectacular agriculturalists in my riding. I could name families like the

Wismers and the Maillouxs and the Drouillards; these are names that, if you mentioned them in my riding, they would be famous. Everybody would know who you're talking about. The Wismers—fantastically successful agriculturalists in my riding; I could say the same of the Drouillards; I could say the same of the Maillouxs. Of course, they're supported by a fantastic workforce—a workforce which understands the industry of agriculture and understands how important it is to produce quality food and get it to market in a way that consumers want to have it.

Finally, on that topic, I want to say that I want to thank, specifically, the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Transportation before the present Minister of Transportation. I want to thank both of them because there are approximately 2,000 trucks that leave the area of Kingsville and Leamington every single week—2,000 trucks bringing produce to market along Highway 3, which is a principal highway in the county of Essex. That highway is being expanded from two lanes to four lanes, which will not only improve commuting safety in the riding of Essex, but in addition to that, it will make it easier for those 2,000 trucks to get their goods to market. That is a great support for the agricultural industry in the riding of Essex and a great support for all of the workers who are working in that industry, from the people who plant it, to the people who pick it, to the people who package it, to the people to process it. It is a wonderful industry. We're so happy to have that in the riding of Essex and we're happy to continue supporting the workers in that industry.

I spoke earlier about how we have a diversified economy in Essex; part of our diversified economy is the manufacturing industry. The manufacturing industry is very, very important to my riding, even though it's primarily a rural riding. We have great manufacturing interests in my riding, and those manufacturing interests are supported by the workers who know manufacturing like the back of their hand. Sometimes when you want to know what's going to happen in the manufacturing industry, you don't need to read Forbes. You don't need to read The Economist. All you need to do is go talk to somebody from Unifor Local 444 and say, "Hey, what's going on in the manufacturing industry?" They'll tell you. They'll say, "We have this product lined up to come in year 1 or year 2 or year 3." Or they'll tell you, "Listen, this product is being phased out. We're hoping to get another product." They can predict the ups and downs of the economy because they see the product coming in through their plant. That speaks volumes to the fantastic manufacturing workforce that we have in the province of Ontario, and I wanted to say a little bit about that.

Finally, I also want to say something about our skilled workers. I wanted to say that the province, in conjunction with all of the Working for Workers acts that we have been introducing over the course of time, that we've also been supporting our skilled trades in training individuals in the province of Ontario to provide a pipeline for skilled tradespeople in the province of Ontario. As we all know, the typical person in the skilled trades is a person who is

nearing the age of retirement—closer to retirement than they are entering. The average person getting into the skilled trades was typically 28 years old. We're trying to bring that age down. We're trying to get people into the skilled trades faster and we're trying to get people into the skilled trades at a younger age. That's why we've introduced so many programs through the Ministry of Education to make sure that we get people not only interested in the skilled trades but also into the training programs. To that end, the Ministry of Labour has supported various trades, and I want to mention three.

First, I want to mention LIUNA Local 625, which is a local in my area. I'll talk about the training centre, which is not located in my riding; it's located right next door. Even though it's not located in my riding, I know people in my riding will benefit from it, because those people who are interested in getting into the construction trades are going to be able to go to LIUNA and they are going to be able to get the training they need. That is supported by a specific grant from the government of the province of Ontario, which is permitting LIUNA Local 625 to upgrade and build their training centre, located just next door to my riding.

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I also want to mention IBEW. IBEW is the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and they are also participating in this government program to help upskill and train electricians. So many are going to be needed not only now but also in the future. IBEW has also been the recipient of government funding so that they can build a training facility and get more electricians into the skilled trades so that we can help build Ontario.

When I think about that, I think of the homes that we're going to need for the many, many people who are looking for homes and the many people who have decided to call Ontario home and will be looking to found a family and start a home in the province of Ontario.

Finally, I wanted to specifically mention one more union, and that's the carpenters and joiners' union. They too have benefited from the grants given by the province of Ontario, and they too will be building a new training centre in our area, in the greater Essex area, in order to get more carpenters into the skilled trades to build the homes that we're going to need in the province of Ontario.

I wanted to mention those programs because they're so vital to getting skilled trades in the province of Ontario and getting young people into the skilled trades. I've mentioned this before, and I'll mention it again: One of the common telephone calls that I get in my constituency office is actually from grandmothers who are seeking to get their grandchildren into the skilled trades. They call my office and they say, "How do we do this?" I'll often refer them to LIUNA or IBEW or the carpenters and joiners' unions, and I say, "Here's the number to call. Call these people, and they will get your grandson or your granddaughter into a program and train them for a great career that's going to give them a job for life, interesting work; often give them great pay with a great pension and even benefits." So that's part of what we as a government

believe in and will continue to support through the programs that we introduce.

The bill before us also made steps to expand cancer coverage for firefighters, and this was a reduction of the duration of service required for what we call presumptive coverage. Presumptive coverage means that should a firefighter contract primary-site kidney cancer and should that firefighter have 10 years of service, it will be presumed that the firefighter contracted that disease in the course of their duties. If this is passed, it will lower that to 10 years.

Previous to this legislation, the presumptive factor was 20 years. In order to be eligible for the presumption, you had to work 20 years in order to be eligible for that, but under this legislation, now it will only be 10 years of service. Of course, we hope that nobody will contract this terrible cancer, but in the event that they do, they will be benefiting from this presumption.

Also, in this piece of legislation, they created a new parental leave for parents through adoption and surrogacy. That will give them a 16-week job protection period, and I think that is an improvement over what it was in the past.

Also included in this legislation is a new 27-week long-term-illness leave for employees unable to work due to serious medical conditions. These would be defined by a medical practitioner. Here are a couple of examples of what might be meant by that: Cancer would be a serious medical condition, multiple sclerosis would be a serious medical condition and Crohn's disease would be a serious medical condition. If this legislation passes, that would mean that this would be one of the longest provincial leaves that are eligible for workers in all of Canada, and it will ensure that workers who have one of these serious medical conditions, or perhaps a different serious medical condition, will be able to take the time they need away from their jobs in order to recover, concentrate on their health, without the risk or fear of losing their job.

We're also taking steps to make the trades more welcoming to women and that is a step that I think is fairly important. We're going to make sure that, if this legislation passes, if women are seeking to enter the trades and they need personal protection equipment—which everybody does when you're in a trade—that personal protection equipment be made for all persons of all body types. That might seem, on its face, not to be a great leap into the future, but as a matter of fact, it is an important step because that is sometimes something which has been unwelcoming in the past. We want to change that and we want to make it instead welcoming. We'll say the same thing about washroom cleaning records, which will be benefiting everybody. That is a step forward as well.

We're also cracking down on bad actors and people that harm workers. We're going to have minimum fines for people who are convicted of repeat offences under the Occupational Health and Safety Act within a two-year period. This will be a factor or a consideration which will take into account serious injury—a serious injury of one worker or a serious injury of more than one worker. It will also take into account those incidents which might result

in death. If this legislation passes, one of the considerations which will be imposed will be a mandatory minimum fine of \$500,000 for a corporation or individual convicted of repeat offences.

You have heard me, Madam Speaker, several times in this Legislature make reference to the enforcement provisions in various pieces of legislation. I tend to concentrate on that because we like to call this the teeth in the legislation. People often say, "That's nice to have that in the legislation, but how are you going to enforce it? How are you going to make it work?" Of course, that's through the teeth; that's through the enforcement provisions of the legislation. If this legislation is passed, it will introduce a new minimum fine of \$500,000 for a corporation that is convicted of repeat offences under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

So those are some general comments about what the legislation does, and also some general comments about some initiatives that have been introduced by the government of Ontario. It is, if I may say so, my intention to continue supporting these initiatives and, I hope, other initiatives that will be introduced by the government of Ontario.

I don't anticipate that Working for Workers Six will be the last Working for Workers act that this government will introduce. I'm looking forward to Working for Workers number 7 and number 8 and number 9, and so on and so on and so on, because as I have said before, and as others in the government party have already said before, we will never stop working for workers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to speak in this House—today, on the time allocation motion basically rushing Working for Workers Six through the House. I don't want to leave any misunderstanding: We support this bill, but we do not support time allocation, mainly because it is removing the committee process from the legislation.

So while the government claims that they know everything that needs to be known about workers, eliminating committee kind of—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, but they don't want to listen to those same workers. Again, we are in favour of, by far, most of the changes made in this bill.

Miss Monique Taylor: Modest changes.

Mr. John Vanthof: Modest changes.

In our view, this is Working for Workers Eight, because Bill 124 and Bill 28 also concern workers and they were very, very, very anti-worker. They don't like to mention Bill 124—wasn't that one struck down in court? Didn't that one cost billions of dollars when they had to repay to workers the wages they basically tried to—I don't know if "steal" is parliamentary; if it isn't, that they unrightfully took from workers.

They don't mention that; they don't even lift their heads. I don't know whether that's Working for Workers 1 or 2 or 4, but there's actually eight Working for Workers bills. The other one was, I believe, when education workers

went on strike and they tried to limit their ability to strike—again, unconstitutionally. So it's easy to understand why we would be a bit reluctant whenever they propose legislation to not have committee to actually listen so we can hear what workers actually are saying about the bill, and not just workers that they contact. Because they also rush these. We don't have any prior time to actually look at these bills to make a broad range of consultation ourselves on these particular issues. That's why we support the bill but don't support the way the government is doing it, specifically the committee.

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I listened intently to the member from Essex. I actually like the Legislature; I like listening to people's input. I believe people's input is important, and I believe differing opinions are important. That's how this system is supposed to work. So that's why I disagree that this is Working for Workers Six. The member from Essex says it's six; I think it's Working for Workers Eight—so, six were okay, and two massive failures.

He talked about transportation. I would fully agree that people driving trucks are workers, and they should have the safest conditions possible, and so should the people who share the roads with those trucks. He used an example that on Highway 3, I believe, there were 2,000 trucks a week from one—and he could correct me, but I believe it was from one facility there were 2,000 trucks a week. That's a lot. He was commending the government for taking steps to multi-lane I believe it's Highway 3—great. I would like to put on the record that on Highway 11, north of North Bay, which is where it becomes two-lane, there are 1,800 in the trucks a day, driven by workers and surrounded by other workers trying to get to their jobs, surrounded by families.

There don't seem to be the same protections provided to those workers, to the people driving the trucks, who are great truck drivers. It's not an easy job, driving trucks. It isn't, and specifically in our part of the world, where there are no shoulders. If you don't know this and you pull your truck over to the shoulder, you're not getting back out. You're stuck. There are no rest areas—very few. There is a place; we call it the Field cut-off. It's where Highway 64 and Highway 11 butt. There has been a rest area promised for that corner almost, I think, as long as I've been here. And it's needed, because there is no place for trucks to stop—no place at all. Shouldn't that be a priority for Working for Workers? That's what's frustrating, Speaker, that there are so many things should be done, could be done, in the cases of the rest areas that are promised to be done and just aren't.

Why I keep focusing for us—and every time someone gives me the opportunity to speak, I'm going to talk about Highway 11 and its impact on the workers of the country. Because Highway 11 is the Trans-Canada Highway—11 to 17. When they're stopped—and they're stopped multiple times, and I'm not even talking about the people who lose their lives on 11 and 17 because of the risks involved. That's a whole different issue. I'm talking about the millions and millions and millions of dollars that are lost

by Ontario and lost by other provinces each time the commerce of the country is stopped. Because, quite frankly, Ontario isn't living up to its obligations protecting workers across this country regarding that artery—even on incredibly simple things.

I've got a question for the House: Does everyone here check 511 before they go for a trip?

Interjection: I did.

Mr. John Vanthof: We do in northern Ontario. But you know what? It happens very often. And I've got to mention his name in the House: Shawn Poirier. He's a trucker. He actually ran against me once—great guy. I don't hold that against him. He had issues to bring to the table, and he brought them. He continues to bring them. And he brought this to my attention again: We all check 511, but you know what? Sometimes, in northern Ontario, they don't update it. So you can check 511 and it will say, "road's clear." But you check Facebook, and "road's closed."

Imagine a place where 511 was accurate. We hear all these ads about how great Ontario is and how you should be able to imagine it. You wouldn't need to imagine it if it was actually happening. That's the problem: The basic, basic stuff shouldn't be beyond the capability of the government to have 511. So you put in 511—I have it on my, what is it? It's not called Twitter anymore. It's X. And it must be other places too; X is pretty volatile these days. But you still don't know if it's accurate. So what is that? And that's the same for workers, for people on those trucks.

I'm going to be really—I have to be careful with—no, I don't have to be careful with this issue. There are people who are driving those trucks, some of them who shouldn't be, because somehow they get licensed without the proper training. And some of them aren't licensed in Ontario. I always hear, "Well, this is a federal problem." But many of them are, without the proper training. That's not only dangerous for the drivers; that's dangerous for them. Because, regardless of who you are or where you come from, everyone in this province, in this country, in this world, wants to come home to their family. And it's incumbent on the government to ensure that, when you're licensed in Ontario, you are actually capable of driving whatever you're licensed for in this province. That's incumbent on the government.

I'll give you a little bit of a personal story. I like telling personal stories. Sometimes it doesn't put me in a very good light. I'll be 62 in a while. I got my driver's licence when I was 16, in the little town of Englehart. Drivers' licences were different back then. I had my driver's licence, I think, for two years before I saw a stoplight. I am sure that I wasn't safe to drive on the 400-series highways until I was about 35 years old, because I had never experienced it, nor did I claim to be. Because of my job, I didn't have to drive. And then, all of a sudden, I got involved in politics, and all of a sudden, I find myself driving 100,000 kilometres a year.

I knew I wasn't. I spent a lot of hours driving tractors, but I didn't spend a lot of hours on the highway. But we

have now people who are on the highways, and I think specifically it's a specific problem on the Trans-Canada two-lane. Anyone who has driven the Trans-Canada two-lane has experienced this: A truck will pass another truck, but you're coming the other way. They act like it's a four-lane. It's not.

1350

And this is not an uncommon occurrence, that you get pushed off the road. That should never—you just shouldn't be able to do that. That's an enforcement issue, and the OPP and whoever else and the MTO are doing what they can. I'm not criticizing them. But they don't understand the rules of the road in northern Ontario. They just don't, and that's a licensing issue. That is a licensing issue.

We've put forward many bills to try and fix that. The member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay just put forward another one regarding getting trucking simulators, perhaps, to somehow give people some experience on what it's like to drive in northern Ontario. Because, believe me, driving in northern Ontario for a lot of people is like me on the 400 when I was 18. "Oh, my God, what foreign country is this?" It is. Many parts, if you're driving in northern Ontario, there's no cellphone. There's a lot of things that aren't—that all has to do with Working for Workers. No, it does, because those are all things that we can change.

We don't even need to be doing that in this House. I believe a government that—remember they used to be "for the people?" I believe a government "for the people" should be able to fix 511—that when you look at 511 in northern Ontario, it's actually accurate; it's not a day old. That shouldn't be beyond the capabilities.

Another one: Enhanced 911—great. There are big parts of this province that don't have any 911, and now that they're upgrading the towers from 3G to 4G, we're actually losing coverage of cellphones instead of gaining. And it's so frustrating. It's so frustrating.

Some of you go, "Well, he's not talking about Working for Workers." I'm just following the member from Essex. He started about trucks and started about agriculture. I haven't even gotten to agriculture yet. I listen very intently to what other people speak. I go where they go—no; sometimes I don't go where they go, but I listen to where they go.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Careful where you go.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, careful where I go. Sometimes I don't know where I'm going either. I don't know if you've noticed this.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: At least you're over here.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, yes, I'm not going over there; at least not while they're there.

But getting back, my colleague from London West brought forward that this Working for Workers—maybe that will be in seven: paid sick days. Paid sick days are pretty important. Maybe that will be in seven. Maybe it'll be in eight. Who knows?

I need to repeat: We are not opposed to this bill. This bill could have gone through naturally. They chose not to.

That's fine. The only thing that we're really, really concerned about is that they chose, once again, to omit committee.

For those who have been here long enough, committee used to play a much more important role than it does today. Actually, the idea of committee is, people bring things forward to committee that, quite frankly, the government missed, maybe we missed, maybe everybody missed. And you go, "Ah, do you know what? That's something that needs to be fixed." But that's not happening here, because it's not being given the chance to happen.

The government is going to say, "Oh, we need to rush this through, because we're running out of time." Yes, okay, you're running out of time, but you started five weeks late, right? We're not really running out of time; it's just how the government chooses to manage their time. And that's up to the government, completely up to the government.

We're talking about workers and where we need to look for workers, at workers, because let's face it, without quality, qualified people doing their jobs, society will fail. We're seeing, I'd say, some cracks in our society that we haven't, in my lifetime, actually seen. Homeless encampments are something that I never really thought that I would see in my lifetime. It's happened, right? We all remember these really old songs, "Trailers for sale or rent," right? King of the Road; that was the Depression. I thought we were past that as a society. I thought we were. But it doesn't look like we are.

Do you know what? Some of those people in those encampments are workers. A lot more could be workers if they had the supports, but many of them are. If you think about that, then maybe Working for Workers needs to be a bit more aggressive. Maybe we actually need to listen to those people in committees. Maybe a government would be better if it didn't think it had all the answers and actually listened to other people. Maybe a government would be better off actually looking for answers themselves instead of trying to convince everyone that they had all the answers. That's a big one.

When there have been discussions—and again, maybe the government should spend some time and some advertising dollars explaining changes they're making for workers as opposed to trying to convince us how great everything is. There's a difference between legitimate government advertising and, basically, self-advertisement.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: The member from Ottawa—

Mr. John Fraser: South

Mr. John Vanthof:—South is agreeing with me. Let's just put it on the record, Speaker, that the people who actually changed the advertising rules so that the current government can do that was the previous Liberal government. If they hadn't changed the rules, then the current government wouldn't be able to abuse them without changing them themselves.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Obviously, the member from Ottawa South doesn't agree because he's heckling me—no,

"voraciously" is a big word. He's really heckling me, but it's the truth. I remember making a similar speech when the past Liberal government changed the rules. I remember because they were angry because there was some kind of—I can't remember who said it in the House, like, "The Auditor General, they're being so particular. We put a red apple in the ad and they call it partisan."

They changed the rules so that we have what we currently have: a \$100 million of ads with, "Imagine how great it would be. Oh, you live here." Imagine if we lived in a province where we actually cared enough about people to make sure they had a place to live so they didn't have to live in a tent. Imagine that. Imagine you're a company looking at a place to put your company and you see that the government actually cares enough about people that they make sure they do everything so that they don't have to live in tents. Imagine. And then you wouldn't have to put ads. Imagine.

I drive home every week. I see all these "It's part of our \$30-billion project to build this. It's part of our \$30 billion, part of our"—the government is great at talking about what they're going to build, yet we are still waiting for a rest stop for trucks on Highway 11 and Highway 64. I don't even see a sign. Maybe after the speech tomorrow, we'll have a sign.

1400

Miss Monique Taylor: "Future home of—

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. "Future home of the rest stop we promised 20 years ago."

I may not get the chance to do this later, so I'm going to, and I don't know what—I only know from what I've heard in the news, what the Premier said, about homeless encampments. I heard what the Minister of Municipal Affairs said this morning.

None of us like what's happening in our parks, what's happening in our downtowns. It's happening in northern Ontario too.

At the Christmas parade in Sturgeon Falls on Friday, I was behind a float of a group of people who were trying to help—because there are encampments in Sturgeon Falls. I don't have the lady's name in front of me; otherwise, I would quote—I wasn't planning on speaking on this today. She said, "The one thing, John, is, we can't just move these encampments, because where are these people going to go?"

Clean out the encampments and expect people in your backyard, folks; expect people in your empty shed; expect people in your cottage—seriously. You can't just sweep them under the rug like dust bunnies.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Where? That is the question.

It's like safe consumption and treatment sites. I'm going to go way out on a limb, and I might not be House leader tomorrow for saying this, but honestly, nobody wants one next to their house. But without a safe drug consumption and treatment site, everywhere is a drug consumption site—everywhere.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Unsupervised.

Mr. John Vanthof: Unsupervised.

The HART hub things might be great; I don't know. I don't pretend to be an expert. And I think everybody would agree that I'm not an expert on a lot of things.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, and that's the great thing—we just pretend to be discussing things.

A HART hub 200 miles away means nothing to someone who's in crisis right now. It means just as much to them as the speeches that we hear here on a daily basis.

So if the government is serious about tackling encampments, which it should be—which we should be, which we are—let's talk about how to house those people; how to house them in the short term, in the medium term and the long term; how to give them not a handout but a hand up, but not a swat. That's what's happening now. They're workers too—a lot of them are; many more of them could be. Maybe that will be in Working for Workers 18, if they make it that far.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, I don't think they will, either.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm writing that down.

