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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 October 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 octobre 2017

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CUTTING UNNECESSARY

RED TAPE ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES
INUTILES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 2, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to cut unnecessary red tape by enacting one new Act and making various amendments and repeals / *Projet de loi 154, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives inutiles, à édicter diverses lois et à modifier et abroger d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Good morning. Speaker, our government knows that we need to build Ontario up and deliver on one of our top priorities, and that is to grow the economy and create jobs.

We know that working to reduce outdated, unnecessary regulations is very important to helping businesses so that they can focus on growing their business and also growing our economy.

We made a commitment to introduce annual burden reduction bills, so that all ministries would have access to a regular and ongoing instrument to cut red tape.

We are taking a sensible approach to reduce, over time, the amount of red tape so that the business community is not unduly burdened.

This bill is the second of annual burden reduction bills and will help Ontario ministries in updating legislation and streamlining processes to remove red tape for businesses and to create savings in both time and money.

While previous bills focused on cutting old red tape, this bill will ensure a filter is applied to new regulations to ensure they are modern, efficient and effective, while minimizing impacts to our business community.

This bill, if passed, will enact a new MEDG statute, Reducing Regulatory Costs for Business Act, 2017, that will implement five new burden reduction initiatives. It will also amend existing legislation from five partner ministries, to reduce regulatory burdens that cost busi-

nesses time and money, estimated to save between \$6.3 million and \$8.9 million.

Speaker, we have heard from the members opposite: "Businesses want to be in the business of doing what they're supposed to be doing and not looking through a maze of red tape to get to what they want.

"It should be something that we can accomplish together, I think, as a Legislature so that we have a friendlier process for businesses, but in the meantime, Speaker, when it goes to committee, that's when the real work is going to be done." That is from the member from London-Fanshawe.

Another one: "I've been involved with red-tape reduction since I got here, trying to reduce red tape. When our former leader was here, my first critic's portfolio was small business and red tape. I spent a lot of time traveling across the province hearing from businesses, industries and institutions that were bound up in red tape and just couldn't move forward." That's a quote from the member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

So, let's help these businesses and get this bill moving to committee.

We allowed debate to continue when we reached 6.5 hours of debate on this bill, so that more members would have an opportunity to present their views on the bill.

Speaker, as you know, this bill has seen more than nine hours of debate, and we have had many of our members of the Legislature speak to the bill. However, at this point, much of the debate is now repeating points already made by other members. So it is time that the bill is put to a vote for second reading and hopefully be referred to committee, where important work takes place.

As a result, I move that this question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The Minister of International Trade has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House.

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

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

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, this vote will be deferred until after question period today.

Vote deferred.

FAIR WORKPLACES, BETTER JOBS
ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 POUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN MILIEU
DE TRAVAIL ET DE MEILLEURS EMPLOIS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 2, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and to make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 148, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi et la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the concerns of my constituents on Bill 148.

As I am speaking, there are thousands of workers in my riding who are fighting to keep their jobs in Ontario. When I talk to them on the picket line, they aren't focused on increasing the minimum wage, or scheduling, or any of the other things in this bill. They are fighting to keep those 2,800 jobs in Ontario. I support them in that effort.

Those people on the picket lines are disappointed that, despite their pleas, this government isn't standing up for them. In fact, this government is taking the opposite approach: They are adding more red tape and costs onto businesses, which is pushing more and more businesses out of Ontario.

We've seen it in my riding. In the last 11 months alone, there have been 1,300 layoffs announced in Oxford. That is 1,300 people who no longer have a paycheque to help pay for the mortgage, kids' hockey, or even food. I know how hard it is for someone to make ends meet on minimum wage, but I know how much harder it is to make ends meet without a paycheque.

Before the government introduced this legislation, that should have been the first question they asked: What impact will this have on jobs in Ontario? Yet they didn't do any studies at all. But I bet that if we checked, we would find that they did polling on it.

The Financial Accountability Officer actually studied the impact of the minimum wage increase and found that it is going to result in over 50,000 job losses.

In fact, the report said: "However, there is evidence to suggest that the job losses could be larger than the FAO's estimate. Ontario's proposed minimum wage increase is both larger and more rapid than past experience, providing businesses with a greater incentive to reduce costs more aggressively."

0910

The report went on to say, "However, the FAO estimates that just one quarter of the higher labour income would directly" impact "low-income families. Since the income gains would not be concentrated on low-income families, raising the minimum wage would be an inefficient policy tool for reducing overall poverty." That was the quote from the FAO officer.

At the same time, increasing the minimum wage will force many companies to increase the cost of goods and services. This is going to have a huge impact on seniors on fixed incomes, people on ODSP, and others whose salaries won't increase. It's going to squeeze many of the people who are already struggling to make ends meet. Those same people who are having trouble paying their hydro bills and finding an affordable place to live due to this government are going to be the ones paying more for coffee and groceries.

The people of Ontario deserve better than that. They deserve a government that is going to create an environment that attracts new jobs and that is going to put in place policies that are designed to help us prosper, not just something that polls well.

As one small business owner in my riding said:

"I am in the garment industry. I have been in this business for over 20 years. This new legislation sounds like it is designed to get rid of businesses like mine. I have never paid anyone minimum wage but my wages hover within a couple of dollars of minimum wage. So an increase in minimum wage will mean an increase in pay in order to keep my staff happy.

"And with a staff of 15, this can destroy what I have built, as the trend in my industry is to hold all production overseas. Small increases to keep up with inflation are acceptable, but some of the items proposed feel like they are being made by people who have no idea of the effects to Canadian small businesses. At the current rate, I feel like better opportunities are with other countries.

"This bill will definitely force me to look elsewhere, or at least rethink, why have production employees at all?"

That would be a disaster, if they decided that having the employees wasn't worth the trouble.

Another said, "Our greatest concern is that Bill 148 would make Ontario and its businesses less competitive."

A restaurant owner said:

"The minimum wage proposal is fine in its current format, with the exception of liquor server wages, which would remain untouched. Our full-time servers and bartenders make \$800 to \$1,000 a week in tips, plus their wages of \$10 to \$11.50 per hour. (The majority of servers' tips/gratuities are cash and are not reported).

"This equates to \$65,000 to \$70,000 per annum and our government, for political gain, wants to give everyone a raise to \$15 an hour? Really? Does that honestly make sense to you?

"Because of the proposed wage increase, there will be a net negative effect on the number of hours available to these servers, as we work on a fixed labour percentage." This is all part of the quote from the restaurant owner. "We don't believe this is the objective of Bill 148. Also, other changes such as minimum call-in etc. do not consider that the restaurant business has many factors outside of its control (i.e., weather, holiday times etc.).

"The bill seems to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to business, and I feel nothing could be further from the truth for restaurants, as we never have guarantees on cus-

tomers counts in and out our doors daily. How does proposed Bill 148 allow us to continue providing our servers and ourselves with a guaranteed schedule so they can have jobs and financial security for their families as well?"

I think that pretty well says it all for restaurant owners as to how this bill deals with their business.

Mr. Speaker, our agriculture industry is also concerned about this bill, and I'm sure that you have talked to them and have heard the same thing.

In the competitive food industry, increased costs will mean that our farmers will lose their competitive edge in the global market. Profit margins for fruit and vegetable growers are as low as 5%. Raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour would mean a 32% increase in labour costs for these growers.

The Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis, for the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, apparently reveals that if government were to change nothing other than to implement the minimum wage increase over five years instead of the next 15 months, jobs at risk would decrease by 74% in the first two years. I think that's the really important part. It isn't just the value of the \$15. If we did the increases in a more incremental fashion and put it over a longer period of time, the adjustments could be made. I think that would be very important if they did that.

Most of the discussion about this bill has focused on the impact of the minimum wage increase. There are a number of other provisions in this bill that will have a serious impact on businesses.

For instance, the requirement for advance scheduling may have unintended consequences. It is one thing in a restaurant or retail store, where planning the schedule in advance may be easy, but what about manufacturing operations where there is an unexpected shutdown on the line and there is an order to fill?

I know that in my riding, Toyota operates on just-in-time delivery. That means that the parts show up at the plant just as they are needed. In fact, it is so detailed that the seats show up, packed in trucks, with the colours in the order that they are needed.

Right now, if there is a delay on the 401 and the line gets behind, they schedule overtime on Saturday morning to catch up. If Bill 148 passes as is, and that delay happens on Thursday or later, they won't be able to schedule the overtime, which means they won't catch up the work over the next week. It will put the whole next week out of order, because the trucks will keep on coming. That throws off all the suppliers, and it puts our plant at a competitive disadvantage with all the other Toyota plants, when we are pushing for new lines.

What about the suppliers to the plants like Toyota? If they can't meet their scheduled delivery, those companies face huge financial penalties.

These are very good-paying jobs that the government is putting at risk.

Mr. Speaker, I have also heard from numerous municipalities who are worried about the impact.

There are numerous signs that the government simply didn't think this legislation through. For instance, their requirement to provide payment for being on call included volunteer firefighters who are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This would bankrupt many small municipalities. The legislation still needs to be amended to address composite fire departments, to clarify the difference between full-time firefighters and volunteers.

The legislation also would have meant that municipalities couldn't respond to emergencies, because they would have to give everyone several days' notice before they could be called in to work.

I want to acknowledge that the government has started to address these problems, but AMO has reviewed the amendments and said that they don't go far enough to make it actually work on the ground.

It isn't just fire and paramedics. After the recent flood in Windsor, we saw that garbage pickup was one of the services urgently needed to clean up after the flooding.

AMO has asked for a blanket exemption from on-call provisions for employees who are delivering services that are a statutory obligation. They have also asked for an exemption for municipal management. The reality is that the director of public works is always on call.

I think of our visit to Pelee Island, which has a limited staff and needs to ensure that the pumps are going when it rains, or the island will flood.

I've heard from businesses, farmers, municipalities and others who have concerns about the impact of this bill. It will cost us jobs.

I encourage the government to rethink this bill and take it to committee and amend it in such a way as to deal with these.

Mr. Speaker, this week is Agriculture Week, where we celebrate our agriculture industry and the importance of farming in Ontario. Agriculture in Ontario is a multi-billion-dollar industry and a huge contributor of jobs and products to our economy. The changes in Bill 148 mean less sustainable prices, less investment in farm technology and innovation, and loss of farmland when our agriculture industries can no longer afford their farms.

We saw how our agri-food industry moved out of Ontario with the increasing hydro rates. Greenhouses and manufacturers moved out of Ontario to save money on their production costs. I don't want to see that happen again, Mr. Speaker. We need to ensure that we are working with our agriculture sector and ensuring their prosperity for the future, instead of making it harder and harder for them to stay in business.

0920

Mr. Speaker, I also have a letter here from one of my constituents: "Hi, guys. Hope you are both well. Looking forward"—incidentally, that's addressed both to me and my federal member. He's writing us the same letter and that's why it says "Hi, guys" instead of just me.

"Hi, guys. Hope you are both well. Looking forward to upcoming elections for both. Our continued support is understood; thank you." Obviously, I've got him marked in the "decided" column, Mr. Speaker.

"It appears there is a hearing loss at Queen's Park and in Ottawa these days as the pointy heads develop whimsical policies aimed at serving their own purposes, with little derived benefit to those for which their policies are intended." Obviously, this is a constituent who doesn't support this legislation 100%.

"On the provincial front the rapidity with which we need to adjust payrolls is clearly developed by someone that has never been personally responsible for making a payroll using their own money. I have no problem with wage increases, as we presently have full-time workers at \$15 per hour in both stores; and those part-time and students that are worthy, are already paid more than minimum wage since they have value.

"My issue is that with the speed of the application, I have no time to adjust, hence a reduction in both hours and employees to counter the increased wage percentage.

"In addition, there will be another 175 provincial civil servants hired to chase down those who do not comply. That makes perfect sense—private sector job loss; public sector hire. Where does this insanity end?

"This then ties in with the new middle class" for which there is no definition. The letter goes on to speak more about the problems in Ottawa.

But the first part of the letter was specifically sent to us based on what this piece of legislation was doing to an individual who has two stores in different cities in the province of Ontario, and who sees great detriment in the cost of that wage going up to \$15 an hour. He's not concerned about the \$15 going up; he's concerned about what we call the "domino effect." The people who are now making \$15 and \$16 in his store—when the new hires have to make \$15, those people are going to need more money in order to be satisfied with that.

He did sign it. He has sports centres; that's where he sells his goods.

Mr. Speaker, other businesses have many questions about the new legislation. Our businesses are working hard to keep their businesses operating while also trying to understand the new legislation and the impacts it will have.

I had one local business from my riding contact me with many questions on Bill 148. They have scoured the Ontario government websites to find the level of detail that they need, to understand the changes and begin preparing for the changes so they can comply when it gets royal assent.

They find it unclear, exactly what types of businesses will be able to use weather exemptions and what types of weather will count in these exemptions.

They are unsure how seasonal workers differ from full-time workers; if various new provisions are pro-rated; or if things like 10 personal leave days will apply for someone working 12 months, the same way as it does for someone working for four or five.

That, I think, would be a problem that the government should have addressed in the bill a long time ago, in the original writing. We're talking about the difference between full-time and part-time workers, but when you

put in the mandated new conditions that must apply, are they pro-rated for the individual who is working part-time? The bill doesn't say. I think we go back to the issue about the volunteer firefighters and equal pay for equal work. That's what comes here. The equal pay would include: Do they get the 10 days? Do they get them even though they only work five months of the year, or is that pro-rated to the five months of the year, or is that pro-rated to five months based on the 10 days being for a full year?

Volunteer firefighters, when they go to the fire and you talk about equal pay for equal work—and we will all know that I spent 25 years being one of those firefighters. When you go to the fire, the fire is the same heat regardless of whether it's a volunteer or a professional firefighter who is there to fight the fire. Does that mean that the pay for volunteer firefighters should be the same as the professional firefighters when they're working? I don't know. The bill doesn't deal with that. But I think people would have concerns about that and I think that would be a very important thing to be looking at.

Again, on part-time work and occasional work: We talked about the agriculture one. When farmers hire part-time help to help in the fields and the person who works for him full-time is there and making a certain amount, does everybody who comes in to work—because it's equal pay for equal work—get that same pay? Is there no designation that a class, a job or a title in the organization gets paid differently with equal pay for equal work, unless it's defined?

I'm not saying that we shouldn't have equal pay for equal work, but we have to make sure that that doesn't change the way our society works—that people who have seniority there get paid more and, in many cases, particularly in the agriculture area, somebody who works full-time year-round at the farm get more per hour than someone coming in to help out for a day. I think that's a very important thing that should be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank you very much for the opportunity to bring some of these concerns about this bill to this House. I hope that the government, when they send this bill to committee, will look at some of the changes. Again, when you look at the press release, the reason they brought this in was to deal primarily with the minimum wage. The amount of it is not the problem; how quickly they're trying to do it is.

Some of the other things that they're putting in—I heard a lot of complaints about scheduling from people working in the fast-food industry who didn't want to be sitting at home for hours and days not knowing when they were going to go to work, so prescheduling works well. It doesn't work well for my employer Toyota in my riding. I would hope that we would look at this to make sure that when Toyota needs to find another line or to expand in Woodstock, they don't take it somewhere else because they can't work under the legislation that this government has put forward. We need to protect all those well-paying jobs in Oxford county.

Thank you very much, again, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad, as always, to stand in this Legislature and add what I hope are thoughtful comments on behalf of the folks in Oshawa.

I would like to address some of the points that the member from Oxford brought up. As he talked about part-time work and precarious work—we have a lot of folks across our ridings, certainly in my own riding, who deal with part-time work and precarious work: the inability to have benefits, the inability to plan their work week, to have any kind of definite scheduling, to pay their bills, to make plans. So I'm glad that we're talking about those folks because they don't really have the time necessarily to lobby for themselves because they've got two or three jobs to hold down.

A lot of the conversation we've had in this House about this bill has been about the minimum wage. I'm glad that we are finally going to be paying closer to a living wage to the folks who deserve it who work so hard to keep all of our systems running. We absolutely should be having the conversation about what that will look like and the challenges faced by employers and everyone involved in this conversation, but we certainly need to be putting more predictable wages in the hands of those who are working so hard to earn them.

He mentioned equal pay for equal work. I take his point that he was speaking about agricultural jobs when he said that we have to make sure it doesn't change how people work in our society. We actually do have to change how people work in our society. Specifics to consider about agriculture and different industries: Absolutely, we want to look to make sure that if we're going to talk about offsets or supports—or let's lower hydro rates for some of our businesses that can't make ends meet.

0930

But we absolutely do have to change how people work in our society. Yesterday I had a young woman here who works beside 17-year-old students who make almost a dollar less for the same work. Women should be earning more. We need to have this conversation and change the face of work in this province.

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

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to add my voice to Bill 148, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's the right thing to do, because we all know that the labour laws have not been changed since 2003. As society evolves, as businesses evolve, it's very important to keep pace with the changing and current economy.

This bill is all about protecting workers' rights and strengthening collective bargaining. We all know that everyone benefits when workers' rights are protected and collective bargaining is strengthened. Employees benefit, employers benefit and the economy benefits.

I was listening to the member from Oxford when he said the government didn't take any consultations. I disagree with that. The Minister of Labour was criss-crossing the province during the summer, and he did take consultations in Brampton, and I was a part of that consultation. There were business leaders, there were labour organizations, and there was the public as well. The purpose of holding that round table was to listen and to learn and to look at this issue from all viewpoints. Even the minister from Peterborough—small business—also held a round table in Mississauga two to three weeks before. I was there, too. The purpose was the same. So consultation was done.

This bill is all about fairness, so that no one in the province is left behind. We need to play a role to be a force for good, as a government, and this is an important step in the right direction.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to offer a couple of comments about Bill 148. It is certainly something that has caused, and continues to cause, a great deal of concern in my riding. To focus on small business is appropriate, but not to leave out the fact that this impacts on larger businesses as well.

I want to take an example of someone in my riding who is in the restaurant business. I think that a lot of the pressure of this bill will manifest itself in employment fields such as restaurants, and ones which are family-owned, with maybe one or two employees. One of the restaurant owners said to me that she had a staff person come to her all excited because the restaurateur was going to have to pay her \$15 an hour. The owner then said to her, "Well, let's get a piece of paper and a pen and write down the deductions that will come from your \$15." "Well, it's my money," she said. She's 18. "It's my money, and so nobody can take this. I'm getting \$15. The government says so." Welcome to adulthood. Along with that comes a whole set of obligations, and those don't get the recognition in terms of the reality.

On this side of the House, there was a recognition of the importance of being able to adjust to changes in how people are paid and minimum wage. We supported that.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise not only on behalf of my constituents, but every unionized worker across the province, especially auto workers. I'm going to get into that because the member from Oxford talked about supporting CAMI workers from Unifor Local 88 that are out on strike.

I find it interesting that a party that said, "Let the auto industry die"—that is something that their members actually said.

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: You should talk to your members, because they did.

But regardless: "Let the auto industry die. We don't pick winners and losers." Now they're saying that they

stand with auto workers—auto workers who actually fight for a livable wage for every person in this province; auto workers who create many spin-off jobs in the parts sector and other sectors; auto workers who fight for fairness for other people in this province, other people like the member from Oxford and members of his family, to make sure that they are making a fair wage. So I think it's interesting. The member from Oxford should go back and maybe talk to some of his members. There have been quotes of them saying, "Let the auto industry die."

I can say that I have always stood with auto workers—not just today, going into an election and looking for some political points at the eleventh hour. My husband is a proud 444 member. He works at Chrysler. If it was up to the Conservatives, my family would have been on the streets a long time ago because his job would be gone, along with thousands of others.

People deserve a living wage. It's not about making employees happy. It's about giving them enough money to live on.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Oshawa, Mississauga–Brampton South, York–Simcoe and Kenora–Rainy River for their kind comments. I'll start from the member from Kenora–Rainy River.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Windsor West.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Windsor West, okay. I got the wrong one. Sorry.

The member from Windsor West: I just wanted to point that I was on the committee that originally helped negotiate the deal to get CAMI into Ingersoll when I was a municipal politician. I've been fighting and working with them ever since to make sure we keep those jobs in Oxford—

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I would just point out that when she wants to talk about who is there when the election is approaching, I want to say that it's all the NDP members who want to take advantage of the situation by stopping on their way by to sign the flag, when in fact they didn't do a thing to help put it there or keep it there so far. I think maybe she would want to check her own record. I never made the comments that she suggested.

I do want to point out to the member for Mississauga–Brampton South that I didn't say that they didn't do consultations; I said they didn't do studies on the impact this will have on the businesses. That's why we're getting so many letters from businesses around the province. Again, it isn't the amount of the increase. I think we all agree that we need to have the minimum wage go up, and \$15 is not more than it should be. It's just that we can't go from \$11.40 today to \$15 in 18 months and not, according to all the professionals, lose jobs in doing it. We need to find a better way to get there so we don't lose those jobs. There's one thing worse than working for too

low a minimum wage, and that's not being able to work at all.

I think if we would look at the impact and fix that impact—and even the Premier has said that we're going to have to make some adjustments to help small business deal with this. I think we should have studied this so we didn't need to make adjustments.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate today, and pleased to speak on behalf of the good people of my great riding of Essex on an important topic that we've talked about since the government proposed these changes. It's been a hot topic in my riding and, I would imagine, across the province.

I highly respect, admire and genuinely like the member from Oxford and appreciate and believe he's sincere in his comments. I wonder if he realizes the history that the party in which he sits has when it comes to debates around the minimum wage. I've been elected for six years. I've been a follower of provincial, federal and municipal politics since I was born, I believe. I can tell you, in my experience, I have yet to hear a member of the Conservative Party, at any level, make any tangible reference to increasing the minimum wage. If anything, I have heard them, time after time, talk about decreasing the minimum wage or freezing it and pandering to big business.

0940

I respect the fact that that's where they sit ideologically. I respect the fact that they bring the concerns that are prominent in business as it relates to the impact of minimum wage on their businesses.

But what is the converse of this issue? It's the impact that the minimum wage has on our communities and our society.

The member from Oxford began his 20-minute hit talking about the CAMI workers in his riding who are currently on strike. Speaker, if you look at the specifics of why they are on strike, they're not talking about a higher wage. That has been negotiated. They're talking about stability and productivity and maintaining a footprint in this community, because they know how important those good-paying jobs are. They know that if they don't fight for those jobs for the next generation of workers who will come after them, they won't exist, and it will decimate the economy of that area.

How do we know that? We've seen it time and time again. Much of the damage that has been done to communities as it relates to good-paying manufacturing jobs leaving is due to the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, and its predecessor, the free trade agreement, the FTA—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Canada-US.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The Canada-US free trade agreement.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm just trying to help.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

He's very aware. He understands, I would imagine, that in Mexico, if you open up a new auto parts assembly plant, it's possible that you set up in an area of Mexico in the northern part called Ciudad Juárez, where many of these multinational manufacturing plants have set up. It has seen an explosion of growth in the manufacturing parts sector and other different businesses. At this very moment, you can hire a production worker or an assembly worker for \$2.50 an hour.

So when they talk about a higher minimum wage in Ontario making us unproductive—well, yes. Compared to \$2.50 an hour, there is no way on earth that we would ever, and should ever, compete with that. Yet free trade agreements put us in competition with those jurisdictions. That's not free. That's not fair. That's a disadvantage to our domestic footprint and our domestic manufacturing.

It's all good that these corporations can set up and hire labour. That's obviously the regulations that they have. Those are the rules that the government of Mexico has imposed when it comes to minimum wage. Those are the labour standards that they have.

But what are the ramifications for that society? There's a correlating pattern when it comes to civility of those areas. Ciudad Juárez is one of the most dangerous places on earth to live. It has one of the highest murder rates per capita on the planet. In March 2017, there were 384 murders—in March. I think we barely get to that figure nationally in this country.

When we talk about a minimum wage, we often wonder if there is a minimum that the Conservatives would actually implement. There is no minimum that they would implement. It would be bottom of the line, \$2.50, if that's what the market demanded. I wonder, because I have yet to hear what their number would actually be. It's a question that has been left out there that I would love to have answered.

What we're doing here is trying to find some economic justice, some economic stability and financial security. We know that in developed economies, it's our responsibility to acknowledge when there is disparity in what the minimum wage workers and others should make.

Speaker, there was an article this morning that I read in the Toronto Star, credited to Fatima Syed, who is a staff reporter. The title of the article is that Toronto residents do not make enough money to thrive, report says. In the report *Thriving in the City* that was commissioned by public health at the University of Toronto—the report states that for a single person aged 25 to 40, the thriving wage, a wage in which you could afford some of the basic elements of life, public transportation, additional health care such as dental and glasses, personal care costs like laundry and haircuts and clothing—to be able to thrive with those extra costs, you'd have to make around between \$46,000 to \$55,000, which is more than double the current minimum wage. After the proposed changes to the minimum wage under Bill 148, that rate will be \$25,000, so we're still well below what would allow someone to thrive.

