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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 15 April 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 15 avril 2026

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PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

PROTECTING SENIORS' RIGHTS
IN CARE HOMES ACT, 2026

LOI DE 2026 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES DROITS DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES
DANS LES MAISONS DE SOINS

Ms. Pasma moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 23, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 and the Retirement Homes Act, 2010 respecting tenancies in care homes / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation et la Loi de 2010 sur les maisons de retraite en ce qui concerne les locations dans les maisons de soins.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for their presentation.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm proud to rise on behalf of residents of Ottawa West–Nepean to debate Bill 23, the Protecting Seniors' Rights in Care Homes Act.

The seed of this bill was planted when Penny Eccles reached out to me in early 2024. Penny is a senior in Ottawa who was living at Park Place in Central Park. Penny moved into Park Place in 2022 to be close to her husband, Vernon, who was in the assisted living wing. As Vernon was also on the wait-list for Villa Marconi, a nearby long-term-care home, Penny thought Park Place was going to be her home for years to come. But Penny had just gotten a notice from Park Place that they were going to significantly increase her fees and simultaneously decrease the services she was getting for those fees, including reductions in food services and housekeeping. Her monthly fees were set to rise by \$2,245, a nearly 50% increase.

I soon learned that Penny was far from alone. Many of the residents in Park Place and the Ravines, another residence owned by Alavida Lifestyles, were being served with astronomical fee increases. Many of them were so large that they seemed almost unreal, Speaker, but the residents showed me the paperwork. Seniors were being asked to pay \$6,000, \$12,000, \$18,000 and even \$30,000 more per year. Imagine my shock, Speaker, when I discovered this was all perfectly legal in Ontario.

In retirement homes, care costs are paid by residents. Unlike long-term care, they are not publicly funded. Fees are divided into two portions: rent and care fees. Care fees cover meals, housekeeping, assistance with daily living activities, pharmacy and nursing care. The rent portion is regulated under the Residential Tenancies Act. This means that if the building was constructed before 2018, rent may only be increased once per year subject to the maximum annual guideline set by the Ministry of Housing, which is based on the rate of inflation and is capped at 2.5% to protect tenants from unusually large jumps in rent.

For care fees, on the other hand, it is the Wild West. The only limit is that a retirement home must provide 90 days' written notice before increasing fees. Other than that, they can increase fees by as much as they want, as many times as they want.

I want to note, Speaker, that there are 750 regulated retirement homes in Ontario, both for-profit and not-for-profit, and many of them don't exploit their residents. It's clear that retirement homes can pay the bills and provide decent service without subjecting seniors to massive price increases. But not all of them are good citizens. Some of them are gouging seniors. There is no other word for it, Speaker, when they are literally holding people's homes hostage. Many seniors, when they move into a retirement residence, believe that it will be their final home. They develop friendships and community that are hard to leave behind. Moving is stressful, and it is costly.

Katherine Elliott told me she paid \$6,000 in moving costs when she had to leave her retirement home due to a \$15,000-a-year fee increase. To not pay \$15,000, Speaker, she had to pay \$6,000. Seniors who are facing this scenario have told me about the stress they feel: unable to eat, unable to sleep, trying to figure out if they have enough money to keep them housed until they die, trying not to be a burden to their families.

Here's what Rita Kuiak told a CBC Ottawa reporter when her fees went up \$18,000 a year: "It's hell ... I had been hoping to make this my last home, but it's a bit traumatizing and upsetting, resettling everything...."

"It's shocking. I mean, it's a lot of money. Most of us here are living with a pension of some kind, so we can't just say fine, just keep going."

And this is Eliane Bouchard, who was 91 at the time she spoke to CBC, when her fees were going up \$12,000 a year: "I'm broken. I'm very broken and I need help...."

"I don't want to eat anymore. I just want to pass as soon as possible. I'm not going to do that, but that's the way I feel."

Eliane calculated that she would run out of money in four years if she stayed and paid the fees out of her savings.

This is the effect, Speaker, of a policy that we can easily change, as legislators: seniors who don't want to live anymore, who don't think they can afford to live anymore. And there are so many more examples of excessive fee increases.

John Simmons, a senior in Whitby, had his annual expense go up more than \$19,000 within a space of two years.

Magdalena Rogall, a 97-year-old Ottawa resident, was told her fees were going to increase \$30,000 a year for a 400-square-foot studio. The home coerced her into signing a new contract without her children present, even though English is not her first language.

Ernie Jackiw, who was 89 at the time, was told that his fees were going to almost double from \$3,200 a month to \$6,300 a month. If you're doing the math, that's a more than \$37,000 a year increase, Speaker.

Increasing a senior's cost of living by \$37,000 a year is something that I think can only be called evil. But while increases of over \$30,000 a year are rare, even a \$3,000- or \$4,000-a-year increase is still unaffordable on a fixed income. Even if you have a pension indexed to inflation, when care fees are increasing by so much more than inflation, sooner or later you're going to have to dip into savings, if you have any.