Mr. John Vanthof: I appreciate that the government House leader is listening. The government House leader says he's taking notes. I hope he takes detailed ones, then I can use them for the next speech.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I know I'm wandering, but this is worth—like, we are not opposed to this bill. On one hand, I actually—for me it's beneficial that I can actually put a few things on the record that I wouldn't have the opportunity to do otherwise. But it would be much, much, much better if people could actually come forward who have read this bill, who have had time to consult on this bill, and come to committee and actually—“Okay, we like this, we like this, but what about this? Could we maybe change this?” Right? That's what committee is for.

This time allocation motion follows many others and in essence—in past time allocation speeches, I've quoted the current government House leader about how he used to be so terribly opposed to time allocation.

Mr. Steve Clark: I've seen the light.

Mr. John Vanthof: He has seen the light. Actually, he's gone to the darkness of government. That's where—he says he's seen the light, but he's gone—and I'm not going to read those quotes because I've got them in the record once. I don't need—

Miss Monique Taylor: Oh, do it.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would if I could find them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The government House leader on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd just like to advise the House that the night sitting for this evening is cancelled.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): I return to the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you for that. I lost my place in my speech because of that. I might have to start again.

But what this time allocation motion is further example of is slowly—it's an erosion of the role of Parliament. It is. The former government House leader has mentioned a

few times that the NDP is actually the grandfather of time allocation. And, actually, not wrong: When the NDP was in government, we were the first ones to use time allocation. But each successive government has used it more and more and more. Perhaps the government House leader has said he's seen the light. He's also seen the ease of time allocation, but it's at the erosion of Parliament.

Honestly, the way Parliament is supposed to work is, I'm the House leader and government has a House leader and those who shall not be named. Basically, the government, whatever government of the day, has—they win a government, they win a majority or minority, and they have a right to put their agenda forward, to put their bills forward. And we should have discussions beforehand—“So here's the legislation; what do you think?” The way it works is, some bills we actually—this would be one of them, I would say. The health care bill that we just passed—was it second reading or third? Second.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Health care?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. Anyway, there are bills that we don't disagree with. We might not agree with everything, but we don't fundamentally disagree with, and we could say, “Okay, let's debate this for so many hours, send to committee, and let's expedite it through the House.” But these bills—this bill or that bill—like, Bill 124, we would have fought and used every tool in the House we could to stop that, and it actually would have helped the government because it would have saved them from having the courts stop it.

1410

You manage the House that way and some bills—yes, you would do everything. We don't do it, we can't do it here anymore because there are time limits, but you used to be able to do kind of what I'm doing right now, filibustering.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: You're not filibustering.

Mr. John Vanthof: No. But if there was no time limit and if it was a bill that we really—like Bill 124; we'll use that as an example. I think everyone agrees that Bill 124 was a bad idea. The opposition agrees; the court agreed. Even now, the government agrees, because they're paying all the workers' money back. So everybody agrees.

Without time allocation, on this side we would have all talked and talked. Before there were time limits on speeches, you would just keep going and keep going and keep going, and then the member from Ottawa South would keep going. And at the end, the government would pass it but it would be a big fight. But then the public would be aware, everybody would be aware that there was something happening in Parliament that could impact them.

And slowly, we put time limits on speeches. Now we're actually slowly eliminating committees, eliminating their relevance. So many people who got elected in the last session will think this is how it's supposed to go. This isn't how it's supposed to go. It isn't. And it's not just getting worse. It's not just the opposition that's sore about this, but the government is sore too because the government's making unwarranted errors, unnecessary errors.

Not everything that the opposition says is wrong. Not every time the opposition says, “Well, have you really thought about this?” is always wrong. It’s better that the opposition warns you than the court—that you have to go to court. Constantly having to go to court, threatening to use the “notwithstanding” clause, is not the hallmark of successful government. It just isn’t. It’s also not the hallmark of long-lasting legislation. I get that every government wants to leave a legacy, and I hope the legacy is more than great advertising campaigns of “imagine if.”

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Or RCMP investigations.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, or RCMP investigations. All those things are not good for the government, but they’re not good for Ontarians. They’re just not.

It’s like today’s question period—the Auditor General’s report, Ontario Place. Again, if someone wants to lease an apartment in Toronto, you need first and last, and pretty good references—all these things. When you want a 95-year lease from prime government property, you’d think you should have the same thing, but apparently not.

If the government had taken more time to actually make sure that everything was correct, they wouldn’t be facing this scrutiny. But the government just seems to think that they can just stonewall through it. They seem to be doing it so far, but at some point, there will come a reckoning.

But getting back to what I’m talking about, about the Legislature: At some point, you’re going to be on this side, and whoever is on that side will be ramming their legislation too—a bill a week—and you will realize how bad that is. You will be: “Oh, my God. How can you?” You know what? There will nobody left who will be: “Wait a second, this isn’t really how it’s supposed to work.” Because it might not go back. It might not. This might be the new bill-a-week: Come up with an idea on—I’m really pushing it here, but come up with an idea on Friday night, introduce it in the bill on Monday morning, and Thursday afternoon, it’s law. Look at that. Doesn’t that work great. Well, it didn’t work so great for the greenbelt legislation, didn’t work so great for Bill 124, didn’t work so great for Bill 28. A lot of Ontarians aren’t thinking it’s working so great. Some of them are; I’m not going to deny that.

But these latest time allocation motions, with the elimination of committee, are the ultimate example of minimizing the actual capability of the Legislature. The Legislature is a pretty good place. Most of the time, the decisions—again, I might not agree with the philosophical bent of the government, I might not agree with the legislation, but if you let the legislation run its course through committee, we might make it better legislation for all Ontarians. You’re not allowing that ability, and in the end, that’s going to hurt all Ontarians.

You might think now you’re just hurting us, because you have the power and you’re using it—great. The trick to having power is knowing how not to have to use it. That’s true. How do you think the Bill Davis Conservatives stayed in, what, for 40 years? Anyway, they didn’t do it by doing this. No, they did it by actually, even though they had majority governments, operating like a minority,

saying, “Hey, you know what?” And when the opposition put forward an amendment that actually made sense, they adopted it. And then, when the next election came—and you go, “We need to get rid of it”—really? We put forward this legislation, and you actually helped us craft it. Much harder to beat than what this government is doing.

A few days ago, we had an interchange between the member from Sudbury and the member from Sault Ste. Marie. The member for Sault Ste. Marie said something about how the member of Nickel Belt hadn’t come to some event where they had announced something, and I brought up that perhaps she wasn’t invited. It turns out she wasn’t, because this government never invites sitting members other than from their party to events, ever.

You know what? News flash: You’re actually harder to beat when you do. It used to be that when ministers came to my riding, you know what? A minister of the crown comes to your riding, regardless of for what, you’re not going to beat up the minister of the crown. You’re going to say, “Thank you for coming. Thank you for the announcement”—I was going to say—well, I’m just going to say, “Blah, blah, blah.” We know it, right? When the Minister of Transportation comes when they open up the Northlander, and hopefully they’ll invite me, I’ll say, “Thank you very much. We work together, blah, blah.” But when you don’t get invited, it’s much easier to slam the government. Yet the government doesn’t seem to understand that. There’s an art to politics. It’s not like a four-inch brush; it’s like a—I don’t know how to explain it, but you will get, the easier you are to work with, the harder you are to beat. That’s something that you haven’t learned.

You’re riding high in the polls right now. I get it. I really get it. You know what? There was a time when the federal Liberals were riding high in the polls and they won a massive majority. Remember that? There was a time when the Liberals were riding high in the polls and they won massive majorities.

If you will recall, Speaker, often the government has a bit of revisionist history, and they say, “The Liberal government, supported 15 years by the NDP.” That’s actually not the case. When I first got elected, I got elected in a minority Liberal government, and then after a couple of years, we withdrew our support, and the government failed, and you know what happened? They didn’t elect the Conservatives. They elected a massive Liberal majority, twice.

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Mr. John Fraser: Once.

Mr. John Vanthof: Twice.

Mr. John Fraser: Once.

Mr. John Vanthof: Twice. There were two majorities after I got elected.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: True story.

Mr. John Vanthof: True story.

Anyway, they elected a massive Liberal majority. At that point, it was like saying that we support you.

And do you know what? I bet you, if we counted it out, probably about 50% of the time, we do support your legislation.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: No.

Mr. John Vanthof: We looked it up. When the Liberals were in power, I think we supported them 50%—again, I’m going off memory.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: It’s 98% of the time.

Mr. John Vanthof: No. I will be happy to retract this if I’m completely wrong, if you look it up. I believe that we supported the Liberal government 50% of the time and the Conservatives 46% of the time.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Sounds about right.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes.

But because we vote for your legislation once in a while, because even a broken clock is right twice a day, we—it’s not that we’re propping you up. You don’t need to be propped up, just like the Liberals didn’t need to be propped up. When we withdrew our support, we lost, as did you, as will you—maybe quicker, because with the way you operate, there are a lot of people who are very supportive, but deep down, they’re saying, “Man, these people are pretty rough.” That’s not something that you can measure or regain.

The member for Kiiwetinoong was there when I said this: The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said something about how the minister of northern development and mines was pretty rough with me in question period, and I replied, “Well, perhaps you could tell the minister of northern development and mines that the next time he comes to my riding, he doesn’t have to invite me. I have no problem with that. But he shouldn’t tell people who work very hard to get government funding who they can or can’t invite.” People remember that. There’s a difference between governing with class or governing with a fist. With a big majority like yours, you shouldn’t have to do that, but for whatever reason, you do. And that, at the end of the day, is going to hurt Ontarians and hurt you probably more than it’s going to hurt us.

Again, Working for Workers Six—we are not opposed to this bill. We would much rather it go to committee so people would have exposure to it. We are very much opposed to this time allocation, especially because it prevents committee—we’re opposed to time allocation in general, but any time allocation that eliminates committee is basically eroding the credibility of this Legislature, eroding the credibility of our parliamentary system, and in the end, it will not provide the best possible legislation that this system is capable of.

With that, I’d like to thank you for the time, Speaker, and thank you for allowing me such a broad latitude of topics. And I didn’t mention cows once.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Leardi has moved government notice of motion number 29 relating to allocation of time on Bill 229, An Act to enact the Skilled Trades Week Act, 2024 and to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour and other matters.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.” All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.” In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

SUPPORT FOR SENIORS
AND CAREGIVERS ACT, 2024
LOI DE 2024 SUR LE SOUTIEN
AUX PERSONNES ÂGÉES
ET AUX FOURNISSEURS DE SOINS

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 5, 2024, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 235, An Act to amend the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 and the Retirement Homes Act, 2010 / Projet de loi 235, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2021 sur le redressement des soins de longue durée et la Loi de 2010 sur les maisons de retraite.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate? I recognize the member for St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you, Speaker, and I would like to inform you that I’ll be splitting my time with the member from Toronto Centre.

I’m proud to stand today to speak about Bill 235, the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act. This bill makes changes to long-term-care and retirement homes that are meant to help our seniors. While some of these changes are good, there are a lot more that need to be done.

First, I’ll talk about what the bill has right now. Adding dementia care programs to every long-term-care home is a step in the right direction, but let’s not forget that we asked for this way back in 2021, when the government brought forward the Fixing Long-Term Care Act. At that time, this government said no. Now they’re finally including it. While I’m glad to see this change, it’s frustrating to think about the care seniors have missed out on in the meantime.

I also support stronger penalties for people who run homes and break the rules. For years, when homes were fined, it just meant less money for the residents’ care. Holding individual operators accountable instead is the right move and I’m happy to see that this is in the bill. However, Speaker, this bill just does not do enough to fix the deeper problems within our long-term-care homes. One big issue is that it doesn’t treat for-profit and non-profit homes differently. They’re treated the same. We know that non-profit homes provide better care. They provide the best care. Their focus is always on the residents, not just making the money, yet this bill acts like all homes are the same—cookie cutter, may I say—and that’s just not true.

Another problem is staffing. Right now, Ontario is short over 50,000 nurses and personal support workers in long-term care. Without more staff, it’s impossible to give seniors the care they need. The government has promised four hours of care per resident per day, but they didn’t

meet that goal last year. This bill does nothing to change that.

The bill also talks about adding cultural programs to all long-term-care homes. It's a nice idea, but it does not go far enough. Many seniors would rather live in homes designed for their culture, where they can speak their language, eat familiar foods and celebrate their traditions. Instead of building these culturally specific homes, the government is just asking existing homes to offer a program. It's not the same and it's not what seniors deserve.

This bill does add new rules to making sure homes follow the law and that is very important. But it's a bit ironic, Speaker, that the government wants operators to keep better records when the government itself can't meet its own promises for staffing and care hours.

I'm also worried about how this bill handles the use of psychotropic drugs in long-term care. Experts like the Alzheimer Society say antipsychotic drugs should only be used "as a last resort." This bill doesn't guarantee that, and that puts vulnerable seniors at risk of being overmedicated. Seniors in Ontario and the people who care for them deserve so much better.

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While there are some good ideas in this bill, it doesn't solve the bigger problems. It doesn't fix the staffing shortages, it doesn't build culturally specific homes and it doesn't set higher standards for for-profit homes.

If passed, this bill would require all long-term-care homes to have an organized program of dementia care and services, similar to other required organized programs. It would build on existing requirements under the FLTCA for long-term-care homes to have a religious and spiritual program. It's required for all long-term-care homes to have an organized program for recognizing and respecting, at a minimum, the culture, language, religious and spiritual needs of residents. It would rename the medical director role in long-term-care homes to "clinical director" and enable nurse practitioners to fulfill the role.

I can say firmly that this is a positive step in the right direction. It's something that stakeholders and advocacy groups in long-term care have been asking for for a very, very long time. Making nurse practitioners clinical directors will be incredibly useful for long-term-care homes, and it should lower the numbers of non-essential emergency room visits as well as broadly improving the care residents receive.

The bill would also enhance the ministry's ability to conduct inspections of prospective offences.

Now that we have talked about some of the specifics in this bill, I want to talk about this government's record on the long-term-care file, and I want to go back to what happened during the pandemic, as an example. The tragic failures in this sector during the COVID-19 pandemic didn't just expose cracks in the system; they exposed deep, systemic neglect that cost thousands of lives.

When I say, "thousands of lives," I say 6,000 people lost their lives in long-term care in the province of Ontario over the course of the pandemic, under this government's watch. That's not just a number or statistic. Those are our

mothers. Those are fathers. They were grandparents. They were our friends. They were our loved ones, brothers, sisters, our aunts, our uncles.

Let's start with what the Ontario Ombudsman said in the report. He revealed that during the first wave of COVID-19, the government's long-term-care inspection system was completely overwhelmed. For seven weeks in the spring of 2020, not a single inspection took place in Ontario's long-term-care homes. I say that again: In the spring of 2020, not a single inspection took place in Ontario's long-term-care homes. This is a shame. Not one—for two months, no inspection reports were issued.

Speaker, this happened during one of the most dangerous times in history. Hundreds of seniors were dying in long-term-care homes in a matter of weeks. Families couldn't visit their loved ones. Workers were stretched beyond their limits and there was no proper oversight to ensure safety or basic care was being done in Ontario's long-term-care homes. The ministry in charge was caught completely unprepared, leaving residents and staff to fend for themselves in facilities that were already struggling.

The numbers are heartbreaking. By the end of the first wave, over 4,000 seniors in long-term care had died. Most of these deaths occurred in for-profit long-term-care homes, where conditions were far worse than in non-profit or municipal homes. In fact, residents in for-profit homes were almost twice as likely to die from COVID-19. This is a fact: 70% of all deaths occurred in long-term-care homes in the province of Ontario.

These deaths were not just statistics, as I said. Again, they were our mothers, they were fathers, they were grandparents. They were actually real people who deserved so, so much better.

Let me talk about one of the worst examples, Orchard Villa in Pickering. During the first wave, 71 residents at Orchard Villa died from COVID-19. They called in the Canadian Armed Forces and their report painted a horrifying picture—from which most of our Armed Forces now suffer from PTSD. Think about that. What did they see? What did they see? They found residents left in soiled diapers for hours and hours, rooms filled with garbage, filled right up to the beds with garbage, and staffing so short that basic care wasn't being provided.

Here's what really angers me. Despite everything that happened at Orchard Villa, this Ford government renewed its licence. Can you believe that? Let that sink in: After 71 people, residents in long-term care, Orchard Villa, died, after the military personnel exposed neglect and horrifying conditions, this Ford government rewarded Orchard Villa with the right to continue operating. This is not accountability. This is not justice for families who lost loved ones in such awful, awful circumstances. So when the government talks about strengthening penalties and making individual licensees liable for abuse of seniors, I look back at this government's record and I wonder whether they will follow through—because they certainly didn't.

The reality is, this government simply has not ever held the bad actors in for-profit, private long-term care account-

able for their actions. The government claims they've learned lessons, but the reality definitely tells a different story. And when this government does sometimes do the right thing, it never, ever seems to go far enough to actually fix the systemic issues in our long-term care. I think you can describe this government's approach on most things as "too little, too late." They are still relying on for-profit companies to deliver long-term care, even though we know that for-profit homes consistently prioritize money over quality of care. They still haven't held bad actors accountable and they still haven't fixed staffing crises that left workers overwhelmed during the pandemic. It still happens today.

Let's talk about the workers. Personal support workers, nurses and other staff in long-term care were treated like afterthoughts during the pandemic. Many worked long hours for very low pay, with inadequate protection. They were overworked and underpaid and some even lost their lives. I remember during the pandemic, a long-term-care home in my riding looking for proper masks that this government was not providing them. These are workers that had worked every day in long-term care—they care and they were overworked. It's a shame. Even today, many of these workers are leaving the sector. They're burnt out, they're feeling undervalued. The Ford government says it's committed to fixing long-term care, but they've done little to make these jobs attractive. Without proper staffing, how can we give our seniors the care they need and they deserve?

Families in Ontario are furious, and rightfully so. They want answers. They want accountability. They want change. They want a system that puts care ahead of profits. For-profit long-term-care homes failed our seniors. The government must stop funding them and instead invest in non-profit, municipal homes, where care given—not profits—is a priority. Facilities like Orchard Villa should not be allowed to keep operating after such devastating failures. Licences need to be revoked and there must be consequences for those who put lives at risk.

Workers in long-term care are the backbone of our system. They deserve full-time jobs. They deserve wages, decent wages, and the resources they need to do their job safely and effectively. And we know we still have a major crisis in staffing in our long-term care and retirement home systems. Ontario failed to meet its own legislated target this past year for the average number of hands-on hours of care that long-term-care residents receive.

1440

There is nothing in this bill to address staffing shortages and improve hours of care. The Ford government's own record shows, as of this year, there is a need for 13,200 additional nurses and 37,700 personal support workers in Ontario. The reality is, residents are not going to get the care they deserve with this government's current strategy.

Speaker, it is unacceptable that inspections stopped for seven weeks during the pandemic. We need a robust unannounced inspection system to ensure every facility is meeting high standards of care always, not just in times of crisis. It should be done all year round. Families who lost

loved ones in long-term care have valuable insights; their voices must guide our decisions as we rebuild the system.

Ontario's seniors deserve better than they have gotten from this government. They built this province. They worked hard their whole lives. They deserve to live out their golden years with dignity, in comfort and with the utmost respect. Instead, what are they getting? What did they get? They got a government that failed to prepare for the pandemic. They got a government that let inspections stop during a deadly crisis. It's a shame they got a government that let for-profit operators put money before lives.

But it doesn't have to be this way. We can build a better system—a system where every senior is cared for properly, where workers are treated with respect and where the mistakes of the past are never repeated.

Speaker, today we're discussing the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, which aims to mandate organized programs in long-term-care homes to recognize the culture, language, religious and spiritual needs of all residents. At first glance, this seems like a step forward. But when you look at the government's broader record on long-term care, you realize that this bill is yet another half measure from a government more concerned with optics than real change.

Let me be clear: Ensuring that seniors' identities, beliefs and experiences are respected in long-term care is essential. It should already be a fundamental part of how we provide care. But passing a bill to change this without addressing the deeper systemic issues in long-term care is like painting over the cracked foundation. It might look nice at first, but it doesn't fix the rot beneath.

This government wants to pat itself on the back for introducing this bill, but let's not forget its track record. Let's talk about Bill 7, the so-called More Beds, Better Care Act. What did Bill 7 do? It gave hospitals the power to force seniors out of their care and into long-term-care homes that they didn't choose. I see day in and day out in my office in Niagara, in St. Catharines, the families of an individual that is placed in St. Catharines' Niagara Health System, and they are pushed out to another hospital close to an hour-and-a-half drive in Port Colborne. Their significant others can't make it to visit them for months, for weeks at times, because they can't get there—they can't drive.