Isn't that what we want? We want people in this province to be able to thrive, to save for retirement, to allow them to have those basic necessities met, like affordable housing. Being ever-cognizant of the stresses and the pressures that are put on businesses, we have to do that. We have to ensure that there are some offsets so that the level of growth is commensurate with their stresses, but let's ensure that we recognize that people are struggling out there and that there is a disparity when it comes to income that needs to be addressed. It is our responsibility to do that, or else we start to slide down the economic ladder to jurisdictions like Ciudad Juárez. That's what we could potentially head towards. That's the cautionary tale.

I don't think anyone in this province, business owners and workers alike, want to see that type of economy. It's not functional. It doesn't support growth. It doesn't support health. With a staggering number like that coming out of Mexico, you would wonder: What do their civil services look like? Well, their police officers are paid—these are public servants—\$350 a month. I often hear, mainly from the right wing, that our public servants are paid too much. I'll tell you, when compared to our crime rate and that of Mexico, I think we're getting pretty good value for the dollar when it comes to our police forces and our first responders. They keep us safe. There is a direct correlation to them having a good wage and being financially secure.

This is about income insecurity. It's something that New Democrats have fought for for a very long time. Our leader, Andrea Horwath, has been raising the issue around the minimum wage for over a year now. Public pressure has resulted in the government finally addressing it in this bill. But there's much left out, Speaker. There are still two-tiered wages in place for servers in bars and restaurants. There is still a glaring omission when it comes to people who have extenuating circumstances around sexual assault and abuse who need paid leave. We can do that. We can make this bill better. I certainly am happy to play a part in that.

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

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to play a part in it too, Mr. Speaker. I'm always enthralled by my good colleague and friend from Essex, who speaks truth to power. I think he did an honourable and very good job in presenting his case.

This is about fairness and balance. Some say it's too much too fast, but for those falling behind, these changes can't come fast enough; it's as simple as that. We know, Speaker, that there is a connection between health and wealth. We also know or intuit that anyone working full-time shouldn't be living in poverty. That just is not a reality that we want to embrace in this great province.

0950

In my community of Hamilton, we have a code red area where 29% of the children are living in poverty and where the life expectancy in certain communities is 20 to 22 years less than for the community I happen to reside

in, which has better care and higher incomes. So we need to do what we can to narrow the gap between the richest of us and the rest of us, and this is a good start.

I don't know if members in the House know this, but the majority of the users of food banks today in Ontario work full-time, so we need to be about ensuring, with a growing economy leading the G7 nations, that the benefits of that economy accrue to everybody. A rising tide should lift all boats and not just the yachts.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the member from Essex this morning.

The reality is, Speaker, everybody would love a raise. It doesn't matter what your wages are, where you work or who you work for, we would all like to get paid more money.

So when you bring out a bill such as this, or this portion of the bill, which is completely based on the politics of the issue and was never even part of the workplaces review—it was specifically said that it would not be dealt with in the workplaces review. The authors said specifically it was not going to be touched in the workplaces review.

The government decided—they're desperate. They're worried about 2018 and the votes in 2018, and they had to come up with something that was really, really revolutionary. It is quite revolutionary when you take a wage that—of course, today it's \$11.60. It went up 20 cents on October 1. But when you take a wage that is \$11.60 and in basically a one-year period move it to \$15 an hour, that would certainly be called revolutionary. It is a big change. They recognize that and they are hoping that the change is one that is popular among enough people that they receive votes for it in the next election. I get that.

Unfortunately, the studies that are being done—and the government chose not to do any studies—are showing that in households where there's a minimum wage earner, the households themselves are not low-income households. The vast majority of minimum wage earners come from a household where the income of the household is much above the average. So they need to do their study, get their facts straight, and make sure that this is done right.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to add my comments after hearing the remarks from my colleague from Essex on Bill 148. I appreciated his analysis and his talking about wages not just here but elsewhere—in Ciudad Juárez, for example—talking about the idea of wages and minimum wages, minimum standards, below minimum, and the concept of free trade versus fair trade.

You know what? I don't know why we would ever call it free trade, because there is such a cost: a human cost, a community cost. We should be having conversations about what is fair: fair trade, but also what's fair to our communities. Certainly, I hope the Conservatives

wouldn't suggest that we look at that \$2.50 minimum wage and see that as a good thing. They seem so afraid to actually pay a fair wage.

Going back to fair wages, the member from Essex read a quote about a thriving wage in the Toronto area, what people need to thrive. I'm going to take it back a step and talk about just a living wage. They did a living wage study in the Durham region, and that was \$17 an hour. So \$17 an hour is a living wage so that people can get by and be able to sleep at night, pay their responsibilities, look after their kids, put one foot in front of the other. That's a living wage.

Here we are losing our minds over \$15 an hour when a living wage in my neck of the woods just down the road is \$17 an hour. When we're talking about income security, that's not just something to talk about, that's something where people can't sleep at night, they can't make plans, they can't feed their children. We're talking about full-time workers who are using our food banks.

This has to be more than a conversation. This has to be that we switch how we do things and that we look after the folks in Ontario, starting with this.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm really happy to have an opportunity to weigh in on this.

I do know, Speaker, that there are people who think there should be no minimum wage. There are people who think that market forces should determine what people get paid. It's kind of horrifying to think that when the PC Party was in power, they froze the minimum wage. It was \$6.85 for many, many years. They did not raise it because they did not think there should be a minimum wage.

On this side of the House, we are firmly in support of a minimum wage and that minimum wage should mean that someone working full-time at a minimum wage job should have a decent standard of living. So there's a fundamental difference between them and us: We believe in having a solid safety net. We think there should be a minimum level of pay for people, and that it should be an adequate level of pay.

So it's disappointing. I have been around here long enough to remember earlier debates on minimum wage, and the very arguments we heard then are the arguments we are hearing today. The reality is that with a decent minimum wage, it supports not just those earning the wage, but those around them. They will spend that money. People earning a minimum wage will spend that money and they will spend it locally. That will benefit merchants in their communities because that money will be used to support their families. We will all benefit. Even those of us who earn above minimum wage will all benefit from having a society that is strong, where people can have an adequate diet and live in a decent place.

We are all better off when those of us who have the least have at least an adequate amount.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank my colleagues, the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the member from Oshawa and the Deputy Premier.

It's incredibly important to have this debate. It has so many ramifications for our communities, for our businesses and for our society. That's ultimately what I think we have to be focused on: What type of a society do we want to live in? What type of society do we want to help build and create?

Government has an enormous role. If you don't think it does, I don't think you would be in this room. Therefore, it's something that requires us to be very, very thoughtful and focused and honest, because people's lives are directly affected by what this decision will be, ultimately, and what this bill will ultimately look like.

There are people in our ridings in every community who wake up each and every day and wonder how they're going to eat. That's their first thought. There are lots of people who wake up every morning and wonder how they can avoid eating, they've got so much. We have to be cognizant of that disparity and find a balance, so that everyone in this province can have the certainty and the security in their lives that their basic needs will be met.

I am aware and I recognize the concerns that our small-business community has. I am optimistic and I truly believe that we can find the appropriate balance to ensure that they are able to sustain this change. We can make sure that their hydro rates are not exorbitant. We can ensure that they have access to good social safety nets in their communities: good roads, good schools. These are all things that create a climate for economic growth, and we're prepared to do that hard work.

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

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Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's a great honour for me to speak on Bill 148, Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act. I stand today in my capacity as the member of provincial Parliament for Ottawa Centre, a job that I take very seriously, a job I know all members take seriously when it comes to representing their communities. I really wanted to take the opportunity, the 10 minutes or so that I have available to me as I speak on this bill, to bring the point of view and perspective of my community of Ottawa Centre.

Speaker, as you may recall, the government tabled this bill back in May, which means that, at least from my perspective, I have now had ample opportunity to discuss the details about the proposals in this bill over the summer months. As many members know, one of the things I love doing the most is knocking on doors in my community every weekend. In fact, in the summer months, I was out three or four times a week knocking on doors in my community and just talking to people. I'm lucky to represent a downtown community so it's easier for me to do that. But, Speaker, what it allows me to do is to really speak about things and hear from my constitu-

ents about things that are important to them, and to be able to then advocate for them in this chamber and in the government, day in and day out.

And you can imagine, Speaker, that the families and the individuals who make Ottawa Centre home were very keen to talk about what the government is doing. What is the government doing when it comes to creating fair workplaces? What is the government doing when it comes to helping their children in terms of the health care they receive and the education they receive? What is the government doing to make it easier for their children to go to college or university? That was a recurring theme of the conversations I had in my community of Ottawa Centre.

What was clear to me, again and again, in those conversations—whether I was in the Glebe, talking to families there, or I was in Westboro or I was right downtown in one of the Ottawa Community Housing buildings on Gladstone Avenue or on McLeod Street—is what people really want their government to focus on. You know that people don't make a distinction between which level of government, whether it is federal, provincial or municipal. What people want from their governments is fairness. They want a fair shot at success. That's the message I continue to receive. They want to make sure that we are fair to everybody in this society and that we make decisions that will allow them to succeed. Of course, that varies from where you are in life and what socio-economic status you've got, or whether you've got children or you're a single individual. I've got the full array, of course, of individuals, from very high-end incomes to single moms who live in affordable housing, and everything in between. And that was a recurring theme.

I engaged in a conversation with them around the work we're doing through Bill 148 increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and the work we're doing through Bill 148 around making sure that there is equal pay for equal work—it doesn't matter if you are a temporary worker, a seasonal worker, a casual worker or a part-time worker, as long as you get the same wages and benefits as somebody who works full-time and does the same job—and whether that's fair or not. I'll speak to that in a little bit more detail in a moment.

When I spoke with families, their point of view and perspective on how do we encourage more children to attend colleges and universities—because everybody understands and accepts that going to college and university is like going to high school. The time has gone where a high school diploma was more than sufficient to move ahead in life. Now, it's almost needed that you have a diploma from college or you have a degree from university as a bare minimum. So what are we doing to assist in that direction?

When we talked about the reform of OSAP and we talked about how 210,000 students now will be able to attend college or university without paying tuition fees, people said, "Well, that's fair. That's the right thing to do." I have not met anybody in my community—and I

could be proven wrong, but most of the people I spoke with felt very strongly that when you're building an economy that is based on knowledge—when we speak on building a knowledge-based economy, you're actually building that supply chain, that pipeline of individuals who can then have access to education, and that everybody in society has a fair shot at accessing that information, not just the privileged few.

Similarly, Speaker—I speak of it as a parent of two beautiful young children—when you talk to families and parents about OHIP+, the pharmacare plan for children and youth, when you say to them that, starting January 1, all prescription medications for children up to their 25th birthday will be covered by OHIP, the response is, “It’s about time. The government is in the right direction.”

That is exactly what we need to do, because, Speaker, you know that as moms and dads, as parents, we will do anything to keep our children healthy. We will do anything. Parents make a lot of sacrifice, especially those parents who are low-income. When I go to Rochester Heights in my community, when I go to Debra Dynes and meet with families and moms who are immigrants from Somalia, they’ll tell you how difficult it is for them to make ends meet. By creating that reprieve, they will be able to save money and focus on other things.

A woman in my community thanked me because her daughter is going to Carleton University. Six months ago, that was not even a conversation in the family because they couldn’t afford it. They learned about the new OSAP plan. She is the first person in that family to attend post-secondary education. You know we are turning them around. That family is going to break away from the cycle of poverty they’ve been subjected to. That young woman wants to be a neuroscientist. I said to her mom, “She will be a neuroscientist.”

That’s the fairness agenda. That’s what this government and this Premier are focused on when we talk about building a fairer and better Ontario. Bill 148 is very much part and parcel of that plan. I know there’s a lot of conversation and time spent on just the minimum wage aspect, but it’s an important debate that needs to be taken. I personally take offence on behalf of my community when the official opposition makes it a plan about something around political expediency, that somehow the only reason it’s being done is to gain some votes. I think that denigrates the issue and really does not reflect the point of view of those hard-working women and men in this province who live on minimum wage and the positive impact that is going to be made in their lives on a daily basis because of that very important change.

But there’s more to Bill 148 than just minimum wage. There’s a lot more in there. The point I appreciate is equal pay for equal work. You speak to people about that and ask them the simple question, no matter what community you’re in, “Do you think people should get paid equally for the work they do?” I don’t think you’re going to find anybody who says, “No, not in our society.” They will say that people should get paid equally for the work they do. Whether you’re a casual worker, whether you’re

a part-time worker, whether you’re a temporary worker or a seasonal worker, if you’re doing the same work as somebody who is full-time, you should get paid equally for the work you do, you should get the same benefits, and Bill 148 does that. That is a fair thing to do. There’s nothing nefarious about that. There’s nothing to hem and haw about. There’s nothing like, “Too soon, too quickly.”

Sometimes in our political lives, we’ve got to do the right thing. We’ve to pick a lane and take that lane. Our government is doing that. We made sure that minimum wage has been increasing since 2004 in this province, from \$6.85 to \$10.25. Then we made sure we did a catch-up on that minimum wage, because there was a four-year freeze, to \$11 and to index it to the cost of living. The economy was still struggling and working through. Now that our economy is booming, let’s make sure we raise the minimum wage, bring it as close to the living wage as possible and index it. That is the fair thing to do.

That is why I’m proud to represent Ottawa Centre and I’m proud to be part of this government.

I hope all members will support Bill 148.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Unfortunately, we don’t have enough time for questions and comments following debate. We will pick up on the additional questions and comments at a later date when this bill is brought forward.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): This House will now stand recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1010 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today I would like to introduce some guests of mine who are in the Speaker’s gallery. We have a resident of Brant and a friend from the OFA, Larry Davis, OFA director Rejean Pommerville from eastern Ontario, and OFA vice-president Peggy Brekveld from Thunder Bay. Welcome, and thank you very much for being our guests today.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I’m proud to welcome the grandparents of page Nicola Noordermeer today. Anne and Don Walker are here from Strathroy. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to welcome all of our friends and directors from the OFA here today. The farmers of Ontario do an incredible job for Ontario, and so does the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I would like to welcome the OFA here today, which represents over 36,000 family farms: Keith Currie, Peggy Brekveld, Mark Reusser, Brent Royce, Don McCabe, Larry Davis, Debra Pretty-Straathof, and of course Steve Brackenridge—he’s not here today—who represents the OFA for my riding of Peterborough.

We welcome everybody. The reception this evening is in rooms 228 and 230.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd also like to welcome to this House a very special provincial director from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. He's from the Bruce: Patrick Jilesen. Welcome.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I see a friend of mine has returned to join us here in the Legislature. I would introduce my friend the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Michael Gravelle.

Applause.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome some of my constituents here with us today. They're the family and friends of Cole Banville, our page captain today. I would like to introduce Shirley Bryant, Patrick Banville, Ursula Bryant and Susan Track. Welcome to Queen's Park, and thank you for your service, Cole.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to introduce Brent Royce, who's here with the OFA from Listowel in my home riding.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Page Alessandro De Simone has some very important guests with us today. His mother, Emilia, and his younger brother Angelo have joined us. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Ms. Soo Wong: Students from St. Sylvester Catholic School, grades 6 and 7; their principal, Roy Fernandes; Brian Meli, a teacher; Barb Stoner, a teacher; Maria Aricci, an educational assistant; and Mireya Mondaca, a parent volunteer, will be joining us very shortly. I want to welcome all of them.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I also would like to welcome some students who are not here yet; they'll be here shortly. They're from Dr. Emily Stowe Public School, here visiting Queen's Park today, along with some of their parents and their teachers. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I note today that there's a flag raising for the Korean community outside the Legislature. I'd like to welcome all of our guests of Korean heritage to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Todd Smith: I don't see him here right now, but I did see him downstairs earlier. From the Ontario Federation of Agriculture—he's a regional vice-president for the east region. Bruce Buttar is his name, the director of zone 12. He represents Hastings, Prince Edward county, Lennox and Addington and Northumberland. We welcome him to the Legislature today.

Mr. Michael Harris: I noticed Mark Reusser from the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture here with the OFA today. Mark, I'll see you later this afternoon. Thanks for coming.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? Last call for introductions.

Minister of Children and Youth Services on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I believe that you'll find we have unanimous consent that members be permitted to wear ribbons to recognize child abuse prevention and awareness month.

I also would like to invite all of the men to join me on the Polished Man campaign. We're painting one finger-

nail to recognize the one in five young people who are subject to some form of abuse. I invite all the men in the Legislature in front of the Liberal caucus room right after question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services seeks unanimous consent to wear ribbons on behalf of the issue today. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome Don McCabe. The former president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is here at Queen's Park today. Welcome, Don.

PIERRE DE BLOIS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and responsible for francophone affairs on a point of order.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence before question period as a sign of this House's condolences for the sudden passing of Mr. Pierre de Blois, one of the Franco-Ontarian community's most prominent activists and builders.

Monsieur le Président, si vous me le permettez, en français, de joindre nos condoléances à la famille et les amis de M. de Blois. Il était un pilier, un grand pilier de la francophonie ontarienne.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence in respect and tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

I would ask everyone in the House to please rise for a moment of silence and paying tribute.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Please be seated.

It is therefore now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The new chair of the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers is pretty well-known around this building. She is the old chief of staff to the former Minister of Agriculture, a relative of a former Liberal MPP and a well-connected Liberal lobbyist—the same old, same old Liberal patronage. It looks like Liberal entitlement at its finest. It does not send a good message to Ontario farmers.

Was the chair appointed because of her Liberal connections? Was it the Premier's office that drove this patronage appointment?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Simple answer: no.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: It seems the Liberals don't want to reconcile their patronage and Liberal entitlement. I'll try a different question on behalf of Ontario farmers. For 14 long years, Ontario farmers have seen broken promises after broken promises, and one of the best examples of that is the natural gas expansion. They've been waiting and waiting, and that promise keeps on coming. Frankly, the funding for it seems to be diminished year after year.

So, a very direct question to the Minister of Agriculture: Will we actually see this natural gas expansion, at the amount funded, finally honoured this year?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Municipal Affairs, come to order. The Minister of Indigenous Relations, come to order. You're not going to get the last word.

Minister?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just say yes. Just say yes—one word.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Infrastructure, who has been a real leader on this file.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. While it is appropriate to move to another minister, it's not appropriate to add anything else.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'll withdraw that.

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

Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When we announced the \$100-million Natural Gas Grant Program, we became the first government in Ontario's history to make a significant investment in rural natural gas expansion. The program was a direct response to what we heard from Ontarians, that residents, farmers and small businesses want to reduce their energy costs. Our government believes that the expansion of natural gas access, particularly in rural and remote communities, is an absolute priority. We are expanding natural gas access in underserved communities, including those in rural and northern Ontario. The expansion will help families, farmers and small businesses save up to \$1,500 in heating costs in each year.

Speaker, this \$100-million program is leveraging millions more of investments from the gas utilities. In light of significant uptake for this program, we are working hard to win the federal—

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Agriculture: Now the natural gas expansion is contingent on

the federal government; they know how to make up any excuse to not honour their promises.

Mr. Speaker, let me ask a more local question on behalf of farmers in Simcoe county. The sheep farmers of Simcoe county have been dealing with an increase in predatory animals, particularly coyotes. They are a persistent threat. The Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program is supposed to be there to assist them, but there are serious concerns about the implementation of this program. Farmers are not getting the assistance they need and were promised by this government.

Since I can't get a commitment on walking away from their patronage or on natural gas—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development, come to order.

Mr. Patrick Brown:—can I at least get a commitment that on this program the Liberals will ensure that the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program will actually give farmers the help they were promised?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case the minister missed it, the Minister of Economic Development, come to order.

Minister of Infrastructure?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: To the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Indeed, the compensation program that we have in the province of Ontario is very important to our farming community. We have trained staff that actually go out in the field to assess the damage that's been done by a predator. In fact, not too long ago, I took the opportunity to be at a farm in my riding of Peterborough to see a sheep that was attacked by a fisher to see the damage that was done by that particular predator. I know, in that particular case, that the assessor, who comes from the municipality, in that case, Asphodel-Norwood, goes into the field and assesses the damage to make sure that the farm community is adequately compensated. From time to time, we continue to monitor the situation to make sure that for any farm animal that's been damaged by a predator, you get compensated.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order. Because this is happening, we're about an inch away from warnings. If you would like to do that, we will.

New question?

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. As the days go by, so does the government abuse of government-funded advertising. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, they not only have abused it, they have more than doubled the government ad buy for this year. It's one thing to use Liberal Party funds to campaign; it's another thing to use taxpayer dollars.

My question is very direct. To the President of the Treasury Board: Will they cancel the \$5.5 million—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. We're in warnings. We are in warnings. If I sit down and it starts, I might name.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, clearly the Auditor General has said these are partisan ads that would not have been approved by her office. The question is, this latest \$5.5-million ad buy—will you do the right thing and cancel these partisan ads?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I want to talk a little bit about the process for government advertising. There actually is a bulk media buy, which is consolidated at my ministry. However, the process for approval is, a ministry approaches Cabinet Office; Cabinet Office makes a maximum allocation—Treasury Board actually isn't party to that. But, presumably, the figure that the member is citing is the maximum allowable allocation. In order for the ads to ever go to air, they have to be approved according to the Government Advertising Act.

I would point out to people that we continue to be the only jurisdiction in Canada that has a government advertising act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the minister: \$5.5 million may seem like nothing to a government that wastes billions. But these millions could have been spent on much more worthy purposes—helping people with a hydro bill, or helping children who need services for autism. There are so many better uses than using taxpayer dollars to fund government advertising, to fund partisan ads.

Let me ask this very direct question: Does the Treasury Board president believe it's appropriate to use taxpayer dollars for Liberal propaganda? Because that's exactly what they're doing.

Are you on the side of taxpayers, or are you going to continue to ignore the Auditor General? Do the right thing. Cancel these partisan ads. Do the right thing. Make sure it's not charged to taxpayers.

Interjections.

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

President?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Well, I obviously don't—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Cancel it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

Carry on.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I obviously don't agree that the advertising that we've supported over the years is partisan ads. Think of some of the advertising that we have done as a government. Think of the #WhoWillYouHelp campaign about sexual violence. If you go to that particular advertising campaign, the video was viewed internationally. The video was viewed by over seven million people in the first 10 days alone. It eventually generated more than 85 million views worldwide. But what's really interesting about that ad is that it actually changed public opinion. What we set out to do with that was to change the attitude towards sexual violence, and

in fact that ad achieved that. We don't think that's partisan. We think that's good social policy.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is again to the minister.

I'm talking about a \$5.5-million hydro ad buy. You say they're not partisan. The Auditor General, the non-partisan legislative oversight, has said they are partisan. They would not have passed her office's approval, but you took that approval away. So rather than try to distract the public with a different ad campaign, be very clear, we're talking about these partisan hydro ads.

Let me give you an example of something that would have been more of a worthy cause. The member for Nepean–Carleton challenged the minister today that we could have used those funds on opioid awareness. This is a real challenge. This is a real crisis. So will you accept the challenge—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

The member from Etobicoke North is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, will the minister accept the challenge from the member from Nepean–Carleton and do the right thing, rather than have these partisan Liberal propaganda ads on hydro? Will you use those funds for an opioid awareness campaign?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Speaker, we use government funding for—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We do advertising for a variety of reasons, including extensive health things. Think about the campaigns about getting a flu shot. Think about the campaigns about the Healthy Kids Community Challenge and quitting smoking. So, yes, we do advertising about health, but we do advertising about a variety of things.

Think about the climate change ads that we did, because unlike the people opposite, we actually think that climate change is one of the most serious problems facing us today as citizens of not just Ontario but citizens of the world. That ad campaign, again, helped inform the public about the fact that climate change is real. It's not—

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

1050

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

New question?

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre par intérim. Yesterday, my leader, Andrea Horwath, told this House that over the weekend, 22 sick people in my hometown of Sudbury received their medical treatment in hospital hallways, TV rooms, patient lounges and a shower room. This isn't the first time that the Deputy Premier and her Liberal government have been alerted to the overcrowding crisis in Ontario hospitals.

What is the Deputy Premier's plan to fix the crisis in Sudbury?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Our plan is to continue to invest in health care as we announced and are now implementing as a result of the spring budget: a \$1-billion investment in the health care budget this year. We're investing seven billion new dollars in health care over the course of the next three years and \$500 million specifically this year to hospitals on top of an equal amount last year.

We're investing in our hospitals, ensuring that they have the operating funds necessary to run their institutions properly and provide that high quality of care, but we're also investing specifically in those hospitals that are facing capacity challenges. We're working with those hospitals that are coming forward with proposals with regard to how we can further make available beds for them to improve the process through which people who require admission are admitted in the hospital.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The minister knows that the Brampton Civic Hospital has been officially over capacity every single month of 2017. He also knows that this crisis did not start in 2017. The hospital has been over capacity for more than two long years.