When fees at Walford Sudbury increased by 10%, Dave Legget calculated that he would need to take \$500 a month from his savings. He told the Sudbury Star, "It leaves me in a dilemma here. I'm OK for four or five years, but in seven or eight years, I'm not going to be able to afford to live here. There's no way. It would take every penny I've got to survive."

I've heard so many more stories like this, Speaker, but some seniors, including at one retirement home in Ottawa West–Nepean, have asked me not to share their names or their stories publicly because they're scared of retaliation by management if they speak up publicly. So retirement homes are not only gouging seniors; some of them are intimidating seniors into silence.

Why are retirement homes doing this? Many of them talk about increased costs without providing any evidence that they are, in fact, facing increased costs, because under the way the law is written right now, operators do not need to offer any justification whatsoever for fee increases.

But sometimes we do get a peek at what the motivation is. When Atria nearly doubled fees for seniors living in The Court at Brooklin, a seniors' residence in Whitby, they claimed it was because of increased operational costs. However, the Toronto Star reported on an earnings call held for investors in Ventas, a US real estate investment trust that is a part-owner of Atria. This is what Justin Hutchens, executive VP of seniors housing at Ventas told investors: "We found a way through our data analytics to really focus in on the right price to do two things: either just to get higher price or to drive volume.... What's really driving the underlying trend are higher move-in rents and

then continued strength in our internal rent increases. And so, that's something we'll stay very focused on, and we're trying to pull both levers."

In answer to a question about growth opportunities in Canada, he said, "Pricing has been a little bit better there as well. So we're always focused on revenue across the board, but price is an opportunity that's emerging in Canada."

"Price is an opportunity that's emerging in Canada"—there you have it. Our seniors are being treated as cash cows for private, for-profit corporations who are raising fees just because they can, because it makes their profits go up.

1810

The good news, Speaker, is that this is entirely solvable, and the solution is simple. We can just regulate fees the way we regulate rent. BC is already ahead of us. The BC government announced in 2024 that care fees were considered rent under their Residential Tenancy Act and that the same limits that apply to rent would apply to care fees as well. If BC can do it, so can we.

Bill 23, if passed, would require that care fees be based on the cost of actually providing the service, with one fee for all residents, rather than marketers being able to assess how much you're likely to be able to pay when you sign up. The services would have to be available individually if residents don't want to buy a package. And they could only be increased once per year, based on a limit set by the consumer price index.

Bill 23 would also regulate the use of marketing discounts, a practice where retirement homes recruit residents by promising them one price, not always telling them that the price will end, when it will end or how much they'll be paying after it ends. Bill 23, if passed, would require that any marketing discount be clearly spelled out, including when it will end and what the price will be once it is ended.

The bill would also ensure that if services are decreased that fees are decreased commensurately, and it clearly spells out that all provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act apply to residents of retirement homes, including compensation for evictions and appropriate notice of eviction in cases of closure or conversion.

In the few moments I have remaining, Speaker, I want to talk about why protecting seniors against exploitation and price gouging is so important. Seniors built our province and our country. What we have comes from the work that they did. That means we have a duty of care for seniors in Ontario. They deserve a dignified and secure retirement, access to care, and stable, affordable housing. This is in addition to the fact that no human being's need for housing and care should be exploited simply for the sake of excessive corporate profits.

We know that many seniors are already being exploited and harmed by these practices. We also risk seeing many more being put in this situation as private care and retirement homes are filling in gaps in long-term care. With long wait-lists, seniors are ending up in retirement homes, and particularly in assisted living and memory care wings. Retirement living is not just about a lifestyle choice any-

more, Speaker. That increases our obligation to protect seniors from predatory practices by these homes. And it's not hard; we can just make them illegal. It won't cost the province a penny. We don't have to create a new program—no new bureaucracy; just change the regulation.

I hope that all MPPs recognize the urgency of addressing this issue and will vote for Bill 23 to protect Ontario's seniors the way they deserve to be protected.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 23, the Protecting Seniors' Rights in Care Homes Act.

Let me begin by saying clearly that the goal behind this bill is one that all members of this House can support. Seniors in Ontario deserve dignity, they deserve stability and they deserve transparency when it comes to the place that they call home. For many older adults, moving into a retirement or care home is not simply a housing decision. This is a decision that is really, deeply personal, and it's a transition that's often made during a really vulnerable time in their lives.

Many seniors in this province live, as mentioned, on fixed incomes. They budget really carefully, and they plan for years ahead with real discipline and with care. When unexpected costs arise, particularly increases in service fees for meals, personal care or essential supports, those increases can really quickly destabilize financial security and create significant stress.

We also know that moving later in life also carries real, significant stress and risk. It's not simply inconvenient; it can be physically and emotionally harmful. Seniors who are forced to relocate because of affordability concerns can lose community ties. They can lose continuity of care, and also they can lose the stability that is so important to their well-being.