So seniors are often moved away from their families, communities and even their cultural and spiritual supports, all for the sake of freeing up hospital beds. Really, Speaker? This government essentially told seniors, "Your comfort, your preference and your dignity just doesn't matter." Where were these seniors sent? "We're going to send you hours and hours away." They may end up in for-profit homes: homes with some of the worst outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic, homes where profits are prioritized over people and concerns are cut on staffing, infectious control and quality care, all cut. These are the same homes where thousands and thousands of seniors lost their lives.

Speaker, this government now wants to talk about respecting culture and spiritual needs, but where was the respect when they tore seniors away from their families under Bill 7?

I could speak about my colleague from Waterloo, who tabled a bill that this government has supported time and time again. Why is it not in the legislation today? The Till Death Do Us Part Act: It was a sensible amendment to the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021. It adds the right for long-term-care residents to not be separated from their spouses upon admission. Accommodations must be made for couples to continue living together.

Speaker, I've been married for 43 years, and I'm telling you, I want to be in the same home as the person I married when I was 18 years old. It is simple. We should ensure that seniors in long-term care, the ones that have built these communities and live now, can maintain dignity and emotional well-being by staying with their spouses as they age.

That was brought forward in this House by my colleague from Waterloo, and this government supported it. However, I don't know; when families are torn apart under Bill 7—I don't understand why this government is against keeping seniors within their community so their significant others can visit them, their family can get to them, so that they can stay together.

Where was the respect when they renewed licences for for-profit homes with appalling track records, like Orchard Villa? Where was the respect that this government gave when they failed to protect seniors during the pandemic? Even before the pandemic, the long-term-care system was in crisis, and this government did very, very, very little to fix it. Now we have members from our Armed Forces with PTSD. I wonder if they even see that, what they made those young men and women that have seen so much overseas—to go into a long-term-care home in Ontario and see the disgusting habitats that these seniors had to live in. It's terrible what this government did. They ignored warnings from experts, underfunded municipalities and non-profit homes, and continue to funnel the money—where? Yes, let's say it: to for-profit operators. Shameful.

Now they're introducing this bill to address culture and spiritual needs. Well, that's important, absolutely. It feels very hollow coming from a government that has consistently shown it does not prioritize seniors' well-being; it does not prioritize seniors at all in Ontario.

Speaker, let's ask the tough questions: How will this bill be enforced? The government's record on inspections and accountability is absolutely terrible. If homes fail to implement these programs, who will hold them accountable? This government? Probably not.

What about staffing? Long-term-care homes are still facing a severe staffing crisis. Personal support workers, PSWs, are overworked, they're underpaid and leaving the sector in droves. Who will implement these cultural and spiritual programs if there is not enough staff to provide basic care?

Why are we still relying on for-profit operators? Another great question; I don't see anybody answering it over there. For-profit homes consistently underperform compared to non-profit municipal homes. It's a known fact. They cut corners on care to maximize profits. How can we trust these operators to provide meaningful cultural and spiritual programming when they can't even provide adequate physical care? What about Bill 7? If this government truly cared about seniors, culturally and spiritually, they would repeal Bill 7 immediately—today. Forcing seniors into homes far from their communities completely undermines the goal of this legislation. How can they not see this?

1450

As I said, my colleague from Waterloo tabled the bill, Till Death Do Us Part. If you married for love, it's truly that you should share a lifetime with someone, you grew a family with someone, you should be able to stay with them in long-term care. But Bill 7 should immediately be repealed because it forces seniors into homes away from their communities, completely away from their significant others.

I want to discuss the closure of Upper Canada Lodge in Niagara-on-the-Lake—a community that's just right beside mine, St. Catharines—a heartbreaking example of what happens when this government fails to properly prioritize seniors and long-term care. While we are debating Bill 235, we need to confront the reality that this Ford government is allowing another long-term-care home to close on their watch. It's heartbreaking. Upper Canada Lodge has been a home, not just a facility. The people who work within the bricks and mortar of Upper Canada Lodge care—they care for over 80 seniors. These people are individuals who built our communities, raised families within the community and contribute to the fabric of all of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Now they are being uprooted and relocated to Gilmore Lodge in Fort Erie, which is a good half-hour-to-45-minute drive away.

We don't know how many of these residents will actually be moved to Gilmore Lodge. This lack of transparency is deeply concerning for the residents. It's deeply concerning for their families and deeply concerning for the staff who work within the bricks and mortar, who care for each and every one of them. We know that moving seniors, particularly those living with dementia, can be very, very traumatic. It disrupts their routines, it takes away from their community, and often leads to a very, very fast decline in their health. Yet here we are again, watching as another closure causes unnecessary upheaval for some of our most vulnerable residents in our communities. How is this acceptable?

Families are worried, not just about where their loved ones will end up, but about the quality of care they will receive. Let's not forget the impact on the hard-working staff at Upper Canada Lodge, who now face uncertainty about their jobs. Here we go again. People are going to lose their jobs, possibly.

Bill 235 talks about dementia care, cultural programming and stricter penalties for long-term-care operators

who fail to meet the standards. Jeez, those are great ideas, but they don't mean much if homes like Upper Canada Lodge are allowed to close without a plan to protect the residents, and to protect the workers and the staff that are working at Upper Canada Lodge.

Where is the government committed to keeping seniors close to their communities? Where? Why does this bill not address the bigger picture, like ensuring that closures like this do not happen, or providing more funding to keep existing homes open and fully staffed? So I ask today: How many of the residents from Upper Canada Lodge will be moving to Gilmore Lodge in Fort Erie? How many will have to leave their communities entirely? What supports are being offered to help these residents through this traumatic transition? These are questions that this government should be very, very seriously answering.

If this government is serious about supporting seniors, like they say, why are they standing by while other long-term-care homes are closing? Instead of focusing on real estate deals or cost cutting, why not invest in keeping homes like Upper Canada Lodge open and ensuring that seniors can age in place in their own communities? Allowing Upper Canada Lodge to close without a clear plan for residents and staff sends a clear message that this government talks a good game but isn't doing enough to protect our seniors where it really matters the most.

To the residents of Upper Canada Lodge and their families, I want to say this: We are with you and we, the official opposition, will keep fighting to hold this government accountable for the care and the dignity you deserve.

Speaker, this government has shown time and time again that it is more interested in protecting corporate profits than protecting our seniors—our seniors, the pillars of our community. They allowed the crisis in long-term care to deepen. They failed to hold bad actors accountable. They ignored families who begged for better care for loved ones. Even now, much of the funding they've announced for long-term care is going to for-profit operators—the same operators who failed our seniors during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, non-profit and municipal homes, which consistently provide much better care, are left struggling for resources. If this government is serious about improving long-term care, this bill cannot be just a band-aid solution. We need comprehensive reform. Here's what real action would look like, Speaker.

Repeal Bill 7: Restore the rights of seniors and families to choose where they would like to reside and live. No one should be forced into a home that does not meet their needs or is far from their loved ones.

End for-profit care: Phase out for-profit operators and invest in non-profit and municipal homes that put care before profit.

Fix the staffing crisis: Gee, that's a great idea. Pay PSWs and other long-term-care staff a living wage, a decent wage. Offer full-time positions—not part-time; full-time—and provide the training and support they need

to deliver the highest quality of care they can in long-term-care homes.

Accountability for bad actors: Revoke licences for long-term-care homes that consistently fail to meet standards. Really, enough is enough.

Listen to the families and the residents who lost loved ones in for-profit homes: Families and residents know what they need. They know what's needed to improve the care. Their voices should guide any changes to this system.

I don't oppose the idea behind this bill. Of course we should be recognizing and respecting the culture, language, religion and spiritual needs of seniors. But this bill is only a small piece of what's needed to be a much larger effort to overhaul the whole long-term-care system in Ontario.

Seniors in this province deserve better than piecemeal solutions and empty promises. They deserve a government that will stand up for them. They deserve a government to fight for their dignity and to ensure they receive the care and the respect and the needs that they deserve.

This bill would rename the medical director role in long-term-care homes to clinical director and enable nurse practitioners to fill the role. We are supportive of this reform. Nurse practitioners do an incredible job serving our seniors and our communities. We definitely need to support nurse practitioners. It will be incredibly useful for long-term cares and should lower the number of non-essential emergency room visits while broadly improving the care.

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However, I want to be clear: While this is welcome reform, the reality is, this government has created a crisis in staffing in our health care and our long-term-care sector. It is no secret: We are really struggling to recruit primary care doctors and front-line workers today in this province. Some 2.5 million Ontarians under this government's watch do not currently have a family doctor.

We have a severe staffing crisis in our hospitals and our long-term-care sector. This crisis did not just happen overnight; it is the direct result of years of underfunding, poor planning and wrong-headed policies under this Ford government. Today I want to break down the key factors that have led us to this point: Bill 124; the chronic underfunding of non-profit homes; the shameful low wages for personal support workers; and the Ford government's reckless overreliance on private staffing agencies, which has cost the taxpayers—wait for it—over \$1 billion.

Let's begin with Bill 124, a piece of legislation that perfectly captures this government's attitude towards workers. Bill 124 was introduced under the guise of wage restraint, and it mostly attacked women workers. Let's call it what it is: a direct attack on workers, particularly the front-line health care heroes who have kept our long-term-care systems afloat during some of the darkest days.

Under Bill 124, public sector workers, including nurses, PSWs and other health care professionals, have had their annual wage increases capped at just 1% per year, well below the rate of inflation, and we all know that

you guys got more than 1%. It's a violation against their collective agreement, may I add, too.

This legislation has driven countless workers out of the health care and long-term-care sectors. Why? Because they can no longer afford to do these demanding jobs while their wages stagnated and their workloads increased and increased and increased.

These are the same workers we called heroes during the COVID-19 pandemic. They showed up every day. They risked their lives to care for our seniors, often without adequate personal protective equipment, and this is how they have been repaid. Bill 124 tells them that their sacrifices do not matter, that their work isn't valued and they're worth less than what they deserve.

I'll say it plainly: Bill 124 has fuelled this staffing crisis. It pushed nurses and PSWs out of the sector in droves, leaving long-term-care homes dangerously understaffed at several times.

This government had a choice to repeal this legislation, especially after the pandemic laid bare the urgent need to retain and recruit health care workers, but instead, this government chose to double down on policies that actively harm the very people who care for our most vulnerable residents—they doubled down on it all the way until the courts ruled it unconstitutional.

This staffing crisis isn't just about Bill 124. May we also say how many millions were paid on lawyers' fees? It's also about chronic underfunding of non-profit municipal long-term-care homes, which provide some of the best care in our province. Unlike for-profit homes, which cut corners to maximize their profits, non-profit municipal homes prioritize the needs of residents.

But under this government, these homes have been left struggling in keeping the lights on. Non-profit homes have been forced to operate on razor-thin budgets, making it nearly impossible for them to hire and retain enough staff. They cannot compete with for-profit homes that funnel public money into private profits, nor can they match the rate change by the private staffing agencies, something I'll discuss maybe—well, I'm running out of time.

Speaker, personal support workers: These workers are the backbone of our long-term-care system. They're the ones who bathe, feed and comfort our seniors. They provide human touch that makes long-term care more than just a clinical environment. But this government has to learn to pay them, to value them, to respect them and to give them what they deserve.

I'm going to finish up here with a few words, and I'm going to say what we need. We need inspection systems that ensure accountability. We need to repeal harmful legislation, like Bill 7, that strips seniors from their rights. And to caregivers, we owe the support and recognition. Creating paid caregivers' benefits isn't just good policy; it's the right thing to do.

This government has to do the right thing. Let's be clear: Treating seniors with respect and dignity is not optional, it is a moral obligation; a reflection of who we are as society. And while this government has failed to live up to their obligation, we have the power to demand

change. Together we can build a system that values care over profit, compassion over negligence and people over profit.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It is always an honour to follow my dear friend and well-respected, beloved MPP, the member from St. Catharines. Thank you for that brilliant presentation on this bill.

Bill 235, the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, is a supportable bill. It's supportable because it's an example of the government stealing the Ontario NDP's homework. We submitted these amendments to a bill three years ago, in 2021. The government voted those amendments down and, lo and behold, look what happens: It has now materialized here today.

Most of the bill is comprised of those amendments, and we are glad that the government is now seeing the light; that they now want to do what we proposed three years ago. But this bill could also go further. As we know, long-term-care homes are in need of funding, they're in need of support, so that they can deliver the quality of care that our seniors deserve and that is expected for all our loved ones.

The fact that this bill is now being rushed through when the government simply could have tabled it earlier, done proper consultation and still passed it by the end of this year is insulting, because once again, when it comes to time-allocated bills, we don't go back to the public.

We also recognize that there has to be strong penalties when a long-term-care home fails to maintain proper records, which is what we saw during the COVID pandemic, when the government just simply stopped inspecting those homes. We saw extraordinary pain and suffering in those homes, and we saw for-profit facilities and operators get away with literally social murder. The government creating more penalties for bad record-keeping of long-term-care operators is actually a good thing, but the government should take its own advice, because they, themselves, have failed to produce records of meetings, text messages and emails about large infrastructure projects, and that has caused a lot of concern when it comes to public accountability. And it deserves further scrutiny, which is probably why the Integrity Commissioner is involved with those discussions.

Schedule 1 of this bill amends the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021, and it actually requires now dementia care programs and services for residents. This change, Speaker, is long overdue. It's actually insulting that it has actually come so late. But it is here now, and we're very pleased to see it.

The government, when they rejected the NDP amendment—it was probably because they didn't want to give the official opposition some type of win, as modest as that could be. But simply, we were trying to improve legislation that actually would have improved the quality of service for our seniors.

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By doing that, they delayed this service, this enhanced service around dementia care, for over three years. They

created loopholes for bad operators, for those additional three years, and it's actually—I would say they were cruel and callous by not supporting the bill when the amendments were first tabled. That three-year delay caused heartbreak and suffering, and that was not necessary. I think we need to think about how we work together to support Ontarians, because that's what Ontarians expect. They don't really want this politicking—because isn't it silly that, three years later, the government is now seeing the light, that they want to do what's right? Ontarians deserve high-quality care for our seniors and loved ones. That's something that we should be working day in and day out to strive for. Our seniors certainly do deserve that.

Schedule 1 also requires long-term-care operators to have programs to meet the cultural, linguistic, religious and spiritual needs of residents. This is supportable and certainly commendable. However, it should also be noted that it doesn't necessarily create additional facilities or create expanded maintenance to have those programs. All it does is say that there should be some programs. What we need to do is actually expand those programs and make sure that we can have the beds for seniors and those who require.

For example, the Yee Hong geriatric centre, founded by the esteemed leader within the Chinese Canadian community, Dr. Joseph Wong, now operates one of the largest non-profit long-term-care facilities. They've been operating now since 1994, 30 years in action, but they were the ones that led that conversation, pushing for culturally appropriate care, linguistically appropriate care for Chinese and other Asian seniors. They now operate over 805 long-term-care beds, and they serve over 15,000 residents in the GTA every single year. That was the community leading the charge for this. But does every community, every ethnocultural group have to fundraise on their own, have to demand for respect, have to ask government to meet them where they are? Or should it become the status quo that this is how you do business, this is how we deliver care?

I'll give you another example. In Toronto Centre, we have a gem. This gem is called the Rainbow Wing inside the Re kai Centre. It's a long-term-care senior home. I had the honour of attending the opening of the Rainbow Wing, which focuses on providing care for the 2SLGBTQ elderly community. It's a non-profit facility, and it provides spaces for inclusivity for queer seniors to thrive so they don't have to go back into the closet when they have to require support as an elderly person. This is the first dedicated 2SLGBT long-term-care home in Ontario—the first one in North America, possibly. The Rainbow Wing only has 25 beds—in all of Ontario—when this should be a model of care for many communities, and I would argue that every community has 2SLGBTQ people and every community should allow them to age gracefully, with dignity, in the appropriate care spaces that they need.

My constituents in the Rainbow Wing have lived a hard, hard life. It has become harder as they get elderly. They have had to survive periods of time of extended homophobia and transphobia. Many of them do not have

adult children to check in on them, and they really rely on the Rainbow Wing. But, again, it's only 25 beds.

You don't have to take it from me. You can take it from a psychology instructor from the University of Ottawa, Arne Stinchcombe, who does research on health and aging, and they quote in a TVO article that, “There is evidence suggesting that fears of homophobia and transphobia within formal care prevent health care utilization, timely diagnosis, and treatment of major health conditions and treatment adherence among older LGBTQ2+ people’....

“Providing inclusive and safe environments for LGBTQ seniors is ‘essential’....”

Speaker, there's only 25 beds dedicated in Ontario to this community, and for all the government's grand announcements, I don't hear them talking about expanding facilities for the 2SLGBTQ community, despite our size. In the final days, when loved ones are scared, no one should be forced to go back into the closet.

The second point I want to point out in this bill is language around the importance of language communities to care. My grandmother passed away in Fudger House, which is a long-term-care facility run by the city of Toronto right on Sherbourne Street. They provided a level of care for my grandmother, who spoke a rural dialect called Toisan, and although they had the best of intentions, it was very hard for them to deliver that quality of care.

There are others like my grandmother who are now aging in Ontario. We need to ensure that Ontario facilities and programs delivered by the government are going to be accessible in every single way. Translating complex health care terms into Arabic, French, Bengali, Cantonese, Mandarin, Spanish, Portuguese, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Tagalog, Singhalese, Somali, Swahili—these are the things we need to do as we pride ourselves on being the most diverse province in Canada. It's not just a brochure here or there that's translated. It's about embedding equity and accessibility and inclusion into the daily deliverance of these programs—something we should all be working together to strive for because our seniors are worth it.

It's certainly nice to know that this government wants long-term-care homes to be culturally accommodating, but you can't necessarily do that without adequate funding because it does require that type of investment. A friend of mine just moved her mother into a long-term-care facility after their husband had passed away. It was a difficult choice. That mother transitioned smoothly because the home she moved into was full of Italian speakers. She instantly felt comfortable. She was able to speak her native language with staff and residents and bond over cultural activities and a few of her friends already lived there. This is the type of long-term-care experience that I hope every Ontarian will have access to and this is something that we should all be striving towards. That happens with adequate investments in long-term-care homes and services.

Schedule 2 amends the retirement home Residents' Bill of Rights, and this means a resident's right to ongoing support from caregivers in retirement homes. Again, this is something that the Ontario NDP had advocated for in the 2021 Fixing Long-Term Care Act when it was tabled.

I've heard countless stories about family members who are being locked away and prevented from seeing their loved ones, let alone providing them with care. It's unfortunate because these stories are heartbreaking and I suspect that you, Speaker, and other members in this House have had similar experiences or they certainly know others who have had those experiences. That suffering within families when they cannot ensure that their loved ones, their elderly loved ones, have the dignity of care is regrettable, but again, it's something that could have happened much sooner if this government listened and worked with the opposition to pick this up two or three years ago.

Schedule 2 also allows a litany of government officials, including an associate deputy minister, an assistant deputy minister or a director in the Ministry of Long-Term Care, to give direction and recommendations to the prevention and management of infectious diseases. Speaker, I note that not a single one of those listed officials are required to be public health experts. They are ministry bureaucrats. If they happen to have public health expertise, that's a bonus, but regrettably, it's not required.

It is prudent for this government to entrust a job like that to someone who has public health experience or at least require them to issue those directives in consultation with public health experts. I have no idea why the government worded it in such a way. I hope that they can take caution right now, listen to the suggestion of the official opposition and amend it because we know that it would really make a difference when you put a public health lens over policy direction that has health impacts.

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What's missing from this bill is that it doesn't have any language that distinguishes between for-profit and non-profit long-term-care homes, and we've seen that Ontario has failed to meet its own legislative targets this past year for the number of hands-on hours of care that long-term-care residents receive. There is nothing in this bill to address the staffing shortages and to improve the hours of care.

The government's own record shows us that as of this year, there's a need for 13,200 additional nurses and over 37,700 personal support workers in Ontario alone. That number is only going to grow because of the exacerbations and the harm done by the government's Bill 124 that drove thousands and thousands of nurses and public support workers out of the sector, and that staff is what the sector desperately needs in order for the system to work efficiently.

This bill also does nothing—absolutely nothing—to improve the pay or the working conditions for the PSWs, the nurses and other home care workers. We know that the working conditions are tough and that job satisfaction levels are low, and it directly contributes to the quality of care that our loved ones receive.