Since the minister has known about this crisis for years now, what is his plan to fix the mess at Brampton Civic Hospital?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member opposite's figures are simply not true.

Interjections.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I have in front of me the hospital occupancy rate for every single hospital across this province. They are delivered quarterly, although we do track them on a daily basis. In the most recent quarter, from April through July 2017, Brampton hospital is at 86% capacity. It's important that we all in this Legislature work with the facts. I'm happy it provide her with, as I have—in fact, these are often generally publicly available very soon after I receive them myself. We're happy to actually work together for those hospitals that are facing specific capacity challenges.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The budget shortchanged Ontario hospitals by \$300 million, and the minister knows

that because the Ontario Hospital Association has taken the step to write to the minister to tell him just so. They have demanded immediate funding in order to avoid an even more acute crisis when the flu season, which is just around the corner, will hit us this winter.

How much funding can hospitals expect from this government, and when can they expect it to deal with the overcrowding crisis?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know what's happening here. Despite the NDP voting against our budget, which included \$24 million specifically to address capacity in hospitals, and despite the NDP seemingly being absolutely opposed to the Humber River proposal, the Finch site, to add more than 150 beds for transitional patients who no longer need to be in hospital, now they're trying to set themselves up as somehow this is their idea: an investment that we made long ago and work that we're currently doing with our hospitals to address not only capacity, but the potential for surge due to the flu season, which is upcoming. We've been working with this intimately with the OHA, with the hospital system. We'll continue to work. It has nothing to do with—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not quite sure.

A wrap-up sentence, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est encore pour la première ministre par intérim. In January this year, Humber River Hospital in Toronto was forced to admit 94 sick patients in unconventional beds. In February, it went up to 97 sick patients; in March, 61 sick patients; and in April, 68 sick patients were admitted in unconventional beds. That's 320 sick people forced to receive medical treatment in a public hallway with no privacy and no dignity—and that's just one hospital.

When will the minister at least tell us what is his plan to make sure that the sick patients admitted to Humber River Hospital will actually get a hospital room?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Health and Long-Term Care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Our plan, Mr. Speaker, is the one that they oppose. Our plan is to create in excess—at least we're considering a proposal from Humber River Hospital and a significant number of other hospitals in the GTA. They've come forward with a proposal to address precisely what that party is asking us to do.

Their proposal is in excess of 150 beds opening up for ALC patients in those hospitals, including Humber River, that know they're not acute. They no longer need to be in that hospital environment. The plan from Humber River Hospital is to actually bring those people into an appropriate transitional setting where they can get expert rehabilitation care.

I can't for the life of me—I mean, this is such a direct question that runs contrary to their expressed opposition to this proposal. They're calling it “warehousing,” they're calling that site “mothballed.” They obviously don't like it. The actual solution being proposed by Humber River that we're looking at, they oppose.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: SickKids hospital reached a high capacity last winter of 107% of its acute care beds. Its mental health unit reached an astonishing 136% over capacity at the exact same time. Again, the minister has known about this crisis for years.

What is the minister's plan to make sure that no sick child admitted to SickKids will ever feel the burden of this government's neglect of our hospitals? When will he stop risking the health and lives of those little sick children just to balance the bottom line?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm so disappointed, once again, in the NDP rhetoric. The fact that that member is suggesting that Ontarians cannot trust the Hospital for Sick Children—with their hundreds, if not thousands, of front-line health care workers, volunteers and administrators who are working day in and day out to provide world-class health care for the youngest members of our society—to suggest that somehow, this government is, or I as minister am, putting those lives at risk, is unbearable for me. But it's in line with the rhetoric that they're increasingly using, which is creating fear-mongering.

The fact that they addressed our long-term-care system as being in chaos, the fact that they're talking about mothballing of individuals in facilities and the fact that they're opposing every effort we're making to address the challenges we face, I find unconscionable.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Those little sick children get very good care once they are admitted, Speaker, but this is what the issue is all about.

The minister is refusing to listen to the opposition. He has refused to listen to the Ontario Hospital Association. He says that he cares about the facts, but he has been presented with the facts time and time again in this House and by the people of Ontario, only to continue to deny that there is a real crisis of overcapacity in our hospitals.

What will it take for this minister to take some real action, to take some decisive action and to help Ontario families throughout our province who need hospital care and end up admitted into a hallway?

1100

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I have lived and worked in many countries and in their health care systems. I know that we have one of the best health care systems in the entire world, and it's here in this province. I know that that party has given up on our health care system. I know that that party is fearmongering for partisan political reasons.

We're not going to stand for that. We're going to defend the health care system. We're going to defend the

doctors and the nurses and personal support workers and the thousands upon thousands who are working every day to provide that highest quality care.

We have one of the best cancer care programs in the entire world, bar none. We have one of the best hospitals down the road in SickKids hospital.

If you continue to disparage our hospital system the way you are, I'm going to continue to defend it. I believe in it. I love the health care system that we have in this province, and we have to defend it.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

In July, your government gave \$1.5 million to support the Carrot Rewards app. The minister's announcement described Carrot Rewards as “an innovative health promotion mobile phone application that rewards users for being active, eating healthy and quitting smoking,” with the goal of reducing the risk of chronic diseases.

Now Carrot Rewards is encouraging users to check their credit score. Can the minister explain what credit scores have to do with reducing chronic diseases?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It seems to be the trend this morning, Mr. Speaker. I can't believe it. It seems the opposition have reached new depths in twisting information and vilifying Canadian companies in the interest of scoring cheap political points.

I believe it's critical that we support Ontarians by encouraging people to make healthy and active lifestyle choices. That's why we partnered with Carrot Rewards. It's an innovative health promotion mobile phone application rewarding users for being active, eating healthy and quitting smoking. We invested in Carrot Rewards—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think that's enough.

Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, Carrot has absolutely no affiliation with Equifax, and if she or her staff had done their research, she would understand that.

This is the PC Party of 2017, and 14 years in opposition have not been kind.

Interjections.

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

I'd like to remind members, particularly those who have already been reminded, that we're in warnings.

Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The arrogance of this government is beyond the pale. You are throwing away \$1.5 million, and you call me—political points? Unbelievable.

Back to the minister: Carrot Rewards contracted Borrowell—follow the dots, Minister—a company partnered with Equifax, to check Carrot Rewards users' credit scores. Borrowell admitted in September that the Equifax breach could “put you at the risk of identity theft.” The government gave Carrot Insights \$1.5 million

but did not do their due diligence to ensure the money was in fact used to encourage healthy living. Carrot Rewards is still directing Ontarians today to a service using Equifax during what is reported to be the largest breach of social insurance numbers in North America.

What steps has the minister taken to ensure that the personal information of Carrot Rewards users—

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

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, Carrot no more has a relationship with Equifax than CIBC has a relationship with Equifax, let alone it's a third party twice removed. I think members of this House would—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My lenience is exhausted. The member from Dufferin-Caledon is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you. Carrot Rewards was actually launched in partnership with the Harper federal government in July of 2015, when Rona Ambrose was Minister of Health. Carrot worked with the federal government for an entire year before they signed its contract in January, when Patrick Brown was still a federal member. In fact, the \$5 million was provided by the Conservative federal government to Carrot Rewards.

So this had its genesis with the federal Conservative government, but of course the member opposite didn't look into any of that before trying to attack a good Canadian success story without merit. The Progressive Conservative Party of Bill Davis is long since gone. I can't see—

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

Interjections.

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

You won't know when I'm going to say so, and if you had said it one more sentence after I had started, you would have been warned. The minister knows better. We refer to anybody in this place by their title or their riding. We must elevate our debate.

New question.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Acting Premier.

Judy Congdon of London waited more than a year for her knee surgery. Now she's waiting even longer, in pain, for her hip replacement surgery. Her surgery date last month was cancelled due to a lack of funding. And now, Judy, like so many Londoners, will wait two long years for the surgery she desperately needs.

London, Strathroy and Stratford have some of the longest wait times in Ontario for hip and knee surgeries. That's not just me saying that. The head of the LHIN

says, "Our wait times are some of the worst in the province."

When will this government stop squeezing our hospitals and start making sure that patients like Judy don't have to wait years for surgery that they need now?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, since we came into office, our government has invested over almost \$2 billion for more than three million additional procedures to help reduce wait times. In fact, as a result of that, the Wait Time Alliance report card continues to give Ontario straight As in five key service areas, including hip replacement surgery and knee replacement surgery—straight As.

Now, we know that there is variation across the province. That's one of the reasons why, this past summer, we made available publicly to both health care providers, patients and Ontarians information about wait times for a whole set of procedures. It's publicly available so individuals can see, for example, which hospitals have longer wait times and which hospitals have shorter wait times, and they can work with their health care provider to make a decision that suits their particular and unique needs.

We know that we need to continue to invest. In the supplementary, I'll talk about those investments in this budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The crisis in health care in London is a direct result of years of hospital cuts by the Conservatives and the Liberals. Since 2013, London Health Sciences has been forced to cut \$141 million, and at least 488 full-time-equivalent jobs have been cut. That is the Premier's legacy in London.

Now we have the longest wait times for surgeries. Our hospitals are overcrowded and pleading for dozens of new beds, and the Acting Premier just sits there and makes excuses instead of standing up for health care in her own city.

When will this government stop cutting health care like the Conservatives and start fixing the damages the Liberals have done to hospitals across southwestern Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As part of the budget, we announced an additional \$50 million to improve access to and wait times for hospital services, including specifically knee and hip surgery. In the South West LHIN, this included an additional half a million dollars for more hip and knee replacement surgeries.

But it's important that Ontarians understand the situation in the province. According to data from CIHI, Ontario continues to beat the national targets for hip and knee surgery wait times. Also, compared to other jurisdictions: It is 121 days across the OECD, 86 days in Canada, 75 days' wait in the UK and only 70 days in Ontario. Similarly, for knee replacements, the wait times in Ontario are half the average of what it is in the OECD.

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We absolutely have more work to do. That's precisely why we made the wait time investments for hip and knee in this year's budget.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Finance. In 2010, this government promised to eliminate the deficit and balance the budget by 2017-18. This was not very long after the 2008-09 recession, which had very extremely negative impacts on countries around the world, and Ontario, of course, was not immune.

However, rather than slash the programs and services upon which Ontario families rely in order to eliminate the deficit, I am very proud of the fact that our government chose to build Ontario up. The investments that we have made in transit, schools, hospitals and education have led people to choose Ontario as their home now more than ever. And I, for one, am happy to see that there are more supports for municipalities. Ontario cities and towns are now receiving four times the level of support they got in 2003, more than \$4 billion in support.

Can the minister remind the House how on this side of the House we've been able to invest in the people of Ontario for 14 years without the slashing and cutting that they would do on that side of the House?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I thank the member for the question. For the past 14 years, our government has taken a balanced approach to keeping Ontario at the forefront of a global economy. We managed our expenses and transformed how we deliver public services, making them more efficient and more effective.

This is the type of financial responsibility that the opposition doesn't understand. By investing in progressive policies, we're stimulating growth in our economy. We're making historic infrastructure investments: \$20 billion into hospitals, \$16 billion into schools, free tuition for our students and free pharmacare for our young people. Meanwhile, our program-expense-to-GDP is lean and lower than pre-recession levels.

Let me remind you: Under the previous PC government, Ontario taxpayers were paying 15 cents for every dollar earned just to service the debt. Now in Ontario we're paying only 8.4 cents, and next year it will be even lower. We've eliminated the deficit, we've balanced the budget and that means more money to invest in health care, education and other public services that—

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: Back to the Minister of Finance: If you listen, Speaker, to what the opposition are saying, they want people to believe that we've made no advancements over the last 14 years. They would like people to believe we have had no improvements in businesses and no investments in industries like the tech sector and the STEM sector. They would want you to believe—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: They advanced, but they all advanced backwards. They advanced backwards.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Too late. The member from Nipissing is warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case the member needs a reminder, we're into warnings.

Mr. Arthur Potts: They would want us to believe that Ontarians have not been working hard to grow this economy into one of the strongest in Canada and all of North America. It's hard to rectify that with what the Minister of Finance has just spoken about: how, under Liberal leadership, we have dug Ontario out of the recession, and how, because of this, we are now able to make very progressive investments in new policy that will attract foreign investment.

Can the minister tell us about the great progress that this side of the House has made over the last 14 years, to make Ontario the best place to create and grow jobs?

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm very proud to stand up today to say that we've worked tirelessly with our business community and Ontario workers to build Ontario up and to turn our economy into one of the strongest in Canada and North America.

Yes, we've weathered one of the worst recessions we've seen in recent memory. Since then, we've added 760,000 net new jobs. Since then, and for the last three years, we've been leading the G7 in growth. Since then, we've brought our unemployment rate down to 5.7%, the lowest in 16 years. Since then, we've invested \$3 billion in partnerships with businesses, leveraging \$27 billion in private sector investment, supporting 170,000 jobs and, just as importantly, we're now poised to lead in the new global economy.

We've transformed our economy; we're heading in the right direction—

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

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the President of the Treasury Board. The opioid crisis has been gripping the province for about a year now. Cities like Toronto, Ottawa, London and Kitchener are not immune to the spread of the deadly opioids that have claimed the lives of 865 Ontarians in 2016.

The best way to prevent Ontarians, particularly the youth in our province, from taking potentially deadly drugs laced with fentanyl is through greater awareness and better education. Given the government's bulk media buy, or its advertising budget, which has grown in the last year from \$25 million to \$56 million, will the government commit to dedicating 10% of that to the public fight against opioids?

Hon. Liz Sandals: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I genuinely appreciate the question. I think that we share the same assessment that we have a public health crisis, a public health emergency,

with regard to opioids in this province and in this country. We need to do everything we can, including education and awareness. It is an important tool. It's one of those touch points. It's not the only one, but it's an important touch point where we can alert people to the dangers and the risks inherent in both licit and illicit drug use, particularly, as the member opposite has said, with regard to young persons.

The education and awareness component of the opioid crisis is an aspect of our response that we've been working on for quite some time. In fact, we're working closely across ministries—higher education, for example, and others—to make sure, as we roll out this aspect of our efforts to fight the epidemic, that it is also having that intended impact.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much to the Minister of Health, but I'll go back to the President of the Treasury Board. The government spent \$5.7 million on ORPP ads after the program was scrapped or during the program's scrapping. You're also slated to spend at least \$5.5 million on the fair hydro plan that the auditor called a pat on the back. I'm asking, basically, for \$5.6 million to be dedicated to opioid awareness in a public health and safety campaign that could save lives.

Later today the family of Nick Cody will join me at Queen's Park to introduce Nick's Law. Nick died of a drug overdose after fighting addiction. His parents, Steve and Natalie, believe we need a province-wide awareness campaign.

More money for awareness is just one more tool in the tool kit in the opioid crisis, but I believe it is a very important one. Will the government commit at least \$5 million to an advertising and education campaign to tell Ontarians about these deadly drugs?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, again, I share the member opposite's concern, and the objective, as well, in terms of that one component: education and awareness—

Mr. John Yakubuski: The President of the Treasury Board says people need to know about things. Well, let's talk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We need to be sure that we're reaching young persons in school, in colleges and universities, and that we have a campaign that reaches people who go to nightclubs and bars, for example, where they may come into contact with tainted drugs.

The problem that we're facing is an increasing amount of fentanyl and that many, if not most, individuals who consume drugs are completely unaware of its existence and of the risks inherent in that. We're funding safe injection sites, including in the member's city of Ottawa. We're funding test strips so you can test for the presence of fentanyl. We just released \$21 million out of a nearly

\$300-million investment over a three-year period to fight the crisis, \$21 million to go specifically to harm reduction workers on the front lines so they have the tools that they need as well.

EDUCATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Acting Premier. Ontario families and education advocates were shocked to discover that this government is welcoming US Education Secretary Betsy DeVos to Ontario. DeVos is an outspoken proponent of voucher programs, which divert public dollars to private schools and undermine a strong publicly funded education system.

With a \$15-billion backlog in school maintenance and repair, with rising violence in Ontario schools and with chronic underfunding of special education, why is this government giving a platform to someone who believes that government should be spending less, not more, on public education?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I am so proud of our education system in Ontario. We have actually transformed education over the last 14 years. Our graduation rate has gone from a shameful 68% to over 86%. It is a remarkable turnaround. The more we can spread the word about what has happened in education in Ontario, the better.

1120

I actually think that Secretary DeVos has a lot to learn from the Ontario experience. I welcome the opportunity to be able to educate her about how public education can work and can be strong and can benefit all students. I think there is a lot to learn, and I'm glad that she is actually taking the opportunity to learn about our education miracle.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Acting Premier: It's not just DeVos's position on school choice and privatization that has people worried. She rolled back rules on gender-neutral washrooms in schools and watered down college policies on handling sexual assault. Public education advocates strongly denounce her views. The president of the Ontario Teachers' Federation wants DeVos to keep her backward ideas out of Ontario.

Why won't this Liberal government listen to teachers and take a strong stand against privatization, against trans exclusion, against gender-based violence, and retract its invitation to allow DeVos to tour Ontario schools?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: This is a disappointing question coming from the NDP, because when it comes to public education, Ontario has one of the best public education systems in the entire world. When it comes to focusing on student achievement and equity, Ontario has one of the best public education systems in the entire world.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: If Secretary DeVos wants to learn about public education, there is no better place in the world to come than to Ontario to learn about public education and how we are serving the needs of Ontario's two million students. Some 95% of students in Ontario attend our public education system because we have an excellent system, and we are proud to tell the secretary and anyone else—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Again, my patience. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is warned, and I think Windsor West is looking—I'm not sure.

New question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Education. Over the last 14 years, our government has worked hard to improve the quality of our publicly funded education system. I also know, as a teacher and a union leader, that we inherited a system that was severely underfunded and in disrepair. However, our government has made historic investments and we continue to build on our proven track record of supporting student success.

I know that we have made many accomplishments during this time and that we have been recognized by the international community for our excellence in education. We always want to make sure that our young people are equipped with the supports they need to reach their full potential both inside and outside of the classroom.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: After 14 years of progress, how has our government improved the quality of education—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara West–Glanbrook is warned. It doesn't matter where you hide; I'll still find you.

Carry on.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member from Barrie for this question. I know how passionate she is about Ontario's public education system.

We are starting right where it belongs, with the investments in our classrooms. After 14 years, we have increased education funding in this province by 66%, to more than \$23 billion each year. Our historic investments in education are paying off, contributing to a high school graduation rate of a historic high, 86.5%, up from 68% in 2004.

Over 14 years, we've invested more than \$17 billion in school infrastructure, 820 new schools and more than 800 additions and renovations, which is part of our plan to create jobs and grow our economy.

Let's talk about full-day kindergarten, Mr. Speaker—

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for the response. I know how enthusiastic parents were when sending their children off to school this fall, and it's clear just how much families value Ontario's publicly funded education system.

Thanks to our supports and investments, our students consistently rank amongst the best in national and international student achievement outcomes. Over the last 14 years, our plan for our education system has been clear: We are committed to supporting student achievement, equity and well-being for all students in Ontario.

We've also heard that we are collaborating with education partners to prioritize student success and well-being. Minister, can you please tell us more about our plan to pave pathways to success for all students and to support all education workers within our publicly funded education system?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to say thank you again to the member from Barrie. As she well knows, the excellence in our education system begins with our excellent teachers and education workers across this province, who show up each and every single day on behalf of all of our students. I just want to say thank you to them.

We have invested in our system of education because we know this is the best investment we can make in the skills and in the talents of our students. We've introduced new programs to prepare students for the workplace and for life after graduation.

Hon. Jeff Leal: High skills major.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: The Minister of Agriculture is talking about our Specialist High Skills Major program, including our agriculture program. These Specialist High Skills Major programs are having an extraordinary impact on our students.

But we're not stopping there, Mr. Speaker. We've invested an additional \$190 million over three years to create 40,000 more work-related integrated programs for students, giving them the experience they need to—

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

New question.

ONTARIO CULTURE DAYS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a question for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. This past Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Ontario celebrated Ontario's Culture Days 2017. Beginning the last Friday of September, the annual Culture Days weekend features hands-on, behind-the-scenes, community-engaged activities, inviting the public to contribute to arts and culture across Canada.

This year, Ontario Culture Days fell on the important Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, unfortunately. This means that many in Thornhill and the Jewish community across Ontario were unable to participate—and I'm not talking about just attending. I'm talking like actually participating in the events that foster engagement and support for the diverse arts and culture community in Ontario.

I'm wondering if the minister can explain why there isn't a plan in place to accommodate special days like Yom Kippur.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I know how important her faith is to her, Speaker, and in recognition of that, I want to say how much I respect her question.

I want to point out, though, that Culture Days, which we celebrate right across Ontario, encompass about 200 cultures in Ontario. With a busy calendar season every year, sometimes it's difficult to choose a day that doesn't affect a particular faith and a particular religion.

I will take this back to my officials, having had the question now from the honourable member, and see what we can do to avoid such duplications in the future. But I know she appreciates that there are hundreds of cultures across Ontario and that sometimes, again, it's difficult to schedule these kinds of events and celebrations, given that there's one almost every weekend, on days that don't impact a particular culture or faith.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: Again to the minister: I just want to read from a message from Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne on Yom Kippur, where she said just last week, "Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement—is the holiest day in the Jewish calendar." I can understand that everybody here can appreciate that there are a lot of Jewish holidays. It's a never-ending cycle of holidays in the Jewish community. But Yom Kippur is a little bit different. It is the holiest day. We don't need the Premier to tell the community that. But maybe the Premier's words need to ring into some of the ministry staff to understand that.

1130

We have artists—we lost Leonard Cohen this year. Eugene Levy is a famous Canadian actor. Even Drake was bar mitzvahed, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to see a little bit of recognition that, for the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, events like the Culture Days can accommodate those special days.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I thank the member opposite for the question. I want to take this opportunity to wish the Jewish community in Ontario and beyond our very best wishes for the High Holidays season, which, of course, as the member opposite has just mentioned, is just behind us now. Having Jewish members in my own family, I am very proud, as we all are, of our Jewish community here in Ontario. There are enormous accomplishments. In fact, in the arts and culture sector, there are many artists who are Jewish.

I want to just respond by saying again that we will look at the calendar. I also know that the member opposite appreciates the diverse nature of our province. When it comes to Kathleen Wynne and her support for the arts and culture sector and her support for the various faiths in this province, nobody can question that commitment because she is absolutely committed.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. In 2015, Toronto was rocked by the death of Andrew Loku, a 45-year-old black man in mental health distress, in an incident with police. Rightly, a coroner's inquest was called and, earlier this year, that inquest made 39 recommendations that would give the police the training and tools they need to de-escalate situations with racialized populations and those who need to be heard and helped, so that incidents such as the death of Andrew Loku may never happen again.

Today I am joined by a group of concerned mental health professionals on the front lines of this issue who are calling on this Liberal government to act on the coroner's inquest recommendations. My question: When will the Premier implement the Loku inquest recommendations?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I thank the member for his question. First, I want to express my sincere condolences to the friends and the family of Andrew Loku.

I know that police officers are increasingly interacting with vulnerable individuals, often with complex mental health issues. This is why we need to modernize police service training. Police officers need the necessary tools to defuse crisis situations and protect both themselves and their communities. Through our Strategy for a Safer Ontario, we will promote a collaborative partnership between police, the public and other sectors such as education, health care and social. This will improve interactions between police and our vulnerable Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Back to the Acting Premier: Notwithstanding those assurances, the reality is that it's been two years since the tragic death of Mr. Loku. The jury is in and those recommendations have yet to be implemented.

The time for talk and good intentions is over. The people of this province don't need another coroner's inquest gathering dust on someone's desk. When will this Liberal government act to implement the coroner's inquest recommendations into the death of Andrew Loku?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Our government is very committed to making sure that people with mental health issues get access to the services they need. Through the Strategy for a Safer Ontario, we will be improving de-escalation training for all new recruits and existing officers across the province, incorporating use of force and de-escalation into our upcoming legislation to ensure police can fully respond to individuals in crisis. We will establish the most appropriate model for police interaction with persons who are in crisis.

My ministry is also working diligently with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to provide people

with mental health issues with the right care in the right place at the right time. We will be bringing legislation this fall.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de l'Infrastructure, the Honourable Bob Chiarelli.

Speaker, at the outset, I'd like to thank Minister Chiarelli and the Premier for joining me in my riding of Etobicoke North for the latest and greatest infrastructure development, the \$400-million expansion of Etobicoke General Hospital.

Fourteen years of dedicated Liberal leadership such as this has resulted in the largest infrastructure renewal in Ontario's history. Under the leadership of this government, whether it's hospitals, schools, public transit projects across Ontario—and, of course, these were precisely the projects ignored egregiously by both the PC and NDP governments.