I want to acknowledge at the outset that this bill is responding to a real and growing concern. Greater transparency around service fees, clearer expectations about costs and protection against sudden increases are really important goals. These are goals that reflect values that are shared across this House: fairness, accountability and respect for seniors. These are elements of this legislation that absolutely move in the right direction.

The requirement to clearly itemize care, service and meal charges is a really important step. Too often, residents and families really struggle to understand exactly the full cost of services, especially at the time of moving and when these agreements are signed. Providing really clear and accessible information about pricing does help ensure that seniors and their families can make informed decisions.

Similarly, the effort to limit how frequently charges can increase introduces a real level of predictability that many families need. When individuals are living on those fixed incomes, knowing that increases can't happen repeatedly throughout the year provides some reassurance and also helps support their financial planning.

The bill also takes steps to ensure that residents have greater control over optional services, including the ability to reduce or discontinue certain services, and that principle

that residents should have meaningful choice is one that deserves support.

Speaker, acknowledging these strengths is really important, but it's equally important that we examine whether the protections will work in practice, because good intentions aren't always sufficient, unfortunately. Legislation has to be workable, it has to be enforceable, it has to be sustainable if it's going to be able to achieve its goals. It's in here that we have some concerns that emerge.

The most significant one is enforcement. This bill does create rules, but rules alone won't guarantee protection, especially from those really bad corporate overlords. We have to ask, who is going to ensure that those rules are followed, how is that compliance going to be monitored, and what happens when violations occur?

Many of the protections proposed in the bill do appear to rely on complaint-based systems, and that raises a real, practical question: How likely is it that a vulnerable senior—perhaps living alone, maybe without family support and maybe facing health challenges—is going to feel empowered to challenge a provider? Some residents might even fear retaliation; others might lack family support, and some might not understand their rights or may find the complaint process really intimidating. These aren't hypothetical concerns. They reflect the lived realities of many seniors. If enforcement depends primarily on individuals coming forward, then those most in need of protection may be the least able to access it.

A right without enforcement isn't protection; it's essentially a promise without power. That's why stronger clarity around compliance mechanisms, oversight responsibilities and enforcement tools will really be essential if this legislation is going to have a really meaningful outcome.

Another issue that deserves some attention is the potential impact on service providers—good ones. Retirement homes, or homes for the aged, operate in a really challenging environment right now. We know that. They face rising costs on labour, food, utilities, insurance, specialized care. Staffing shortages are still a problem, a serious issue right across the sector; we know that. Inflation has affected nearly every aspect of service delivery, and we know we're in an affordability crisis that is sort of across the board, right?

This bill introduces caps on how frequently and how significantly service fees might increase; and while predictability is really important for residents, we have to recognize that costs don't always rise in predictable ways. If cost increases outpace permitted fee adjustments, providers may just be forced to make difficult decisions, and those decisions could include reducing some optional services, delaying some investments or limiting the range of the programs available to the residents.

That raises an important question: How do we protect affordability without undermining quality? Because affordability matters, but quality matters just as much, and a system that keeps costs stable but allows services to deteriorate is not serving seniors well, nor is a system that creates administrative burdens so significant that smaller providers struggle to remain viable.

1820

This brings me to another concern, and that is the balance between cost regulation and service quality. This bill places considerable focus on pricing transparency and cost control. Those are important components of consumer protection, but transparency alone doesn't guarantee high-quality care.

We do not see in this legislation expanded attention to staffing levels, inspection capacity or quality-of-care standards. We don't see provisions addressing workforce pressures or training challenges. And yet these are among some of the most pressing issues facing the retirement and care home sector today. If we're serious about protecting seniors, we have to address not only what they pay, but also the quality of the care that they receive.

And then there's the issue of unintended consequences. With new regulatory structures introduced, organizations will adapt. That's a natural and predictable response. So if certain types of fee increases are restricted, providers may restructure pricing in other ways. Services may be bundled differently, and new categories of optional services might emerge. They'll just find another avenue, potentially. And none of that is necessarily malicious, but it reflects the reality that systems evolve in response to regulation.

That's why careful policy design is so important, and I know it's on the member's mind. We must anticipate just how the sector may respond and ensure that safeguards remain effective over time.

Implementation is another area where careful attention will be required. This legislation introduces new requirements for documentation, pricing structures, communication with residents and families, and ongoing updates to information packages. These changes will require time, training and system adjustments. If the transition is rushed or insufficiently supported, there's that risk of confusion, not only among providers, but also among the residents themselves and their families. That confusion can undermine confidence in the system and create unnecessary stress for those it's meant to protect.

And so while the objectives of this bill are absolutely commendable, the path to achieving them has to be really clearly defined and adequately supported.