The hard-working PSWs in this province—and I will say this because they have said it to us many times, but it's worth repeating—are exploited, underpaid and overworked. What needs to be repeated again in this House is that many of the PSW workers are immigrants and racial-

ized women. The level of exploitation of these workers is grossly unacceptable. They have worked on the front lines of the pandemic, putting their own lives at risk. When everybody else was safely at home, they went out and cared for our vulnerable populations when we did not. We called them heroes during the pandemic, and look how they are being treated again, years later.

I recently spoke with Connie, a PSW in Toronto Centre. She worked throughout the pandemic, caring for seniors. Her hours fluctuate significantly, and she doesn't have benefits. Sometimes she's scheduled to work as few as three hours a day on low wages, under hard conditions. No one in this room, in the chamber, would work under those conditions or be agreeable to substandard wages, so why on earth would we put them through that?

PSWs are essential. They deserve to be treated with respect. Connie told me that the seniors that she visits depend on her. She is allotted one hour per visit to complete the following: Help her client, the patient, get to the bathroom, bathe them, dress them—all within one hour. It is impossible to rush that kind of care in an hour, including the fact that she has to get there through heavy traffic, take a breath before she steps into the space to provide that care, but this is exactly what we're doing to our seniors and the individuals who support them.

Language and talk about supporting seniors without adequate investments and the right legislation to support them is absolutely meaningless. You can cut red ribbons all you want when it comes to opening up new facilities but if you can't staff them, it's not very helpful at all. This government needs to step up and pay—pay our PSWs—and recognize that the work is difficult, physically challenging, emotionally challenging.

I heard from another PSW in my riding. Her name is Sue. She completed her training at the height of the pandemic. She says, "I certainly don't do it for the money." She recognizes that her hard work is not being compensated but she cares about the seniors, she believes it's a calling, and that's why she does it.

This government should not be exploiting those caring professionals in any way, and it's up to us to correct that. This legislation that's before us, this particular bill, government Bill 235, has an opportunity to fix that. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the bill that is addressing it.

Speaker, yesterday, I had a party for the seniors who live in Toronto Centre, and it was attended by 250 people or so. It was a wonderful experience to see those seniors come together—but how challenging it is, when they tell me what they are going through. Many of them fear that when it's time for them to go into the long-term-care homes, they will not get the quality of care that they have right now, while they can live independently on their own.

We can do so much better, and we should—and when we have an opportunity to improve legislation, I don't see why not.

I call on the government to not wait another three years or four years, until you get the light bulb and decide to improve the legislation. You can improve that legislation

now. There's no reason for you to delay. Pay the PSWs and the nurses what they deserve. Make sure you build long-term-care homes that are going to be well-run—with the high quality of care that they deserve.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to share a few words today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I have a question for the member from St. Catharines. She was referring to how the seniors were suffering during the COVID time, and I can understand that—in fact, at least because how the seniors were suffering in long-term care before I became a member. This is the reason why I joined and became a member. And the problem that we had during the COVID time is because of how the mess it was with long-term care.

Since then, we have been active, and I have been vocal, and I know that our government has been doing a lot of work in improving long-term care.

And I can see that this bill—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Mrs. Daisy Wai:—that we have the adult daycare programs; we have \$20 million over three years; the community access to long-term care, for \$50 million over two years; the respite services, \$20 million—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you very much.

Response?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you for the question.

During COVID-19, we lost 6,000 residents in long-term care under your watch. You did zero inspections—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Comments through the Chair.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Through the Chair, Madam Speaker—I apologize: Zero inspections were done. The military had to go in. They're suffering with PTSD. And believe me, they weren't seniors who were in ill health; these were healthy seniors who died under your watch.

Right now, in Ontario, we are short 50,000 nurses and personal support workers in long-term care.

Madam Chair, through you—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Next question.

Miss Monique Taylor: I appreciate the passion that comes from this side of the House, from our members. We see and we listen to our communities. We hear the struggles that they're facing.

In Hamilton, we have wait-lists that are two to five years long. We have 1,938 seniors waiting for long-term care; we have 161 of those in hospitals, so we know what's happening to them: If they're not getting out quick enough, they're being charged by the day or being sent to communities far away from their homes. We have 368

significant-safety-risk seniors waiting for long-term care—that's up to a six-month wait.

What will this bill do to correct the actions that seniors and people of our community truly need?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to the member for that important question.

Unfortunately, this bill does not address those critical issues that she has just identified, not with respect to the expansion of beds or to correct the deficiencies that are there; not to pay or recruit more PSWs or nurses. So, regrettably, this bill doesn't meet that need.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

MPP Zee Hamid: My question is for the member from St. Catharines. I'm really confused listening to the member, because it seems like she's claiming she wants the amendments that we're proposing.

Just take dementia, which is a growing and deeply concerning issue among residents of long-term-care facilities. The alarming rise in diagnoses has placed significant burden on families, caregivers and staff. In response, the government has proposed amendments to the dementia care program which aim to elevate care quality, introduce consistent standards across all homes and provide better support for those living with dementia.

Can the member of the opposition please explain their reluctance to support these critical amendments? These measures are not just necessary; they're long overdue. How can the opposition justify a position that appears to disregard the needs of vulnerable seniors and families who rely on a high standard of care?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you for the question. This government brought in Bill 7, and Bill 7 was actually forcing seniors out of long-term care into other homes, moving them away—distance, miles, hours away—from their significant others and their family members, and putting them in places, in homes, that actually were away from their cultural services and spiritual care. You're moving them out of their hometowns, their communities where they can be visited and people can see them.

It's so crucial for seniors—I worked in long-term care, and it's so important—that their family members or your caregivers can come and hold your hand. But if you uproot them with Alzheimer's or dementia, I'm telling you, when you take them away from their culture, beliefs and spiritual care, you are only causing more confusion to that senior.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Question?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm really pleased to be able to continue conversing about this important thing. The member opposite simply doesn't recognize the fact that most of what is in this bill today are amendments that New Democrats have put forward to the government years prior. They are things that we could have already had in place.

And now, when our families and our seniors are in crisis, we're putting forward these bills, and they are little to do—I mean, I'm thrilled we have dementia care. We could've done this years ago. I sat on committee the other day. We put forward amendments to the government again asking for these kinds of changes, and they once again turned every amendment down. What does the member have to say about that, when history actually truly does count and we could be so much further ahead if you actually just took—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Response?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: An excellent question from my colleague. You know, she's absolutely correct: The members on this side of the House, the official opposition, the New Democratic Party, often—I mentioned in my speech that my colleague from Waterloo tabled a bill, the Till Death Do Us Part Act. If you want to go as far as what the member over here asked me just earlier, this would help seniors to be able to stay in fixed long-term care and adds the right for long-term-care residents not to be separated from their spouse upon admission.

Accommodations must be made for couples to continue to live together, which is so important. If you're married to a loved one, you want to stay together, you want to share your life with someone. I don't know why this government will not bring back to the floor the Till Death Do Us Part Act that they supported time in and time out.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Matthew Rae: My question is to the member for St. Catharines. I've been listening to the debate this afternoon, and they are leaving out some important facts, Speaker. They voted against \$4.9 billion to hire and retain staff in long-term care. They voted against \$6.4 billion to build new long-term-care homes. In the last provincial election, they campaigned on a promise to close 1,000 long-term-care homes in my own riding. That is how many homes are privately provided in Perth-Wellington alone, and they want to close them, tomorrow.

So my question—hopefully they're going to comment—yes or no: Are they going to support this bill since it has, as they admitted, NDP amendments? Are they going to vote for it? Yes or no, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'll always vote against bad bills.

I've just got to say, their vanity project on Ontario Place is costing \$400 per person. That could go to long-term care, and that could go not to the for-profit homes; let's put it in the non-profit homes. Let's make sure our community homes are looked after, that PSWs that work and look after the residents within the bricks and mortar—you put all the beds you want in there, but if nobody's looking after the beds, we can't put patients in them. You could put beds, and you could say, "We're building all these beautiful places," but the ribbon cutting has to stop somewhere. You have to start putting the money into the

non-profit homes and community homes and stop this vanity ad.

Can you imagine what our long-term-care homes would look like if they were worked and they had PSWs that were well paid, had full-time benefits and had the time to be able to look after their—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Good afternoon, Speaker. I rise today to speak on behalf of the government side in support of the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, 2024. This is a pivotal piece of legislation that stands to significantly enhance the quality of life and the care for seniors across the province of Ontario.

This act is not just a proposed policy; it is a commitment to our seniors. It is a commitment to the families of seniors and the caregivers who tirelessly support them. Our seniors are the pillars of our communities. They have contributed immensely to the fabric of our society, and it is our duty to ensure that they receive the care and the support they deserve.

The Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, 2024, introduced by our government, is a comprehensive initiative aimed at addressing the multi-faceted needs of our aging population. This legislation encompasses a \$114-million suite of initiatives designed to improve dementia care, support families and caregivers, and enhance social connections for seniors.

One of the cornerstone elements of this act is the significant investment in dementia care. We are committing almost \$80 million over three years to improve and expand dementia care and supports. This includes requiring all long-term-care homes to have a dementia care program and ensure that primary care providers have the tools and resources needed to deliver fast, effective and high-quality dementia care. By expanding adult day programs and respite services, we are providing much-needed recreational and social programs for people living with dementia.

Our government recognizes the invaluable role that families and caregivers play in the lives of seniors. This act therefore includes several measures to support them. We are amending the Retirement Homes Act, 2010, to reinforce residents' rights to ongoing support from their caregivers. Additionally, we are strengthening the existing requirements under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021, to recognize and respect the cultural, linguistic, religious and spiritual needs of all residents. This includes new regulations that require long-term-care homes to increase information available in French.

The Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, 2024, also focuses on protecting seniors and enhancing their social connections. We are introducing new offences under the act related to the abuse or neglect of long-term-care home residents and enhancing, as well, the government's ability to investigate and prosecute such offences. Furthermore, we are expanding the Seniors Safety Line, Ontario's only dedicated 24/7 crisis and support line for our seniors,

which is delivered in over 240 languages, including 23 Indigenous languages.

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Our government is committed to building a future where seniors can live with dignity and respect. By 2046, there will be 1.7 million more seniors living in our province. To address this growing need, we are building 58,000 new and upgraded long-term-care beds across Ontario. We are also offering incentives of up to \$25,400 to students and recent graduates of personal support worker education programs to launch careers in long-term-care homes and in the home and community care sector. Additionally, we are investing up to \$4.9 billion to create thousands of new positions for personal support workers and nurses in long-term care.

Speaker, while these numbers are encouraging, I would like to take a moment to speak about what these changes would mean to my constituents in the riding of Durham, but also to families across Ontario. All long-term-care homes will be required to have an organized program for dementia care and dementia services. This includes training staff in emotion-based care, which has been shown to improve outcomes for residents living with dementia. We are investing \$9 million over three years to support this training in up to 15 long-term-care homes serving more than 1,800 residents. Imagine a resident in my riding of Durham who has been struggling with the challenges of dementia now receiving personalized care that not only addresses their medical needs but also their emotional well-being. This program will bring comfort and peace of mind to their families, knowing that their loved ones are in compassionate hands.

We are working with the excellent Minister of Colleges and Universities to incorporate additional dementia elements into the personal support worker education standards. This ensures that PSWs receive the necessary training and the placement experience for person-centred dementia care. Consider a PSW in my riding of Durham who, after receiving this enhanced training, can now provide more effective and empathetic care to seniors with dementia. This not only improves the quality of care, but it strengthens the bond between caregivers and residents, fostering a sense of both trust and security.

We are leveraging the Centre for Effective Practice to provide primary care providers with the tools and the resources needed to deliver fast, effective and high-quality dementia care to all Ontarians in need of it. Picture a family, again, in my riding of Durham who, after years of struggling to find adequate dementia care for their loved one, can now access timely and comprehensive support from their primary care provider. This initiative will alleviate the stress and burden on families, allowing them to focus on creating cherished memories with their loved ones.

This legislation would bring community access to long-term care by giving seniors still living in their own homes access to certain services in long-term-care homes such as recreational and social programming, clinical services and personal care. In the first year, the pilot is expected to

launch at up to three sites, and I can picture in the near future a senior in Durham who, despite living independently, can now participate in social and recreational activities at a nearby long-term-care home. This initiative will help combat loneliness and isolation, providing seniors with a sense of community and belonging.

We are expanding access to respite services to support caregivers of people living with dementia. I know firsthand how important this is, given that we were honoured to have my late mother-in-law with us for more than 20 years, Speaker, in Durham. She was able to enjoy both time with our family and time in the community, and lived a very enriched life to the end.

Respite services provide day, overnight and weekend visits, in-home visits and recreational activities, giving caregivers a much-needed break. Think of a caregiver in Durham who has been tirelessly caring for their spouse with dementia. With expanded respite services, they can now take a well-deserved break, knowing their loved one is in safe and capable hands. This support will rejuvenate caregivers, allowing them to continue to provide the best care possible, and that is most important in terms of this initiative.

We are expanding funding to the Ontario Caregiver Organization to support caregiver programs and enhance health care provider education. This includes supports for caregivers' mental health, help navigating the health care system, and recognition of their role as part of the health care team. Imagine such a caregiver in my riding of Durham who, feeling overwhelmed and isolated, can now access mental health support and resources to navigate the complexities of the health care system. This initiative will empower caregivers, ensuring they are recognized and supported in their vital roles.

We are supporting a provincial approach to using artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence technologies can be deployed for the early detection of osteoporosis, preventing injuries and improving patient outcomes. Again, picture my riding of Durham and a senior who, thanks to early detection with the deployment of AI technology, can receive timely treatment for osteoporosis, preventing debilitating fractures and maintaining independence. This will enhance the quality of life for seniors, allowing them to enjoy their golden years with confidence.

We are investing \$1.5 million over three years to expand the Seniors Safety Line, Ontario's only dedicated 24/7 crisis and support line for seniors, which I referenced earlier in my remarks. This service is delivered in over 240 languages, as I indicated, including 23 Indigenous languages. It is a game-changer for Ontario and for Durham seniors who, whether feeling vulnerable or alone, would be able to reach out to the Seniors Safety Line for immediate support and assistance. This expansion will provide a lifeline for seniors, ensuring they have access to help whenever they need it.

If passed, the changes proposed in this legislation would build on recent announcements that definitely demonstrate our government's commitment to improving

long-term care both in Durham region and the province of Ontario.

In August 2024, the Minister of Long-Term Care came to our region to announce that our government is expanding access to diagnostic services in long-term-care homes in Durham region, with the goal of improving residents' quality of life and reducing avoidable emergency department visits and hospital stays. The new Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care Plus program allows paramedics to begin delivering diagnostic services like blood work and ultrasounds to residents under this program. This builds on the existing Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care Program and will be rolled out across six paramedic services, including Durham.

I was pleased to share with my community that we invested an additional \$6 million province-wide to continue the Equipment and Training Fund in 2024-25. This helps homes buy diagnostic equipment and train staff to better manage and treat residents' conditions.

This past March, we also announced that construction is under way on a new 200-bed long-term-care home in Pickering. This home is one of 67 long-term-care home projects fast-tracked with support from the Ontario government's increased construction funding subsidy. The new home will provide 200 new beds and is expected to welcome its first residents in a year and a half, in summer 2026. The three-storey building will feature design improvements, including an outdoor cafe and terrace, gardens for residents and visitors, larger resident common areas, and air conditioning throughout the home. The design is centred around resident home areas, each of which creates a more intimate and familiar living space for up to 32 residents.

And there's even more. In the beautiful town of Bowmanville, construction is already under way at Glen Hill Gardens, another new long-term-care home and part of the government's \$6.4-billion commitment to build more than 30,000 net new beds by 2028 and 28,000 upgraded long-term-care beds across the province. Glen Hill Gardens will provide 125 new and 99 upgraded beds, for a total of 224 safe, modern long-term-care beds in Bowmanville. The new building will also have specific design improvements, including private rooms, no-ward rooms, larger resident common areas and air conditioning throughout the home. This project is part of our broader effort to support 12 long-term-care projects in Durham region, providing a total of 2,472 beds built to modern design standards.

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I would like to reiterate to all members that the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, 2024, is a crucial component of our commitment to the well-being of our seniors. It is a comprehensive approach that addresses the diverse needs of our aging population, and it supports the caregivers who play a crucial role in their lives. I urge all members of this House to support this important legislation so that we can ensure that our seniors receive the

care and the support they deserve and that their caregivers are recognized and supported in their vital roles.

I say this, that it is clearly not a case of deciding that one size fits all; our different seniors have different needs at different ages. As I mark my 62nd birthday today, Speaker, it's clear that I am approaching those senior years. Health indeed is a gift; the love of family members is a gift. Whatever the circumstances of our seniors, we owe it to them—we owe it to the future for ourselves—to plan for the future, to make sure that we build for the future, to make sure that we support the caregivers who are there for our seniors: the PSWs, who are dedicated and excellent, and the family members, who give of themselves and who need that caregiver relief that is part of one of the fundamental principles of this legislation.

I close by saying that this, our modern world—all of us are blessed to have the opportunity to live longer lives. Let us work together and come together in this House, as we have on many occasions, to support a common cause: to support our seniors, our loved ones, the senior members of our communities who built Ontario and the caregivers who love and support them.

Whether families and seniors choose to have members of their family within their own homes, support them in living independently in their home of many years or decades, or to move to an alternative residence, let us make sure that all of the options and choices are there, that families and seniors can make the choice that's right for them and that we support them in the alternative and wide variety of ways that each and every one of us and our loved ones can live out in our golden years.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm always pleased to be able to join in the conversations and to talk about how legislation moves through this chamber very quickly.

We know that many of the details that are inside of this bill today are former presentations from New Democrats that we offered throughout committee process under the long-term-care act previously that the government refused to listen to.

We have seen time allocations happening very quickly, which is the consultation process with our communities, with the public, with the people who work hands-on day to day. We've watched time allocation go for Working for Workers, so cutting out our workers' voices. We've watched it for safe consumption sites, cutting out health care.

Will this bill make it to committee for the public to have a say and to help the government ensure that they get it right—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Response?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: Speaker, through you to the member opposite: We are in the midst of debate on this bill right now. I'm pleased to see that although there was some commotion earlier on in my remarks that the House fell silent and apparently was listening to what I was

saying, and I appreciate that—because I'll be listening to the members opposite as well, and I have been listening.

It is important, as I said in my inaugural speech in August 2022, to remember that we're all equal before this House as members. We can all learn from each other, and we bring richness and diversity to our roles here as parliamentarians. That richness and diversity includes our life stories, what we saw growing up and what we see in our communities. Let's bring all of those ideas and thought to this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Thank you to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement for his remarks earlier.

As we know, dementia continues to be a growing concern for families and communities across the province of Ontario. This progressive condition profoundly impacts not only the individuals living with it but also their families, caregivers and loved ones. People living with dementia and their caregivers face significant challenges, whether they are navigating resources within the broader community or ensuring appropriate care and support in long-term-care homes.

Our government recognizes these challenges and has made a strong commitment to improving the lives of people affected by dementia through comprehensive support measures and innovative solutions. This includes ensuring access to tailored services and programs.

Can the minister please provide further details on how the proposals outlined in this bill are designed to support seniors living with dementia?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the wonderful member for Burlington for her question. It took me back to thinking about some of the loved ones in my life over the years, including my great-grandmother, Elizabeth Hurley, who lived until the late 1960s. She had received, with the women of her generation, the right to vote just after World War I. She, in her final months, did suffer from dementia. Therefore, I can say clearly that dementia care requires a coordinated and multi-faceted approach, as it did for my great-grandmother and others who came after her facing those challenges.

The proposed initiatives under the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act makes it such that, in terms of dementia, care is a pillar that is designed to work together to address these challenges holistically. That is the key and that is what this act does, with compassion and effectiveness.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The member said that this bill significantly will enhance care for seniors in the province and I dispute that. The waiting lists are huge. I think there's about 50,000 people that are waiting for beds in long-term care across the Hamilton, Halton, Niagara, Brant and Haldimand region. There are almost 2,000 just in Hamilton alone—and the wait-list can be up to two to five years.

Even if you're in crisis in Hamilton, you've got a six-month waiting list. This is totally, totally, unacceptable.