At the heart of our \$190-billion, 13-year plan is a commitment to creating better lives for the people of Ontario. In Etobicoke North, whether it's communities, schools, hospitals, transport infrastructure, there are developments all around the riding. But the opposition is opposed to this every step of the way.

Could the minister please elaborate on Ontario's current infrastructure developments?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question.

Speaker, our government invests an average of \$12 billion per year on infrastructure, on track for \$20 billion next year. In their last year in power, the Tories spent \$1.9 billion. They killed transit projects and let social infrastructure rot.

Our Liberal government has been building Ontario up for 14 years. We've invested \$280 million in broadband, connecting tens of thousands to high-speed Internet. We've carried out 100 major hospital projects and children's treatment centres, with 35 more under way. We were the first Ontario government to invest \$100 million in rural natural gas expansion. We tripled to \$300 million the annual Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund for smaller communities. We are funding nearly 1,400 clean water and wastewater projects.

Speaker, there is no debate to be had. Of all the parties represented in this House, only ours has delivered on infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister, for the flurry of developments and your leadership. I know that the investments that we've made over the past 14 years in every corner of this province will benefit today's generation, but these will also lay the foundation for a fair and prosperous Ontario for our kids and grandkids.

Speaker, whether we're making infrastructure investments in health care, in education, in transportation, these are of course a top priority for the community that I represent in Etobicoke North. From rapid transit to GO

regional express rail, these new transit options will allow people in my community of Etobicoke North to get to work or school and back and forth from home faster than ever before. As an example, we have a \$1.2-billion Finch LRT, custom designed with eight stops, right in Etobicoke North.

Would the minister please provide more information on what our government continues to do to reverse the chronic underinvestment, the legacy of the governments opposite?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to have a chance to answer the member from Etobicoke North's question. He is absolutely correct. Since 2003, we have gotten a lot done; for example, the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, which will open up in 2021. When you think about that, it will be more than 20 years since the Conservative Party killed and filled the Eglinton subway.

We also know that when the Conservatives were last in government, they invested between 10 to 15 times less per year than we have in GO Transit and other rapid transit projects.

Of course, an oldie but a goodie: We can never forget that Mike Harris and the Conservatives sold Highway 407.

Now let's take a look at what our Liberal government has done over the last 14 years. We've extended the GO rail network by nearly 90 kilometres. The Toronto-York Spadina subway extension is merely weeks away from opening. And we have already opened the first phase of the publicly owned Highway 407, which will be going out to the 115/35 in no time.

Our record is clear and so is the Conservative record.

TAXATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: To the Acting Premier: Canada's Premiers are gathered in Ottawa today with Finance Minister Bill Morneau to discuss the Liberal proposal to raise taxes on small businesses. We already know that Premiers from across Canada are standing up for their small businesses and family farms, but so far, Ontario has refused to condemn the action of their federal cousins.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier be on the side of our small businesses and family farms, or Justin Trudeau's?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The federal government, as everyone knows, has proposed changes to close loopholes used by consulting firms and professionals. We need to understand the implications of these changes to small business, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that Ontario continues to grow and thrive.

Regardless of the federal government's decisions, we will continue to take action to support growth of small business in Ontario. We have already lowered business corporate tax rates from 5.5% in 2009 to 4.5%. We've eliminated capital tax, lowering overall tax rates. We've

accelerated the capital cost allowance to enable them to invest.

We'll continue to work with our small-business community to ensure that they are protected and that, whatever the federal government does, we will continue to support small business and the business community. We have 5.6% unemployment, and there's more investment in Ontario than anywhere else in Canada because of the efforts that we continue to make.

DEFERRED VOTES

CUTTING UNNECESSARY RED TAPE ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES INUTILES

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

Bill 154, An Act to cut unnecessary red tape by enacting one new Act and making various amendments and repeals / Projet de loi 154, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives inutiles, à édicter diverses lois et à modifier et abroger d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 154, An Act to cut unnecessary red tape by enacting one new Act and making various amendments and repeals.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1146.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members, please take your seats.

On September 25, 2017, Mr. Duguid moved second reading of Bill 154, An Act to cut unnecessary red tape by enacting one new Act and making various amendments and repeals. Mr. Chan has moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Mr. Chan's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted
Baker, Yvan	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Ballard, Chris	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoggarth, Ann	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Kiwala, Sophie	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Thibeault, Glenn
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Vernile, Daiene
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Martins, Cristina	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Oosterhoff, Sam
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Romano, Ross
Bisson, Gilles	Hillier, Randy	Sattler, Peggy
Brown, Patrick	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Coe, Lorne	Martow, Gila	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	Yakubuski, John
Gates, Wayne	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras	
Gretzky, Lisa	Nicholls, Rick	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 52; the nays are 43.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Duguid has moved second reading of Bill 154, An Act to cut unnecessary red tape by enacting one new Act and making various amendments and repeals.

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

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1150 to 1151.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Duguid has moved second reading of Bill 154, An Act to cut unnecessary red tape by enacting one new Act and making various amendments and repeals.

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Norm
Anderson, Granville	Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Gravelle, Michael	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Gretzky, Lisa	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Baker, Yvan	Hardeman, Ernie	Naqvi, Yasir
Ballard, Chris	Harris, Michael	Natyshak, Taras
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hatfield, Percy	Nicholls, Rick
Bradley, James J.	Hillier, Randy	Oosterhoff, Sam
Chan, Michael	Hoggarth, Ann	Pettapiece, Randy
Chiarelli, Bob	Hoskins, Eric	Potts, Arthur
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Hunter, Mitzie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Clark, Steve	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Coe, Lorne	Jones, Sylvia	Romano, Ross
Colle, Mike	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sattler, Peggy
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Tabuns, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Smith, Todd
Del Duca, Steven	MacLeod, Lisa	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Malhi, Harinder	Tabuns, Peter
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Thibeault, Glenn
Dong, Han	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Duguid, Brad	Matthews, Deborah	Vanthof, John
Fedeli, Victor	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
	McDonnell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo

Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John

McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
McNaughton, Monte
Milczyn, Peter Z.

Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 95; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be referred for third reading? The Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

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

The House recessed from 1154 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'm very happy to introduce the honourable consul general of the Republic of Korea, Kang Jeong-Sik, and his lovely wife, Yoon-Sun Huh; Bok Sil Shin, chair of KIN; June Choi, the Korean Rose of Sharon Association; Agatha Um, the Hong Fook Mental Health Association; Jang Hun-Kong, the national unification advisory chapter; Richard Bang, Royal LePage; Bang Ju Lee, the Korean Veterans Association; and Mr. Stan Cho, who is the PC candidate from Willowdale, and his friend Mr. Ryan Cole. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I, too, would like to welcome the consul general—a good friend. Happy national day. Congratulations.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to introduce, in the gallery today, several people from the city of Ottawa who are here today to help me introduce a bill called Nick's Law. First, I would like to introduce the family of the late Nick Cody—his father Steve, his mother Natalie and his brother Darren; as well as board members from We the Parents, Sarah Zraggen, Sean O'Leary and his daughter Paige O'Leary; as well as three of my staff, Kayla Fernet, Rebecca Hubble and Valerie Cickello, who have been working very hard on Nick's Law.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

KOREAN NATIONAL FOUNDATION DAY

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Today marks Korean National Foundation Day. Four thousand three hundred and fifty years ago, a new country named Gojoseon was

born in the Korean peninsula. Gojoseon means "country of the morning calm." As its name reflects, Korea has had a history of peace and tranquility, with the exception of when it was invaded. Since the Second World War, Korea has been divided into two countries: a communist north and a democratic south. Today, the area is one of the most dangerous in the world.

Despite the current situation in the Korean peninsula, I can honestly say that the Korean people are a peace-loving and very industrious people. The hard-working Koreans that immigrated to Ontario have contributed immensely to the economic prosperity, cultural diversity and higher education of this great province. I would say that their contributions have been immeasurable.

As a Korean Canadian, I'm very proud to stand in this chamber to make this statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

FOOD BANKS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, you can tell by looking at me that I haven't missed too many meals. I'm one of the lucky ones. Across this province, the people who run Ontario's food banks say that the demand for food is on the rise. In my area, the Unemployed Help Centre is the hub for 15 food banks in Windsor and Essex county. They average 125,000 visits from hungry clients each year. Those who need it most and those earning a poverty wage come in once a month.

Clients also get fresh produce each week, from the Plentiful Harvest program; tomatoes, cukes and peppers, for example. Since 2012, we've rescued 11 million pounds of good nutritional food, some of which ends up in soups and stews that are frozen and distributed later. Other parts of the province aren't as fortunate, so the Windsor produce is shared with other food banks.

More than 300,000 people in Ontario couldn't get by without the support they receive from our food bank network. The demand is growing. In Toronto alone, the number of seniors coming to the food banks is up by 27%. People are skipping meals because they need the money to pay their rent, their hydro or to buy their prescription medication. Thirty-four per cent say they go hungry at least once a week; 14% of those going hungry are children. Some food banks are running out of food because of the increased demand.

Speaker, we're heading into the Thanksgiving weekend. It's a good time to think about the less fortunate. It's a good time to make a donation to a food bank of your choice.

SHIRE

Mr. Han Dong: It is my pleasure to rise today as the member for Trinity-Spadina to congratulate Shire on the occasion of the official opening of their Canadian headquarters in my riding. This leading biotechnology company has chosen Toronto as their home, where they are close to our health researchers and academic hospitals,

with which they will collaborate, innovate and help Canadians live healthier lives.

Shire is a global leader in curing rare diseases and other highly specialized conditions. This company was named Pharma Company of the Year and has a reputation for providing top-quality products.

Success stories are always welcome in Ontario, and Shire can help our community by growing our economy. Research, innovation and growth are something we can all celebrate.

Shire's downtown location will help shape Trinity–Spadina's research and health care community. These jobs will attract top-quality talent and grow our area.

I encourage my colleagues to join me in welcoming Shire to my riding. I know they will be a productive and valued business in my riding.

DEAN HUMBLE

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise to celebrate Dean Humble, who retired last month from the Brockville Para Transit service, which he launched 35 years ago.

Like any quiet hero, Dean wasn't expecting fanfare when he put his bus in park for the final time, but when your career has literally opened the doors of our community to the disabled, it's impossible to slip away quietly.

I became mayor of Brockville in 1982 when Dean, who had spent 18 years as a city police officer, started Para Transit, so I know first-hand it was more than a business to this trailblazer of accessibility.

For Dean, ensuring all citizens could fully participate in their community was the right thing to do. And over the next 35 years, Dean became an advocate and champion for equality of access.

His riders weren't his clients; they were his family. He shovelled their walkways. He waited for them at their doctors' appointments. He became a friend to those whose lives were changed because they finally felt included.

There were countless heartfelt tributes to Dean at a retirement party in his honour recently. On social media, people recalled fond memories of Dean teaching Elmer the Safety Elephant courses in public school, or how he was such a patient high school driver's ed instructor. It tells you everything you need to know about Dean's incredible personal character that those brief encounters decades ago are still recalled with such fondness.

Speaker, I want to ask all Ontarians to join me in congratulating this humble hero. His good deeds never went unnoticed and will never be forgotten.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Last year, this House passed a piece of legislation that I think was monumental and something that would have been so great. For the first time in the history of this country, we were going to create a couple of ridings in northern Ontario that would

give us an opportunity to have First Nations elect their own to be here in the Legislature at Queen's Park, by creating ridings, one or two of them, in the Far North where they would be in a majority so that they would have a better chance of being able to elect their own. Imagine this House, where we would have two people from far northern Ontario who were able to represent the indigenous people of this province—on committee, in cabinet, in this House, in the halls, in the meetings—to be able to inform us on the issues that we need to move on.

1510

Unfortunately, what has come back to this House, by way of the commission, is a riding in the northwest that somewhat does that, but a riding in the northeast that is called Mushkegowuk but is not by any stretch of the imagination one where First Nations will get elected by majority, because they actually are only about 10% of the riding that is being created.

This House has decided to send a committee to Kenora and Moose Factory next week. We will have a chance to listen to the people of the Mushkegowuk in regard to what they want. Let's hope that at the end of that process we are able to see within our hearts that this is a real chance for us to do reconciliation and to change the legislation and amend it so that we finally can have ridings where people of the Far North, First Nations people, Cree and Mushkegowuk, are able to elect their own to come into this Legislature so they can better represent the issues that are important to them directly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member from Timmins–James Bay, which I didn't get a chance to say before. He was enthusiastic about his speech.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There you go.

DIWALI

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Mississauga–Erindale

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know you are forgetting but this year, on October 19, Ontarians will witness many celebrations and events organized by the South Asian community to commemorate Diwali. Diwali is celebrated by people of different faiths. Some celebrate the festival due to religious observance, some for spiritual significance, and others for historical reasons. It is a festival that is celebrated by a multi-religious contingent, which is exemplary of the Canadian values of freedom of religion, multiculturalism and unity.

Diwali is fondly known as the festival of lights, a fitting title as the festival represents the triumph of light over darkness, and the celebrations consist of a multitude of colours and fireworks. Mr. Speaker, as family and friends come together to celebrate Diwali, it is important to be thankful for all the blessings that have enriched our lives.

This year's Diwali celebrations in Canada also coincide with the introduction of a Canada Post stamp

which honours the Diwali festival. I would like to say thank you to Canada Post and India Post in combining their efforts in the creation of a stamp for Diwali. It is an important symbol of respect to the wider South Asian community which has for generations contributed to the fabric of Canadian society.

I would also like to extend my very best wishes to everyone celebrating Diwali in Ontario and around the world. Happy Diwali.

BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to celebrate provincial championships won by two St. Thomas minor baseball teams. Congratulations to the St. Thomas Cardinals major peewee team and the St. Thomas Cardinals major rookie team on winning the Ontario Baseball Association's provincial championships.

The St. Thomas Cardinals major peewee team, led by coach Dave Boldt, Shaun Rivard, Dan Groves, Richard Van Liere and Edward Jordan, was second out of 13 teams in the regular season and was runner-up in four tournaments. Their season record was 39-14-1, and they won the OBA's B provincial championship in Leamington on Labour Day weekend. Their team members were Evan Boldt, Aidan Rivard, Jackson Groves, Cody Van Liere, Patrick Berkvens, Junior Coleman, Carson Dietrich, Adam Fry, Ryan Hind, Cameron Niles, Eric Oakes, William Richardson and Creegan O'Connor.

The St. Thomas Cardinals major rookie team is led by Daniel Leonardes, Ryan Morrison, Wade Bergeron and Tom Watson. This team shut down Northumberland in the final game by not allowing a single run after the first inning, and won the championship 9-4. Their team members are Tayven Barned, Kolton Bergeron, Hayden Burrows, Chase Cameron, Cooper Henderson, Kaden Leonardes, Cameron Morrison, Luke Ordroneau, Luke Thomas, Parker Vaughan, Nathan Watson and Zephyr Hatch.

Thanks and congratulations to these teams on great teamwork and the desire to play and to be the best they can. They deserve this championship.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You got them all in.

Further members' statements?

NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Mr. James J. Bradley: The latest round of cuts of front-line staff at the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority has caused justifiable alarm among environment groups and, indeed, thousands of people in the Niagara-Hamilton region who wish to see our natural heritage and the environment protected by this agency.

Members of Trout Unlimited Canada, the Welland River Keepers and the Bert Miller Nature Club are among concerned residents in our area who believe that the NPCA appears to be abandoning an important role that it has traditionally played in years gone by.

Local MPPs have heard from their constituents concerns about controversial land deals, questionable contracts and hiring practices, a new, development-friendly philosophy, workplace harassment and bullying of any who dare to question or criticize those in charge of the NPCA through legal action or retribution practices.

Constituents are saying that as the NPCA loses long-time, dedicated employees through firings and resignations brought on by stress and discouragement, and silences its critics with acts of intimidation and retribution with what some claim to be SLAPP suits, the environment and public participation will be the losers.

There is much evidence to justify the concerns expressed by local constituents, who hope, as I do, that the NPCA returns to its respected and envied roots.

HARRY POTTER FESTIVAL

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am happy to announce that from October 13 to 15, the town of Blyth—a real-life Room of Requirement for this event—will transform for a much-anticipated Harry Potter and the Transfigured Town event.

While you may not be a wizard like Harry Potter, you can still experience the magic of his wizarding world. It's important to note that you may just recognize Harry Potter in Blyth. He's being played by Gracin, who served us as a page before the summer break.

Whether you are a Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff or Slytherin, this is an opportunity to put on your capes, grab your broomsticks and fly over to Blyth. The weekend event may not be the Quidditch world cup, but there are still plenty of exciting events that will be taking place, including Quidditch tournaments, a musical performance by Draco and the Malfoys, as well as Slughorn's VIP dinner.

By attending this year's Harry Potter festival, you will solemnly swear that you will be up to some good, as the proceeds from this three-day festival will be donated to charities such as the Huron Food Action Network.

Don't forget, when the weekend's over, just say, "Mischief managed."

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NICK'S LAW (OPIOID ABUSE AWARENESS), 2017

LOI NICK DE 2017 SUR LA SENSIBILISATION À L'ABUS D'OPIOÏDES

Ms. MacLeod moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act to raise awareness of opioid abuse /
Projet de loi 161, Loi visant à sensibiliser le public à
l'abus d'opioïdes.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This bill enacts Nick's Law (Opioid Abuse Awareness), 2017, which requires the government of Ontario to allocate at least 10% of the Bulk Media Buy Program toward marketing campaigns that aim to raise awareness regarding the risk of prescription opioid abuse and regarding the risks associated with fentanyl abuse. For every fiscal year, the Minister of Finance must report on the campaigns and the percentage of the Bulk Media Buy Program that was allocated toward them.

I have named this Nick's Law. Nick passed away. He was the first person ever to come through my constituency office in 2006 struggling from a drug addiction.

1520

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(LIFE SETTLEMENTS), 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES ASSURANCES (RACHATS
DE POLICES D'ASSURANCE-VIE)

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to amend the Insurance Act to authorize life settlements / Projet de loi 162, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances pour autoriser les rachats de polices d'assurance-vie.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Mike Colle: If passed, this bill would allow Ontario seniors to do what they can do all over the United States, and that is that at a certain time in their life they have the option to sell their life insurance policy so they can get their money back so they can take care of themselves or loved ones when their savings run out.

It is a very important bill, given the example of so many seniors living so long that they are basically dying poor because they can't access these assets in life insurance. I want to thank Mr. Leonard Goodman and the executive director of the Life Settlement Association of Ontario, David Hughes, for championing this initiative to help our seniors finally access their life insurance policies so they can live in dignity.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Jeff Leal: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Minister.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(c), a change be made in the order of precedence on the ballot list draw of August 14, 2017, for private members' public business, such that Mrs. Martins assumes ballot item number 3 and, Ms. Vernile assumes ballot item number 26; and that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notices for ballot items 2, 3, 6, 7 and 26 of the ballot list draw of August 14, 2017, for private members' public business be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(c), a change be made—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Hon. Jeff Leal: Speaker, I believe you will find we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the use of sign-language interpreters in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Minister.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I move that sign-language interpreters may be present on the floor of the chamber today to interpret statements by the ministry and responses.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister moves that sign-language interpreters be present on the floor of the chamber today to interpret statements by the minister and responses. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT
AWARENESS MONTH

MOIS NATIONAL
DE LA SENSIBILISATION
À L'EMPLOI DES PERSONNES
HANDICAPÉES

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I am honoured to recognize October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month in Ontario, and I want to acknowledge our sign-language interpreter here and thank him for being here today.

As I make this statement, Speaker, it's important to recognize that we are gathered here on the traditional territory of indigenous peoples dating back countless generations. I would like to show my respect for their contributions and acknowledge the role of treaty-making in what is now Ontario. Hundreds of years after the first treaties were signed, they are still relevant today. I am committed to working closely with First Nations and indigenous partners, as well as francophone communities and others, to build a stronger province that includes more social and economic opportunities for people with disabilities.

Speaker, as minister responsible for accessibility, much of my mandate involves promoting a culture shift in Ontario, one where accessibility becomes a valued part of our everyday lives. Our government understands that Ontario's rich and precedent-setting diversity is one of our greatest assets.

Notre gouvernement est conscient que la riche diversité sans précédent de l'Ontario constitue l'un de nos plus grands atouts.

Talk to any visitor, whether they came to Toronto to celebrate last week's Invictus Games or travelled to Walton for our popular International Plowing Match, you will likely hear how Ontarians are welcoming, forward-thinking and diverse. Not many places celebrate diversity as does Ontario. It has been woven into the fabric of our province and it has become our calling card to the world. Diversity of race, religion, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation and disability is what makes Ontario unique. As minister responsible for accessibility, I'd add that it's also what makes us strong.

Now it's up to us to harness this diversity, to use this strength to fortify our society and our economy, and build a more accessible and equal Ontario that includes the talents of everyone. Speaker, this is precisely what our government is doing with our new employment strategy for people with disabilities. Access Talent is a bold plan that aims to harness the talents of people with disabilities to grow our society and our economy. It's focused on connecting more people with disabilities to jobs and more employers to new talent.

To achieve these important goals, the strategy is built on four foundational pillars: inspiring youth and students with disabilities; creating person-centred employment and training services; establishing the government as a leading employer and change agent; and engaging employers as our champions and partners.

We're proud to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month in Ontario as a means to champion increased employment for people with disabilities.

Speaker, all across this country, employers and advocates will promote the business case for hiring people with disabilities, organizing events and celebrations that encourage companies to tap into one of Canada's top economic resources. And thanks to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, more people with disabilities will be able to join our workforces. This groundbreaking act has established standards in key areas of

everyday life that require businesses and organizations to make their practices, products and premises accessible to people with disabilities. The employment standard, for instance, requires employers to make their hiring practices and workplaces accessible, allowing them to draw from a bigger talent pool.

Beyond the legislation, we're partnering with accessibility champions like the Ontario Disability Employment Network, which is helping to connect employers to talented Ontarians with disabilities. We're also supporting Dolphin Disabilities Mentoring Day on October 25 to give more people a chance to showcase their skills and meet prospective employers. Dolphin Digital Technologies has made hiring people with disabilities a business priority. They know, like we do, that the secret to business success involves more than the latest app or acquisition. What truly helps a company to thrive, Speaker, are its people.

Today, the formula for financial success is often found in how well a company can integrate diversity throughout its workforce, and they can do that by becoming accessible. It's no accident that one of the world's most profitable online businesses has listed diversity of population as a requirement for the location of its new headquarters.

In fact, many of the globe's leading tech companies are partnering with our government's new BIG IDeA accessibility innovation program to increase accessibility in machine-learning models. They understand that to compete in an increasingly diverse economy you need accessible products and diverse talent. That's why forward-thinking companies of all sizes and all sectors, from Deloitte to CIBC to Loblaws, are actively hiring and promoting people with disabilities as an untapped talent pool that can help improve and grow businesses. As a leader in accessibility, Ontario is doing the same.

We're committed to being an inclusive employer of choice, Speaker, and we're working hard to be a change agent that motivates other organizations to take action and include more people with disabilities on the payroll. To help us in this work, we've enlisted some pretty big names from the business, public sector and post-secondary fields, executives with the strategic smarts to guide our work and the professional networks to influence their peers. They're members of Ontario's new employers' partnership table, which I was very happy to launch just last week. This dynamic advisory team consists of 17 leaders from employers of various sizes and geographical locations across the province. They will provide our government with real-world insights, drawn from their experiences in various sectors and communities, including indigenous and francophone perspectives.

1530

Speaker, this table marks a major step forward for Access Talent: Ontario's Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities. Their work will help identify innovative ways we can achieve our goal of increased employment for people with disabilities. And they will champion accessibility and inclusive employment in

boardrooms, shop floors and community hubs across Ontario.

The vision of Access Talent is one of a province where people with disabilities have a chance to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to our society and to our economy, and I believe that the professional perspectives provided by this table will go a long way to making this vision a reality.

They'll be aided in that work by the new Discovery Ability Network, recently launched by our government in partnership with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and Magnet. This online portal will function as a one-stop shop for both job seekers and employers, with a job-matching platform and hiring resources.

Together with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Access Talent is helping to position our province at the forefront of the accessibility movement.

Consider this, Speaker: We were one of the first places in the world to establish a goal and time frame for an accessible province. We were the first to set accessibility standards so that people with disabilities can participate in their communities and the economy. And we're one of the first to actively challenge employers to hire more people with disabilities.

Speaker, all of us know that Ontario's labour force should reflect the diversity of our province. So I'm calling on everyone to share the benefits of inclusive employment with their constituents, with their business associates, with their families and with their friends. Together, we can harness the power of Ontario's diversity, using it to build a more accessible, inclusive and prosperous province for all of us.