I want to emphasize that raising these concerns isn't about opposing the principle of protecting seniors—absolutely not. Quite the opposite: It's just about ensuring that the protections are real, they're durable and they're effective, and ensuring that when we tell seniors they are protected, that promise holds true in their daily lives, not just in the legislative text that we read here and debate at Queen's Park.

That means strengthening enforcement frameworks. It means ensuring that oversight bodies have the resources necessary to monitor compliance. It means supporting residents with accessible information and advocacy tools so that they understand their rights and know just how to exercise them.

It also means working collaboratively with the providers to ensure that reforms are practical and sustainable,

because sustainability and stability in this sector are essential to stability for the residents.

There is an opportunity here to build on the foundation that this bill creates. We can strengthen accountability mechanisms—we must. We can improve clarity around compliance expectations. And we can consider additional supports that protect both the residents and providers during implementation.

That's how responsible policy-making works: not by dismissing concerns but by addressing them thoughtfully—because seniors deserve more than just symbolic protection; they deserve policies that function in the real world under real conditions and that are going to stand the test of time. As legislators, our responsibility is not only to respond to the problems, but to ensure that the solutions we provide are durable, that they're effective and grounded in practical realities.

Protecting seniors is not a partisan issue at all. It is a shared responsibility. It reflects the respect that we owe to those who built our communities and contributed so much to this province.

This bill begins a really important conversation about affordability, transparency and fairness in retirement and care homes. But to truly deliver on this promise, we have to ensure the systems behind those protections are strong, enforceable and sustainable. Because at the end of the day, seniors aren't asking for promises; they want certainty, stability and dignity. And that is what our work here in the House has to strive to deliver.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

Mr. Ric Bresee: I'm very pleased today to rise to address the concerns raised by the member opposite, leading to her proposed changes to the Retirement Homes Act and the Residential Tenancies Act.

Let me begin by saying, as the other member said just moments ago, that we all share the same goal. Our goal is to ensure that seniors in Ontario can live with dignity, safety and peace of mind. That is something I believe every member of this House supports—should support—regardless of party.

Speaker, our government does take that responsibility very seriously. Since 2018, under the leadership of the Premier, we've continued to strengthen the supports for seniors and improve oversight in the retirement home sector. At the same time, it's important that we have an honest discussion about what is already in place and what is truly needed.

The reality is that Ontario already has a strong legislative and regulatory framework to protect retirement home residents. The Retirement Homes Act includes the Residents' Bill of Rights, which clearly sets out protections for residents. These rights are not symbolic; they're meaningful, enforceable protections that help ensure residents are treated with dignity and respect. Residents have the right to know what care services they're receiving, what fees they're paying and what choices are available to them. They have the right to raise concerns without fear. They have the right to safe living conditions and to transparency

from the operators of the retirement homes. These are important protections that are already here and exist today.

In addition to those protections, residents in retirement homes also benefit from important tenancy rights. Seniors who live in these homes are not left without safeguards if challenges arise. The law already requires retirement homes to provide clear information to residents and their families and to ensure that residents understand their rights and the available supports. This is especially important in cases when a retirement home may cease operations. Ontario already requires retirement homes to provide at least 120 days' written notice of any potential closure. It's a significant period of time. It allows residents and their families to make informed decisions, explore alternatives and plan their next steps with greater certainty.

It's not a system that leaves people in the dark. It's a system that recognizes that seniors deserve time, information and support in those decisions.

Just as importantly, Ontario has a dedicated regulator in place to oversee the sector. The Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority plays a critical role in licensing homes, monitoring compliance, responding to complaints and taking enforcement action when it's necessary. That oversight is essential. It provides accountability, and it helps to ensure that the standards are upheld all across the province.

Speaker, when issues arise, there is already a mechanism in place to respond. When homes fail to meet standards, there are consequences. When closures occur, there is a framework to support the residents through an orderly transition.

While I appreciate the intent behind the member's proposal, we must also be careful not to create duplication and not to create extra where the protections already exist. Speaker, good policy is not about adding new layers of process for the sake of appearance; it's about making sure that the rules we have are practical, effective, enforceable and focused on outcomes. Our priority should be making sure the current framework continues to work well for residents: that information is clear, that operators meet their obligations and that oversight remains strong. That's how we protect seniors in a meaningful way.

1830

Our government remains committed to supporting seniors, to strengthening accountability and to ensuring that older Ontarians can age safely, securely and with dignity in the communities they call home. That's what seniors deserve. That's what families expect. And that is exactly what we will continue to deliver.

Speaker, having sufficient retirement home options is an incredibly important part of this. I want to take the opportunity to speak about the work our government is doing to make it easier to build the kinds of homes that seniors need because ensuring dignity and security for older Ontarians doesn't begin at the front door of a retirement residence. It begins with making sure that those homes can be built in the first place, in communities where seniors want to live, close to their families, close to the services and those social supports that they're used to.