In Hamilton, for example, they're required to build centres to house folks that are waiting to be in a long-term-care home or people that are looking for complex care. My question to you is, given the state of the crisis in long-term care, a bill that opens two schedules and provides dementia care—yes, that's important, but all these people that are languishing on wait-lists won't be having access to dementia care for who knows how long.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I appreciate the question from the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas. She states the question with passion. But it has to be remembered that while we're on the path with this legislation and the policies surrounding it to build 58,000 new and upgraded beds for our seniors, only about 611-odd beds were built in the years that the NDP was supporting the Liberal government. That's why we're in the predicament that we're in. But we are doing the best that we can and going above and beyond the call of duty. We're putting our seniors' needs first, making the investments and leading the way towards getting it right.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I appreciate hearing from the minister, the member from Durham, on an important issue. We've heard over the course of our term how important it is that we be there for the seniors because they were there for us. They did everything for us so that we could live.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The opposition will come to order.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'm fortunate in my own family to have both of my parents alive who are, as the minister who sits to my left would say, super seniors.

I want to ask the minister, who spoke so eloquently and passionately, how important is it that our government has a vision to be there for the seniors just like they were there for us?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the Solicitor General for his question. He references the word "vision." That's what this bill is about. That's what our program and policy when it comes to supporting our seniors is about. There wasn't a vision in the previous government and that was a sad legacy left to our government to pick up the torch, to have the vision, to make the investments, to make the innovations, but to remember that it's not one-size-fits-all.

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He has the blessing of both his parents being alive. I lost my father suddenly at the age of 65; my mom lived a long life to age 88. There are different circumstances for each family, and so the vision that we have reflects that there are different needs and different choices that seniors and their families and caregivers make. That is our vision, and we're proud of it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Miss Monique Taylor: I hear from my constituents on a regular basis of how they're trying to care for their loved ones, their spouses; how they're at home and they're desperate for help. I see them in my community. They call my office. They are desperate. They have zero help for their wife or their husband, and they're trying to get through. But without the help and without the supports—and they have dementia, or they have Alzheimer's, and so they're languishing on these wait-lists, waiting for that desperate help. I don't see anything in this bill that will fix this for those constituents who literally are begging us for our help.

Could the member opposite tell us when, at some point in this blue sky, the government will find to actually help caregivers living with people with dementia?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I appreciate the member for Hamilton Mountain, who also demonstrates passion and compassion for the seniors she represents. But you see, I've been here for two and a half years, and as I have said, I, like everyone else in this House, brings their life stories to our roles here.

I support this bill and the investments associated with this bill because it's the right thing to do for our seniors. We're playing catch-up from a sad legacy left by the previous Liberal government supported, in part, by the NDP. So yes, we are playing catch-up.

But I can tell you, through you, Speaker, that I have walked a mile in the shoes of those who are suffering and worried. I cared for my mother-in-law; I cared for my mother. Our families came together around them, and we're no different than any other family. But our government must lead with this vision, and we are doing so, and we will continue to do so—proudly so.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

M. Guy Bourgouin: C'est toujours un plaisir de se lever en Chambre pour représenter les commettants de Mushkegowuk—James Bay mais aussi pour parler du projet de loi, la Loi modifiant la Loi de 2021 sur le redressement des soins de longue durée et la Loi de 2010 sur les maisons de retraite.

Vous le savez, j'en parle souvent en Chambre ici. J'en parle aussi de comment le Nord est doublement ou triplement ou même quatre fois plus affecté qu'on parle dans le Sud. Quand j'entends les membres du gouvernement parler de comment ils ont eu un nouveau foyer pour les personnes âgées puis comment c'est apprécié, comment ça va bien et comment des résidents aiment avoir cette nouvelle résidence-là—je vais vous donner une réalité qu'on vit dans le Nord. Pour le Manoir, il y a 135 personnes qui attendent. Ça représente quoi, 135 personnes, pour vous? Voulez-vous que je vous le dise, ce que ça représente? C'est de six à huit ans d'attente.

J'écoutais le collègue du gouvernement parler et il disait comment le gouvernement fait du beau travail et comment les personnes des soins de longue durée sont bien traitées, puis comment—va dire ça à quelqu'un qui attend six ans, huit ans. Huit ans, c'est en bas de la liste. J'ai vérifié juste avant, mais je me suis trompé. Je me suis

trompé de trois ans. Moi, je pensais que c'était une période d'attente de cinq ans. Dans les années où j'ai été député ici, ça a augmenté à huit ans.

Pourtant, madame la Présidente, en 2018, le gouvernement a fait une belle annonce dans mon comté avant les élections et durant les élections, qu'Extendicare va bâtir une nouvelle maison en 2025, qu'on est près d'arriver—qu'une nouvelle maison serait bâtie avec 68 nouveaux lits; ça veut dire une maison de 128 lits. Qu'est-ce qui est arrivé, tu penses, à ce fameux soins de longue durée-là? On attend toujours.

Puis, il faut réaliser que le foyer Extendicare, c'est un « C home ». Les « C home » sont supposés être éliminés en 2025. Ça fait trois ministres qu'on change, là, dans les soins de longue durée; trois fois—j'ai parlé à chaque ministre; trois fois je leur ai envoyé les lettres pertinentes; trois fois je leur ai dit qu'il faut mettre de la pression sur Extendicare pour qu'on bâtisse ce soins de longue durée, parce qu'il y a une pénurie dans mon comté. On a un autre, le Manoir, qui en est un—they font aussi une demande pour pouvoir plus agrandir le Manoir.

Mais c'était de belles annonces, là. J'ai été le premier à reconnaître l'annonce puis de dire merci à l'annonce—pourquoi? Par ce que je sais que c'est un besoin. On est rendu à six, à huit ans qu'on attend. Ça, c'est pour le Manoir, et je peux vous dire, l'Extendicare est encore—mais le pire de tout ça : c'est un « C home ». Puis, moi, je le disais au ministre : il faut mettre de la pression. Puis Extendicare dit: « Oh, c'est un problème avec—tu sais, on n'est pas capable de trouver de terrain. On a essayé le gouvernement, la municipalité. » Je peux vous dire, je connais très bien le maire, le maire de Kapuskasing. On se parle tout le temps parce qu'on a le même but. On a besoin de ces 68 lits-là.

J'ai même pris la position : « Non, enlève la licence à Extendicare. Donne-la à n'importe qui d'autre. » Mais, eux autres, ils ne sont pas prêts—pourtant, le gouvernement a fait de belles annonces. C'est quoi, c'est 35 piastres du lit? Je ne me souviens pas du montant, mais ils amenaient de l'appui. Si tu étais pour construire, il y avait—c'est plus que 35; c'est 65 piastres du lit, je crois—du financement pour appuyer puis donner un incitatif à ces maisons privées de construire. Les incitatifs étaient là. Qu'est-ce qu'on voit? Six ans d'attente, huit ans d'attente.

Fait que, ne venez pas vous pêter les bretelles, nous faire accroire que tout va bien, puis que chez nous ça va bien : « ah oui, on a des maisons ». Mais je peux vous dire qu'il y a d'autres places, d'autres réalités dans le Nord et d'autres réalités en Ontario. Ça ne va pas bien, là.

J'écoutais encore qu'ils parlaient de la démence. Puis on sait que ça va être quelque chose qu'on va traiter beaucoup. Tu as six à huit ans d'attente chez nous, là. C'est qui qui s'occupe de ce monde-là? Hein? L'avez-vous, la réponse? Je vais vous dire c'est quoi la réponse : ce sont les familles. Les familles se brûlent à prendre soin de leurs êtres chers, puis avec raison : on va s'occuper de nos êtres chers parce qu'ils n'ont pas de place où les mettre. Va-t-il falloir, astheure, qu'on prenne nos êtres chers, qu'on les amène à l'urgence et qu'on dise : « On s'en lave les mains.

On n'est plus capables »? C'est ça que vous faites. Vous poussez le monde à faire ça. C'est où la logique là-dedans? C'est où la compassion?

Bien non, bien non : « Ça va bien. » Les belles annonces qu'on a, là—quoi, 103 millions de dollars? Avec 103 millions de dollars en publicité, je peux vous dire, on en aurait bâti, des soins de longue durée. Je peux vous dire qu'il n'y en aurait plus de pénurie chez nous, moi.

On a besoin de foyers de longue durée à Hearst, Kapuskasing, Smooth Rock Falls. Ce monde-là veut demeurer dans leur communauté—Moosonee, Moose Factory, toutes les communautés dans le Grand Nord qui sont isolées. Elles veulent garder leurs aînés avec eux. Ces aînés-là veulent vivre dans leur communauté. Ils veulent être capables de voir leurs êtres chers proches. Puis si ton être cher a la malchance d'avoir de la démence, comme on voit que c'est rendu, que de plus en plus, on en voit, bien il devrait y avoir une place pour eux, il devrait y avoir un lit pour être capable de desservir cette population-là.

Parce que s'il y a de quoi qu'on sait, c'est que l'affaire la plus importante c'est notre famille, puis qu'on doit faire sûr que les services sont là. Ils le disaient, là : « Tu sais, ils se sont occupés de nous autres; il faut s'occuper d'eux autres. » Bien, je ne sais pas, moi; vous avez échappé la balle, pas à peu près. On est rendu à six à huit ans, là.

Si c'est ça de prendre vos êtres chers—en tout cas, je vais m'en occuper de mes êtres chers, parce que, moi, je ne les ferai pas attendre six à huit ans. Si on a la chance de former le gouvernement, je peux vous dire qu'ils n'attendent pas six à huit ans.

Que ce soit des communautés conservatrices, libérales, vertes ou NPD, on va les traiter sur tout le même plancher, sur tout le même niveau. Pourquoi? Par ce que ce n'est pas à cause que tu es élu conservateur ou que tu es élu NPD. C'est juste la bonne chose à faire. C'est juste la vraie affaire à faire. La couleur partisane n'a pas d'affaire là-dedans. C'est de la santé des êtres chers qu'on parle.

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Bien non, six à huit ans, si vous trouvez ça correct—vous traversiez tout à l'heure, vous veniez me dire « Bien, non, Guy, c'est normal. » Ce n'est pas normal. Je m'excuse. Allez dire ça à la famille qui s'occupe d'une personne dedans ou même une personne âgée mais qui n'est pas capable de se voir desservir les soins. Parce que chez nous, vous savez—j'ai lu le projet de loi, puis j'ai regardé des choses. Honnêtement, OK, il y'a des bonnes choses, un petit peu, dans ce projet-là, je pense. C'est venu aussi avec des comités. On a fait des recommandations, puis ils ont pris nos idées, puis—écoute, au moins on sait qu'ils nous écoutent un petit peu.

Mais le fait qu'on veut des questions de culture, des programmes de culture, puis d'adresser la langue—ce qu'on sait, surtout en démence, là, même si tu parles l'anglais—moi je parle l'anglais puis le français, mais si je viens à la démence, je vais retourner à ma langue natale, qui est le français.

Très souvent, ce qu'on voit dans les soins de longue durée, surtout avec la pénurie de main-d'œuvre comme c'est là—puis on sait qu'il y a une pénurie. S'il y a une

pénurie pour les services en anglais, posez-vous la question à ce que sont les services en français. Tu sais ce qu'on sait? C'est qu'on est doublement pénalisé en cause des services en français. J'entends souvent le gouvernement dire : « oh, on investit dans ça », mais veux-tu que je vous dise la vérité? Puis, ça, ce n'est pas rien que moi qui le dit, ce sont les hôpitaux, ce sont les soins de longue durée, ce sont les « PSW » qui travaillent dans les soins à domicile. Le monde sort plus vite qu'il ne rentre.

Ça, c'est dommage, parce que ça, c'est venu avec le manque de respect, le manque de—tu sais, quand qu'on a gelé le salaire dans le temps d'une pénurie, de « héro à zéro », qu'on a traité les infirmières, qu'on a traité les « PSW », tous ceux qui travaillaient dans le système de santé et puis d'éducation, bien, ça leur a mis un goût amer dans l'institution. Puis le monde a dit : « Bien, si on n'est pas apprécié, si on n'est pas bien rémunéré, si on n'a pas de valeur à faire ce travail-là—je vous dis, ce n'est pas donné à tout le monde de faire ça.

Moi, je vous dis, c'est une vocation. S'occuper des personnes âgées, s'occuper du monde qui a de la démence, s'occuper de ceux qui ne sont pas capables de se contrôler—si je peux utiliser le terme—puis que, aller changer une couche, ce n'est pas évident. Ce monde-là le fait à tous les jours, nettoyer ces personnes-là.

Puis, on le sait, on a vu des rapports qui ont sorti, que ça ne se faisait pas tout le temps. Mais on a renouvelé ces contrats-là aux mêmes joueurs, qui n'étaient pas—quand je vois dans ce projet de loi, qu'ils disent : « oh, on va augmenter les amendes ou les pénalités », il n'y a personne pour les enforcer, les renforcer ou d'aller vérifier. Parce que s'il y a quelque chose qu'on sait avec ce gouvernement-là, c'est qu'ils ne sont pas forts sur les inspecteurs, que ce soit sur les routes, que ce soit sur la santé, que ce soit le WSIB, que ce soit—la liste est longue. Mais, s'il n'y a pas d'inspecteurs qui vont vérifier les soins de longue durée—et pas appeler et dire : « je m'en viens ». Mais non.

Premièrement, ça demande plus d'inspecteurs. Ça prend qu'ils viennent à l'imprévu pour pogner ce monde-là qui sont les mauvais acteurs, comme ils disent souvent. Mais on a une responsabilité de faire certain que ces soins-là sont donnés aux personnes. Mais qu'est-ce qu'on voit? On augmente les pénalités, mais il n'y a personne qui va être là pour les renforcer.

C'est beau, ça. Ça va changer quoi? Ça ne changera rien, parce que comme c'est là, il y a des mauvais joueurs qui ne respectent pas—s'il n'y a pas d'inspecteurs, ils vont continuer, voyons-donc. Arrêtons de jouer à l'autruche, puis croire que—ces joueurs-là ne changeront pas, bien qu'il n'y ait pas d'inspecteurs. Ça c'est une affaire que je trouve.

Mais, écoute, je dois donner crédit à la nouvelle ministre. Je l'ai rencontrée, elle a dit : « Guy, non, c'est inacceptable la situation qui se passe avec Extencicare, la situation à Kapuskasing. On veut bâtir plus de lits. » J'ai entendu ces choses-là; les autres me disent la même chose. Mais elle, elle a parlé au maire, à la ville. Ils vont donner l'opportunité de faire un plan, puis si—enfin bon, ils vont

leur donner les 128 lits où Extendicare—puis elle a dit : « Même si Extendicare veut bâtir, on a une pénurie. »

Écoute, on attend six à huit ans, fait qu'on a besoin de plus qu'une maison. On en aura deux à Kap, mais ça, on peut en avoir une autre, puis je suis certain qu'on va la remplir, puis il va encore y avoir du monde sur la liste. Parce que, dans le nord de l'Ontario, la population est vieillissante.

Tu sais, j'arrive à 60, moi, là. Je sais, Stéphane me regarde et il me trouve jeune homme, mais en réalité, j'arrive à 60. Un jour, peut-être que je vais me rendre là moi aussi. Fait que, c'est sûr que ça me concerne. Moi, mes parents ont été dans les soins de longue durée. Mes deux parents sont décédés. Mon père a fait de la démence. Tu sais ce que je veux dire, on a un devoir de faire certain qu'on fasse les bonnes choses.

Mais comme j'ai dit, la ministre a dit : « Non, Guy, c'est inacceptable. » Puisque, s'il y en a un qui dit que c'est un problème de municipalité—ça n'en était pas un. On vit dans le nord de l'Ontario; du terrain, on en a; ce n'est pas comme si on n'en a pas, et la municipalité en avait. Fait que, ça semble peut-être à vouloir déboucher. Je ne sais pas. Mais c'est inacceptable, ce qu'on voit là, que les commettants ou les personnes à Kapuskasing ou de Mushkegowuk—James Bay ne sont pas capables d'avoir une place dans les soins de longue durée.

Pourtant, ils ont fait la belle annonce en 2022. Puis, en 2025, c'était supposé être fait. Là, ils vont donner une extension; qu'est-ce que tu veux qu'ils fassent? Mais tout ce temps-là, ils se sont traîné les pieds. Tout ce temps-là, Extendicare s'est traîné les pieds. Et là, on va avoir une maison et—tu sais, on sait que les conditions sont meilleures dans une nouvelle maison. Les choses ont changé. Mais tu ne peux pas prendre une « C home » et faire une nouvelle maison avec. Tu ne peux pas comparer les deux à ça. Ça ne se compare pas. Mais tout ce temps-là, par exemple, ces personnes âgées-là et le manque de lits—on est affecté par.

Je veux parler un petit peu de la pénurie de main-d'œuvre, parce que c'est intéressant de voir—tu sais, en anglais ils disent : « it creates a requirement for cultural programming in all long-term-care homes instead of improving the availability of cultural-specific homes in communities that need it ». Très belle ligne—beautiful wording—mais si tu n'as personne pour le donner—on a une pénurie de « PSW », d'infirmières. Écoute, il y a encore des « nursing agencies » qui viennent, mais ils ne parlent pas en anglais. Qu'est-ce que tu fais pour donner le service en français ou le service culturel? Comment va-t-on être capable de desservir ça? Les « PSW », on a une pénurie.

Fait que, là, ce qui arrive est qu'ils partent; ils vont au « home care ». Ils vont dans les soins de longue durée ou dans les hôpitaux; c'est plus payant. Fait que là, tu vides un bassin pour remplir l'autre, parce que le monde sort plus vite qu'il ne rentre. Vous pouvez me dire : « regarde, on en forme, on en forme », mais on n'en forme pas assez. En tout cas, on n'a pas de services en français. On a besoin de plus de « PSW » et d'infirmières en français, parce que

les agences, il y en a une, de temps en temps, qui parle en français—ils veulent en avoir, mais il n'y en a pas. Pourtant, ils disent qu'il faut s'éloigner de ça.

Il y a un soin de longue durée qui a réussi parce qu'il rémunère, il donne de bons bénéfiques. Fait que, là, ils ont attiré des « PSW » et des infirmières, bien, c'est en les rémunérant, en les payant comme il faut et en les valorisant dans leur travail. J'ai négocié 21 ans, puis je disais aux employeurs : « Ce n'est pas un secret. Si tu veux garder ton monde, commence par les respecter, paye-les adéquatement et donne-leur des bons bénéfiques. » Comme c'est là, ces infirmières et ces « PSW » sont brûlés. Il y a une pénurie. Je t'ai dit : c'est une vocation. Fait que, là, ils se sentent mal de s'en aller; ils restent là, travaillent de longues heures et ils se brûlent et tombent sur le « sick leave ». C'est un cycle vicieux, mais c'est ça, la réalité.

Puis, quand j'entends que tout va bien—ça me fait penser à une chanson, mais je ne chanterai pas; j'ai assez chanté dans cette Chambre ici; je n'ai pas besoin de chanter une autre fois. Mais c'est ça qui se passe. On a du monde, tu sais—on dit qu'on va aussi pousser le « vivre à domicile ». Écoute, vivre à domicile et tu n'as pas de service—qu'est-ce qu'ils font? Ils sont brûlés, ils sont brûlés « tight ».

Tu sais, même le gouvernement—ils ont manqué à leur devoir. Ils ont proposé qu'il y ait quatre heures de service par patient. Ils ont même failli à ça. Dans la moindre des choses, on doit être capable—pourquoi on n'en a pas, qu'ils ne sont pas capables de délivrer? Parce qu'il manque de personnes. Tu sais, ce sont des belles paroles, des belles lignes, mais quand tu commences à regarder, qu'est-ce qui soutient ça? C'est un château de paille; ça s'écroule parce qu'il n'y a pas ce qui retient tout ça pour desservir la population.

C'est ça qui se passe. Mettre des belles choses puis—écoute, je suis le premier à reconnaître qu'il faut faire les bonnes choses, mais commençons à faire certain qu'on a le monde pour desservir ces choses-là, puis commençons par avoir plus de lits. Remplissez les promesses que vous avez faites. On fait des belles promesses, puis on ne livre pas la marchandise.

1620

Quand tu as 135 personnes qui attendent pour rentrer dans les soins de longue durée, puis ça prend—comme je te le dis, c'est en bas de la liste. C'est huit ans, là; c'est long. Il ne faut pas oublier, si tu te fais évaluer, plus ta condition est aggravée, tu vas sauter la queue. Tu vas monter en haut. C'est correct, ça. C'est la manière que ça devrait être. Mais il y a des personnes qui en ont besoin aussi, qui n'ont pas de place où aller, qui n'ont pas de famille. Qu'est-ce qu'elles font? Qu'est-ce qu'elles font? Je vous pose la question. C'est une réalité qui existe dans mon comté.

Mais, comme je dis souvent quand je vois des choses de même, c'est comme nous donner un cheval mort, comme on dit en français. « Giving me a dead horse »—où est-ce que je vais aller avec ça, moi? Mais c'est ça qui se passe. On fait des belles lignes et on fait des beaux titres, et ça ne fonctionne pas.