Merci. Thank you. Meegwetch.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's time for responses.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to respond to the minister's comments regarding National Disability Employment Awareness Month, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and our leader, Patrick Brown.

I don't really want to talk about the statistics because, frankly, the statistics are still poor. What I'd like to talk about are some successes.

I was involved in and attended a Community Living Dufferin special event. Essentially, the special event was an annual event that Community Living Dufferin hosts to thank their employers for hiring individuals who have different abilities. As part of that evening, they include a best employee, best in the class award ceremony. I will never forget when Adam was given his outstanding employee award medal. Instead of coming up to the front and saying thank you and accepting his award, Adam actually gave what was essentially an elevator pitch. The elevator pitch was, "Why you should hire me is because I have a special ability. Just because I'm different, I have a special and unique ability that will make a difference. So if you know anyone who is willing to hire me, Adam, then please do that."

Speaker, that was many, many years ago, but I was absolutely impressed. Everybody gave Adam a standing

ovation because we thought, "Right on. This is exactly what we need to be doing more of." We need more employees who are willing to step up, who are willing to take a risk, which really isn't very much of a risk, frankly, and we need more ambassadors like Adam.

I also remember, during the Select Committee on Developmental Services, being part of that committee when we heard from Mark Wafer. Many of you will know who Mark Wafer is. He was a franchise owner of multiple Tim Hortons for many, many years. He has hired over 100 individuals who have a different ability. He is a huge ambassador. He actually participates in a program called Rotary at Work. Essentially, what Mark and Rotary at Work do is they go out and they educate employers. They talk to employers about why it makes good business sense to hire people with different abilities. Mark has been doing that for years. I'm pleased to see that he is going to continue that advocacy.

Even when he sold his Tim Hortons franchises, he ensured, through the sale, that his long-term employees who have disabilities were going to continue be part of those organizations. We need more people like Adam. We need more people like Mark Wafer. We could do more as MPPs.

I think today, as we mark DEAM—Disability Employment Awareness Month—we remember that there are some great, positive, proactive examples out there across Ontario. We need to encourage our employers; and we, as employers, need to understand that there are many, many opportunities that we can provide that we can talk about and ensure that there are more people like Adam who, instead of just doing the elevator pitch, actually get the job.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of our leader, Andrea Horwath, and the NDP caucus to mark October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

I would also like to welcome our interpreter to the House today, thinking that we should have an interpreter in this House every day, ensuring that it's always on our minds and that people of all abilities have the ability to access our Legislature.

Too often, I speak to people with a disability who desperately want to work but can't find an employer who will want to hire them. Just in the last couple of days, I've been talking to someone who is a graduate of Mohawk College as an architectural technician. This person has cerebral palsy and has had a lot of calls about work over many years. Everything seems positive until they find out about his physical challenges, then they find excuses not to hire him.

Many others I speak to are fully capable of working. In fact, they are working, but they're doing it for free, as a volunteer. They volunteer a day here or a day there. That is the reality for far too many people living with a disability in Ontario.

In fact, Speaker, according to a 2012 study done by Stats Canada, the employment rate for people with

disabilities aged 25 to 64 was just 49%. That's less than half. Even those with a mild disability were employed at a significantly lower rate than the population in general.

For those who are working, they're often paid less than their non-disabled counterparts. Researchers of a 2015 University of Guelph study found this:

"There's a gap of approximately \$4,000 between graduates with and without disabilities, and that's just two years after graduation; we would expect that gap to grow with time."

When we see reports of how people with a disability perform in the workplace, we really need to consider why that is. The website for National Disability Employment Awareness Month tells us that: 90% of persons with disabilities rate average or better on job performance than their non-disabled colleagues; 86% of persons with disabilities rate average or better on attendance; and 98% of persons with disabilities rate average or better in work safety than their non-disabled colleagues.

Last year, Irena Kagansky-Young wrote in NOW Magazine about her experience as a person living with a disability searching for employment. This is what she wrote:

"For five tough years I worked tirelessly toward graduating with honours from Canada's third-largest university. I had dreams of starting a successful career in communications. I looked forward to being given the opportunity to shine. I was ready to show the world. I'm fluent in three languages. Surely I had everything I needed to impress potential employers. Instead, I was stifled, belittled and disheartened by potential employers every step of the way." Those are her words.

She went on to give examples of some of the rejections that she received. These ranged from an interview being cancelled after she told the prospective employer that she had a disability to being offered to work at home as a volunteer or for a \$200 honorarium. She also spoke about the lack of accessibility in workplaces, a problem that extends into our transit system.

1540

In 2005, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act was passed. It set a deadline for Ontario to be fully accessible by 2025. Now, just eight years from that deadline, there is nothing to suggest that it will be met. In March of this year, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance asked the minister if there was a detailed plan to reach the 2025 goal. But there is no evidence that such a plan exists. The Liberal government is failing people with disabilities. They are well behind reaching their goal, and there is nothing in place to see that any of that is about to change.

We must do more to enable people with disabilities to be active members in the workforce. I would say that there is need for more individually tailored training programs that match the skills of people with disabilities with specific employers' needs. But there are also very serious problems to overcome. We have issues with attitudes and discrimination that result in employers not

being appreciative of disabled workers, the benefits that they bring and the opportunities.

There are problems with accessibility that need the government's immediate attention. People living with a disability are counting on the government to act. They have been let down long enough.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital" in Alliston "is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space as it was built for a mere 7,000" emergency room visits per year and now "experiences in excess of 37,000 visits annually; and

"Whereas the government-implemented Places to Grow Act forecasts massive population growth in New Tecumseth, which along with the aging population will only intensify the need for the redevelopment of the hospital; and

"Whereas all other hospital emergency facilities are more than 45 minutes away with no public transit available between those communities; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

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

"That the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government immediately provide the necessary funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital for the redevelopment of their emergency department, operating rooms, diagnostic imaging and laboratory to ensure that they can continue to provide stable and ongoing service to residents in our area."

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

PHARMACARE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition that reads:

"Universal Pharmacare for All Ontarians.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas prescription medications are a part of health care, and people shouldn't have to empty their wallets or rack up credit card bills to get the medicines they need;

"Whereas over 2.2 million Ontarians don't have any prescription drug coverage and one in four Ontarians don't take their medications as prescribed because they cannot afford the cost;

"Whereas taking medications as prescribed can save lives and help people live better; and

"Whereas Canada urgently needs universal and comprehensive national pharmacare;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support a universal provincial pharmacare plan for all Ontarians."

I fully agree with this. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Nicola to bring to the Clerk.

ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition.

"To Address Reoccurring Delays and Unspecified Time Frames for Elevator Repair and Service.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas elevators are an important amenity for a resident of a high-rise residential building; and

"Whereas ensuring basic mobility and standards of living for residents remain top priority; and

"Whereas the unreasonable delay of repairs for elevator services across Ontario is a concern for residents of high-rise buildings resulting in constant breakdowns, mechanical failures and 'out of service' notices for unspecified amounts of time;

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

"Urge the Ontario government to require repairs to elevators be completed within a reasonable and prescribed time frame. We urge this government to address these concerns that are shared by residents of Trinity-Spadina and across Ontario."

I agree with this. I'll sign it and give it to page Milind.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICIES

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

"Whereas residents in rural areas can be particularly susceptible to property crimes, and can experience concentrated spikes of criminal activity in small communities; and

"Whereas all residents in the province of Ontario deserve to feel safe in their communities; and

"Whereas illegal drug use has become endemic across Ontario; and

"Whereas there are clear links between illegal drug use and property crimes; and

"Whereas communities often find criminals back on their streets on bail while cases work their way through the courts; and

"Whereas when crime spikes in a small community, residents live in fear;

"Therefore, we the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement policies that will empower the judiciary to keep criminals off of our streets who pose a significant risk of reoffending while out on bail."

I'll affix my signature to the petition and send it to the table with Olivia.

SHINGLES VACCINE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario announced that starting September 15, 2016, the shingles vaccine would be available to all seniors 65 years to 70 years free of charge ...;

"Whereas seniors over the age of 70 years will still be required to pay for the vaccine ...;

"Whereas the government of Ontario claims that studies show that the vaccine is highly effective when seniors are vaccinated between the ages of 65 and 70 and will not cover the vaccine for all Ontario seniors;

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

"This is unfair to seniors over the age of 70 and we urge the government to expand the coverage so that all Ontario seniors are eligible for the free shingles vaccine."

I agree. I'll sign it and give it to Greg to bring up to the Clerk.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

"Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

"Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be" better "served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

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

"Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge."

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

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Stop the Move of the Provincial Offences Court from Minden to Lindsay.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Attorney General has announced it is closing the provincial offences court in the town of Minden; and

"Whereas closing the court in Minden would render justice inaccessible for many residents in the county who do not have reliable access to transportation to travel to Lindsay; and

“Whereas the government did not consult with the county of Haliburton to support this decision; and

“Whereas the Ontario Provincial Police will incur overtime and travelling costs which will result in higher taxes passed directly onto our taxpayers; and

“Whereas the courts have a positive effect on the economy of the county of Haliburton and closing the courthouse will divert money out of town;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the Minister of the Attorney General immediately reverse the decision to move the Minden provincial offences court to Lindsay from the period of July 1, 2017, to July 1, 2018, and ensure that residents in the county of Haliburton have access to justice in their own community.”

It's signed by hundreds of people from Haliburton county. I'll pass it to page—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Further petitions?

PRÉVENTION DU TABAGISME CHEZ LES JEUNES

M. Taras Natyshak: J'ai le plaisir de présenter une pétition au titre « Pétition pour les films sans fumée ».

« Entendu que, au cours des 10 dernières années en Ontario, 86 % de tous les films montrant des fumeurs étaient accessibles aux jeunes et le fait que l'industrie du tabac se sert du grand écran pour promouvoir l'usage du tabac est bien documenté; et

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« Entendu qu'un rapport scientifique rendu public par l'Unité de recherche sur le tabac de l'Ontario, environ 185 000 enfants de l'Ontario commenceront à fumer après avoir vu des personnages fumer dans des films, et que plus que 59 000 fumeurs ainsi recrutés finiront par mourir de maladies liées à l'usage du tabac, lesquelles entraîneront des coûts de soins de santé de l'ordre d'au moins 1,1 milliard de dollars; et

« Entendu que le gouvernement de l'Ontario s'est fixé comme objectif d'atteindre le taux de tabagisme le plus faible au Canada, et que 79 % (par rapport à 73 % en 2011) des Ontariens et Ontariennes appuient l'interdiction de l'usage du tabac dans les films classés dans les catégories G, PG, 14A; et

« Entendu que la ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs a le pouvoir de modifier, par l'entremise du Conseil des ministres, les règlements pris en application de la Loi sur le classement des films;

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

« Que le gouvernement examine les façons dont on pourrait modifier la Loi sur le classement des films pour réduire l'usage du tabac dans les films classés dans les catégories qui conviennent aux enfants et aux adolescents, et diffusés en Ontario. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je vais l'envoyer avec page Greg.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Collingwood General and Marine Hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space;

“Whereas a building condition assessment found the major systems of the hospital will require renewal within the next 10 years;

“Whereas substandard facilities exist in the emergency department; there is no space in the dialysis department to expand, and there is a lack of storage and crowding in many areas of the building; and, structurally, additional floors can't be added to the existing building to accommodate growth;

“Whereas there is no direct connection from the medical device repurposing department to the operating room;

“Whereas there is a lack of quiet rooms, interview rooms and lounge space;

“Whereas Collingwood General and Marine Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

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

“That the government immediately provide the necessary funding to Collingwood General and Marine Hospital so that it can build a new hospital to serve the needs of the community.”

Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'll edit this one for time. It's called “Protect Ojibway Prairie.”

To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

Whereas the Ojibway Prairie Complex is within a system of five parks totalling more than 330 hectares, which is half of the remaining natural areas in the city of Windsor; and

Whereas Ojibway has 160 species at risk and is Canada's most endangered ecosystem; and

Whereas 4,000 species exist on the site, represented by more than 100 rare plants, more than 230 bird species and 16 mammals; and

Whereas there is a proposed development adjacent to the complex, and some of the areas within the Ojibway Prairie complex include environmentally significant areas, a provincially significant wetland and an area of natural and scientific interest;

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

“To designate this land with provincial importance and prevent any development on or adjacent to” this property.

I agree. I'll give it to Michael to bring up to the table.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICIES

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to present this petition.

"Whereas residents in rural areas can be particularly susceptible to property crimes, and can experience concentrated spikes of criminal activity in small communities; and

"Whereas all residents in the province of Ontario deserve to feel safe in their communities; and

"Whereas illegal drug use has become endemic across Ontario; and

"Whereas there are clear links between illegal drug use and property crimes; and

"Whereas communities often find criminals back on their streets on bail while cases work their way through the courts; and

"Whereas when crime spikes in a small community, residents live in fear;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement policies that will empower the judiciary to keep criminals off our streets who pose a significant risk of reoffending while out on bail."

As I am in complete agreement, I have signed this.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition here from Dr. Lesli Hapak, who is a periodontist in Windsor. It's a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly to update Ontario fluoridation legislation.

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations, including the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ontario Dental Association; and

"Whereas recent experience in Canadian cities that have removed fluoride from drinking water has led directly to a dramatic increase in tooth decay; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care urges support for amending the Fluoridation Act to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

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

"That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across

the province of Ontario before the end of the first session of the current Ontario Parliament."

As a dental assistant, I fully support this petition, will affix my name and send it to the table with page Will.

ENERGY STORAGE

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

"Whereas there are significant concerns raised with the procurement and environmental vetting of the NRStor CAES project in Goderich; and

"Whereas, despite all precautions, energy plants are ... dangerous and should not be placed in urban areas, close to residential homes and a municipal daycare building; and

"Whereas the government is spending taxpayers' dollars on additional energy projects despite the energy minister's proclamation that Ontario has an abundance of energy; and

"Whereas this money could instead be used to provide health care, keep rural schools open, increase long-term-care needs and other services for the people of Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the government to cancel the NRStor CAES project proposed for Goderich."

I'll put my signature on this petition and send it to the table with Rachel.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONSTRUCTION LIEN AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE PRIVILÈGE DANS L'INDUSTRIE DE LA CONSTRUCTION

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 28, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to amend the Construction Lien Act /
Projet de loi 142, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le privilège dans l'industrie de la construction.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I've been looking forward to this opportunity to debate this bill. This is something we've been waiting for for a long time. I'm not yet convinced that the government is going to move on this in a way that is going to allow this to happen in a timely fashion, but nonetheless, we're somewhat optimistic that the bill responds to some of what the issues are within the construction industry. It doesn't respond entirely to the satisfaction of those people who have been calling for this bill, but at least it's a step in the right direction.

Allow me to divert a little bit, because I want to bring the House's attention to something that's going on in Constance Lake. Unfortunately, we've had another youth who died. This is the second that we've had in that community in a couple of weeks—a child about three years old. I want to say that my colleague Carol Hughes and myself have been reaching out to the community to find out what we can do to in order to support the community as they move forward, about how you deal with that kind of pain in a community, and what you do in order to try to prevent those types of tragedies from happening in the future.

I'm glad to say that there has been a response. I think what we saw in Attawapiskat a couple of years ago has gone a long way to inform both the federal and provincial governments that you can't just stand aside, allow this stuff and ignore it. You've got to take it straight on. So some teams have been sent into Constance Lake in order to work with the community, those affected, and help the chief, council and others to deal with this.

Let's hope we get to a day one day when these types of issues are not something that we report in the House, that our communities are sound and safe and that children and others are safe in those communities, but there's a long way to go. I just wanted to bring this to the attention of the House because I don't think a lot of people know about this and I think they should be aware in case this comes up.

1600

I want to get into this entire issue of prompt-payment legislation. My original trade before I got here was an electrician. I worked for a short time in the construction industry, in between times when the mining industry wasn't doing too well. As an electrician, and first as an apprentice, I was able to get work in the construction industry, working on a number of construction projects up in northern Ontario.

I've got to tell you, it's not just the contractors who are affected by this. It's the tradespeople and labourers and others who work in the industry who are paid as a result of these contracts that come out either from the private sector industry or government when it comes to building infrastructure or whatever it might be. Because this is an issue that has been long-standing and that all the members of this assembly have been lobbied on for how many years now? I've been here for 27 years, Speaker, and this issue has been around for a long time. Countless members have raised this issue in the House, from all sides of the House. I know that my good friend the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek raised it a number of times in regard to what happened in his community in regard to the stadium for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats and also what happened in the Pan Am Games. I know that other members in this House have raised it: Mr. Natyshak, the member from Windsor—Essex, has raised it; members from the Conservative caucus; and members from the Liberal caucus have raised this issue.

For some reason, it has been like the House is sort of seized up and not doing anything about it. We get private

members' bills that come before us. Everybody says, "Oh yeah, great idea. We should do something in order to set a regime so that the contractors are actually"—and the subcontractors, which I'll get into in a minute—"paid on time." And the bill just doesn't go anywhere. It has been a really frustrating process for everybody involved, on all sides of the House.

Imagine how you feel if you're the contractor, the subcontractor or the worker who got paid late, and in many cases didn't get paid at all, as a result of the contract not being fulfilled, as far as payment, in a timely fashion. You've got to ask yourself the question: Why? I know the rules don't allow us to assign motive, and I'm not going to go there, Speaker, because I know the rules well enough to know that I can't do that. But I'm going to skirt close to it; you'll have to decide if I'm just jumping over the line.

I think that there are powerful interests in this province, both within the private sector and within government sectors, who kind of like it the way it is. You get a big contract. Let's say a tender goes out for some type of infrastructure project. We're talking often in the millions, if not the tens or hundreds of millions of dollars—in some cases, even larger. Imagine what you can do with the numbers if you don't pay the contractor on time. Those are monies you've been paid by the person who essentially—you're the one paying the bill, first of all, as the person who's paying the contractors who pay the subcontractors. But if you could hang on to some of that money for an extra month, an extra two months or an extra three months and stall it whatever way you can, imagine the compound interest that you make on that money that is sitting there and that is not being paid to the contractors and subcontractors.

Clearly, there's some motivation here. I'm not saying that it's always the case. We have to agree that sometimes there are legitimate cases where the contract has not been fulfilled in a way that's satisfactory for the person paying the bill, be it for municipal, federal or provincial governments or the private industry that is paying the bill on this particular job. But that's not really what goes on the majority of times. In the majority of times, it is a question of the bill not being paid very quickly either due to the ineptness of the people who pay the bill, or the desire and the positioning that the company paying the bill decides not to pay it on time because you make a little bit of money, right? Imagine you've got a contract that you have to fulfill that's in the tens of millions of dollars, and you don't pay for an extra two months; you delay the payment of that bill for a couple of months. You can make some pretty serious change, as far as interest on that money or interest that you don't have to pay as a result of the money you've got to borrow. You may have actually secured the loan, but you haven't drawn down, and if you haven't drawn down, you don't have to pay the interest. There's a little bit of motivation here as far as not wanting to pay the bill on time.

Again, I want to say that there are legitimate cases where a contractor did not fulfill the contract in a way

that's satisfactory to the person issuing the contract. Those issues need to be dealt with, and I want to acknowledge that. I want to say that all of this is not what I'm suggesting, but a good part is. Something needs to be done so that you have some sort of a system in place that looks at these issues and says, "Is this real, or is this somebody trying to make some extra dollars?"

This is a practice that goes on in many industries and many professions as far as not paying on time and holding money. For example, we know of many cases where we've heard various lawyers on deals hold on to the money in special accounts and don't pay it out on time because they make a little bit of money on the interest, right? We know that goes on. You've got to ask yourself the question, Speaker: If all the members in this House—I'm saying all the members and I might be overstating here. If the majority of members in this House, I think would be the best way to put it, think something needs to be done so that the hard-working contractors, subcontractors and workers don't get shortchanged by a person who's not paying the bill on time for their own motivation, you have to ask yourself a question: Why has this issue not been resolved a long time ago?

I think part of the reason is that there's a fair amount of pressure that's put on government, as far as the executive council, to not move with this quickly because certain people who pay the bill, be it the municipality, be it OPG, be it Infrastructure Ontario, be it whoever—there's a little bit of money to be made by maybe not being as efficient as you need to be when it comes to paying the bill. There's a little bit of motivation that goes on here that I think, in the end, serves the interest of one side of this equation.

Now, should the fix be that everything is done the other way so that we don't take into account the times where there's actually a problem with the contract? Well, absolutely not. I think you need to have a system in place that looks at the facts and says, "Oh, this is not a question of the person paying the contract trying to withhold money for their own advantage and gain. It's a question of where the contract in fact hasn't been fulfilled." I think you need to have some kind of system in place that deals with that.

The legislation, as proposed, is based on the recommendations that have been done by the expert panels and kind of deals with that. I don't think it deals with it to the extent that a lot of people in this House and a lot of people in industry would like, but I've got to say it is a step in the right direction. Of course, as New Democrats, we will support this legislation. But are we really addressing this issue in a meaningful way over the longer period? Time will tell. I think the part of this bill that's a little bit lacking is that there is a system somewhat put in place to deal with a kind of mediation-arbitration process. If the payer of the bill is delaying payment of the bill because they say there's something wrong, but there isn't, the contractor or subcontractor can go through a process established in this bill that would allow them to come to a head on the decision of getting paid.

But the problem is, where's the teeth? Where's the enforcement? It's one thing to say that you go through a process, you mediate or arbitrate some sort of a decision as to, "Is this an issue or not an issue and is there a legitimate reason why the money wasn't paid?" But let's say, for the sake of argument in this part of the debate, it's a question where in fact there is no legitimate reason why the money is not being paid. It's a question that the person paying the bill is just taking their time because they're saying, "Oh, my God, my accounts payable is so busy. We run so many jobs and we just can't get our heads around paying all this money in a timely fashion. We need extra time." Well, your inability to organize yourself shouldn't be my problem as a person who is getting paid by a contractor.

1610

If you don't have some sort of an enforcement mechanism at the end of the arbitration or mediation process, what's to happen? I know the bill talks about forms of mechanisms to deal with that, but it falls short of providing real penalties that would discourage a payer not to pay the contractors and the subcontractors. That's the problem. I think that's something that we're going to have to deal with in time through this process, as we go through the House and committee, to say, "All right, how do you deal with that? What is a proper enforcement process in this type of legislation?"

Now, as a New Democrat, as a social democrat, I don't want something that is so cumbersome that the contractors, subcontractors or the payers get caught up in some kind of a process and nothing happens. I don't think any of us want that. But I think you need to have some sort of a mechanism where you can come to a decision on the facts quickly enough: Is there an actual issue where the payer is not paying because of a deficiency in the contract and the work being done by the contractors and subcontractors, and you deal with that? Or is it a question that the person who is doing the paying is not paying for their own motivation? If that's the case, I think you have to have some pretty clear language in the bill as to how you deal with that. Is it a penalty? Is it an order of some type in order to make the person pay? I think we need to listen to experts on committee that can tell us the best way to do that, because I think there's an argument for both, and there may be an argument or another way that I haven't thought of. I think the people who are engaged in the process of this whole contractual relationship would be better able to inform us on what penalties or what mechanisms we have to be able to enforce.

I understand that the government says, "Oh, don't worry. That's all by regulation." My God, by regulation: That means to say that the government can do anything it wants. To an extent, that's like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse, because in the end, government is a large player when it comes to issuing work to contractors and subcontractors because we do infrastructure all the time. We are talking about billions of dollars. Infrastructure Ontario and others issue billions of dollars in con-

tracts on an annual basis. And we're going to put the fox in charge of the henhouse? We're going to allow cabinet to set regulation on how that should be done as far as penalties?

I'm not comfortable with that, Speaker. This is something that I have spoken about before in the House: that there is far too much of the authority of this assembly that is delegated to regulation over the last 25 years.

When my good friend the House leader for the Conservative Party and I were elected back in 1990, along with his colleague Mr. Ted Arnott—I forget his riding. What is it?

Mr. Steve Clark: Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wellington–Halton Hills. When we were originally elected, there was far less delegated to regulation than there is now. Normally, we would write a bill—government, through their ministers and their offices, would write a bill, and the bill said, “It shall,” “It will.” It didn't say, “By regulation.”

The only things we delegated to regulation were the complex questions of “how to.” For example—I'm not sure if the honourable House leader for the official opposition was on the bill that dealt with the creation of the sustainable forestry development act; I think it was another member of the Conservative Party at the time who was involved. But we delegated some of that to regulation because writing the manuals by which we managed forest management and the practices—it made far more sense to have foresters write it than it did to have legislators write it. So we said, “Here are the principles that we want in the bill,” and we didn't delegate our authority holus-bolus to cabinet to be able to decide what to do.