One of the most significant barriers to building new housing, particularly purpose-built seniors' housing, has been the rising cost of development charges. These costs, which are imposed at the municipal level to fund infrastructure, have increased dramatically in recent years. In many cases, it adds tens of thousands of dollars to the cost of each unit. For seniors' housing projects, where affordability and fixed incomes are key considerations, these costs can be the difference between a project moving forward or being shelved indefinitely.

We've been clear from the start: It cost too much and takes too long to build housing, specifically seniors' housing, here in Ontario, and our government is continuing to take action to fix that.

That's why, through our latest housing legislation and the supporting measures, we're taking targeted steps to reduce development burdens, particularly for forms of housing that support the needs of seniors. We recognize that seniors' housing is not one-size-fits-all. It needs to include a continuum of options from independent living and accessible units to assisted living and supportive housing. Each option plays a critical role in allowing people to age in place while also freeing up the larger family homes elsewhere in the market.

By reducing or deferring development charges on seniors' housing, we're actually helping to unlock new supply across the continuum. That's about creating the conditions for builders to move forward with projects that might not otherwise be viable. It's about ensuring that seniors have more options at different price points in the communities they already call home.

At the same time, we recognize that municipalities rely on development charges to fund their infrastructure. That's why our approach is balanced and responsible. We are stepping up with significant provincial investment to ensure municipalities can continue to build and maintain that critical infrastructure. Through the \$8.8-billion partnership with the federal government to support housing-enabling infrastructure, we're working in partnership with the municipalities to accelerate the construction of new homes.

This includes investments in water and waste water, roads and other essential services essential to growth. And this is a key part of our broader strategy: Aligning infrastructure funding with housing outcomes. We are making sure that when municipalities are asked to support more housing, particularly the housing that meets priority needs, like seniors' housing, they have the tools and the resources to do it.

Madam Speaker, it's about more than numbers; it's about strengthening the entire housing continuum in Ontario. When seniors have access to appropriate, affordable housing options, it creates movement throughout the system. It allows individuals and couples to downsize from larger homes and in spaces that better meet their needs. It opens up those larger homes for families. It reduces pressure on long-term-care and hospital systems by supporting more independent living. And it helps build complete communities, where people can remain connected and supported at every stage of life.

That's why our government is taking a comprehensive approach. We're not looking at seniors' housing in isolation; we're looking at how it fits into the broader housing system and how large actions, like reducing development charges, can have system-wide benefits. We're also working to provide greater predictability and consistency in the development charge framework overall. By standardizing and streamlining how these charges are applied, we're helping builders and municipalities alike plan for better growth. Predictability matters: It reduces risk, encourages investment and ultimately leads to more homes being built.

We are doing all of this while maintaining a clear focus on accountability. Our infrastructure investments are tied to outcomes. Our funding programs are designed to ensure that the dollars are directed where they will have the greatest impact. We are working across ministries to coordinate efforts, remove duplication and keep projects moving.

Seniors in Ontario deserve more than just protections; they deserve real choices. They deserve to live in homes that meet their needs, in communities that support their well-being, without being priced out by unnecessary costs and delays. By taking action to reduce development charges on seniors' housing and by backing that up with historic investment in infrastructure, our government is helping to make that a reality.

We are building a stronger, more responsive housing system, one that recognizes the importance of every stage of life and ensures that no one is left behind. This is how we support seniors, this is how we strengthen communities and this is how we will continue to deliver results for the people of Ontario.

Speaker, I was speaking earlier about the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority and speaking of the bill of rights. There is a process for everyone to be able to access that information and make sure that their rights are being upheld. If there is anyone watching today that needs that access, please—the number is 1-855-ASK-RHRA or 1-855-275-7472. I encourage you to use that number, to use that information, to know your rights.

Work with the families and the seniors to ensure that all of the rights and rules are there for the seniors because, as has been said many times already in this House tonight, seniors deserve respect, seniors deserve dignity and seniors deserve the protection of this government.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to commend the member from Ottawa West–Nepean for trying to fix the problems of the former Liberal government and the current PC government.

It was the Liberals in 2010 who created the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority and left it without teeth and oversight and accountability. At the time, Madam Speaker, it was the Conservatives who supported it. We voted against it because there was too much industry representation on the board and we saw it for what it was. That is what you call symbolic protection.

So the member for Ottawa West–Nepean has brought forward legislation, and this is not the first time. We have

tried to fix the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority and the lack of oversight and protection for seniors in retirement homes—now four times we have brought forward the legislation. It goes without saying, or it should be understood, that the current authority has no oversight around regulating fees. This is the solve here. We have had 16 years of seniors being abused and taken advantage of and being displaced in their homes—16 years. You have an opportunity to fix this today. You have an opportunity to fix what the Liberals started and to acknowledge that the problem is real.