Je vais vous parler—il ne me reste plus grand temps. Ça passe trop vite. Je veux vous donner un exemple. J'ai des familles qui ont été obligées de faire des plaintes contre un des soins de longue durée chez nous. Ils voyaient des bleus sur leur mère. La madame faisait de la démence, ce qui fait que, tu sais, ils ont commencé à questionner—et ils ont même caché une caméra et ont vu certaines choses, mais ce n'était pas assez clair pour mettre des charges.

Ils sont allés voir la direction, et la direction a fait la bonne chose, mais ils ont dit, même avec tout ça—puis c'est arrivé à Extencicare—ils ont dit que le service que la mère recevait était bon. Mais il y avait deux « PSW » qui s'occupaient des changements, puis ils se doutaient qu'il y avait certaines choses qui se passaient—assez que la madame avait, comme, un choc-traumatisme toutes les fois qu'ils rentraient dans la chambre. La bonne chose que la direction a faite, elle a retiré ces deux personnes-là puis qu'ils n'y touchent plus. Là, ils ont mis une caméra dessus, elle aussi—la famille peut demander. Il y a beaucoup de monde qui ne sait pas ça : tu peux demander qu'une caméra soit là quand ta mère reçoit des services, ou ton père, ou qui que ce soit, pour faire certain qu'ils ont de bons services.

Mais, à la fin de la journée, ils n'ont pas pu prouver que c'était—c'était leur parole contre la leur, parce qu'ils sont même allés voir la police pour une investigation. La police a dit : « Ce n'était pas assez clair. On ne pourra pas mettre des charges. »

Ils m'ont dit : « Le problème est arrangé, Guy, mais on veut que tu en parles, parce qu'il ne faut pas que ce se répète. » On a une obligation de faire certain—c'est pour ça que c'est beau avoir des plus grosses pénalités—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Questions?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: I appreciate the member opposite gave his address in Canada's other official language. I respect that very much. I am not as capable as he is in terms of being able to speak in the other official language, so I am putting this question in English.

He would know from reviewing the bill that we're strengthening the existing requirements under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021, to recognize and respect the cultural, linguistic, religious and spiritual needs of residents. This includes new regulations that require long-term-care homes to increase information available in French.

Would he care to explain if he is going to support this initiative and all aspects of this progressive legislation, and if not, why not?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci pour la question. Comme j'ai dit, c'est bien de faire ça. La première fois, j'ai dit qu'il y a de bonnes choses dans ce projet de loi-là—même ils nous ont écouté un petit peu dans les comités. Mais de là à aller dire que ça va répondre aux besoins des francophones ou des services francophones, je suis un peu en désaccord, parce qu'il nous manque du personnel pour être capable de délivrer ce que vous proposez. La culture ne s'arrête pas juste à du langage ou quelque chose d'écrit sur

le mur, là. Ça va bien plus loin que ça. La culture, c'est la langue, le chant, qui on est—il y a tout qui rentre là-dedans. Je ne suis pas francophone juste parce que je suis capable de parler francophone; c'est parce que j'ai été élevé, j'ai mon éducation, j'ai ma religion—écoute, tout ça est relié. Mais si on n'a pas le monde pour être capable de faire tout ce que vous dites, ce n'est pas plus fort que ce qui est écrit là.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

M^{me} Sandy Shaw: Merci pour vos paroles aujourd'hui. Nous savons qu'il y a presque 40 000 gens qui attendent un lit dans une maison de soins de longue durée. Aussi, vous avez parlé de la pénurie de main-d'oeuvre dans les soins de longue durée. Est-ce que vous pouvez nous dire quelques mots sur le fait qu'il y a un sous-investissement de la part du gouvernement dans ce secteur ? Aussi, il y a les profits qui jouent un rôle. Nous savons que les sociétés à but lucratif, peut-être, sont plus occupées par les profits que par les soins. Est-ce que vous pouvez nous dire si vous trouvez ça un problème dans ce secteur?

M. Guy Bourgouin: C'est sûr que dès qu'on parle du privé comparé à l'autre système qu'on a—c'est pour ça que j'étais surpris de la réponse de la ministre quand elle m'a dit : « Guy, je vais prendre la proposition de la ville de Kapuskasing pour nous faire une proposition pour une autre maison, parce que définitivement, ça va être géré différemment qu'un privé. » On va voir ce qu'ils vont faire, mais c'est sûr que je suis concerné.

Pourquoi est-ce que j'ai un « C home » encore en 2025? Il y a eu des propositions faites en 2022 pour de nouveaux lits, puis quand j'ai parlé avec Extencicare, ils ont dit : « Guy, peut-être que tu ne le sais pas, mais ton « C home » est moins pire que d'autres. » En d'autres mots, leur responsabilité était beaucoup plus où il y a beaucoup plus de population. Tu sais ce que je veux dire? Ils vont pouvoir bâtir une plus grosse maison. Ça fait que, moi, ma communauté doit attendre pour presque six à sept ans, huit ans.

Ça, c'est sans mentionner que, si tu vas dans les communautés autochtones, ils n'en ont pas de maisons de longue durée. Mon collègue, il va en avoir une à Sioux Lookout. Mais quand tu vas dans les communautés autochtones—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you. Question?

M. Stéphane Sarrazin: Je trouve ça intéressant, toutes les discussions qu'on a, surtout du parti à l'opposition. Moi, je dois dire que j'ai très hâte—en janvier, il va y avoir une inauguration chez moi, de la Résidence Prescott et Russell, un projet de 100 millions de dollars. Je dois dire que je suis très fier de voir les initiatives qu'il y a dans ce projet de loi-là.

Quelque chose qui me porte un peu à confusion, c'est que j'entendais les gens, tantôt, de l'opposition dire : « Ah, ça fait longtemps qu'on veut ça. Ça fait longtemps qu'on demande ça. » Mais, tout d'un coup, on a le sentiment qu'ils vont voter contre. Donc, je me questionne à dire, est-ce que vraiment vous êtes pour, à améliorer les services

pour nos aînés dans les résidences de soins de longue durée, ou est-ce que vous êtes contre? Est-ce que vous allez supporter ce projet de loi-là?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci à mon collègue de Prescott-Russell. Félicitations pour ton foyer de longue durée; j'aimerais dire la même chose. J'aimerais dire que ton gouvernement a les mêmes valeurs quand ça vient à mon monde qu'il a eues pour le tien. J'aimerais dire que—à cause que mon comté est orange, que mon monde mérite moins que toi; ça, ce sont des réalités qu'on voit. Votre gouvernement est tellement partisan que vous ne voyez plus clair. Vous oubliez une grosse partie de la province. Puis ça, c'est inacceptable, parce qu'on mérite six ans à huit ans pour attendre un soins de longue durée. Je ne sais pas comment c'était avant ça par chez vous, mais chez nous, ça n'a jamais été aussi pire que c'est là.

On veut des améliorations. Trois ministres—ils nous disent que ça va se faire. Trois ministres—j'attends encore. Ne vient pas nous dire—pour le projet de loi, est-ce qu'on va le supporter? Je te dis qu'il y a des bonnes choses dans ton projet de loi, mais mes commettants méritent le même service que toi—excusez, through you, Speaker : que toi.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

M. Joel Harden: C'est toujours un grand plaisir d'écouter mon ami de Mushkegowuk—Baie James. Et comme j'ai eu la chance d'écouter tes mots, c'est clair pour moi qu'il y a les bons mots, les bonnes lignes, mais il y a aussi une responsabilité faite par le gouvernement pour donner les fonds nécessaires pour les équipes qui travaillent dans les maisons de soins. Ce ne sont pas les lits qui donnent les soins aux personnes âgées. Et quand il y a une personne, par exemple, un aîné âgé atteint de démence, et cette personne ne peut pas chercher des soins en français, on a des vrais problèmes. On a des vrais problèmes pour chercher des personnes pour travailler dans des maisons de soins, parce que s'il y a des conflits entre les résidents et l'équipe qui travaille parce qu'il n'y a pas beaucoup de capacité pour donner les soins en français—on a des problèmes sérieux.

1630

Donc, avez-vous un peu d'avis pour le gouvernement pour les ressources nécessaires pour ce projet de loi, pour être capable?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci pour la question. C'est sûr qu'il faut remettre de l'emphase sur donner les services en français. Ça, ça veut dire qu'il faut développer encore plus, et il faut investir l'argent pour attirer le monde. Le problème, c'est qu'il n'y a pas d'intérêt. L'intérêt n'est plus élevé comme il l'était dans ce domaine-là.

Tu sais, je ne t'ai pas parlé d'un métier; je t'ai parlé d'une vocation. Ce monde-là—c'est une vocation, travailler dans ce domaine-là. Prendre soin du monde, ce n'est pas comme réparer un moteur de char; c'est de s'occuper du monde. Imagine-toi quelqu'un qui a de la démence et qui parle juste français : il a du mal et il ne se fait pas comprendre. Puis après ça on se demande : « Bon, bien, on va la médicamenter parce qu'elle est en crise tout le temps. Elle est en crise tout le temps; on va lui donner

des médicaments, juste pour l'endormir ou la relaxer », et tout ce temps-là, ça ne se fait pas comprendre.

C'est ça que je vous dis : on a un gros devoir, comme province, de faire sûr qu'on donne les services nécessaires. Puis, tu sais, le programme culturel, c'est bien beau, mais on a besoin de bien plus que ça. On a besoin du monde qui donne ce service-là à ces personnes—avec la vocation—puis de mettre de la valeur dans ce domaine-là parce qu'on a enlevé cette valeur-là en ne les payant pas et en ne les reconnaissant pas—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you. Next question, quick question.

M. Joel Harden: Merci, mon ami. Pour continuer ce dialogue ici, s'il y a un problème dans une maison de soins, s'il n'y a aucune personne qu'on peut embaucher dans une maison de soins, est-ce qu'il y a les mêmes problèmes dans les hôpitaux?

Par exemple, on a les travailleurs sociaux qui travaillent dans les hôpitaux, mais il y a une convention collective dans une place comme ça qui est plus belle que pour les maisons de soins. On n'a pas de problème pour embaucher des personnes dans des hôpitaux. Si on augmente les salaires dans les maisons de soins, est-ce que c'est une bonne idée pour le gouvernement de le faire?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci pour la question. Écoute, c'est sûr—comme j'ai dit, j'ai négocié 21 ans. Si tu veux garder ton monde, il faut que tu les rémunères, il faut que tu les respectes et il faut que tu leur donnes de bons bénéfices. Tu sais ce que je veux dire : si tu ne les respectes pas et que tu ne leur donnes pas l'argent—parce qu'ils ne sont pas pires que les autres. Tu vas aller là où tu peux faire vivre ta famille le mieux. Ça fait que, si ça paye plus pour le même travail dans les hôpitaux, comparé aux soins de longue durée, ou bien donc, encore pire, que tu travailles dans le domaine à domicile, bien, qu'est-ce que tu penses qui arrive?

Et c'est normal. Pourquoi tu penses qu'ils s'en vont dans le système privé? Ça paye plus, le système privé. Pourtant, ils font le même travail qu'eux autres. Mais ça, c'est eux autres qui l'ont créé. Puis aujourd'hui, on paye le prix, et les soins de longue durée payent le prix. Tout le monde paye le prix.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I will be sharing my time with the member from Kingston and the Islands.

I usually say this at the end of debate, but I'm going to say it at the beginning of debate. I was talking to the House leader about this bill, and I hope that this bill goes to committee. I know we're in a big rush here because it's Christmas, and we're putting stuff through at lightning speed. There are good things in this bill, but there are things in this bill that we need to talk to stakeholders about, because they are not perfect. And I think you will agree, once you take a look at the bill about those things, that we have to consult with the people who do this work every day. It is important that we do that in this legislation.

The other thing I would like to add before getting into the bill is, after the pandemic, after what we saw hap-

pening in long-term care, after the tragedies, we had a long-term-care commission that was shared by Jack Kitts, former CEO of the Ottawa Hospital, anesthesiologist, great doctor. He made 84 recommendations. I think that the government might take them one at a time. Then, the government said, “Well, we don’t actually want to do a five-year review on how do we do on these 84 recommendations.” That’s kind of concerning. You hire somebody, you hire an expert. He gives you 84 recommendations into the tragedies that happened in long-term care, those awful things that happened, and then you put it, as I said earlier this week, in a desk, on a shelf, collecting dust. I think we should all take a look at that long-term-care commission’s report and see how far we’ve come in meeting the recommendations of that report.

There are a lot of good things in the bill. I think it will start to address palliative care and dementia care, and it recognizes the linguistic, cultural and religious needs of residents.

I’d like to focus a little bit on language. Language is critically important, because as you age and your cognitive function declines, you often revert back to your first language, and whether that’s French or Mandarin or Arabic—it’s very hard if you don’t have somebody helping you or serving you who you can communicate directly with. So I think that this is a really good thing in the bill and that it has put a priority on this. What has to follow it, though, is the support and the money to be able to do that. It just doesn’t happen because we write it down in a piece of legislation. The only way it’s going to happen is if there’s some support behind that. I’m not criticizing that. I’m just stating that that’s the fact. That’s what’s going to need to happen for this part of the bill, in section 1, to be able to make it work.

One of the things that isn’t in here that should be in here—and some people in the room may know about this—is spousal reunification. That’s when two spouses are in long-term care and they’re living 30 miles apart, or 40 kilometres apart, and we try to bring them together. Because there’s a way of setting priorities for admittance to long-term care, what has happened since the pandemic is, spousal reunification has fallen further down—it climbed up over a period of time, to be a more important factor in designating a place to live, but it has fallen back.

We all have heard those stories, all been part of those stories, where somebody is separated from a loved one. It seems to me that that’s almost as important as language or a spiritual belief. So I would have liked to have seen that in here somewhere, that there would have been a commitment to try to make that better for people, because that’s what we’re saying in this legislation—we’re going to try to make it better for people’s religious and cultural needs and language needs. Well, we need to do that for when people are separated and they’ve been married for 60 years. And we’ve all seen that.

This is one of the concerns I have and why we should bring it to committee: We go through a pattern—and it goes through a series of governments—where we look at offences and we increase the fines. Maybe we increase the

offences, but we increase the fines and—I’m not pointing a finger at anybody, but we keep doing this. Nobody pays the fines because they don’t get charged. It still happens. I’m not pointing the finger at the government. It happened under us. I’m not sure if it happened over here, but probably not, because it was a long time ago and there weren’t as many old people—and people were driving and parking in their long-term-care homes. It was different. So I think we need to take a look at how we make this work better. One of the complaints that homes have is that there’s too much enforcement and not enough to change behaviour, which either means we’re not getting the help that we need or nobody is getting fined. So I guess it’s good for all of us to talk tough about if somebody does something wrong, but unless there’s actually going to be a consequence, it’s not really going to change behaviour. The number of people who are actually charged under this and pay these fines is exceptionally, exceptionally low.

There are a lot of people who work in long-term care who are afraid of the inspectors coming in, not because they’re doing bad things, but because of the power that the inspectors have. Homes have raised that with us. I know that there is concern about the inclusion of volunteers in this piece of legislation—what that’s going to do to the homes. I don’t think that they’re saying no, but they’re saying, “If volunteers are subject to inspection, we might lose volunteers.” Maybe that’s just the consequence of what’s going to happen. I think they should be accountable for what they do, but that’s why we need to talk to the OLTCA and all the other long-term-care home associations and homes that are out there.

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In the last piece—and this is another place where there is some concern—is the inclusion of nurse practitioners as medical directors. That’s already happening, but I think there are legitimate concerns amongst nurse practitioners and doctors about that scope of practice and for people being ready to do that. I think it would be good to at least hear from both nurse practitioners and Ontario’s doctors and long-term-care doctors about exactly what this is going to mean in terms of a change in long-term care and the role of clinical director. I think it’s a valid, legitimate question to ask these organizations. That’s why we need to have committee hearings. I think it would be a useful thing to do during the break, that we could have a few days where we could get just depositions from different interested parties who are affected by this legislation to be able to say to us, “Well, here’s what we think is going to happen,” or “Here’s what our concerns are.” That’s the best way to get a good piece of legislation.

I think—just to repeat myself—there are good things in this bill. The bill will need to have the financial support once it’s passed to be able to execute the things that are in the bill. I think there’s a couple other things we could put in the bill, one of them being—I mentioned spousal reunification and about making that a priority that’s equal or at least we have a discussion about whether we want to do that or not, not have it go up or down the scale. If you can imagine, I’ve been married for 45 years—I thought it

was 46—45 years. So maybe, in all fairness, Linda wouldn't want to be living in the same place as me; I'm not sure.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm sure she would, John.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, I'm sure.

I can't imagine being separated. Right now, coming here, we're separated, and many of you know that; you know what it's like to be separated. It's hard. But can you imagine getting to the end, where you don't have to travel for work, and you're together, you're in your golden years—or even if they're not as golden anymore—being separated, how much impact that would have on your life? Some people are so closely tied together that without their partner, they're not complete. They're lost. That's why I think we could have a discussion about where that fits in in this bill. I think that's a fair thing to do.

I want to encourage the House leader again that we should put this bill to committee, not because I think we need to tear it apart, but I think we need to look hard at what the people who work in long-term-care homes are saying and that we need to look at what are the things that aren't here that would belong here, like spousal reunification.

Thank you very much for your attention and your patience, everyone. I'll turn it over to my colleague from Kingston and the Islands.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): The member from Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ted Hsu: In talking about the principle of this bill, I want to talk about what I think is not in this bill and should be in the bill. It's motivated by a petition that came from my riding regarding support for 24/7 caregivers: 24/7 family caregivers, they provide a lot of the care and services and take the burden off publicly funded long-term care and other kinds of care, and if we were to try to replace that, it would be way too costly. They do provide an essential service in our society. Many of them have given up careers, they've given up businesses—starting a business or continuing a business. They've given up a chance to earn a living in order to provide the care that's needed by people in their family.

One of the current challenges that we have with supporting caregivers is that the programs are designed for caregivers who are currently employed or who have been employed recently, and that is not the case for many of these people who have dedicated their lives to caring for family members. For example, tax credits offer benefits to people mostly with higher taxable incomes. EI benefits are limited to those who have recently been employed and are only available for a short term. Caregiver leave is capped at eight weeks annually per family member requiring care and it's contingent on having current employment.

It's really important to recognize that there's another class of caregivers that provide a very important source of care and support for those who need it in society that have been overlooked so far. I think this bill would have been an opportunity to address that. These caregivers are so important to help seniors age in place and it saves the government substantial costs, especially institutional costs.

I think it is important to recognize 24/7 caregivers. One way to do that is to provide more respite care, because we don't want these caregivers to burn out. They're providing so much care and so many services in our society, essentially for free. It would be very expensive to replace them. Preventing burnout by providing some financial relief or respite care would be a very useful thing to do, and would pay many, many dividends in terms of allowing these family caregivers to continue to provide the services and the attention that they're giving to those who need help.

I just wanted to point out that this bill would have been an opportunity to recognize the important role that 24/7 family caregivers play in our society.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I notice that the member from Ottawa South made some thoughtful comments about keeping couples together, keeping spouses together in long-term care and he described the difficulty in doing that. It's hard to do that, because at one point, you might say that keeping married couples together is an imperative that ranks in the ranking or hierarchy of imperatives, and then something else might come up. For example, one spouse might need very little care and another spouse might need dementia care. Those might not be available at the same facility at the same time. So it becomes kind of a balancing act or a way to put together the pieces of the puzzle.

I wanted to invite the member from Ottawa South—if he would like to discuss or offer any ideas about how that might occur.

Mr. John Fraser: When you do have residents who have diverse needs or needs at the opposite ends, not every home is going to be able to do that, because not every home has a secure unit and doesn't have availability at that time. Sometimes, there's no availability in the secure unit or the dementia care floor, so it's one of those things where you try to make it happen as quickly as you can. Sometimes you can't—I'm not saying that you can always do it—but sometimes you're waiting for someone to get a spot in the dementia care before you can bring people together. I just think we shouldn't forget it, because we raised it up and it's sliding down a bit right now. I'm not trying to sound the alarm; I just don't see it. I think we all agree that's important and so that's why I raised it—not as a criticism, but as a point that we have to remember.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: There are a couple of bills—I mean, the government is talking about respect for seniors, but we need to remember Bill 218. That was after COVID, when 6,000-plus seniors died in long-term care, primarily for-profit, and the government passed legislation that gave immunity to these for-profit corporations, so the people that lost loved ones never saw justice under this government.