Unfortunately, what has happened over the years is that government has moved from writing bills that were prescriptive, that said “you shall” and “you will,” to “you might, and then everything will be delegated to regulation.” I think that's wrong, because it means that in the end, this Legislature, which is supposed to set the policy of what the bill should be all about and the direction, says, “We kind of are doing that because we're introducing a bill on prompt-payment legislation, but we're going to leave the details to cabinet.” As I said: putting the fox in charge of the henhouse.

I think that's problematic. Leaving cabinet to decide how it's going to deal with the regulations around enforcement in this legislation and what the process will be to resolve unpaid contractors and subcontractors is problematic by its very nature. What members on all sides of the House who have introduced private members' bills on this—we wanted some sort of a mechanism that allows a clear and fair process that allows the payer and the person who has not been paid to go through a process by which they determine what the issues are and make a decision as to, “Is this for the gain of the company not paying the bill, or is this a legitimate problem in the contract?” Once that decision is made, I think most members of this House—the vast majority of us—expected that the prescription would be, “Here's how

we're going to make sure that this is dealt with, and here's how we're going to make sure that there is enforcement; that the person is actually paid.”

The first problem that I see with this bill is, first, we're not very clear on what the penalties will be. Hopefully we can deal with that in committee. Second of all, we are delegating much of the mechanisms of how this bill will work or not work to cabinet, by way of delegating our authority as legislators to the cabinet. I think that's wrong. I think it's a bad idea that we go there.

Here's the other thing: Will the government actually enact this bill? I know we haven't talked about this in the House, but there are a number of bills that the government has brought forward over the last number of years where they have not even enacted the bill. The government gets to stand there and say, “Woo-hoo, wah-hah, look what we did. We're going to deal with prompt-payment legislation. Everybody applaud us. We're great; we're wonderful.” We, in the opposition, take the government at face value and say, “Well, they've introduced the bill. All right. I guess they're going to do something about it, finally. We're pretty happy about that.” We go through the exercise of second and third reading debate and committee, only to find out that the government doesn't enact the bill. I don't know. I ask my colleague, the House leader for the Conservative party, if he is a little bit fearful like I am. They may never enact this bill.

What are we doing here? Is this an exercise in Liberal propaganda, or is this an exercise in trying to resolve a problem? I think it's the former. I have become somewhat of a cynic in this place because we're seen this rodeo a couple of times too many.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's like Groundhog Day.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's like Groundhog Day; good point.

I say to the government across the way: Tell me it's not true. I should go look at the bill, the enactment section—

Hon. Michael Coteau: You love this, don't you?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What do you mean, I love this? I love the idea that we're doing something about prompt-payment legislation. I think it's great.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Nothing prompt about it, though.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Exactly. It's a pretty slow process.

But my point is that I'm going to go back and take a look at that. I just want to make sure that we don't do something to raise the expectation of industry that something is going to happen and then, at the end of the day, it really doesn't happen. We all know: Between now and June there will be an election. Once the election happens, it will be up to whoever the government is in the next election to possibly deal with this by enactment, by having to enact the bill.

1620

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We'll do it. We'll get it done.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm not worried about us doing it; I'm worried about them, because again I'll just say, and I made the comment earlier, that this is like putting the fox

in charge of the henhouse. We're big players in issuing contracts in the province of Ontario. Ontario as a province probably issues more contracts than most individual private sector initiatives that exist within the province of Ontario. We're in the billions of dollars every year when it comes to contracts that we issue directly through OPS and through organizations like OPG and others. So there's a little bit of an interest, a self-serving interest, on our part not to be too diligent in writing out the cheque.

I used to be in small business, years ago.

Interjection: What kind of business?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Electronic repair. One of the contracts that I had was dealing with a couple of ministries when it came to fixing, back then, two-way radios. We didn't have cellphones. Can you imagine? When I first got into the trade, communications was VHF radios. So I used to fix the odd VHF radio and go do installations on antennas and stuff for the MNR and other ministries in the bush and whatever. And oh, my God—to get paid? They were the worst. They were the worst in paying.

And it wasn't even big money. Thank God I didn't have to rely on those contracts to pay the bills at the end of the year. I was just a small operator. I wasn't a big company of any type, but, you know, I would have these bills for 800, 1,200 or 1,400 bucks, and it would take literally months for me to get a cheque. I would have to call and say, "Well, you know, I did this job for you back in June. We're now in October. Do you think, sometime, you can send me a cheque? I have already paid for all the damn equipment that I installed for you."

So I had to change policy, and I ended up losing contracts over this. I changed policy because I would have to buy the equipment ahead of time to be able to install it, and I wouldn't get paid, sometimes, for four, five or six months. My supplier wanted to get paid, so guess what? I had to pay. There were a few occasions where I had to go into our line of credit to pay for the equipment because the supplier said, "You've got to pay, or else we are not going to issue any more credit." I eventually ended up losing most of my government contracts—not that they were many; I wasn't a big operator. I would do maybe \$15,000 or \$20,000 a year with those guys. But I ended up losing a majority of it because I started demanding payment in advance for the equipment. I would say, "Okay, I will do this job for you. The equipment cost is, let's say, \$2,000 or \$1,500 or whatever, and my labour is X. Pay me a percentage"—which was normally half—"of the cost of the equipment, and I'll do the job for you." And they said, "Well, we are not set up to do that." So I just wouldn't get the job.

Now, when I dealt with companies like the mining companies—I remember, for example, I set up the initial communication system up in Detour Lake mine the first time they built the mine. Those guys, at least they paid. I would go up and do work, I would give them the bill, and within 30 days I got paid. That was a good relationship between myself and them, because they got the work and I got my money: Everybody was happy.

But I'll tell you, the government of Ontario, they were one of the worst. I ended up not being able to do work for

them. There were a couple of private sector outfits that were the same. I don't want to say it was just government. Some private sector outfits did the same thing, but the government was the worst when it came to that.

I just say to my friends across the way, especially those who are on the executive council: Putting you guys in charge of regulation? Je ne sais pas. Je ne pense pas que c'est une bonne idée. Je pense que cette Assemblée est mieux servie si c'est à nous de faire les décisions, d'écrire et de légiférer une législation d'une manière qui est claire et qui donne la direction de ce qu'on veut avoir, comme membres de l'Assemblée, et que ce régime soit mis en place de façon que ça marche pour les contracteurs et ceux qui émettent les contrats. I think that would make more sense.

On the penalties side of this thing, again, I'm not a big fan of issuing penalties that are prohibitive to the point that the penalties would become a disservice or a negative when it comes to somebody issuing the contract in the first place.

I think that whatever we do here as an assembly has to be reasonable. We have to recognize that there are two sides of this contractual negotiation. The person who puts out the tender and the person who fulfills the tender both have a responsibility. If one or the other doesn't do what they were supposed to do, and let's say it's the contractor, then the person who issues the tender has a mechanism by virtue of the cheque—not issuing the cheque because work has not been done to the specification of the contract. You withhold part payment or all payment based on whatever the situation is. So the person who puts out the contract, the person who puts out the tender, has got a lot of power to be able to deal with non-compliance of the terms of the contract.

Unfortunately, there isn't anything on the other side. "I didn't get paid. How do I get paid?" There are instances—I know that my good friend, the member from Windsor Essex, worked in the construction industry. I'm sure you've seen—because I saw it when I was in the construction industry—workers who didn't get paid. The sheet metal worker, the labourer, the carpenter, the electrician, whoever, didn't get paid because the contractor didn't pay the subcontractor and the subcontractor didn't have money to pay the workers. So there are a whole bunch of people who have been affected by the money not being issued in time. Depending on the subcontractor—because you need to understand the relationship of the construction industry. Most general contractors don't do all the work themselves. They sub the work out. In some cases, the subs themselves sub the work out. So there are a lot of subcontractors, smaller contractors, who fulfill the contract of the general contractor.

Normally the pockets aren't very big for the subcontractors. Normally, it's like—Taras and I, and I'll just use this; we'll call it Taras Electric.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Electric Personality.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Electric Personality, yes. We start an electrical contracting business, my friend Taras and I. We decide to put ourselves out there for bidding on work. When we first start out: "How much do you have?" Taras

says, “I’ve got 10,000.” I say, “I’ve got \$10,000.” We buy a little bit of equipment. We’ve already got some trucks. We’ve got the tools. We bid on some jobs and we finally get a job. Off to work we go.

Taras and I go out there. We may have to hire an apprentice or we may have to hire a couple of workers to do the work. We’re out there doing the work, we’re spending the money, we’re making the payroll and, all of sudden, we don’t get the money back from the subcontractors or the general contractor who’s paying us. We go, “Taras, does the company have any money to make payroll this week?” Taras says, “We didn’t get paid by the government of Ontario, or the subcontractor, or whoever it is. We have to lay people off.” Unfortunately, that happens.

What does that do to the sustainability of our economy? It kills the creators of jobs. It kills their ability to be able to get into the market, because nobody starts as a contractor as a big player. When Taras and I start our electrical contracting business, we’re not EllisDon—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We don’t have deep—well, we would never be EllisDon. That’s a whole other story. We’d be a unionized contractor, right?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We would; absolutely.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, we would.

The point is that the new contractor getting into the business normally doesn’t have deep pockets, and they’re the ones who normally end up on the short end of the stick. The one- or two- or three-person-operations are the ones who catch the short end of the stick.

We’ve all seen, in our communities—Speaker, I’m sure you’ve had contractors come into your office or who you’ve run across at events who have been in a position where they ended up not being able to survive because of non-payment.

Unfortunately, the non-payment doesn’t affect the guys at the top; it mostly affects the guys at the bottom of the chain. We’re hurting the very people we want to help when it comes to stimulating our economy and putting people to work, because it’s the small guys that do most of the job creation. It’s the small electrical contractor, mechanical contractor, carpenter or whatever who is the lifeblood of the construction industry when it comes to fulfilling a lot of the work that we do in this province.

We need to have something that protects them from being able to get paid—so that they are paid, not protected from being paid. I said it backwards, but I think people understood what I meant.

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We need a mechanism that is able to ensure that the dollars flow from the person who issued the tender to the person who was the general to the person who was the sub or the sub-subcontractor.

Here’s the kicker: Whatever the process is for us to get paid in the end—my friend Taras and I, in the electrical business that we are in—I don’t want to have to spend a whole bunch of money that I don’t have on an expensive process to get my money back. Let’s say that we bid on a

job that was \$150,000, of which the profit is \$10,000—if we’re really lucky. In this economy, it wouldn’t be a heck of a lot. You’re really working to try to get work to keep yourself working, to pay yourself a wage and to pay your workers’ wages. You’re lucky if you make 10%.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: For sure.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes.

We’re going to have to spend that and then some to get our money? We have to have a mechanism that allows a small contractor not to go broke paying a process of repayment when it comes to the big guy not paying the little guy. So whatever we set up in place, it can’t be a burden, especially on the small independent contractors who are trying to do what’s right. They’re trying to create jobs, create wealth, and build a life for themselves and their families. We don’t want a process that’s so cumbersome that the person says—Taras and I—“We can’t afford the lawyer to fix this. The lawyer wants \$10,000 just to deal with the process”—or an accountant, or whoever it is who’s going to do this kind of thing.

So we need to have a mechanism that is not a burden on the person who’s trying to get paid.

I would venture even further: I think if the company who issued the tender is found to be in the wrong, the entire cost should be paid by them—maybe that’s an amendment we should look at—because it wasn’t my fault that you didn’t pay me. Why should I have to pay in order to get my money? I think we need to look at that, to make sure it’s not a burden, especially on the smaller guys.

And it has to be a system that’s not so complicated. I had to go to Small Claims Court a number of times, as a small business person, for people who didn’t do payment. I love Small Claims Court; I didn’t like going to Small Claims Court. Any time I went to Small Claims Court, it meant I wasn’t working doing something else. But what I liked about Small Claims is that at least I didn’t have to hire a lawyer and a whole bunch of people to come in and represent me when it came to getting a bill that I was owed for \$400, \$500 or \$800. I was able to go there myself and say, “Justice of the Peace, Your Honour, this is the work that I did. This is the invoice that I have. The work was completed to the satisfaction of the customer. Unfortunately, they didn’t pay me.” If I was in the right—I would never go to Small Claims Court if I was in the wrong; I would stay away. I always won my Small Claims Court actions. I didn’t have a lot of them, but I probably went, in the time that I worked for my dad and the time that I took over the business, 10 or 15 times. It wasn’t a huge cost. I had to pay to register—I don’t think it was more than 30 bucks or 100 bucks. It wasn’t a lot of money; I don’t remember how much. I would go there and do it myself. They didn’t waste my time with having to sit in court all day. They normally told you when you had to be there. You didn’t have to muck around for very long in the Small Claims Court. And a decision was made on the spot. They’d say, “Pay Mr. Bisson. Pay the contractor.” So you need to have something like that, that

is not going to be so onerous that the person who's owed the money ends up in a situation where it's too much money to go after the person who owes them the money so they end up swallowing it.

The other effect of all of this is—and this is something that we've all felt.

You apprenticed; right? You were an apprentice?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I didn't apprentice.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay.

As a working person, as a working-class individual, it was with great pride that I got my electrical apprenticeship. I'd worked in various industries, trying to find a place to land, as far as doing something that I thought I could demonstrate to my family, friends and neighbours that I could have pride in. Finally, when I got my electrical apprenticeship, I was on cloud nine. That was quite, quite something in my family. Most people in my family hadn't gone to college or university. I was within the first generation to get an apprenticeship and do that kind of stuff. Most of my dad's family were in business; they were all small business people. My grandfather was a logging contractor. Both my dad and his brother were in electronics type of shops, where they fixed radios and TVs and all that kind of stuff. My other uncle—his other brother—was a construction contractor.

But I was the first one in my family to get an apprenticeship, because apprenticeships only really started, I guess, in the 1960s and 1970s. When I got my apprenticeship in the 1970s, it was a huge pride on my part. I was going to be an electrician, and I was going to have a certificate to prove that. I was going to go to school and learn things. It was a source of great pride.

I was lucky, because when I got my apprenticeship, I worked in the gold mines of Timmins. I worked for a company called Noranda—pretty big. I didn't have to worry that Noranda wouldn't pay my wage at the end of every two-week period that we got paid, and that they would be around long enough for me to do my apprenticeship so that I could get my licence.

But I know a lot of guys that I went to trade school with and that I met after, when I worked in the construction industry when there was a downturn in the gold-mining industry, who served their apprenticeships in the construction trade. There's a whole bunch of really good tradespeople, as we call them: tin bangers; carpenters; knuckle-grabbers, as I used to call the guys who did the pipes, but that was a whole other story; and electricians, who started apprenticeships with small contractors and were never able to continue their apprenticeship because the work dried up as a result of non-payment. I know that as a fact in a couple of cases.

I worked on some jobs on the commercial side where we built two or three apartment buildings, some motels and some industrial complexes. Some of the contractors ended up—they weren't contractors, actually; they were sub-subcontractors—going under because they never got paid. I'm not sure what the details were. Was it a compliance issue? I don't know. I didn't have that kind of knowledge at the time. But all I know is, the individuals who took on the apprenticeships didn't have a job.

If you're a newly hired apprentice and you need 8,000 hours to be able to go to write your exam and do your three or four terms at school, depending on what it is that you're doing as an apprenticeship, and you lose your job after a couple of thousand hours—and in fact, it was worse if you had more hours. Let's say that you needed 8,000 and you're 6,000 hours in. Most subcontractors wouldn't want to hire you, even though you're more knowledgeable, because they can go hire the cheaper apprentice at zero hours to 1,000 or 2,000 hours.

I know a lot of guys that I worked with in the trade who ended up never becoming licensed electricians, not because they weren't capable, not because they didn't pass the school—God, they got better marks than me, some of them, and I worked hard—but because they weren't able to complete their apprenticeships because the contractor shut down because of non-payment, which affected a whole bunch of people from being able to continue in the trade that they wanted to be in.

Again, I was lucky. I got to work in the mining industry at the time. For a long enough period of time, it was pretty robust and I was able to do my hours. In fact, I was one of those apprentices who probably had about 12,000 hours before I wrote my exam. It was actually a disincentive to write my trade exam, the way we were set up where I worked, because there were four rates: third-, second- and first-class electrician—first-class when you became supposedly licensed—and a specialist, if you got your electronic endorsement. I came at this backwards. I had electronics before I got into electrical.

When I finished my time as an electrician and I was at the point where I knew pretty well the whole mine—I could fix pretty well anything that was there—the mine needed electricians to be on call. It got so bad that they had to ask me to do it. They couldn't find enough people. I ended up being put on call and I was smart enough to say, "Well, I'm not going on call unless you get me a first-class rate." So I moved from second-class to first-class to be on call. Then I said, "Oh, by the way, I have my electronic endorsement. You've got to pay me a specialist rate." So I was being paid a specialist rate before I ever wrote my trade exam because of the circumstances.

I was one of those guys where you needed 8,000 hours and I was probably over 10,000. I was probably around the seventh year of my apprenticeship out of a four-and-a-half-year apprenticeship when I wrote my exam. I was in no hurry because I was making a specialist rate. I was making a lot of overtime, because back then we had a big shortage of electrical people in the mining sector and I was able to get a lot of overtime. I was making pretty darn good money at the time, considering the situation.

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But my point is, to the debate, there's a whole bunch of people who never got to the 8,000 hours required to be able to write their exam. Some of them actually had finished school. They had done their three terms of school. When I was an apprentice, you did basic, intermediate and advanced and, if you wanted, the electronic endorsement. But the basic, intermediate and advanced

was done for some of them and they only had 6,000 hours. They were never able to write.

I know a couple of guys today who ended up—one became a real estate person. He's doing well. He's happy in what he does, but he misses that he wasn't able to complete his trade. A couple of other guys I know ended up in construction. They ended up starting up their own construction businesses rather than working as electricians because that was the only choice they had to make a living.

This whole issue of non-payment has affected a lot of people in different ways. It's affected general contractors who didn't get paid. It affected a lot of subcontractors and sub-subcontractors in a way that put them out of business. It affected a lot of people who are the tradespeople and labourers who were working in the industry who were unable to work because of the non-payment.

My point in this little diversion I have done in the debate is to say that this is about real people. This is not just about some nebulous thing about prompt-payment legislation and what it means to me. It means getting paid or not getting paid. I say again, there are a couple of things that need to happen.

Again, I want to say up front that we in the New Democrats—I know that Andrea Horwath and all of our caucus have been pushing for this issue for a lot of years. It's something we believe in that needs to be done. We think it's a question of fairness. If a tender is issued by government or a municipality for a private sector contract or a broader public sector contract, the conditions of the contract should be met by the contractor and by the payer. If I have met the conditions of the contract, as the contractor or the subcontractor, I expect the payer to do the same.

As I said earlier in the debate, the payer has all the power. They write the cheque. If they want to withhold the cheque for whatever reason, they've got the power to do so. The current system we have now doesn't have anything to do with this. We need to have a mechanism in this legislation that allows contractors and subcontractors to go through some kind of a process that doesn't make them have to spend more money than it's worth, that is not as cumbersome, where nobody can get anything done because it's complicated. We need something where those contractors and subcontractors are able to go and have the dispute heard and a decision made. If the contractor or subcontractor has fulfilled the terms of the contract, there has to be an order for the cheque to be written. And if the cheque is to be written, it has to be done in a way that is timely for those who are being paid. We need some sort of a mechanism to deal with that.

Again, too much of this legislation is left to regulation. I think leaving the regulation to executive council to decide how this whole legislation is going to work is problematic. It's the fox in charge of the henhouse syndrome. Ontario issues a lot of contracts. And I know, as a victim of the Ontario government, when it comes to slow payment of contracts—they paid eventually, but they were slow in paying—it was an issue for me. I need

to know, as a legislator, that we're not going to put the executive council in charge so that their bureaucrats decide to write regulations that are self-serving to the bureaucracy and to those who are paying the bill. I think there has to be some fairness in how this is done. I think we, the legislators, should prescribe in a definite way in the legislation what that is.

The other thing is that there needs to be an enforcement mechanism that makes some sense. You don't want something that swings the axe completely the other way. I get it. The person paying the bill shouldn't be penalized if they're doing something that is within their right. And if they're in the wrong, you need some sort of a penalty that's not going to penalize the person who issues a contract in such a way that they can never issue another one. We don't want that either, right?

So there needs to be some balance in here about the penalty. What should the penalty be? Should it be a fixed amount, a percentage of the contact, an order of some type by some official body forcing the payment to be made, and if there is no payment made in the prescribed time of the decision, there is some kind of a penalty? I think the committee can work that out.

The other part of this is: Is this whole thing going to get enacted? I don't know if the numbers are right, but I was having a conversation with one of my colleagues here in the Legislature earlier this week about the number of bills that have not been enacted by this government. That's a problem. We need to have some sort of an enactment clause in this thing that in fact ensures that once this legislation is passed, the bill is enacted in a timely fashion and it's not something that's not done.

The other part, which I didn't touch on, is the willingness of the government to move this along. I thought initially that the government was hot to trot on getting this done, and I don't know now; I've heard different things. I don't want to assign a motive to the government because maybe they're trying to do the right thing. I'm not in the executive council, so I don't know this for sure. But I know that there has been blowback from certain sectors about this legislation.

I attended AMO, like a lot of you, in Ottawa last summer. A lot of municipalities weren't very happy with this legislation, for reasons you can understand. I'm sure that Infrastructure Ontario has something to say about this, and so does OPG and other people that let out large contracts. I would imagine that people like EllisDon and other large contractors—what do they call them again?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Conglomerates?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, the big conglomerates like EllisDon and others: They've got issues where they did some pushback on this legislation.

I wonder to what degree the government has the resolve to stand up to Infrastructure Ontario and others and to say, "Listen. We get it. We understand. We're one of the players in this, but we've got to do what's right and we've got to do what's fair. Let's find some balance here about how we make this happen."

I hope I'm wrong; I really do. I hope I'm wrong, and I hope that the government is actually serious about, once

we get this into committee and the bill comes back for third reading, it actually being passed and enacted. Let's hope I'm wrong; let's hope they actually do that because I think that's what most members in this House would want.

I have a sneaking suspicion that there are powers—and I'm not talking about Kathleen Wynne and other members of the executive council. There are powers within government and there are powers outside of government that are going to put on some major pressure to slow this thing down.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We've seen it before.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, we've seen it before. So let's hope that that doesn't happen—

Mr. Steve Clark: With this bill.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: With this bill—I hear you.

How many times has this come before the House? It's quite a bit. I've been here for some time now, and I've seen this quite a few times, so let's hope that that happens.

I want to close, in the last few minutes that I have, on this part: There has got to be a litmus test to all of this stuff, all of this type of legislation. What's fair? Of course, what's fair is subjective to where you stand: Are you at the receiving end of the chain when it comes to payment or are you on the supply end that pays? It's a tough thing for any government to be able to find that balance because nobody is totally happy when you get the balance that is necessary.

As I looked at this legislation in some detail, it seemed to me the balance was more towards the payer than the payee, and I don't think that's right. I don't think it's right that legislation is written exactly the way—yes, it's a step in the right direction; don't get me wrong. A lot of people in industry that are the payees are saying, "At least it's a step in the right direction." But as I read through the legislation, there's a lot of grey area in here that is really left to interpretation, let alone what the regulations will be in the end.

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I think what people back home, the people that we represent, look at is, is this government and is this Legislature doing the right thing? Are we actually trying to establish a balance between ensuring that the payer is—if they have legitimate complaints or problems with the work that was done not being done to the specification in the contract, you don't want to have something where you can have shoddy work and get paid. Nobody wants that. But you need to have a mechanism that allows a look at that in a way that's fair, that says, "All right, what were the terms of the contract? Were the terms of the contract followed? Yes or no?" If yes, then there has to be a clearer process by which the payee gets paid in a timely fashion.

Like I say, I look at this legislation and it's somewhat subjective and a little bit more weighted towards the payer side than the payee side. I think sometimes we forget that doing the right thing is really what should motivate all of us in this place, and trying to find that

balance. I'm not 100% sure what the balance is. I only know from the experiences I've had, as a person who has been on the receiving end of non-payment, what that means. I understand it from the very basic principle that what the payee needs—especially the small contractors—is a system that is not so onerous that you can't afford to make a complaint, a system that allows you to get into a streamlined, simple process that doesn't cost you more than it's worth to bring the payer to the table in order to be able to resolve what the issues are when it comes to payment. And if the payee is found to be right in a timely manner, we actually find a finding that the payer has to write the cheque and it has to be done in a timely manner. And last but not least, if the payer decides, "No, I'm going to ignore this whole process, and I'm just going to have"—because there are no teeth in the legislation, because there aren't any teeth now—that there is some mechanism put in the legislation and, I would argue, not in the regulation, that allows some teeth to be inserted in this bill so that in fact the payee is able to exert some authority in getting paid. That might be a penalty for the person who didn't pay—whatever the penalty might be. So I hope that we're able to strike that balance when we get this bill into committee.