I want to bring the voices of seniors who have experienced great trauma in retirement homes, Madam Speaker. This from a nurse. The nurse says, “Those retirement homes I had to deal with were beyond words! No one has ever bothered to think of the residents that may have lived in their own homes for 50 or more years and then made the decision to move to a” retirement home. “Minimum \$7,000 a month! They are nicked and dined to death for having” blood pressure taken—\$10 a shot—“wheeled to dining room and back”—another \$20. “Garbage can emptied” for \$10. “Then, if one or both residents develop dementia, crack a hip, they pull in the agency staff to assist” at great expense. “Eventually the poor souls have to be placed in” long-term care, “but the facility wants to keep them so as not to lose their” \$7,000 “a month. It’s criminal that these private corporations can get away with this! Bottom line being, one resident, maybe a couple, are made to move three times in sometimes less than one year. The trauma is heartbreaking.” It is disrespectful. It does not honour the integrity and the dignity that seniors deserve.

1840

You have the solve right here in front of you with Bill 23. If you vote this legislation down, you are knowingly leaving seniors vulnerable in these retirement homes—knowingly, intentionally, by design, right? You have a chance to fix the Liberal legislation. You have a chance to demonstrate that seniors deserve to live in their homes. You're talking about building more homes; you're just doubling down on the problem. We know that you know how to build unaffordable homes.

These are the solutions that are right here before you. The regulatory oversight and the blaming that this bill does not fix it is absolutely incorrect, Madam Speaker.

The solve is Bill 23. I urge the government: Do the right thing, just for a fresh change of attitude, okay? This bill is a private member's piece of legislation, based on evidence, based on research and based on the lived experiences of seniors in retirement homes. Fix the problem today—no more excuses from this government and from the Liberals.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I'll remind the member to speak through the Chair, please.

Further debate?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I really want to commend and thank the member from Ottawa West–Nepean for taking this on, for speaking to people and finding a very practical, simple solution to a very, very serious problem. I have to say, it was very difficult listening to this kind of aspirational vision of how we respect our seniors when it is so

far from reality. It is so far from lived reality. Speaking of the Residents' Bill of Rights, do you know how many times it is violated in long-term-care and in seniors' residences? And this government absolutely refuses to do anything about it.

What we know about seniors' residences is that they are, by and large, owned by real estate investment trusts, which exist to make money, to make buckets of money. As a matter of fact, a former Premier of this province made \$10 million out of Chartwell. That is a ton of money. That's a ton of money that could have been supporting seniors, providing care, keeping the costs down. But instead, we know that seniors who move into seniors' residences have sold their homes, if they had one, and that they've got this money that is going to be peeled off month after month.

In my mom's case, we started in a Revera home—\$5,000 a month. Within two years it was going up \$12,000 a year, so we had no choice but to find another place for her to live. So she had to be moved; we had to find a place that was less expensive. And to some extent, that's been successful because it's a community-based seniors' residence. It's not-for-profit. Do you know that the not-for-profit homes in Thunder Bay have a seven-year wait-list? They're actually very nice homes, most of them, but you can't get into them. So you go to these commercial homes, and, as the member from Waterloo said, people are nicked and dimed out of their savings until there's nothing left. Well, I can tell you we have longevity in my family. My mother is now 98. She may go on for quite a few more years. But the money keeps disappearing, right? And while she was living in that commercial residence, it was going. We just couldn't afford to keep her there any longer.

The other piece, of course, we need to recognize is that the older you get, the more care you're going to have to pay for. So you need caps, you need something controllable and manageable, and it's simply not there. And this bill does that in a very important way.

Now, the other thing I want to point to is Heritage Glen. Does everybody remember Heritage Glen in Mississauga, another real estate investment trust that was owned by Chartwell and sold to Minto? That meant evicting 200 seniors. Everyone in this building knew that there was no way that most of those seniors could find any place, even a room. In fact, some were advised, "Why don't you go to a shelter? Okay, you're in your 90s, go to a shelter." Right—that's dignity. That's how we look after our seniors.

And I can tell you right now, one of the important things in this bill is telling people that they actually have residential tenancy rights, because the people at Heritage Glen were not told that. In fact, the Minister of Long-Term Care, who happens to be the Minister of Education right now, did not send a letter to them until after everyone had left the building, saying, "Oh, by the way, you have RTA rights."

Utterly shameful, the behaviour of the MPP for that riding—that was Mississauga—Streetsville—who did absolutely nothing for those people. It was shameful. I'm sorry, but I hear a lot of fantasy about how we look after our seniors that does not correspond to lived reality.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, I was there in 2010 when the Liberal government brought the legislation that brought us the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority. You have put an industry that exists for one reason—to make as much money off the backs of seniors—in charge of 70,000 vulnerable people. When we tried to make amendments to that bill and say that the government has a role to play to oversee those 70,000 elderly people living in retirement homes—"No. The industry is doing just fine. The industry will make sure that every senior is treated."