And we're talking about Bill 7; it's not just about keeping residents together. Bill 7 forced residents, alternative-level-of-care patients in hospitals, to go to

long-term-care homes, whether they chose to or not, against their will. And if they chose not to, they faced a penalty of inordinate per-day charges as long as they stayed there. These are two cruel bills that this government put forward, and I don't think they come anywhere close—this bill doesn't come anywhere close to remedying that.

1650

How do you feel about this government's Bill 218 and Bill 7 and what we had before us, which doesn't even come close to addressing the cruelty that was visited upon—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Response?

Mr. John Fraser: Well, I think the government has made a regular thing of making themselves immune to liability. It's not a surprise. It's not a surprise they did it in long-term care.

Bill 7—here's the thing: It affects about 2,200 families, and it's something that hospitals have been asking for for 20 years. We can't see those people that it happens to. They don't always complain. It gives a lot of power to one person to make a decision and says, "That's where you're going, whether you like it or not." I don't think any of us want that.

So, again, another caution is, it gives a lot of power, and the resident or the patient becomes kind of secondary. I think there was a better balance before. I'm not a fan of Bill 7. I've been clear about that.

I'm happy to take the next question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Natalie Pierre: Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to visit Dundurn Place long-term-care home in a neighbouring riding, where they recently implemented something called the Butterfly program. The Butterfly approach, or the Butterfly program, is designed for dementia care settings. It focuses on delivering emotional-based care, person-centred care that connects people in a dignified, holistic and human way.

My question for the member opposite is around funding that this bill proposes for staff training focused on emotional-based care models. Will the member opposite support these essential training programs that are outlined in the bill?

Mr. John Fraser: I think I've given my indication that I'm supportive of the bill. I just think we can make it better, and that's the reason for committee. I spent four years in government. My mandate was palliative and end-of-life care, so I'm very familiar with the Butterfly model and the expansion of palliative care and home hospice and in-home hospice.

Long-term-care homes—they're not quite big hospices, but they need to be a bit, right? Because they need to be about what is important to people at the ends of their lives. And that's what palliative care is all about, really: your choices, your needs. I think that's a good thing, and I'm

very, very supportive of that. I hope nobody misconstrues my debate.

I'm not being critical of it; I just think we can make it better. I just want to encourage the government to make sure that we fund things like that training—not just the training, but the backfill that goes with that when somebody has to go on training. That's a big challenge.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you to my neighbour from Ottawa South for those remarks, and to the member from Kingston and the Islands.

I'm wondering if the member for Ottawa South could reflect upon something that is happening in the province of Ontario right now that I had understood there was a meeting of the minds of all the members of this House about. I don't see it talked about in this bill, so that's why I raise it in this question.

A gentleman named Paul Ziman, who is a resident of Windsor, is currently being blocked from seeing his mom in a long-term-care home because the home has levied the Trespass to Property Act. We passed a resolution in this House in March 2021—I was happy to put it on the floor—to direct care home operators that they couldn't use Trespass to Property Act notices to stop people from seeing loved ones.

There should be a focus on them to mediate their disputes; there should be a focus on them to come to a way in which differences over care can be negotiated, because that sledgehammer approach is really cruel to seniors and people with disabilities.

I don't see that talked about in this bill. I'm wondering if the member, who knows this sector, can talk about that.

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to thank my colleague from Ottawa Centre, and I really want to thank him for the question because, when you go without notes, sometimes you forget something that's really important in the bill.

I think that section 2, schedule 2, is sort of trying to address that, but in a very kind of blunt way and it's not very clear. There are about 100 people who have trespass orders at retirement homes or long-term-care homes or group homes, and that's a tool that we all agree shouldn't be used and there should be some form of making sure that peoples' family can get to see them.

So it's a problem. I'm not sure that this is going to address it. I think it's trying to go down that road, but there's no real mechanism that says, "If we had this kind of dispute, here's how we're going to solve it."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

MPP Zee Hamid: Speaker, through you, I'd like to commend the member for his speech, as well as his support.

One of the big issues that we're dealing with is elder abuse, including financial exploitation and scams. It remains a massive concern for residents of long-term-care homes, especially ones dealing with dementia and other issues. I was wondering if the member could talk about things we're doing to address these issues. As you know,

elder abuse is not an abstract issue; it's something that I'm sure most of us actually have dealt with either through our constituency office or through our families. I was wondering what the member has to add to that.

Mr. John Fraser: As I said earlier, the part of this bill that addresses offences and who can be charged with those offences has expanded a bit, and I think we should be a little bit concerned about that. We're actually setting higher fines but not levying, right?

Seniors are very vulnerable, not just in their homes but in long-term care. I think one of the things that's not really in this bill—and long-term-care homes have been asking us about this: “We need you to work with us a bit more. We need some help to help our staff be more effective and better at working with residents, recognizing when there's a problem.” Wherever there are vulnerable people, there is always a risk of things like fraud and being scammed.

I support this bill. I think we probably can do more to work with long-term-care homes and their staff.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I rise today to speak in favour of the proposed Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, 2024. As has been already said, our population of seniors is growing across Ontario. And our seniors' population has become more diverse, speaking a multitude of languages that matches a lot of different cultures woven together to create an incredible tapestry that is our province.

This is a blessing in my riding of Richmond Hill, where our diversity has made us so much stronger, fostering a community where the shared respect for our elders and the importance of family has helped to build bridges that link us together. This shared respect for the diversity of linguistic and cultural heritages is one of the reasons why I am so supportive of this bill. The provisions in it about ensuring that cultural and linguistic diversity are respected in our long-term-care homes are beautiful ways of recognizing the importance of our shared heritage. Fostering this respect as our seniors continue to age and require more care is a way of ensuring that they are able to live the lives of dignity which they deserve.

I especially like that this bill fosters inclusion without adding regulatory burden or direct compliance costs for any of the regulated entities covered. This demonstrates that our government is delivering on its commitment to always keep our people first, to get real change done that is customer-service-focused and which doesn't burden those delivering the care our seniors need and want.

Madam Speaker, delivering high-quality care for our seniors when they are in long-term care is incredibly important. Ensuring that the care fits their cultural and linguistic needs is also very important. It shows respect for each senior as a distinct person with unique needs.

I want to turn now to how we are supporting our seniors who live in the community. These are seniors who, as the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility says, face enemy number one: social isolation. We know that when seniors are isolated, they are far more likely to have physical and

mental health challenges. They feel lost and isolated from their local cultural and linguistic communities.

1700

We have already talked about how government is addressing these challenges in long-term care. We should also be talking about how we're helping our seniors to stay active, healthy and connected in our communities, and by this, I mean the historic investment which was announced in our fall economic statement to expand the number of seniors active living centres by 100 additional centres this year. This is a game-changer for seniors.

Under the leadership of our Premier, Doug Ford, and Minister Cho, we put out a request for our new seniors living centres and especially targeted gaps in existing coverage. We asked for proposals that help to fill not only the geographic gaps but also the cultural and linguistic gaps.

We are deeply appreciative of the 316 seniors living centres that are currently operating in Ontario. They are doing incredible work to help our seniors find meaningful ways to stay engaged and connected in our communities. In my riding, in Richmond Hill, I get to see that first-hand through the dedication of volunteers and staff at the McConaghy Centre, which is operated by the city of Richmond Hill.

In my role as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, I have been able to travel all across the province to see how other centres are also supporting our seniors. They are delivering interesting and engaging programs and activities that help the seniors to stay active and connected. They help foster new friendships and strengthen existing ones. They help share information from trusted partners like the Ontario Securities Commission about how seniors can stay safe and not fall victim to financial fraud. They also work with local health partners to ensure that seniors have access to important vaccination and health services information. They truly are the social and information hubs in our communities, and it is amazing to think about what we can help deliver for the people of this province through 100 more centres opening.

I am honoured, Madam Speaker, to be part of a government that truly puts the people first, and that includes putting our seniors first. The expansion of the seniors active living centre network will help thousands of seniors of many geographic areas, of many cultural and linguistic heritages to push back against the enemy of social isolation. Keeping them connected into our communities is important for their physical and mental health. It is also a critical element of helping to keep our communities themselves strong too.

When our seniors stay connected, we're all able to benefit from the wisdom, energy and insights that they offer. Our seniors offer much more through the countless volunteer hours they provide in our community organizations as well.

Through the expansion, we are ensuring that our systems and supports for our seniors are matching the increased diversity of the population they are serving. We

all benefit when our seniors stay connected, and these two examples are wonderful ways of demonstrating that our government is ensuring that the broad-based supports for our seniors are growing and changing to recognize the needs of seniors today.

Madam Speaker, we have talked about what it means to do government differently, to deliver customer-service-focused supports that meet people in the way they want to be met. This is one of the reasons that I am excited to stand and speak to a bill that offers a multi-ministry approach to support Ontarians. People in our great province don't care which ministry is delivering the supports they want. They aren't interested in the building of silos that leave them trying to figure out who can help them. They just want government to work to deliver the services they want. We see one government, not a collection of ministries. This is why a multi-ministry approach to improving the quality and delivery of care for seniors is so important. It recognizes the importance of keeping them front and centre in the forming of programs and services that support them.

I want to thank the Ministers of Long-Term Care, Health and Seniors and Accessibility for working collaboratively together. They've delivered this bill that truly does put seniors and their caregivers first—changes like the amendments to the Retirement Home Act, which reinforce residents' rights to receive ongoing support from caregivers, including family members and friends. These common-sense changes help ensure that residents can receive the physical, mental, social and emotional supports which they deserve.

These changes align strongly with the proposed changes for long-term-care homes that enhance the recognition and respect of residents there. Our government is aligning these changes so that wherever a senior is in their life journey, whether living independent in the community, in a retirement home or in a long-term-care home or anywhere else along the continuum of care, they can receive the services and supports that they need, and that is what they deserve.

At its core, these changes are about delivering a culture of respect: respect for our seniors; respect for their unique cultural, linguistic and geographic needs; respect for the critical role which seniors play in our communities, and for the need to help them to continue to thrive as they stay active and connected. This is why I believe that the investment in this bill, funded through the Ministry of Health, of \$20 million over three years into adult day programs is so important. These programs deliver benefits to both seniors and their caregivers. They provide resources and often small, needed breaks for caregivers. These funds will help to alleviate the wait-list pressures which these programs face as our province's senior population continues to grow. This additional funding recognizes the important role of caregivers to helping our seniors live in the communities as long as they want.

We know, that the caregivers, with dementia, have a lot of stress, anxiety and fatigue. They deserve additional support as they care for their loved ones. This is why an expansion of respite services through the investment of an

additional \$20 million over three years is so important. Respite services help our seniors and caregivers to get a much-needed break by providing day, overnight and weekend visits, in-home visits and recreational programs and activities. It recognizes the importance of the whole community to support our seniors by also helping those who directly engage in caring for those in need. These are the compassionate investments that we put into this bill. They recognize the specific needs of our seniors and those who support them. They are multi-ministry, customer-service-focused and cross linguistic, cultural and geographic lines.

I'd like to take a moment to say thank you to our seniors and to our caregivers who support them. Our seniors have invested and continue to invest considerable time, energy and wisdom into our communities. We are blessed to live in a province that is wonderfully diverse and that has flourished through the efforts of our seniors. Our seniors deserve to live with dignity and respect. This bill demonstrates the commitment of our government to support our seniors and those who care for them.

1710

It is one of the many reasons I'm honoured to stand here to express my support. It is also one of the reasons why I introduced my private member's bill to recognize the contribution of seniors in our businesses. Whether it is in my riding of Richmond Hill or anywhere else in our province, organizations have incredible institutional resources available to them in the wisdom and energy of the current and recent employees who are seniors. This is what led me to introduce my bill to help bring positive attention to those organizations that tap into this deep wellspring of knowledge. The more that we can continue to foster intergenerational learning, the more resilient our communities and organizations will be.

In fact, this week, along with Minister Cho, we have been going to different areas, letting the communities know that we're expanding the program for the senior care program. And so many of them come out, because they want to know how they can partner with us and receive the funding so that we can all work together.

It is better for the community to care for the seniors in their own community, because they know exactly who each one is. And I'm so happy, when I visited different places in the province, that the seniors expressed to me that they can go to the parks together, they can play together. All these programs are really helping them out of that social isolation, which, according to Minister Cho, is the number one enemy to our seniors.

I also want to say that we are working together with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Long-Term Care and the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility. This is a good way, so that we can coordinate all the services in one continuous program, which is why I support this bill so much.

In closing, I'd like again to thank the Minister of Long-Term Care, the Minister of Health and the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility for creating these packages to help support the seniors and our caregivers. And on behalf

of the constituents in Richmond Hill, I want to thank all of our seniors and those who care for them. To you, we have so much that we owe. We are honoured to have you live in our province, and you have built it, and it's now our chance to do the best we can for all of our seniors.

As a super senior myself, I do everything I can to help the seniors, not only because I will enjoy them one day, but because I see how important it is for them to live the rest of their life in a very deserving way.

Thank you very much, and I would hope that everybody in the House supports this bill so that we can all care for our seniors.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member across for their presentation.

It's not too long ago that we saw during the pandemic some of the worst outcomes happening in long-term-care homes, and while the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act talks about creating new offences and penalties, I would like to remind the member it was this very government that passed legislation to effectively protect long-term-care owners and operators—and themselves—from legal liability for deaths that happened during the pandemic. And let's remember that in Orchard Villa, the army had to come in to rescue seniors who were dying from basic dehydration, who were calling out for assistance, and it was a situation so dire that those first responders suffered from PTSD as a result.

I would like to ask the member, why is it that the worst of the worst operators during the pandemic are now being awarded further contracts by this government? What does that say to seniors when you're rewarding the people who did the worst?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member for bringing up this question.

In fact, as I was expressing earlier, with the previous government we had only 611 beds. We have now improved it to 58,000 beds. Not only that, we have improved the quality of care. Even with the seniors, we are giving them different kinds of lessons about fraud—about different kinds of things. We have been investigating to see that each of the long-term cares are doing their part properly.

The quality of care is very important for us, and we will continue to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Brian Riddell: The Seniors Active Living Centres Program plays a vital role in enhancing the well-being of seniors across Ontario by providing them with opportunities to stay active, engaged and connected with their communities. Expanding this program demonstrates our government's commitment to supporting the physical, mental and social health of Ontario seniors.

Can the member explain how this expansion will directly benefit seniors, and what new opportunities or initiatives may be introduced as part of this growth? Additionally, can the member elaborate on specific com-

ponents that the new funding will support, such as program development, facility upgrades or enhanced accessibility measures?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I thank the member—or my seatmate, I should call you—for giving me this opportunity to explain it even more. Actually, as I was explaining earlier, the SALC program is very well received by everybody as I go to different parts of the province.

We have introduced up to 100 new programs in the underserved communities. By 2025-26, we are going to increase the funding from \$50,000 to \$55,000. This expansion will help ensure that more seniors have access to vital community resources and keep them socially connected, physically active and safe.

In terms of the amount of investments, the expansion includes \$5.5 million for the maintenance and operation of 100 new programs, \$2.25 million to increase base funding for all 316 existing programs and \$0.72 million to find five new full-time equivalent positions to help administer the program.

This program expansion reflects our commitment, ensuring that seniors have the support that they need to remain active, engaged and safe in their communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member.

I wanted to ask you how you feel about the fact that we are so short of long-term-care beds in this province—I think it's something like 60,000 long-term-care beds that we're short—and this government is not building them as fast as they need to. And then we have seniors that are being evicted. So, 200 seniors who are living in retirement homes are being evicted from Chartwell Heritage Glen, and then we have seniors that are being evicted from long-term care because, instead of renovating, they're choosing to close up because it's not profitable to renovate.

We are losing more beds for seniors than we are gaining in this province. How is this bill going to address the shortage of places for seniors to live in Ontario?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member for asking that question and allowing me to clarify things.

In long-term care, as I explained, we had 611 beds before. We have now 58,000 beds. We have been building new long-term-care homes. It takes time to build, but we have already got—I believe it's like 30,000 that are ready to be used. The population of the seniors has been growing so fast, so we are continuing to provide new beds, more beds, and also providing high-quality and professional care, whether it's PSWs or nurses.

1720

As far as the retirement home goes, they are private entities and governed by ORCA. We are giving them the regulations to follow, and we are keeping an eye to make sure they are doing their best—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Next question.

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: We know that the member for Richmond Hill is indeed one of our super seniors. I've

seen her great advocacy for her riding of Richmond Hill when she has invited me to visit. It's always a pleasure to see her representing her constituents, speaking for her constituents, and being a great parliamentarian and a great example. Now, we know that we are committed to supporting our elderly population. We'll always stand by them. Retirement homes are more than just residences, they are communities and for many, a place to build and maintain vital connections. With the proposed changes in this bill, how will the retirement home Residents' Bill of Rights be improved?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, Minister, for asking me that question and thank you for working together with me. I look up to you for a lot of guidance as well. We are working together with the retirement homes to make sure whatever they do will be transparent. We will be checking on them to make sure they disclose all the information to the relatives of the customers who are the seniors. At the same time, we have been sending people to check and make sure that whatever they're doing is according to our rules and regulations. The ORCA has been on top of them, and we are working with them to make sure everything is doing it right.

Recently, I was just visiting one of these retirement homes. I'm so happy when I'm there because how they were seeing and enjoying each other and enjoying each other's company is something that I see is important. I know that we are doing our best for all of our seniors. There might be some concerns, but we will work on them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you to the member for Richmond Hill for her comments this afternoon. I just want to note, because this is something the member supported, and I thank her for the support, in the last Parliament, there was Voula's Law, there was a motion that affirmed, in this House, on March 2021, that we believed it was inappropriate for care homes to be issuing trespass act notices to caregivers and friends when these disputes around care can be more reasonably settled through negotiation and bringing people into a room.

I note that schedule 2 of the bill does talk about amending the Residents' Bill of Rights. I'm just wondering if the member could reaffirm the government's support today to make sure that, when there are disputes over care in a home, the solution isn't the sledgehammer of the trespass act, because we certainly don't want a senior, someone living in a group home or person with a disability to be separated from their family or their friends.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much to the member opposite for asking this question. Everything that is provided to us as information, we are listening. We are continuing to modify whatever we have to make sure that we are coping with and making these changes, which is why we have this bill to improve better service and better quality for our clients and for our seniors. So, yes, we will continue to be doing that and we will continue to be listening.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Further debate?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'm rising today to discuss a government bill that is called fixing long-term care and retirement homes. I have to say, there's two schedules in this bill. It's pretty slim, and it seems to me, if you really wanted to fix long-term care and retirement homes in this province, you've got a lot more work to do than what is in these schedules. There's nothing wrong with these two schedules, but it really does come up significantly short when we look at what seniors are facing in the province.

We cannot forget what seniors experienced during COVID. We know 6,000 seniors died needlessly in long-term-care homes. The vast majority of them were in for-profit homes, and we had to call in the military to make sure that some of the residents didn't die. They saw terrible, terrible abuses in those homes, primarily in for-profit homes.

And then we saw the government, subsequent to COVID-19 and all that loss of life, introduce a bill, Bill 218, that primarily gave those for-profit corporations like Orchard Villa, like Chartwell, like the places where people perished—they had terrible mortality in these homes, but this bill gave them immunity from prosecution. So people weren't allowed to see their loved ones when they were dying, and then they were not able to seek any kind of justice or any kind of accountability from these for-profit homes because the government chose to give them immunity. And not only did this government give them immunity, some of the worst actors were given further long-term contracts without having made assurances that they had made improvements. This is how the government treated seniors who experienced the worst traumas that you can imagine.

Then we have a government that introduced Bill 7, which is a bill that basically forces primarily seniors from hospitals into long-term-care homes that are not of their choosing. Without their consent, this Bill 7 allows the hospitals to transfer patients' information, to register them in a home. It doesn't matter how far away this is from their loved ones or from their home or whether they wanted to be there or not. The government allowed this to happen.

To me, that is nothing short of abuse and a complete disrespect of seniors who are already sick; they're already in the hospital. Now they face being sent far away from their home, and if they don't do that, they are threatened with, basically, financial ruin because of the inordinate fines that are charged per day until they submit to the government's decision as to where they need to send them. So it's hard to hear the government say that this is about respecting seniors because to date, your actions have not shown that you respect the situation that seniors are in in Ontario.

I again want to say that seniors now in Ontario are struggling. We're all struggling. There's so many people struggling in Ontario right now, but seniors more than anyone. Seniors are increasingly the ones that are using food banks. We have had an unprecedented surge in the use of food banks. We had the Hunger Report show that a

million Ontarians had to access food banks, and a vast, vast chunk of those are seniors who, in their golden years, are forced to go to food banks to keep themselves fed.