I think the real disservice that we can do here—and it's too bad that the government didn't deal with this a lot earlier. Sometime last fall would have been ideal. This bill needs enough time in committee in order to have the discussion with people who are learned about this stuff, to be able to do the proper work in developing what the regime should be, what the penalties should be etc., because I don't think that's well established in the bill—which is a problem in this Legislature. If you'll notice, with most bills in this House, once they're passed at second reading, you're lucky if you get a couple of days of committee for hearings—normally only in Toronto, because life doesn't exist outside of Toronto, according to this government. When I got here, bills used to travel the province in the intersession, and we had proper time to do consultation with those affected. It made for better legislation.

I certainly hope that we have enough time—not too much time that it kills this bill; don't get me wrong, because there's a limited time between now and the next election—to listen to those people who know more about this stuff than we do, to direct us in the right direction when it comes to writing prescriptive legislation that establishes, in the legislation and not the regulations, what the system will be, what the enforcement mechanisms are, in order to make sure that there's a balance and there's a fairness established between both the payer and the payee.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for this wonderful opportunity I've had. I know that we are getting close to the end of second reading. I want to indicate that we have no interest, as a caucus, of holding up this debate for long. I've got a couple of other members who have a few things that they want to put on the record. But I just want to indicate that it's something that

we, as New Democrats, support. We have been pushing for it and we look forward for this process to continue, so we can get the bill eventually into committee and we can do it justice when it comes to prescribing a bill that is prescriptive, that is clear, that allows a mechanism to work that's not going to be too onerous and that we have some sort of enforcement mechanism, at the end, that works for people. With that, I'd like to thank you.

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

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you very much, Speaker, for getting that title correct. Anyway, I just want to say a few words. I want to speak to the consultation process, because in any piece of legislation that has the wide-ranging reform effects that this does, the consultation process is important.

Last fall, the government met with 25 key stakeholder groups. We met with an advisory council that was composed of construction industry participants and we got their feedback. In addition, the government requested feedback on Bill 142 over this summer. We received a number of submissions with recommendations on how to proceed with the legislation.

The review convened more than 30 meetings, which were attended by over 60 interest groups hosting very lively and—I can tell you—spirited discussions. We also received over 70 written submissions. The Attorney General himself met personally with 30 different stakeholders, and it has taken us 34 years to get to this point. Until now—here's the important point—no one has been able to achieve consensus on these proposed changes—that is, until now.

Thanks to the work with those key stakeholders and the consultation process, a broad consensus was reached on the three core issues that the review directed. They were (1) maintaining and modernizing the lien holdback process; (2) establishing a new system for prompt payment—that's one of the keys to it, prompt payment; and (3) creating a targeted adjudicative system to resolve dispute, so that if there is a dispute, it can get resolved quickly. I can tell you, Speaker, in general all stakeholders expressed support for this review process, the report and its recommendations.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Timmins–James Bay for his speech in the Legislature this afternoon. It's a pleasure to comment on Bill 142.

Like the Liberals, I have been here for 14 years. Yesterday was the 14th anniversary.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Happy anniversary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much.

In those 14 years, one of the repeated requests that has come through my office—and, I know, the offices of all members here—has been to do something about prompt-payment legislation. There is an old principle, Speaker. It's called “you should receive a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.” But it also applies to subcontractors work-

ing for contractors. Since I got here 14 years ago, this has come across my desk continuously. Year after year after year, there have been attempts to bring the issue forward. We hope that this actually works.

But here's the situation. If you're a small contractor and you take work from a large contractor, your small contractor has to pay his workers. He has to pay his suppliers. He or she has to pay their bills on time. If they're put in a position where they're not getting paid by the bigger entity, they're actually challenged as to whether or not they're going to survive. I know a business in my riding that actually failed as a result of not being able to collect in a timely fashion from a large contractor on a major, major project.

It's a matter of fairness. We understand there can be disputes. There needs to be mechanisms to deal with that. But if someone does work, someone should be paid for that work if it is satisfactory.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate. I want to thank our colleague the member from Timmins–James Bay for his eloquent hour-long lead.

1700

Mr. John Yakabuski: Fifty-seven minutes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Fifty-seven minutes? Well, he did a great job in those 57 minutes summarizing the bill: the mechanics of the bill, the reason why we need it, and some of his life experiences as they relate to being a small business owner and working in the trades.

This is all-encompassing. I think people who are tuning in today would be shocked to hear that we're even debating something like this, the fact that, in a mature economy, we need a bill that says, “If you do the work to the standard, to the code, to the requirement of the contract, you should get paid.” Really? That's what we're talking about? This is insane. But, in fact, it happens out there.

He raised a bunch of different questions for me as I listened. One is, imagine a contract that's out there that is outstanding, and a contractor owes subs a larger amount—\$10,000, \$20,000, even a million bucks. The money, over the 30-, 60-, 90- or 120-day period, that's sitting in somebody's account is accruing interest. At the same token, the payee, the one that is owed the money, is incurring costs. They've got money out the door already. They have already probably pre-bid on their next project. There's even a further imbalance there.

One of the questions that I would have for members of government who are inclined to answer would be, are there any provisions for repeat offenders? Because we have seen it in Windsor with the Herb Gray Parkway, where some of the Spanish consortiums and those proponents didn't pay some of the subs, and they were allowed to bid on other projects within the government, within Infrastructure Ontario. That shouldn't be allowed, Speaker.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have two minutes to comment on a very lengthy, well-presented lead-off by the member from Timmins–James Bay.

There are a couple of issues that I just want to touch on. This bill is the culmination of quite a bit of consultation, and it's the biggest change in over 30 years. In fact, we're changing the name of the bill from the Construction Lien Act to the Construction Act because this bill affects all parts of construction. The government has spent a long time consulting, and we hired experts to help us with this.

A few issues I wanted to touch on briefly in my time here: We are modernizing the lien process. We want to keep things out of a lengthy court system. If someone makes a claim to get paid and it's \$25,000 or below, they can go directly to Small Claims Court, which is pretty fast these days, in order to get their matter resolved.

We're also going to have an adjudicative system set up—construction dispute interim adjudication—that would deal expeditiously with payment of disputes, resolving most issues within six weeks.

We all agree on all three sides of this chamber that we want to see changes. This government, as I know from experience—especially under our Premier, Kathleen Wynne—wants to consult. We will be consulting on this bill. We're not saying this thing is carved in stone. It's going to go to committee, where I'm sure we're going to hear from other experts and people. From there, if there are any changes through clause-by-clause, I'm sure they will be considered.

I look forward to further debate on this bill. I'm sure that eventually we will come up with the right bill that will get approved before this session ends.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from Timmins–James Bay for final comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank everybody for commenting on my speech. You're all so kind to say nice things about my speech.

But I want to take away from it one of the items that was raised by my colleague from Windsor–Essex. I never thought of that, and again, the process of debate and the process of committee can inform us. But what do you do with those people who are repeat offenders? That's a really good point. I never thought of it. Should we have some sort of system where, if a person is found to not have paid a subcontractor the money that they are owed, they would not be allowed to rebid on a contract, especially for government contracts coming out of Infrastructure Ontario or other public entities that we fund? I think that's a really good point.

Again, it speaks to the strength of the parliamentary system and our committee process, if we follow it properly; that is, we inform ourselves by debate. The government or the mover of the bill proposes, the debate informs the subject of the bill, and then the public gives us their feedback so that we can write better legislation. I think it's unfortunate that, over the years, we've given that short shrift. We're not as good as we used to be, as

an assembly, at allowing the process to actually work. Because when this system works, it works really well.

There are all kinds of examples, from all sides of the House, where we've introduced bills, we've had good debates and we've done really good work at creating strong public policy that survives. I just think of one bill that I was involved with when I was first elected, and that was the sustainable forestry development act. It's become the gold standard. Industry stands behind it. Every government since has stood behind it. I think one of the reasons for that was that we had a very strong process by which debate and committee allowed for a stronger bill to be written. I think we should inform ourselves with that and try to do that in this case.

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It's a pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to speak about the Construction Lien Amendment Act, Bill 142.

As you're well aware, Mr. Speaker, the construction industry is a driving force in Ontario's economy. In 2016, Ontario's construction industry supported more than 400,000 jobs and contributed nearly 7% to the province's gross domestic product. It's important that this industry continues to thrive for years to come. We need to make sure that our province's construction laws are up to date and reflect today's realities.

When a company doesn't get paid for its work, it sets off a chain reaction that affects its own payroll and the payments it needs to make to trade workers, suppliers and other people who have worked on the construction project. It delays paying companies and people who do construction work—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. A point of order: I recognize the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm so sorry, but I don't see that we have a quorum here, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Please check.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I return to the member from Davenport to continue debate.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I should have started off by stating that I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Children and Youth Services and the minister responsible for anti-racism.

As I was saying, this is the first time in over 30 years that this particular piece of legislation, the Construction Lien Act, has been reviewed, which was created in 1983. There were minor tweaks that were done along the way, but never the type of review that was most recently conducted. We know that many things have changed since 1983 and that construction laws that worked for industry back then just aren't cutting it today.

One of the things that I was speaking about was the delays in paying companies and people who do construction work and the disruption to cash flow from contractors to subcontractors, which can have devastating effects on construction projects as well as on the workers and the businesses involved. So that's why the proposed legislation includes measures that would, if passed, support industry and workers.

One of the things I did want to speak on, one of the changes that this particular piece of legislation is proposing and introducing, is prompt payment: the need to ensure that companies are paid and that there continues to be a flow of money from the contractor to the subcontractor etc. So what we're proposing here is that payments would be made from an owner to a contractor within 28 days after submission of an invoice. The contractor would then pay the subcontractor within seven days. The subcontractor would pay any other subcontractor within seven days as well.

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I'm not going to get into all of the details and all of the lines of what we're proposing to change in this particular piece of legislation, but I did want to say and wanted to highlight how important this piece of legislation is to my constituents in Davenport and how it impacts hundreds of my constituents. Whether they're working in the construction industry, whether they're subcontractors or contractors, many of them live in my riding. The changes we are proposing will impact everyone involved in the construction industry, from the companies that are involved on large, multi-million dollar construction projects to the families doing small-scale renovations of their homes.

The bottom line is, we need to bring our laws up to date to support the thousands of workers in this important sector, and their families. I had an opportunity last week to meet with the Council of Ontario Construction Associations. Do you know what they told me when we discussed this act? They told me, "Cristina, your government has done a fabulous job with this particular act. This is as close to utopia as possible." These were their words.

I'm in support of these changes. We know the changes need to be made. These changes will protect workers in Davenport and make doing business here in Ontario easier and more consistent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): To continue debate, I turn it back over to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to recognize the work that the member from Davenport is doing. It's nice to see all the members return after that quorum call. That was very strategic.

I have been in the Legislature now for six years. In fact, our anniversary is coming up soon; I think next week, is it? Six years. Sometimes I feel like my job here is cleaning up the mess the Tories have left here in Ontario. I've been here for six years and it feels like we're just cleaning up so many issues that the Conservatives

left behind. I don't know; maybe some of those issues were just neglect—they just didn't care about the issues—or they may have been deliberate.

I can bring up a few of those issues. For example, they got rid of the Anti-Racism Secretariat; they removed the word "equity" from all the documents they could find. When it came to public education, they had a 68% graduation rate. We're at, I think, eighty—

Interjection: It's 86%.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's 86%.

Then here we are, where the Progressive Conservatives are actually in the Legislature, standing up and saying, "The Liberals need to work on this prompt-payment piece of legislation," and they were in power for eight years with Harris, but before that, for how many years?

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Was it 40 years?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Forty-three.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Forty-three.

The Progressive Conservative Party here in Ontario was in power in the last 70 or 80 years for most of that time. They had some real opportunity to make some changes. It's a bit ironic to be in the Legislature as a newish type of member, being here six years, and listening to folks—at least one of the members over there was in the last cabinet—who had an opportunity to make changes and actually did nothing, and yet they're criticizing us. We're the party that's standing here today in the Legislature with the legislation on the table, and we're actually making those changes.

I'm very proud of the Liberal Party and the policies that we've put in place, and I'm very proud of what we have been able to do here in the province of Ontario.

The NDP were also in power. It's interesting because, again, there's a member opposite who was in power, sitting here, when the NDP were in government. They had an opportunity to make changes. How could the NDP criticize this party that's actually proposing the legislation and bringing the legislation into this House, and yet they had an opportunity to do so and they failed?

This is the first time in 30 years that a comprehensive piece of legislation around prompt payment has been brought into this Legislature. It's not the NDP that brought it here; it's not the Conservative Party that brought it here. It's the Liberal Party of Ontario that brought it here.

Mr. Speaker, I have construction workers in my riding. For some reason, the NDP think they're the only friends of construction workers. In fact, on my way to my office this afternoon—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): First of all, I want to congratulate the minister for bringing this place to life—but a little too much life. So what I would like to remind everyone of in the Legislature is that a number of you have been warned already, and as a result—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. I need to you to pay attention to this. Some of you

have already been warned, so I would ask that—you know who you are.

We'll continue. We'll turn it back to the minister. There you go.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order: I recognize the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Just an observation: On a point of order, should the clock stop? Yes or no?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): No, the clock didn't stop, so you're continuing to eat up your own time.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Okay, I'll continue, Mr. Speaker. You took away 30 seconds of my time, but I'll continue.

The NDP had an opportunity to actually do something comprehensive; they failed in doing it. The PCs had an opportunity to do something special; they actually caused more harm in this province than they did good. So I don't think we should take any lessons from the Conservative Party of Ontario or the NDP about our relationships and the things we do to make sure that workers are protected here in the province of Ontario. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I just want to end by saying that it's the Liberal Party of Ontario that has brought forward this legislation to protect workers here in the province of Ontario.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise today and say a couple of words on the Construction Lien Act. We're having a lot of debate here. It's a little bit shocking, I think, for those who are at home watching: a Liberal government that has been in power for 14 years criticizing previous governments, criticizing members who are here instead of looking at their own record, the time that they have wasted and the mismanagement.

We have students graduating high school in this province who aren't prepared for university. The universities now have to offer remedial make-up courses so that they can be prepared enough to actually take the university-level courses. We have a province where electricity has skyrocketed to unaffordable levels—300%.

But I want to just talk about the actual bill that we're discussing today. Too often, people on construction sites in the trades, and different companies and individuals, do the work and don't get paid for so long that they're not able to manage. I think this is something that has been discussed many times, and it's a little late, but better late than never.

As somebody who ran an optometry clinic for almost three decades, I certainly understand about meeting payroll. If I did not get paid by my customers, I could not pay my suppliers, and if I didn't pay my suppliers, then they couldn't pay their suppliers. It's quite a domino effect, Mr. Speaker, and it's serious business. It's unfortunate that some individuals try to politicize the issue, but the fact is that we are here to support companies,

we're here to support workers, we're here to support the trades, and that's what our focus should be on today.

I look forward to hearing more debate, and I hope that the further debate is going to be less political and more focused on helping the people we represent.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The honourable minister was so agitated to talk about how it took a government of the Liberal stripe to be able to move on this legislation, finally, because nobody else in the world ever did anything. Fourteen bloody years? Where have you been for the last 14 years? You have been converted on the way to the election.

There's an election coming next year, and they went, "Oh, my God. We'd better deal with this, because God, this has been around for so long that if we don't deal with it, we're going to be accused of having stalled on something that's an issue of fairness."

Come on. Fourteen years, and all of a sudden you're taking great pride in having done something? How many private members' bills, and how many times have members gone to the government and said, "Let's do something. We can all agree," and you take 14 years to come to this point?

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On the other criticism, he says, "Well, the NDP and the Conservatives—my God, they're out there advocating as if the NDP are the only ones who represent working people." That's right; we are. That's who we are. That's our mantra. The NDP is about the working class. You forget that. It's something that is intrinsically natural to us because most of us are from the working class. It's a party that was built—

Hon. Michael Coteau: You don't think we are?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Hang on a second. I'm not saying there are no workers in the Liberal Party. But don't say that the reality of this party being rooted in the working class is not true, because it is. It's what this party is all about. I'm just saying to you—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He is taking such offence to this, which tells me I must have scratched a nerve.

I just say to the member across the way—listen, we can all be accused of having a little bit of hubris around this place. Certainly to God, I've done so myself over the years. I'm not going to pretend that I never have. But trying to say that the only ones who were ever able to move on this were yourselves, 14 years down the road—come on. That is a bit of a stretch. And that you've been converted on the way to the election—I say thank God for the election.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everyone for the opportunity, and, of course, the great folks of Peterborough riding. They should be tuning in right now—Cogeco, 95—to see the proceedings here. It's about 5:20 and a lot of Peterborough families are just

sitting down to supper, but they should be tuned in to this debate this afternoon.

I want to thank my two colleagues the member from Davenport and the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Their approach this afternoon is a little like Hoover and Kirby. Hoover and Kirby, of course, are two well-known vacuum cleaners that the consuming public of Ontario can buy. When they described the situation as the “cleanup”—they’re using both the Kirby and the Hoover to deal with the Construction Lien Act, because it has been around so long. And other parties, when they had the great privilege of being the government of the province of Ontario, had that opportunity.

The question was posed: Why now? We’ll, we’ve had such an ambitious agenda over the last 14 years, and it took a long time to bring the state of Ontario back to a very positive situation. It takes a while to get that done, and we bring this legislation forward today. But in all seriousness, I’ve talked with a lot of contractors in Peterborough. Prompt payment is so very important to their employees—those employees who are paying their mortgages, sending their kids to college and university, buying the tennis lessons and sending them there. Prompt payment makes sense.

I want to really thank both my colleague in cabinet and the hard-working member from Davenport, who I know is rolling up her sleeves every day for the great residents of Davenport to make their lives a little bit better. This is part of her passion to bring fairness to the construction industry in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: With regard to Bill 142, I would like to share with everyone in this House that the collective responsibility we all share is that we need to ensure that we create the right balance from all the parties to get this right. There are close to 5,000 construction jobs in the great riding of Huron–Bruce that I have the honour of representing, and almost half a million across the province, and so it behooves us to work together and get it right.

As I mentioned before, we don’t trust the government of the day because—do you know what? Here we are debating Bill 142, but for those of you who are tuning in and watching, you need to know that this government has failed twice before. It’s interesting; they make a mess of legislation, and then it’s either through debate or in committee that they have to correct all their rushed legislation and the mistakes that they’ve made because they do not consult with our stakeholders throughout the province.

We hope that this bill actually makes it through the House with the right amendments this time around, but given the government’s track record, Speaker, I’m not overly optimistic. Time and again, bills get tabled by this Liberal government and then require significant amendments. Do I need to remind everyone of the debacle Bill 172 was? Climate change—my goodness; we were in committee and amendment after amendment came from the Liberal government. They were fixing things on the

fly because they knew they blew their first kick at the legislative can in that regard.

And I should bring up Bill 151, the Waste-Free Ontario Act, another rushed piece of legislation by this failed, tired, old Liberal government. We had to go into committee to clean it up again. Thank goodness Ontario has an effective opposition party in the PC Party of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We’ll now return to the Minister of Children and Youth Services for a final comment.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to thank all the members for speaking today.

There were some comments made by the member from Timmins–James Bay about the NDP being the party of the working class, and I did heckle back over that there are many people on this side of the House, and on the Progressive Conservative side, who are working-class people. These are hard-working people with deep roots. In fact, my father fixed washing machines all of his life. My mother cleaned; she was a cleaner. In fact my mother—many people don’t know this—brought the union to her hospital where she worked. My mother and my father were very progressive and very involved in making sure that at the end of the day we were provided for as young people.

The member also said, “You’ve never seen a construction site in your life.” In fact, I worked on a construction site in Ottawa. After finishing university, I helped build a couple of places with a few friends who were in construction.

And in fact, today, as I was walking from this building to my office, I ran into one of my friends who I grew up with; his name is Matt. I don’t know if you noticed, there’s some hydro work happening out here. We stopped, and—he’s from Don Valley East—we talked for a long time. I come from a working-class neighbourhood.

There are many stories around here. The NDP are not the only ones who have that connection back to the working class here in Ontario. That’s why, when we moved forward with an increase to the minimum wage, I was surprised that the NDP didn’t support it the first time we did it; it was shocking to me. Every time we brought it up, they were silent—complete silence. At least the Conservatives say, “We disagree with it.” That’s their position, but for the NDP to not support the working class of Ontario, to me, was a shocker.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I’m pleased to have a few minutes in which to further the debate on Bill 142.

As several speakers previously today have remarked, this bill reflects an effort that has been made over the years to solve a particular problem. We’re here today, then, moving this along in the direction of further debate and amendment and the opportunity—one hopes—to provide to the community, to affect the building trades in a positive way instead of having a stumbling block for some years.

Particularly the issue is around the impediment to business and a threat to the viability of small businesses. Let me just take a moment to look at what that actually means: It means that for some time, the connection between an owner, a developer, a general contractor—frankly, a pyramid of individuals who were responsible for whatever part of the building process that was their specialty.

In that pyramid, one of the things that came along to make it very ineffective and unfair was the ability of some companies not providing what was called prompt payment. All of the people in this chain of command of the building had a greater or lesser voice in the prompt payment. What that means is, if you were at the top, you had a big voice, and if you were at the bottom, you didn't. People became extremely conscious of this lack of balance in the construction industry. I recall, in the years preceding, that we would have very strong arguments provided to us as to the effect that this cascading process was taking, the viability of small business in peril.

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We're always talking about risk and risk management, but obviously, in this particular case, it was unnecessary risk. There should be prompt payment. So terms like prompt payment came to stand for something about fairness—fairness in the construction industry.

As I say, we all acknowledge the inherent risk in taking any kind of steps in investment and construction and so forth. I'm not advocating that we should isolate any particular segment of the business community from risk, because risk is the genesis from which you get growth. It spurs innovation. However, small businesses in the construction industry face undue risk. Higher up the construction chain, with the advantage of purchasing power, the payments earned by ground-level contractors were at risk. It's not about politics or partisanship; it's about putting food on the table and keeping those construction teams employed.

As the work is divided up, it became very clear that some people were doing better than others, and those imbalances needed to be corrected through the work of legislation. It's been a discussion item for several years within government and within the industry. As with other thorny issues, the objective for government is to find a solution that everybody can feel, with confidence, that the solution will satisfy everyone. It's very important that every group sees fairness while understanding that in order to achieve fairness, they do not all need the same cookie-cutter treatment. That is the task at hand, and I think it needs reinforcement. Because something can be fair; it doesn't have to be equal.

Another important objective was to meet the timelines. That was a constant irritant for people trying to make a living and trying to meet their financial obligations. It was important in the legislation that there be an element of timeliness, which, in fact, is really a code for fairness to the individual workers. People often refer to something as one size fits all, or does not. In this case, it's the "does not." This is an important function of the legislation, to

be able to make clear that it was different, that you had to be able to adjust the kinds of timelines that had been set and the kinds of obligations that people have, and that there's balance amongst the sectors that need to be able to ultimately work together. So there's a need for greater flexibility in terms of timelines to reflect the very size and scope of the projects in the industry. We're talking here from very small projects to multi-million dollar infrastructure investments.

Smaller lien claims under \$50,000 are able to move to Small Claims Court to provide an avenue for smaller contractors to recover money owed from larger prime contractors without having to go to an adjudication process. I think this is a good step forward for helping those most at risk from delayed payments.

As I mentioned, the PC caucus has been a long-time advocate to bring prompt-payment legislation to Ontario. The spirit of the bill is supported by stakeholders from all sectors of the industry. In general, I am supportive of this bill and believe it is a step in the right direction. While not perfect, I think the essence of the bill strikes the right balance between all the sectors. There is, of course, a need to have greater flexibility of timelines to reflect the varied size and scope within the industry itself. That is why I'm happy to support this bill, with amendments.

This bill is the third attempt to bring prompt-payment legislation to the House. Both previous attempts died on the order paper because elections were called by this government. My fear, with another election on the horizon, is that this cycle will continue. With that in mind, I would like to express my hope and the hope of countless members of the construction industry that prompt payment becomes legislation in Ontario. Of course, there are amendments that I, along with the PC caucus, would like to see made to this, and I hope these will be realized during the committee process.

Small businesses, including contractors, have been hit time and time again by this government, whether it's the cost of hydro, taxes and more. This is an opportunity for this government to do some good.

I have a moment left in my remarks and I want to quote Janet De Silva, the president and CEO of the Toronto Region Board of Trade, because I think it's a message we all need to absorb. She says, "To build tomorrow's infrastructure, we must build a pipeline of talent today." I think that this bill goes a long way to recognizing the manner in which further construction in this province should be managed. It should be managed in such a way that our children and our grandchildren will be part of that pipeline of talent.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise to add my comments to the remarks by the member before me. Soon I'll have time to add 10 minutes or so of debate, as well, and bring the perspective from my constituents in Windsor West.