Who are we kidding? Who are we kidding? We see it right now. We saw it during the pandemic, where most of them—I remember presenting petitions in this House. The residents of Amberwood in Sudbury were being charged hundreds of dollars a week for PPE for the staff. This has nothing to do with care. This has nothing to do with grants. This was just one more way that the big companies, the Chartwells of this world, found to make more money. Did you see how much the profit to retirement homes increased during the pandemic? Because they found all sorts of ways to bill the 70,000 frail, elderly people who need our support. They see them as 70,000 people who will keep paying.

I can tell you that when my mother-in-law—she moved into the Walford retirement home in Sudbury when my father-in-law passed. She wanted to stay where they were in the retirement home. She paid, in 2015, \$4,500 a month for a 350-square-foot room. A 350-square-foot room is a couple of desks. That's her room. She paid \$4,500 a month because they would not decrease her rent after my father-in-law had passed.

The ways that they find to take more money out of those vulnerable people is shameful. We are legislators. We are in a position where we can protect 70,000 vulnerable seniors by voting for this bill. And if you sit down and vote no, you are letting down—you got elected to protect the people of Ontario. We have a duty to do our jobs and protect those vulnerable seniors. If you vote that down, you are allowing the Siennas and the Chartwells of this world to continue to make hundreds of millions of dollars of profit every three months off the backs of those people. This is wrong.

All we have to do is pass this bill and make sure that the same laws that exist—the tenancy law—will apply to the rest of the charges that they put for the cost of care. That's it; that's all. Right now, every 90 days, there's an increase to the cost of care. Why? Because they can. Because the legislation says, "Go ahead." It needs to be changed.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): The member has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I know that there are deeply disappointed seniors who are watching this debate in Ottawa and across Ontario tonight. I have to say that I find it very remarkable that the members from Hastings—Lennox and Addington and Toronto—St. Paul's can listen to these stories of seniors who are being gouged astronomical amounts, who can't eat, who can't sleep, who aren't sure that they want to live anymore, can hear these stories and side with the corporations; that the member for

Toronto–St. Paul’s can hear that they are gouging seniors to drive up their corporate profits and bragging about it to investors and then say, “Won’t someone think of the companies?”; to say that this bill is not practical when BC is doing it already and proving that it works.

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And then for the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington to say that the government already has a strong legislative and regulatory framework, that there’s already a strong regulator—“we don’t want to duplicate anything”—when the government knows perfectly well that the regulatory framework is not stopping this—do you know how I know that they know? Because seniors keep sending emails to the Premier, to the Minister of Housing, to the minister of seniors, telling them that this is happening. And the government keeps responding to them that it is okay that they are doing it because the regulatory framework allows them to do it. So the government knows. They know that they’re not stopping it. This is an easy solution to fix that, to protect seniors.

So I would say to other members of this House, you don’t have to side with the price gougers. You can choose to side with seniors, people who could be your parents and grandparents, people who could be you one day, because we all hope to get old. Our seniors deserve so much better than exploitation, and I hope that they can count on us as legislators to protect them.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): The time provided for private members’ public business has expired.

The MPP Pasma has moved a second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 and the Retirement Homes Act, 2010 respecting tenancies in care homes.

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

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

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

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

Second reading vote deferred.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): We will now move on to the late show. Pursuant to standing order 36, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

The member for Oshawa has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to the question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I recognize the member.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: In 2010, the voters of Durham region voted in a referendum to stop having appointed regional chairs and voted overwhelmingly to elect them. That was in a referendum. In 2014, we elected Roger Anderson; in 2018 and again in 2022, regional chair John Henry. We voted for them to be the head of regional council.

Now this minister and Premier have introduced a law that basically says they don’t care what we voted for. Their new law will allow them to fire the chairs in Durham, Waterloo and Niagara and pick their own public chairs who will answer only to them.

When I was first elected to serve in Oshawa, in 2014, I had the opportunity to serve alongside then-Mayor John Henry. John was always kind and thoughtful and fair, and interested in the story of Oshawa and its people. I was grateful to work with him. Whatever anyone thinks of his politics, they think a lot of him. Lefties think he’s Conservative; Conservatives think he’s too much of a progressive, but from my vantage point he has always been a principled, community-minded politician and neighbour. When we haven’t agreed on issues, he has said to me, “Jennifer, it’s just politics. We can still have coffee.” I want to thank him for his many years of public service.

John Henry is, in effect, being fired. The minister takes exception to my use of that word, but he ran in an election for a position that this government has now said he cannot run for because that job is no longer there.

The job of regional chair has been to represent the community. Now it will be to represent the interests of this government because it will be appointed. And working for the minister is not working for the electorate. That is not the same job.

The minister told us, though, that John Henry could apply for the job. If they’re getting rid of them, why would they want him to apply, or any other chair? And Speaker, even you could apply for the job. But do you know what? It doesn’t matter who applies. It matters who they choose to appoint. And chances are it will be party faithful. It will be a bootlicker. He may be a lovely person, but it will be someone who will take orders.

Speaker, in 2010, Durham region held a referendum to stop appointing and start electing. That is what we chose. This government and six of my colleagues who represent Durham region know that the electorate chose to do that, and they are saying they know best. This “father knows best” nonsense, I don’t have patience for.

But this unelected chair would gain so-called strong-mayor powers, giving the Ford government’s hand-picked appointee the power to set regional budgets, hire and fire the regional administrator and other top staffers, and pass bylaws with the support of just one third of council.

The minister can also make regulations that establish a weighted voting system for any upper-tier municipal council. So a council member or even the chair, possibly, could get more votes than others. The minister may pass a weighted voting regulation for any upper-tier municipality. Votes could be weighted based on anything the minister chooses. So whatever story they are telling us about how they’ll use it, the power is in the legislation. The purpose is up to us to figure out, I guess.

But there are seven Durham region MPPs—seven of us. One of us is responsible for a half-trillion-dollar debt. And likely that individual is looking forward to having unfettered, unrestricted access to the budgets of the region and access, without permission, to pick the property tax pockets of all regional taxpayers. And there's nothing voters can do. This government carries the banner that says, "We don't raise taxes." Ah, but if they can control the lion's share of what it says on our property tax bill, if they can control regional budgets, that's a lot of power. And I can imagine that they would want it. An elected chair is only in the way because an elected chair represents the people and not the Premier.

So if this passes, an unelected appointee will control the budget. This is taxation without representation. If you live in one of those regions, you don't get to elect the head of your regional council, directly or indirectly. You don't get a say in the decisions that they make.

The minister said that this will be an open process for vetting. So instead of allowing the entire electorate to vet and elect or reject someone, it's going to be up to, what, the minister, the Premier, party brass to vet? The last time that they vetted someone was Bob Gale. How well did that vetting process work?

Speaker, we're seeing an attack—

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): I recognize the member for Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to thank the member for Oshawa for this chance to speak to the work our government is doing to enhance regional governance for the people of Ontario, while also correcting some misconceptions the member seems to hold about the content of the bill.

Let's be absolutely clear: Every single person who is elected to a term of office will serve until the end of that term of office. When a person is fired, as the member opposite alleges, that person is removed from their position. No such thing is taking place. In fact, there is no mechanism to remove a currently serving regional chair this term at all. What the member opposite is alleging is, quite frankly, impossible and not based in fact.

What this bill does do is align the regional municipality of Durham with the same system that currently works in

both Peel region and York, regions that account for 50% of all those living in an impacted region. It does this at the beginning of the new council term—once again, not during the current one. In fact, Bill 100 merely realigns the regional chair selection process with how they operated for the vast majority of their history.

To illustrate this, let's look at the history of regional government in Durham and Ontario broadly. Regional government was brought to Ontario in the 1970s to help facilitate the implementation of critical infrastructure and to provide coordination.

This is a very key aspect, Speaker. Regional government does not supersede local government; it supports it. It's why the appointment of a chair was envisioned: to support and facilitate the democratically elected local leaders, to coordinate and facilitate work between the various municipalities.

During this time, no chair was elected. In fact, the first election for a regional chair would not take place until the 1990s, years later—Durham even later, in fact. Roger Anderson became elected chair for the first time in 2014. I remember. I was sitting on that regional council, where I served for seven years. But this wasn't his first time as Chair, Speaker. He had been an appointed chair for over 21 years before then.

The system works. It worked for decades across the regions. It works in Durham, and it's currently working in York and Peel. Our government will not apologize for advancing policies that streamline approvals, clarify responsibilities and support the people we serve. These positions are about public service. They are not the fiefdom of any one person.

Regions have a single job to do: coordinate with the local leadership within the municipalities to advance critical projects to better the lives of their constituents, hard-working families in the region of Durham. These changes contained in Bill 100 will do exactly that.

The Acting Speaker (MPP Andrea Hazell): There being no further matters to debate, pursuant to standing order 36(c), I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow.
The House adjourned at 1902.

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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gilmour, Alexa (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Gualtieri, Silvia (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
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Khanjin, Hon. / L'hon. Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives
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Lennox, Robin (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Minister of Sport / Ministre du Sport
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Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation / Ministre des Affaires autochtones et de la Réconciliation économique avec les Premières Nations Minister Responsible for Ring of Fire Economic and Community Partnerships / Ministre responsable des Partenariats économiques et communautaires pour le développement du Cercle de feu
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Rosenberg, Bill (PC)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Chris (IND)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Hon. / L'hon. Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Speaker / Présidente de l'Assemblée législative
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Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business / Ministre associée des Petites Entreprises
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon. Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Attorney General / Procureur général associé
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Tsao, Jonathan (LIB)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Vickers, Paul (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Watt, Tyler (LIB)	Nepean	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes
Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Vacant	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough- Sud-Ouest	