And then we just have to look no further than health care. I mean, if you happen to have to go to a hospital or you're visiting someone or you're in emerg for whatever reason, who do you see showing up in the driveway of hospitals? A lot of seniors are showing up in hospitals. They're waiting on ambulance stretchers for days, and let me tell you, an ambulance stretcher is a very uncomfortable place to wait. It's not the same as a hospital bed. They're waiting for days and days before they get care, before they're admitted.

Then they have huge delays for their treatments: MRIs, surgeries, procedures that seniors need. And let's face it, who needs knee surgery or hip replacement surgery or cataract surgery in this province? Primarily seniors, and they're waiting inordinate times. I guess they could jump to the top of the queue, which I can anticipate a government member will say, but not everybody has the deep pockets and the credit card to lay down so they can get the treatment that they need.

Let me be clear that seniors are being failed by this government when it comes to health care. Two and a half million Ontarians do not have a family doctor. I'm sure that many of those are seniors. We have had a record number of emergency departments closing, planned and unplanned closures. In addition to emergency rooms, we have urgent care centres that are closing, planned or unplanned. So you're a senior and you are at home. You're waiting for your hip replacement; you're in pain. You decide that you need care. Perhaps you can't get an ambulance because of the ambulance shortages, the code zeros. You go in a taxi to emerg to find that closed. You go in a taxi to an urgent care centre to find that closed.

1730

This is what is happening. This is just the stuff of nightmares. And this is happening to seniors in our province right now. And so, to the subject of the bill, as it says, "fixing long-term care," there's a lot that needs to be done.

I take you no further than the Auditor General's report, her value-for-money audit of 2023 that talked about the failure of this government when it comes to long-term care. Some of the highlights—or lowlights, I guess—are: "Homes Lacked Stable and Adequate Staffing to Care for Residents"; "Not All Residents Had Access to Key Allied Health Professionals"; "Personal Support Workers Lack Regulation"; "Homes Struggled to Cope with Complex Behavioural Issues"; "Homes Were Not Fully Able to Serve Younger Residents," which is something that's a new and emerging issue; "Implementation of Legislation that Increased the Flow of Hospital Patients to Long-Term Care Was Not ... Adequately Monitored"—that's the Bill 7 that I just discussed; and "Accountability Framework Was Not Clear to Ensure Effective Oversight of Long-Term Care Homes." These were identified by the Auditor General, and there's nothing in these two schedules here that will address these concerns, so long-term care has a long way to go.

I just have to talk about the lack of beds when it comes to long-term care. Not only once people are in long-term care are there substantial concerns in terms of access—for example, four hours of hands-on care is not happening; the government has failed to meet their own target—but people are having inordinate wait times to get into long-term care. I have in front of me a report from the city of Hamilton that was presented to city council on long-term care in Hamilton. Some of the information here is really kind of stark.

As of January 2024, there were 6,063 patients on the long-term care wait-list across Hamilton, Halton, Niagara and Haldimand. Hamilton's wait-list itself was 1,938 patients. The wait-lists to get into care are very long, and this government continues to fall very, very, very short of building and staffing the long-term-care spots that we need in this province.

In fact, the situation in Hamilton—I'm sure it's very drastic in other ridings, but certainly, in Hamilton, there is a real concern. The headline here in the *Hamilton Spectator*, by Joanna Frketich, says, "Need Long-Term-Care in Hamilton? Here's How Long You'll Have to Wait." As I said, there are about 2,000 seniors on wait-lists in Hamilton, and the new beds that are promised are years away from opening and far from what is needed to meet the demand. This is what's in the report from the city's health and safety community department: "In fact, the beds opening in the next three years in Hamilton barely replace what has already been lost."

People have a wait-list of up to two to five years to access long-term care in Hamilton. I mean, I just have to say it again: You could wait up to two to five years for yourself, for a loved one, to access long-term care. As Councillor Tom Jackson said—and I agree—"This is totally unacceptable."

And even: "Hamilton's wait-list includes 368 seniors in crisis, meaning they are at 'significant safety risk'" and they still have a six-month wait-list to get into a long-term care.

So this is a desperate situation. Instead of creating spots, in fact, the city has lost 321 total long-term-care beds total since the pandemic.

Unfortunately, the report that the city prepared doesn't say how many more will close, because access to information is very difficult with this government, and there are many more unanswered questions that the city was not able to acquire to really have a good sense of what is going on when it comes to long-term care.

"The Ontario Long Term Care Association reports that nearly half of Ontario's homes are old facilities that need renovation. Many of them have licences expiring...."

I'll talk about this a little later.

"The *Spectator* has repeatedly asked the Ministry of Long-Term Care for more than 19 months for a list of homes closing instead of renovating. The ministry has refused to provide the information, citing 'economic and other interests of Ontario.'" I don't know exactly what that means.

But the point being is that—and I’ll talk about this later—many long-term-care homes which require substantial renovations, something as simple as proper lighting, electricity—even when it comes to fire protection, sprinkler systems, these basics are not happening, and as a result, particularly when it comes to for-profit long-term-care operators, they’re choosing to close rather than renovate. So this is adding to the crisis that we have.

Again, Councillor Jackson said, “Holy smokes, waiting almost 10 years for these beds. I’m just so saddened and angered that I thought” Premier Doug Ford’s “government was going to ... put multi-millions (of dollars) aside to build thousands upon thousands of long-term ... beds and hopefully Hamilton would get its share to address the immediate need—not six, eight, 10 years from now.” I couldn’t agree more with Councillor Jackson that we are in a crisis and that this bill and this government is not taking it very seriously.

In fact, in Hamilton, so many patients are stuck in hospitals looking for a long-term-care placement that they’re building centres just to house them. Hamilton Health Sciences and St. Joseph’s Healthcare already have more than 350 patients who are ready to be discharged but are stuck in hospital because they are waiting for services in the community. In fact, in Hamilton, there’s the former Crowne Plaza hotel downtown, and it was turned into a health satellite facility during COVID. It was supposed to be temporary, but it’s remained open. It now has 180 beds, and—it says, “shows no sign of winding down” because there continue to be no long-term-care beds being created and available for the surging demand.

As I said, there’s nothing terrible in the bill, but there’s nothing earth-shattering. There’s nothing that speaks to the urgency of the situation that we’re in. It’s called the fixing long-term care and retirement homes act. I just have to say, if we were putting forward a bill, and we have put many bills forward to help you see the light, like the bill that we have that we put forward, Till Death Do Us Part, to make sure that seniors weren’t separated—we put many bills forward to help ameliorate this situation when it comes to seniors, and this government has said no to all of them.

I’m pretty sure if we had put a bill forward, we would call it, “seniors before shareholders” or—I don’t know—“people over profits,” because we know that a big chunk of this problem is the profit motive, that in the long-term-care sector and in the retirement home sector, these are huge, for-profit, in some instances multinational corporations that are seeing big bucks. They’re profiting big off of our seniors. So I would like to see a bill that the government puts forward that would protect our seniors from what in many instances is blatant profiteering on the part of huge corporations.

I talked about long-term care, but I also want to talk about the issue of retirement homes in the province. I think that not everyone is fully aware that there’s about almost 800 retirement homes, 770 licensed retirement homes, and the vast majority of these homes are for-profit corporations. They have a population of about 80,000 residents,

so there’s a lot of people that are living in these retirement homes. Let’s be clear: Many of them are seniors that have decided that they don’t want to cut the grass anymore or they want to have their meals taken care of. Some of them are going there for camaraderie. But many, many of them are frail seniors. The average age is 83, and 70% of these residents are women. Unfortunately, when they move into a retirement home, many of these residents are shocked to find how little oversight and protection they face.

We talked a little bit about long-term care and the impact that COVID had. It also happened to people living in retirement homes. Almost 700 retirement home residents died as a result of COVID-19. Believe it or not—if you can believe it—there was less oversight. I don’t know how you could have less oversight given a sector that was never inspected. There was less oversight in retirement homes.

I think it needs to be clear that retirement homes aren’t regulated by the Ministry of Long-Term Care. Long-term care—pardon me; I don’t know if I said this correctly, but long-term care homes are regulated by the Ministry of Long-Term Care, but if you live in a retirement home, it’s governed by the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority. Let me just say, this is a self-governing body that has been given the power by this government to oversee the act, but it is a self-appointed, self-governing body. In fact, Ontario is the only province in Canada that has this situation where it’s a delegated authority, as we say.

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So the province of Ontario has delegated their responsibility to look after retirement home residents to this retirement home. Really, if you look at the composition of the board, so many of these people on this board come from some of the big for-profit chains like Revera and like Chartwell. So, really, you have to ask yourself: How do they manage what would be an inherent conflict of interest?

As I said, the face of retirement homes is changing. The Auditor General had this to say as well: “A shift is occurring whereby thousands of beds in retirement homes are being occupied by individuals who have more intense health care needs than the more active and independent seniors that many retirement homes were designed for.” So people that are in retirement homes are sicker, they’re frailer, and they may not be getting the care that they need. And they may not understand the rights that they have or do not have when it comes to living in retirement homes.

As my time is short here, I’m just going to jump to the fact that, if you live in a retirement home, there are a number of rights that you have, but the most important thing to understand is that your retirement home is essentially your landlord. And just like everybody in the province of Ontario, you can be evicted without due notice, without proper notice, and that is happening. We saw that about 200 people are being evicted from Chartwell Heritage Glen. When people move into a retirement home, they probably think that’s where they’re going to be and that they’re safe there. But, in fact, they are being evicted, and it’s often the case that they don’t

understand, or their family doesn't understand, that they do not have certain rights when they're in retirement homes.

It's really interesting to see, if you look at—right directly from the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority website—a page that says: turn to this “if your issue is outside of RHRA's mandate.” If you're a retiree living in a retirement home and you have problems with your landlord, which would be your retirement home, you can turn to the Landlord and Tenant Board. Well, how is that working out in the province of Ontario? You can turn to the rental housing enforcement unit of the municipality. If you have concerns with the state of the building, you can go to the Office of the Fire Marshal, the local fire department. You can go to the Ministry of Labour. You can go to employment standards. These are places that you would never expect that you would have to turn to and make multiple phone calls to have your issue addressed, but that's what's happening in retirement homes.

Finally, I just want to end on the fact that, as the Auditor General stated, the use of agency nursing is causing huge concerns for our retirement homes and our seniors' services. The fact that we are short in this province about 50,000 nurses and PSWs is impacting care for residents in long-term care and in retirement homes. PSWs are some of the lowest-paid workers in care centres. Again, this has been confirmed by the Auditor General.

And so, it is unacceptable to me that a government that brought forward Bill 124, that capped the wages of workers in the health care sector, is still not acknowledging that, if we want to give decent care and respectful care to our seniors living in long-term care and in retirement homes—it's not the beds that you're opening up; it's the care. It's the people that serve and look after them that are important, and your job is to make sure there are enough people in these homes to get them the care that they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Questions?

Hon. Todd J. McCarthy: My question to the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas arises directly from comments in her speech. I thought I heard her say that she saw good things in this bill. That makes sense, because the preamble to the bill, which is a reflection of its intent, contains this language:

“The government of Ontario:

“Recognizes that Ontario seniors deserve quality care as they age....

“Supports and protects seniors, enabling them to lead healthy, engaged lives while maximizing their independence, quality of life and social connections.”

And then, to her last point about the Auditor General's report, I submit, this bill in terms of how it addresses the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority and the bill of rights for retirement home residents, actually, is very, very positive. Will the member support the bill? No bill is perfect, I submit, but this bill hits the right notes and is consistent with its—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Thank you.

Response?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: There probably isn't a person in Ontario that wouldn't agree that seniors deserve quality care as they age. Who would not disagree with that? And that that care, as you said, needs to be quality care. So yes, we agree with that. We agree with the preamble. But followed up from the preamble really is—I'm trying not to be disrespectful, but it really comes up short. Sure, the things here are great—dementia care. If you happen to be in a long-term-care home, you can have access to dementia care. But for the 50,000 people that are languishing on wait-lists, they're not accessing dementia care—or their families.

My point is, the values are great, but you're not backing it up with substantial action that reflects the crisis that we're facing in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you to my colleague from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas for her speech on Bill 235. When I spoke about it, I've said that I've got six and eight years' waiting time for people on the wait-list to try to be in a long-term-care facility. I was listening to you speak about the struggling, also in your riding, so this is not unique to my riding. I can see it's probably right across Ontario. I'd like to hear more about that. And also, if you could add, what does it mean for French services in some of these communities? Because I have 60% francophones in my riding, as you know, and we are struggling with French services. So I can just imagine what you're going through in your riding.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for the question. “La pénurie” is in English as well as in French—and no wonder. Because Bill 124 with a wage cap—not only were people leaving this sector because they weren't being paid what they deserve, what they merit, but they were being disrespected. They saw a government that didn't take their role as PSWs and health care workers seriously, and they were working so short-staffed. I mean, people that go into health care—you said it's a vocation—they are there because they're caring professionals. For them to go to work every day short-staffed and know that no matter how hard they work they will never be able to give, as has been mentioned earlier, the seniors the care that they deserve—they're just not equipped to do it.

Yes, the biggest concern is the underpaying of health care staff, the shortage, and nowhere in this bill is that major, major problem addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank my friend from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas her remarks. I'm wondering if the member could help me understand, because when I think about the various stages of life a senior or someone with a disability has before they end up in a care home, there's a bunch of steps there. And what's missing in those steps, and missing in this bill, is the compensation for community care workers. I'm talking about personal support workers but also community nurses, who continue

to tell me that in their work, they often feel like the poor cousin of the health care system. I look at the last three decades and we've gradually handed over home care to these large for-profit companies like Bayshore and ParaMed and CarePartners, and do you know what drives me nuts, Speaker? If I were to drive my car from time to time to come down to work here, I'm paid by kilometre for my travel time, but a home care worker isn't paid for their mileage in the city of Ottawa.

So I'm wondering if you could give the advice to the government to put into this bill: Why don't we make sure we take home care back into the public and non-profit sector so those workers are paid for what they do?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Absolutely. I mean we saw the absolute disaster—unnecessary disaster—that it was when the government privatized the delivery of supplies through Bayshore to people who are receiving care at home. And it's not only the patients that are waiting for their pain meds or their proper bandages—and their family—it's these community care workers that, not only do they have to pay to drive from home to home, they literally were buying supplies on their own because, again, they're professionals. They get to know the family and there is no way they were going to show up—if a patient needed a bandage changed, they weren't going to wait another day and risk a life-threatening infection. They actually went themselves and bought bandages and bought equipment with their own money.

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So that's the kind of dedication that we see when it comes to community care and workers like the folks that I talked to on the weekend from the Victorian Order of Nurses. The government doesn't seem to understand this—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

MPP Zee Hamid: The government's proposal includes funding for staff training for emotion-based models. These models have been shown to significantly improve emotional and physical well-being of residents. This initiative also supports staff by equipping them with the skills to provide compassionate and individualized care.

My question is for the opposition—any member, really: Do they not believe that improving care practice that benefits both residents and staff is good for long-term-care homes? And I'm curious how they can justify this neglecting this opportunity to create a more supportive and effective care environment.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I mean, I said quite clearly, there's really nothing in this bill to not support; there's just not enough in it. It is really a day late and a dollar short when it comes to what we are faced with in the province of Ontario. So do patients or seniors who are in long-term care deserve enhanced dementia care? Sure. I heard about the Butterfly model. I know that that happens in Hamilton. But guess what? We don't have enough staff. You can talk about training. I don't know which staff you're talking about that you're going to train because you're already missing 50,000 PSWs and nurses in the province.

And for the families that don't have their loved ones in long-term care, how is that going to help them?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Next question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to just talk about something a little different in long-term care because, yes, of course, seniors are so important. But with long-term care, we have a variety of residents now in long-term care. I had visited a couple of long-term cares just before we came back to Queen's Park, and there are people living in long-term care with brain injuries, mental health issues, addictions. There's a range of ages—and also, of course, fragile seniors. But one of the stories I had heard, someone who was living in long-term care, the operators—there was a bit of a worry that they were possibly pregnant. That's how young a person was there. And I want to talk about that population diversity in long-term care, compared to this bill. How do you think it's addressing all the populations that are now covered under the umbrella of long-term care in this bill?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have to say, I have a really personal experience with this. My cousin Brandon MacFarlane had a brain injury and was living in a long-term-care home. He was a young man. And to his family, to my beloved cousin Shawn MacFarlane and all of our family who supported Brandon through his difficult time, we love you. We all did the best we could for Brandon. He was a beloved member of our family, and we will never forget him.

So you bring up a point that we have young people who have injuries that deserve different care. They are in long-term care, they don't have age-appropriate care and they're living there many times without services, because we're so short-staffed. This is an important consideration. People who are in long-term care are changing. The face of people in retirement homes and long-term care is not the same as it used to be. Some people who are in long-term care in other times would be in hospital. Given the underfunding of this government and the lack of commitment to affordable health care for everyone, long-term care has been a catch-all for some of the most vulnerable, frail and deserving residents in our province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutla Karpoche): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's an honour to provide a few words this afternoon on Bill 235, the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act. This is very comprehensive legislation. It's going to amend a number of acts and regulations. It contains significant new investments in policy initiatives, all in—as the minister referred to it in her opening speech—an evidence-based approach that's built upon the needs and the priorities of seniors in our province. She also talked about the three pillars for this bill when she made her opening comments: improving dementia care and supports; supporting seniors, their families and caregivers; and protecting seniors and enhancing social connections.

I'm like most MPPs; I spend a lot of time in my constituency office when I'm not here in the House. Especially around election time, you always hear from people: "What are you doing for seniors?" I made a point of

talking to a number of seniors about this bill, and it's very interesting how there's an increased awareness about what we've been able to do in long-term care.

I've talked in this House many times about my beginnings in politics, when I was a very young mayor at the age of 22. One of the first things I had to do as mayor was, I had to recommend a number of boards and committees that would have municipal representation. I decided that I was going to put myself on one of the boards that I knew the least about, and that was St. Lawrence Lodge. At the time, it was a long-term-care home—it was referred to as a home for the aged at the time, many, many years ago. That would have been back in 1983. I really learned a lot about the commitment that people have, the commitment that families have to ensuring that our long-term-care homes are well looked after for our seniors. So I spent about half of my nine years in municipal politics on that board. I chaired the board of St. Lawrence Lodge at the tender age of 28. I often joked, as the chair, that I was just prospecting for a future bed sometime in the near future.

I have to say that Minister Kusendova-Bashta, our new long-term-care minister, really struck the right tone. And I have to say, since our government was elected, I can't say enough about the Ministers of Long-Term Care. They have always ensured that they had the best interests of the people of Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. Minister Fullerton came to North Grenville, right in Kemptville, to turn the sod for Southbridge Kemptville. I had Minister Phillips virtually make an announcement to help Maple View Landings in Athens, and I followed up with Minister Calandra, who turned sod at that facility, at Maple View Landings in Athens. I had Minister Cho come and turn sod or make the official announcement for Sherwood Park Manor in Brockville. And Minister Kusendova-Bashta toured the facility at Maple View in Athens when it was 79% finished.

I've got two more, Speaker. The Liberals only built 600 long-term-care beds the whole time. I've got five long-term-care-bed projects in the riding; three of them, I've just mentioned. We've got two more—one that I know the member for Essex is very interested in. The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston and the Minister of Colleges and Universities—we all have Arch long-term-care homes that are looking at coming to our ridings. Mine is in the town of Prescott—Wellington House, a very established home. The four of us are very excited with the progress that that project has made through the Ministry of Long-Term Care. Finally, I have a long-term-care home in the town of Gananoque called the Carveth care home, run by the Gibson family—a very, very top-notch home that we're working with the Ministry of Long-Term Care on. I'm very excited about the development possibilities.

I can't wait until Minister Kusendova-Bashta brings her new baby to Prescott and Gananoque to help turn the sod at those. I'll offer, as a good grandfather, to hold the baby while the minister throws the first shovel at both of those, because I can't wait.

Seniors really want a connected system that provides for them, and I think this bill strikes the right balance between long-term care and the other partners like health and seniors and accessibility.

If you're going to indulge me for another couple of minutes, I want to give a big shout-out to the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, the Honourable Raymond Cho. He's a—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): Thank you. I'm sorry to interrupt the member, but it is now 6 o'clock.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bhutila Karpoche): The House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Oosterhoff, Hon. / L'hon. Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries / Ministre associé des Industries à forte consommation d'énergie
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences Deputy Government Whip / Whip adjointe du gouvernement
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pinsonneault, Steve (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Hon. / L'hon. Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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 / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	