We have a Liberal side that's saying they have been working on this forever. We've got a Conservative side

that is saying they've been pushing for it for a long time. We, as New Democrats, know that we have been pushing for something like prompt payment for a long time. As my colleague from Essex said earlier—maybe these weren't his exact words, but I know the sentiment was the same—it was kind of like, "Duh?"

Is it not just a given that if you do the work and you do it within the agreed contract, you're going to get paid? It seems like a no-brainer. It seems reasonable. If you're providing the service or you're providing the supplies and you're fulfilling your obligations under a contract, the other party is then obligated to pay you, and not just pay you, but pay you in a reasonable amount of time.

Nobody should be expected to provide services or products and then wait for 30, 60, 90 or 120 days as they're incurring interest charges, if they have had to purchase, say, supplies on credit. They shouldn't have to pass up on other jobs because they're still waiting for money to come in from a previous job, so that they can buy the supplies they need or pay a subcontractor to pay their workers to go out and provide the service. No worker should have to wait to get their rightful pay-cheque to go home and be able to take care of their families.

It is absurd to me that we are only getting to this now, after 14 years with the Liberal government and the Conservatives before it. It should have been done long before now.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to get up and comment for two minutes on the well-prepared remarks by the member from York-Simcoe. She presented a good outline of the bill. It's a complicated bill. It's a lengthy bill. That's why we're changing the name of the bill from the Construction Lien Act to the Construction Act. It affects the whole construction industry. There are some things we are doing that I just want to do in detail. There are some micro parts that I think are important to mention here.

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We want to extend the timeline to file liens and start court actions from 90 to 150 days. It would give contractors and subcontractors more time to resolve disputes out of court and avoid additional legal fees. In this new legislation, it would also require surety bonds to be posted on public projects above a certain dollar amount. These bonds are currently used on both public and private projects, but there's no legislation presently that mandates contractors to post them. By posting mandatory surety bonds, subcontractors and suppliers will be protected and paid in case of a project's insolvency.

In addition, specific bookkeeping requirements will be set out to better protect subcontractors in case a contractor becomes insolvent and can't pay the claim. Also, Mr. Speaker, we are increasing the limit from \$20,000 up to \$25,000—rather, the amount that can be referred to Small Claims Court on a matter that deals with construction. So if there's a construction lien, instead of waiting

for a lengthy court trial, you can go to Small Claims Court, which is very efficient, and get it done there. These are enforcement parts of the bill that are very important and should be mentioned.

This bill is quite detailed. Hopefully, it will go to committee and get a good presentation at committee and perhaps some clause-by-clause changes. We'll see.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank my colleague from York-Simcoe for her speech on Bill 142 today. I want to say, it's always a pleasure to listen to Julia. I won't have that opportunity for that much longer. As we know, Julia has announced that she's not going to be running in the next election, so I'm looking forward to every speech that I hear for the rest of this session and I know I'll enjoy every one of them.

What she talks about, like my friend from Windsor West says, should be almost automatically thought of. You do a job, you do it well, you expect to get paid, and the group, the entity, the person, whoever has the job done for them, should expect to pay you in the amount that was agreed upon. It's not that complicated, yet in my 14 years here, we have had small companies fighting for this each and every day.

This government always talks about fairness. They always love to use the word "fairness." Well, they've been part and parcel to what I consider an unfair relationship between big companies and small for 14 years. The small company doesn't have the muscle to challenge the large one—certainly not in a legal way, because they just can't afford to be tied up in litigation, court costs and all of those things, so they felt that the thumb has been on them for too long. They do a job and then it's, "Well, we're not going to pay you right away." They need that money in a timely fashion so they can pay their workers, so they can pay their suppliers, so they can take on another job. If you don't have the money to pay your workers, the workers won't be there for you to do that next job. It makes perfect sense. It's time this was enacted.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Frankly, I don't know how much more I can add to this debate. We're starting to get redundant here. I mean, do the work, do the job, do it right, get paid. Pretty easy.

The nature of financial transactions—I guess it's a thought that I have been thinking about. Back in the day when, in fact, a cheque needed to be issued and mailed to you or a bank note had to be made up for you, a certified cheque had to be done, that, of course, added some time to the whole process in the exchange of commerce.

Speaker, I could send you a hundred bucks in under a minute right now. I'm sure you'd like me to. If you need a loan, I can give you a loan. But the speed at which our finances work and electronic commerce works these days is the speed of light. It's unbelievable. Business happens at the speed of light. It should be such that contractual

obligations also happen as fast as possible, as expediently as possible.

I think that this is what this bill does: It attempts to regulate and put in some parameters for the construction industry and some rules to follow, so that people know that it's your obligation. You're not going to get away with shorting people or leaving people on the hook for what essentially is a job well done. It's good business and it makes good economic sense for us to do this.

But for goodness' sake, let's get it through this House. We've all agreed for a long time. The bickering, at some point, has to end. Move this thing forward, get it going, and let's see it become law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from York–Simcoe for final comments.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to hear the comments of the members from Windsor West, Scarborough Southwest, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Essex.

It would appear that people all agree with the ideas that are behind this piece of legislation. It appears that there's a better understanding of what "prompt payment" means. It doesn't mean, "Wait till the guy is going to go bankrupt and can't pay his bills and has to let staff go."

All of these things are the underpinnings of a successful infrastructure and economy. Unless we assume the responsibilities, as a government, to make this work, we are going to pay the price of a stagnant economy, of more tie-ups and red tape in providing the kind of infrastructure building that this province desperately needs. Time to get on with it.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise today to contribute to this debate on Bill 142, which amends the Construction Lien Act—or CLA—and is the long-promised follow-up to a 2016 review of prompt-payment practices in the construction industry.

I'm especially pleased to be able to speak to this proposed legislation today because the issue of prompt payment, in particular, touched my riding of Windsor West in 2014 with the province's gross mismanagement of the Herb Gray Parkway construction project.

But first I'll talk about some of the things that I'm very happy to actually see included in this legislation. I just had a meeting last week, as I hope many members of this House also did, with the Council of Ontario Construction Associations. I appreciated meeting with the members from COCA because it gave me very valuable insight into some of the positive aspects of this legislation and also where there might be some cause for concern.

The modernization of the Construction Lien Act is something that COCA and construction professionals across the province have been asking this government to take action on for decades. In my meeting with COCA, the members also told me that they are happy to see that this proposed legislation will include a fair dispute resolution process to keep construction projects moving, and I agree that this is an important part of the bill.

Lastly, I would like to focus on the prompt-payment regime. This has also been a major issue in the construction industry, so I'm very happy to see that it's included in this proposed legislation. Prompt-payment protection is already in place in the US, the UK, Ireland, the EU, Australia and New Zealand, so it's shocking how long this has taken in Ontario.

I will go back to the previous comments from a member from the PC caucus, who had pointed out that this is something that they've been asking for. The Liberals claim it's something that they have been pushing for. Certainly, as New Democrats, we have been saying that when you do the work and you do it within the contract, you should be paid for that work. You should never have to take somebody to court to get what is rightfully yours. It's shocking that it has taken this government as long as it has, and a Conservative government before that as long as it has, to actually bring forward legislation to say, "If you do the work, you get your pay." As most of us—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Patience is a virtue.

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Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: One of the Liberal members said, "Patience is a virtue." We would like to see, if he didn't get paid six or seven months down the road for work he has done, if he would still feel the same way, and see if he had to put money up front for something for his job and then didn't get paid for six to 10 months, if he would really feel the same way.

As most of us now know, prompt payment refers to the requirement that businesses or contract owners provide fair and reasonable payment terms for their subcontractors, suppliers and throughout the supply chain.

The Prompt Payment Ontario coalition estimates that there are 400,000 workers at the end of the supply chain who are impacted by delayed payment or non-payment. These are workers that go out and do the work. They expect to get paid for that work that they're doing to provide for their families, put food on the table and pay their ridiculously high hydro bill, yet they're stuck waiting to actually receive payment. They're at risk of not being able to pay their mortgage, not being able to pay their bills and perhaps losing their homes over this, so it is really important that these workers are getting the money that is owed to them in a timely manner.

As I mentioned earlier, we saw this issue play out first-hand in 2014 in Windsor. The construction of the Herb Gray Parkway was totally mismanaged by the Liberal government from the start. Because of this, local suppliers and contract workers weren't getting paid. My colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh raised the issue dozens of times in this House, trying to get some answers from this government. There were numerous local subcontractors and suppliers in Windsor, like Hotham Building Materials, Jake's Crane, Waltron Trailers, R.J. Cyr and others that were owed hundreds of thousands of dollars.

And yet, we have a Liberal member saying, "Patience is a virtue." They're supposed to just sit patiently and

wait to get paid? These businesses contributed their resources and services to this government-led infrastructure project, only to be hung out to dry. Some of them had to resort to legal action to get the government to make the general contractor pay up. Shockingly, in 2017, some of these cases are still before the courts. Some of these subcontractors and supply companies are still waiting to get paid.

Aside from all of this, the primarily electrical subcontractor on the project, Stacey Electric—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me, could I ask—there seems to be—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): If I may have the attention of some of the members? I would ask that we have some order in the House because it's making it very difficult for me to hear the speaker. Thank you very much.

I'll turn it back to the member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. Aside from all of this, the primary electrical subcontractor on the project, Stacey Electric, failed to pay 25 workers. They owed hundreds of thousands of dollars in wages and benefits, yet a Liberal member says that patience is a virtue, and these workers should just have to sit and wait to be paid the hundreds of thousands of dollars in wages and benefits that they were waiting for.

My colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh had asked back then for the government to assure us that this would not happen again. He wanted the Liberal government to commit to putting in place stipulations that, if government money—or, actually, public money—is being used for a project, the people receiving the money will pay their bills owed to the local suppliers and do so in a timely manner.

In fact, Speaker, my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh actually brought forward a motion asking for support from the government and other members of this House so that if there is a general contractor who receives a contract from the government, and so is receiving public money, if they for whatever reason—whether it's like in Windsor with the Herb Gray Parkway, where there were faulty girders installed; my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh played a pivotal part in getting those girders replaced. If it's a case like that, where the contractor then packs up and goes back to—in this case, it was a Spanish consortium. They went back and left the workers, the suppliers and the subcontractors all high and dry.

My colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh said that in a case like that, in a case of a consortium like Freyssinet who takes off, collects the public dollars, doesn't do the job right, does not pay anybody else that has already done work or put supplies out on their own money—if they take off and don't pay those people and take care of the debt that they owe, they should not be awarded another government contract.

Now, as my colleague from Essex has pointed out, I'm not sure there's anything in this bill that actually stops

that from happening. It's shameful that somebody would take advantage of our workers and business owners like that and still get government dollars.

Because I don't have much time left, I'm going to skip to a part, because the Minister of Children and Youth Services had talked about how their government is working so fast to get this done and how important it is to him. But what he may not remember is that in 2013, the current Minister of Transportation, one of his own colleagues, brought forward legislation around prompt payment, and his own colleagues, the Liberal government, quashed his bill. They had an opportunity in 2013, when one of their own colleagues, the Minister of Transportation, said, "You know what? We should be doing something. We should get it set in stone that when you do the work, when you supply the products, you get paid." Just to be clear, the Liberals did not agree, and they quashed that legislation. So I don't think the Minister of Children and Youth Services should be bending his arm trying to pat himself and his colleagues on the back when they had an opportunity in 2013.

Again, they had an opportunity in 2014 when my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh brought up the issue around the Herb Gray Parkway and had to push the government to do the right thing, to replace faulty girders that were dangerous. Somebody could have died. When he brought his motion forward around prompt payment, he was saying that not only should these people be getting paid for the supplies they have already given and for the work that has already been done, but he went a step further than the government by saying that when you are awarded a government contract, when you're getting paid on the public dime, you should never get another contract through the government if you have stiffed the local people who have given you their time and their resources in order to do the work. If you choose not to pay them, you should never get another public dime.

The government has done nothing with that. They need to stop patting themselves on the back.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I'd like to thank all members involved in the debate today.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

SCHOOL FACILITIES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Whitby–Oshawa has given notice of his dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Minister of Education. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or her parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member from Whitby–Oshawa.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise this evening to speak to the Liberal government's continued mismanagement of the education sector. In east Aurora, for example, the population has grown by 30% over the past 10 years, and the local community has developed a strong business case for the establishment of a new public high school. Because the minister has ignored the needs of this local community, parents in east Aurora are forced to pay for public transit to bus their children to a public high school over 30 minutes away from their homes.

Imagine, Speaker, having to bus your children to the other side of town just to attend public school every day, then return home. The costs alone are substantial, but your child's daily schedule is rushed and unnecessarily stressful.

Parents have repeatedly raised the proposed school's construction with the Minister of Education, but are still waiting for the Liberal government's response.

Based on the answer received to my question in the Legislature on September 27, the Liberal government simply doesn't care to listen to parents in cities and towns across our great province. This is exemplified by the closure of hundreds of schools in communities across Ontario—as many as 600 schools, and 27 in the region of Durham since 2004.

The Ontario Alliance Against School Closures says that in the five years leading up to the release of the ministry's revised Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline, 277 schools to date have been closed under the Liberal government's watch.

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Equally problematic, however, is this government's stakeholder consultation process, or lack thereof.

With respect to the proposed construction of a new public high school in east Aurora, on December 20, 2016, a letter was sent to the Minister of Education and the then Minister of Housing, co-signed by the mayor of Aurora and eight municipal councillors. This letter stated the need for a new public high school in east Aurora, based on population growth in the local area, and also included motions adopted by the Aurora town council supporting the construction of a new public high school in east Aurora.

Since September 8, 2017, several families in east Aurora have been sending letters to the Minister of Education in support of the York Region District School Board's business plan for the proposed public high school. As of yet, these families have not received a response from the Minister of Education's office.

The decision to open or close a school in a local community requires extensive consultation with students, parents and education workers. You would certainly expect that, wouldn't you, Speaker? This simply has not occurred in east Aurora.

Beyond issues with closing and opening schools, the Liberal government has a failed track record regarding the upkeep of schools across Ontario. In a December

2015 report from the Auditor General of Ontario, the Auditor General recommended that \$1.4 billion per year was realistically needed just to keep our schools in good working order. However, the Auditor General also noted that the deficit of disrepair in our schools has ballooned from \$5 billion in 2003 to \$14 billion in 2015—\$14 billion. This confirmed that not only is the problem of deferred maintenance not being adequately addressed, but it has become a crisis under the Liberal government's watch.

In closing, Speaker, education is a public good and requires sound management as well as openness and transparency to ensure a successful future for students and the education workers responsible for teaching them. Students and education workers deserve better from this government. We owe them no less.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education may have up to five minutes to respond to the member from Whitby–Oshawa.

Mr. Granville Anderson: It gives me great pleasure to respond to the member's question.

Imagine, we are taking lessons from this government. That's why I became a trustee in the first place—because of the inaction in our school system of the previous Conservative government. They left schools and the education system in disrepair. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Education under their watch said he was going to create a crisis in education, and he did that by creating labour unrest, with decaying schools and parents who had no opportunity for their kids to get a proper education. Under that previous Conservative government, the graduation rate was 66%. It's now 86%—20 percentage points higher. So that's the last government that we should be taking anything from when it comes to education, Mr. Speaker, because they're out to lunch on that.

If the member was well prepared, he would have known, first of all, that walking distance is determined by school boards; walking distance is not determined by the Ministry of Education. Throughout the province, the average walking distance for kids in high school is 3.2 kilometres; it could be three kilometres sometimes.

He alluded to the fact that kids have to pay for busing. Yes, if you live within walking distance, you're going to pay for busing. That's common, and that makes sense. If you live within walking distance, yes, you're going to pay for busing. My kid was right on the cusp of 3.2 kilometres, and he determined—

Interjection.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Actually, that's not correct. The busing was \$2.68 a trip, Mr. Speaker, and that's common.

Let's hear this from the member: If you live within a kilometre and your parents decide you should get a bus to school, then you are now saying that the ministry and the government should pay for that busing. No, it doesn't work that way.

Ms. Catherine Fife: What if your child was three, four or five years old?

Mr. Granville Anderson: No, we're talking about high school. These are high school kids.

Interjections.

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

Interjection: Big kids.

Mr. Granville Anderson: They're big kids, so that's ridiculous. And if the third party is going to agree with that analogy, then we're in a sad state of affairs in this province.

Dr. G. W. Williams high school is a school within five kilometres in Aurora that we spent millions of dollars repairing, Mr. Speaker. It's five kilometres away from that community. So the board spent money on that. The board has submitted a plan for a new school in East Aurora. It's not a priority for them. It's not a priority for the York board because of the expenditure they just spent repairing the school.

So they bus kids half an hour. He said kids spend half an hour on a bus. They take issue with kids spending half an hour on a school bus. I think it's not unreasonable for a high school student to do that. It's not even unreasonable for an elementary kid to spend half an hour on a bus, so I'm not sure what point the member is trying to make.

Interjections.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I'll go to my notes now. Funding for school boards in Newmarket–Aurora has increased by \$1.26 billion, an increase of 145% since 2003. Per pupil funding has increased by \$6,467 since 2003. That's an increase of 9%. We have built eight new schools in Newmarket–Aurora since 2003.

We will continue to invest in capital funding for new schools and renovations of existing ones. We encourage local school boards and communities to collaboratively find solutions so that kids can attend schools at a reasonable cost to the system. It's money saved, Mr. Speaker, so I'm not sure where the member's point is coming from.

OPIOID ABUSE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The member has up to five minutes and the minister—in this case, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care—will have up to five minutes to reply.

We now turn it over to, with her patience, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to thank the members from Windsor West, Windsor–Tecumseh, Windsor–Essex, Hamilton Mountain and Niagara Falls for joining me in this late show. This is the second time in five years that I've called a late show, because the response from this government on the opioid crisis has been less than stellar. I think that the responses I received to the question earlier last week were unsatisfactory not only

for us as opposition members and as members who care about our communities but for the people of this province.

I'd just like to remind the House as to why this issue is so important. Public Health Ontario shows that Waterloo region has experienced an increase in opioid fatalities. In 2015, 23 people died from overdoses; the number rose to 38 in 2016. But between January and August of this year, 42 people died in our region.

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It is clear that it is an increasing strain on public emergency services to respond to opioid-related incidents in Waterloo region, and indeed across the province, indeed across all of the ridings that are represented here right now. To address this crisis in Waterloo region, our police chief, Bryan Larkin, ordered \$43,000 worth of kits of naloxone doses. They have asked this government to provide emergency relief funding to cover those costs.

I want to tell you why I think the police chief, Chief Larkin, did this. It's because one of his own officers was exposed to fentanyl late last year and then in January was in court. I want to read from the transcript of that court case. It says:

“A Waterloo regional police officer became emotional on the witness stand Monday while describing how he was taken to hospital by ambulance after being exposed to fentanyl powder.

“‘It was a very traumatic incident in my career,’ said Sgt. Ben Handfield, his voice breaking.

“Handfield said he was driving in a police van with a locked tool box seized from a drug trafficker when he felt like he was going to pass out.

“He said his nostrils were ‘burning’ and he felt dizzy and nauseous.”

He said, “‘I'd never felt like that in my entire life’ ...

“Fearing he would run into a car, he pulled over, got out of the van and called an ambulance. He spent four hours at Grand River Hospital undergoing tests.

“It turned out the tool box contained fentanyl powder.”

Now, I want to remind people that this police officer testified that “he began feeling ill just 15 to 30 seconds after being in the van with the tool box. He had earlier touched the tool box while wearing latex gloves....”

He said, “I'm starting to feel better now,” but he had said, “My memory is not as clear as it used to be.”

The long-standing effects of this drug are affecting our front-line officers.

“Powdered fentanyl can be accidentally absorbed through the skin or inhaled, said Dr. Karen Woodall,” who also testified. “Nausea and dizziness are symptoms....

“Fentanyl is 100 times more potent than morphine, and morphine is a very powerful drug....”

Now, in response to my question, the Minister of Health acknowledged that there is a crisis, and I acknowledged that they had not acknowledged it as much as they should have, Mr. Speaker. But the Minister of Commu-

ity Safety and Correctional Services went on to say that she is having “regular conversations with Chief Larkin and all other police services”—this is from Hansard—“including our OPP officers, on the aspect of moving forward to ensure that they are safe in their practice, but also to ensure that they have the right resources to practise and continue the great work they do.”

What I would say to you is that local police services and municipalities should not be funding what is fundamentally a provincial responsibility. This is a health crisis. It falls squarely under the responsibility of the minister.

I hope that by bringing this issue to the attention of this Legislature in this late show that we can move past the point of conversation, because when the minister goes on to say that “we are having conversations,” well, Mr. Speaker, we in this province, on the issue of having easy access to naloxone kits, which I myself have been trained in—it takes 10 minutes. It is a life-saving strategy, both for our front-line services and also for the people who are on the street. I mean, we are privileged in this House. We are protected in this House. We are not on the front line.

What this Legislature needs to do and what this government needs to do is a little less conversation and a little more action on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has up to five minutes to reply.

Mr. John Fraser: It’s a pleasure to respond to the member. We all in this Legislature have a concern for the opioid crisis that we have: fentanyl and carfentanil, which is even more dangerous than fentanyl.

I do want to respond to one thing that the member said in terms of the response to this. It’s actually a collective response. Public health is part of a municipal responsibility, which we fund. It requires that response along with the local health authorities. I know in Waterloo Wellington, the LHIN was provided, I think, with \$1.65 million, which actually was more than—each LHIN got a million dollars, but those areas that were most affected got a bit more, and I know that Waterloo Wellington was one of them.

In my city of Ottawa, the police and the firefighters—and the paramedics, obviously—all have naloxone kits. They’ve had them for quite some time. They worked inside the city and public health.

I can’t speak for the Minister of Correctional Services and those in community safety and correctional services in terms of what’s being done from that perspective to work with the chiefs. I do know that I was at the mayors’ table earlier this summer with the minister in response to the opioid crisis, where there was an investment of about \$14 million. I know that at that time, not all police chiefs were requesting that. People were getting it in a variety of different ways.

The good news is that those kits are there and people are getting trained. That’s the most critical thing.

I can understand the member asking for that support. I’m not sure that that support is not available in some form, a collaboration like we’ve had in the city of Ottawa. This is something that has evolved very quickly, and if you take a look, there are some 80,000 naloxone kits out there being distributed, about 6,500 a month. So there are a lot of kits out there, and that’s a good thing.

The challenge is that it’s not just the naloxone and being able to pull people out of overdose that we need to worry about. It’s also public awareness, and that’s some of the investment that we’ve made here. It’s also making sure that there are pathways to ensure that people get the kind of treatment and support that they need. There needs to be an investment, particularly in vulnerable populations like our indigenous communities. If you take a look at the last week, I think it’s about \$300 million over the next two and a half years that has been put forward to this.

It’s a crisis. There’s no question about that. It’s a crisis that’s in our communities. One pill can kill. One smoke can kill. One of the things that is really critical for us to get out there is that people know this.

It’s a big risk for our first responders. They are aware of it; there’s training going on. But you’ve got a story across the river—not in Ottawa, but across the river in Gatineau: a couple with a young child, alive. The parents have a party where they party. The child is now an orphan. These weren’t hard-core users. They were just recreationally deciding they were going to do something one weekend, and they happened to get something that was—you know, this is not a pharmaceutical compound that is made up in some place north of Toronto here. This is something that somebody is mixing up in a mixer.

The naloxone is one really big piece, and we have to work together to make sure that those kits are out there and that we can protect people and they know what they have to do when they use them. But the really important thing is that it’s a whole new world. It’s a whole new world out there, and it has to be communicated—and I know that all members of this Legislature feel this way; we may have different ideas about how that should be done—so that people know and people understand, not just our young people in schools but young adults and all people, mostly people under the age of 40, that you’re at risk. You might be doing something that you’ve done before that you think is safe, but it’s not.

I really appreciate the member’s question and the chance to respond to it. I look forward to continuing to work with all members of this Legislature, as does the minister, to make sure that we do what we can to address this crisis.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I’d like to thank all members for their questions and responses.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House now stands adjourned until 9 o’clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1819.

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Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
MacLaren, Jack (IND)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Hon. / L'hon. Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC) Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	York–Simcoe Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Mike Colle, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Cheri DiNovo, Michael Harris
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Han Dong
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Mike Colle, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Granville Anderson
Granville Anderson, Yvan Baker
Grant Crack, John Fraser
Lisa Gretzky, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi, Lisa M. Thompson
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Granville Anderson, Lorenzo Berardinetti
James J. Bradley, Wayne Gates
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Amrit Mangat, Jim McDonell
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
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Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Grant Crack, Jennifer K. French
Jack MacLaren, Ted McMeekin
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**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Lorne Coe, Bob Delaney
Vic Dhillon, Joe Dickson
Harinder Malhi, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley